

GUIDED TOUR NARRATIVE – SURVIVORS

When smokejumpers Bob Sallee, Walt Rumsey and Eldon Diettert left their foreman Wag Dodge still standing in his escape fire, they scrambled directly up slope along the right margin of Dodge's still-burning fire. Nearly exhausted when they reached the ridgetop, they encountered a 10-15 foot tall rimrock blocking their path. When they encountered the wall of sandstone, Sallee and Rumsey turned to the left searching frantically for a break in the barrier to squeeze through to the other side and safety. Diettert, who was beside them when they reached the rimrock, inexplicably turned up-slope to the right but was caught by the fire before he'd run 200 feet across the hillside.

Sallee and Rumsey finally found a break in the wall and crossed over into Rescue Gulch. Running along the ridgeline to the northeast, they spotted a narrow field of broken rock a little distance off the ridgetop in Rescue Gulch and headed for it. After reaching the rockslide, they picked their way to the top end but were quickly forced to the lower end when a pincher of the fire snaked over the ridgeline and made directly for them. They had no sooner reached this place of refuge when yet another finger of the fire came over the ridgeline to the west of them and forced them to retreat back to the upper end of the rockslide. Here they waited out the fire and were unharmed.