

From the Ashes of the Starbuck Fire

The weather forecast for Monday, March 6th was a perfect storm for wildfires. Extremely low humidity of 10%, unseasonably warm temperatures, and 50 mph winds gusting to 70 mph from a southwesterly direction all contributed. Early in the afternoon, a small fire that began in Beaver County, Oklahoma, near the Oklahoma state line, quickly breached the Cimarron River. The fire was fueled by abundant dry grass and was traveling out of control at 50-70 mph.

The Starbuck Wildfire has the distinction of the largest wildfire in Kansas history. The fire is named after Charlie Starbuck, first to respond to the fire and fire chief of Slapout, OK, a town of only eight residents but 20 volunteer firefighters. Several counties in Oklahoma and Kansas were affected. Just 12 months earlier, the Anderson Creek Wildfire torched more than 335,000 acres in Oklahoma and neighboring Barber County in Kansas. The Starbuck Wildfire was twice the size of the Anderson Creek fire. The fire was 30 miles wide and was approximately 85 miles from the relative starting point in Oklahoma to just south of Bucklin, KS, where it was finally contained. More than 85% of Clark County, 500,000 acres, burned including 4,200 miles of fencing. The estimate to replace fencing alone in Clark County now exceeds \$41 million. Nineteen homes, along with barns, facilities, equipment, an estimated 3,500 plus head of livestock, entire hay inventories, and countless wildlife were consumed by the fire. Some ranchers experienced 100% death loss and total loss of all pastures and fences. Cattle grazing on wheat pastures survived while most cattle wintering on grass pastures perished.

Though there was tremendous loss in every facet of a rancher's life, all local residents survived. The emergency responses from the local level, surrounding counties as well as from neighboring states, were astounding. Fire departments, county and state road graders, airplanes dropping water, and farmers plowing with the intention of containing the fire worked tirelessly. Ranchers helped each other drive cattle to safety while putting themselves in danger with some ultimately losing their homes, possessions, and livestock in the process.

After the fire, countless individuals from across the country volunteered their time, feed and fencing supplies, food, and prayers to all in need. All volunteer efforts were coordinated by local businesses and individuals. Ashland businesses and organizations as well as those from surrounding communities and states all came together for the common good of taking care of one another.

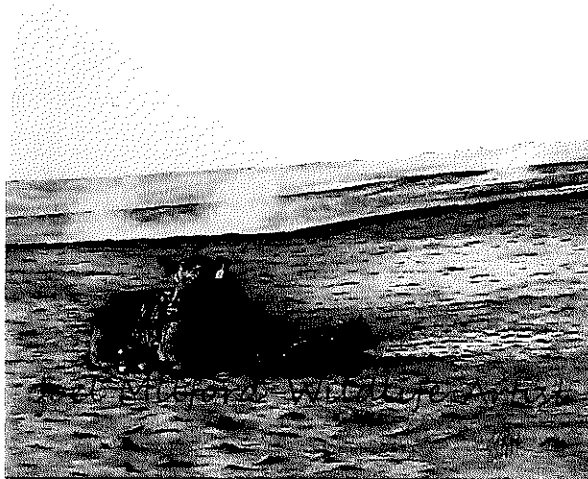
The Ashland Community Foundation coordinated receipts and disbursements of funds to help local residents start to recover from this disaster, fulfilling their purpose of strengthening the health and well-being of families and individuals. A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone that contributed time, talent, and treasure! www.ashlandcf.com **#AshlandStrong**

"I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken". Psalm 16:8

“From The Ashes”

On Monday, March 6, 2017 a devastating wildfire swept across several counties in Northwestern Oklahoma and Southwestern Kansas. It took homes, fences, livestock and numerous wildlife in its path. This fire named “Starbuck Fire” was a fire storm like no one had ever seen before. But through the desolation, new life was brought into the world. I think that beautiful symbolism shows that through it all, through the toughest times you can’t even see past, there is hope. There are new beginnings. Though it is a tremendous setback for all the ranchers, farmers, residents in Clark County as well as the adjacent counties, a new perspective has come about. The many acts of kindness, charity, money, thoughts and prayers are bringing these communities back together. Thank you to everyone who has contributed. The fire consumed everything but it could never take away the hope, heart and pure grit of people in Southwest Kansas.

I came across this picture a few days after the fires and instantly wanted to capture this flawless miracle in a drawing. A young rancher, Cole Gardiner of Gardiner Angus Ranch took this picture the day after the fires of one of their cows that just had delivered a new born calf. *“It was nice to cry tears of joy for a change today, healthy babies born through tremendous adversity”*. Cole Gardiner



THE ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Joel Milford was born and raised in Southwest Kansas. His first pencil art class was taught by Wayne Webb when he was a 5th grader. This class sparked a love for drawing that continues to be expressed in his everyday life. He grew up in Fowler, Ks and graduated from Fowler High School in 2013 where he refined his skills with art instructor Casey Dressler. Through his high school years he won art awards and accolades through many contests. He graduated from Kansas State University with a major in Marketing. He is twenty-two now and has been drawing since he was six years old. Milford enjoys the outdoors and drawing wildlife. As a hunting enthusiast, he likes to draw trophy animals. He also has drawn numerous favorite pets as well as portraits for customers. Although Milford is dedicated to pencil drawing, he likes to spend time hunting, looking for deer sheds, and hanging out with friends and family.