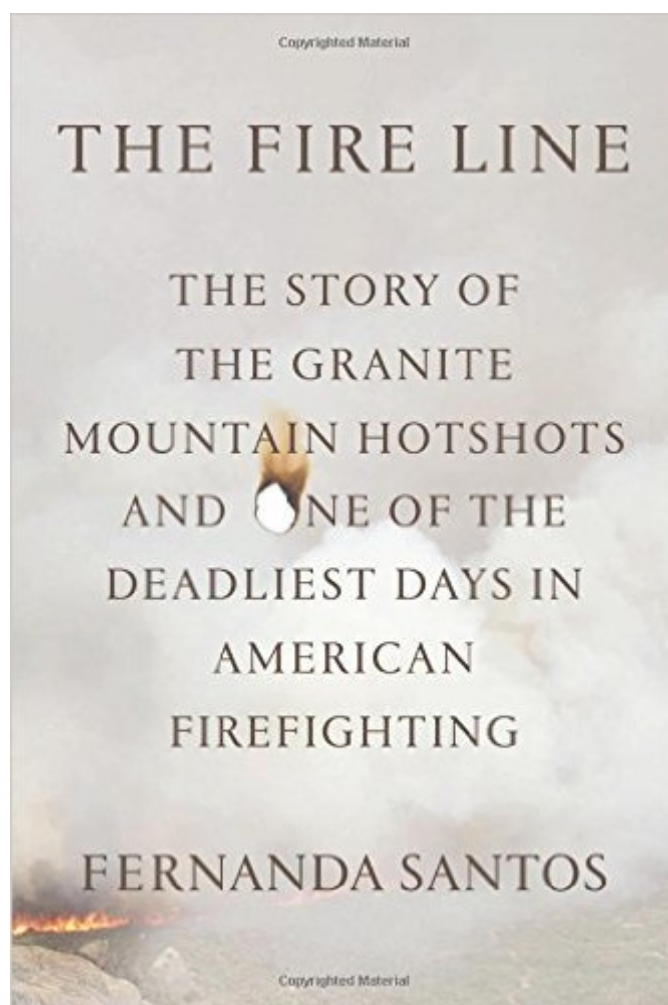


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# The Fire Line: The Story Of The Granite Mountain Hotshots And One Of The Deadliest Days In American Firefighting



## Synopsis

In Fernanda Santos's expert hands, the story of 19 men and a raging wildfire unfolds as a riveting, pulse-pounding account of an American tragedy; and also as a meditation on manhood, brotherhood and family love. *The Fire Line* is a great and deeply moving book about courageous men and women. • Hector Tobar, author of *Deep Down Dark: The Untold Stories of 33 Men Buried in a Chilean Mine and the Miracle that Set Them Free*. When a bolt of lightning ignited a hilltop in the sleepy town of Yarnell, Arizona, in June of 2013, setting off a blaze that would grow into one of the deadliest fires in American history, the twenty men who made up the Granite Mountain Hotshots sprang into action. An elite crew trained to combat the most challenging wildfires, the Granite Mountain Hotshots were a ragtag family, crisscrossing the American West and wherever else the fires took them. The Hotshots were loyal to one another and dedicated to the tough job they had. There's Eric Marsh, their devoted and demanding superintendent who turned his own personal demons into lessons he used to mold, train and guide his crew; Jesse Steed, their captain, a former Marine, a beast on the fire line and a family man who wasn't afraid to say "I love you" to the firemen he led; Andrew Ashcraft, a team leader still in his 20s who struggled to balance his love for his beautiful wife and four children and his passion for fighting wildfires. We see this band of brothers at work, at play and at home, until a fire that burned in their own backyards leads to a national tragedy. Impeccably researched, drawing upon more than a hundred hours of interviews with the firefighters' families, colleagues, state and federal officials, and fire historians and researchers, New York Times Phoenix Bureau Chief Fernanda Santos has written a riveting, pulse-pounding narrative of an unthinkable disaster, a remarkable group of men and the raging wildfires that threaten our country's treasured wild lands.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an insightful story about that ill-fated event. As a seasonal wildland firefighter with over 20 years of experience, I have worked with, and known literally hundreds of young men just like these. They are your neighbor, former classmate, brother, cousin and best friend. Many are college students trying to earn money for school. I remember that day as clear as if it were yesterday. As soon as the news was released, I had friends and family members blowing up my phone trying to find out if I was on the fire and making sure I was ok. Unlike one of the other reviewer's, I didn't read any political agenda in this book. It is a known fact among firefighters that fires are becoming larger and more intense due to a number of factors such as drought, fuel loading and disease. Urban interface has compounded the problem. I will say that as a supervisor, being a seasonal employee for the federal government (USFS- I was a sawyer, engine captain and squad boss) I was only making just over \$15 an hour with no benefits other than sickleave and a little bit of vacation time, and that is typical for seasonal employees. When we are injured, unless we can afford our own insurance, our medical bills are paid by Worker's Comp. which is a difficult process. Fortunately for me I am a schoolteacher, so I had my own medical insurance. This book not only puts a real person with the names of the fallen, it points out those gaps in benefits for firefighters. While we are aware of the situation, no one ever believes it can happen to them, and we accept that risk and relatively low pay because we are doing what we love, working outdoors. Santos did a good job of researching and understanding fire behavior and the operations of firefighting .

This spring I went to a conference in Boston called Power of Narrative and got an early copy of THE FIRE LINE: The story of the Granite Mountain Hotshots and one of the deadliest days in American firefighting. I finished the book this week. It's a fast-moving, vividly written read that transported me to the arid American west, a place where brave men battle wildfires that can turn and kill them. Author Fernanda Santos was working as the Phoenix bureau chief of the New York Times when she read on Twitter that men had died fighting a wildfire. She drove off to learn more, covered the story for the newspaper and wrote this narrative nonfiction book. The first pages of THE FIRE LINE lay out the basic facts of what happened near Yarnell, Arizona on June 30, 2013. A group of elite wilderness firefighters found themselves caught between a fast-moving blaze and a steep mountain

that blocked their escape. They resorted to a desperate attempt to save their lives: hiding in tentlike fire shelters that repel heat. The fire was simply too hot - an estimated 2,000 degrees - and 19 men suffered what must have been agonizing deaths. A sequence of errors led the men into this impossible position, but Santosâ™ narrative spends little time pointing fingers. She writes in the authorâ™s note, âœl knew, from early on, that to explain the great loss would lead far beyond assigning blame for the fatalities. In firefighting, decisions are based on probabilities, on the best information at hand, and theyâ™re made quickly, very quickly.â• More than a simple explanation of what went wrong, THE FIRE LINE serves as an exploration of the peculiar world the men inhabited.

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