



Sandy and Craig Bourasa at the Gold Flake Saloon in Feather Falls.

PHOTO BY KEN SMITH

the fire academy, he went on his first call.

"We didn't have anything when I first started," he said. "It was Company 52, but it was just me and my truck. My first fire [the Lumpkin Fire, a Sept. 2015 blaze that injured eight firefighters], I just showed up and they said, 'You don't have any equipment?' I said, 'Nope, just me.'"

"That's when I met Reed Rankin. He told me to hang out at his water tender and trained me with the pump handle that day."

Rankin, Berry Creek's chief, invited Craig to come train with the Berry Creek company every Tuesday, an offer he accepted. Aside from learning a lot and developing his skills, Craig also found camaraderie with the Berry Creek crew and started bringing his wife along. Sandy said sitting in on those sessions inspired her to join up herself. Both companies still meet regularly for training, assist one another on calls when possible and consider each other "family."

Company 52 now has a water tender and some other equipment, but no fire station. They keep some equipment on their own property for fast response, while most is stored in a quonset hut on the grounds of the Feather Falls Grange Hall; the shed survived the fire, but the grange hall—where the community gathered for monthly breakfasts and other events—did not. A cardboard sign at the edge of the property aimed at recruiting more volunteers still stands, unscathed.

### Night of ...

"You could tell something was wrong all day, just by looking at the sky," Sandy said of Sept. 8. "I closed the bar early and told everyone to evacuate, to get out of town, and then spent the day doing structure protection at our house."

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community, even when closed; dozens of work crews and fire and law enforcement personnel currently use the large parking lot as staging grounds.

Upon moving to Feather Falls, Craig wanted to join the volunteer fire department, but found there wasn't one. So, he started one. Shortly after completing his training at



The structure engine was destroyed in the North Complex Fire along with the rest of Butte County Fire Station 61 in Berry Creek.

PHOTO BY JASON CASSIDY

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