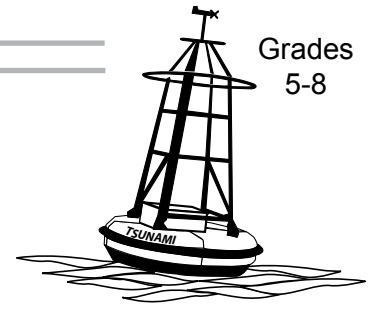


Tsunamis on the Air Waves

Grades
5-8



Overview:

The Prince William Sound tsunami event in 1964 devastated Kodiak and Seward, among other Alaska cities. In this lesson, students listen to oral history recordings and newscasts from the 1964 tsunami event, discuss them and answer questions.

Targeted Alaska Grade Level Expectations:

Science

- [6] SD2.3 The student demonstrates an understanding of the forces that shape Earth by describing how the surface can change rapidly as a result of geological activities (i.e., earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, landslides, avalanches) [Note: Earthquakes and tsunamis are discussed here, volcanoes, landslides, and avalanches are investigated in Units 2 and 3.]
- [5] SE2.2 The student demonstrates an understanding that solving problems involves different ways of thinking, perspectives, and curiosity by comparing multiple explanations (e.g., oral traditions, folklore, scientific theory) of everyday events (e.g., weather, seasonal changes).

Objectives:

The student will:

- describe how an earthquake can cause the surface of Earth to change rapidly; and
- describe how a tsunami can cause the surface of the ocean to change rapidly.

Materials:

- CD player
- 5 copies of the “ATEP Oral History” CD
- “ATEP Oral History” transcripts
- STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Tsunamis on the Air Waves”

Science Basics:

In 1932, radiotelephone communications were established in Alaska. In 1964, the Good Friday Earthquake and resulting Alaskan Tsunami cut off phone communication throughout much of the Southern part of Alaska. Kodiak, Seward, and Anchorage had no telephone service, but radio operators still had Alaska’s attention: issuing warnings, reading names of people unaccounted for and interviewing state officials. Ham radio operators routed calls for help, issued warnings and relayed information to the devastated communities and to those who would provide aid.

Activity Preparation:

1. Explain that the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake and resulting tsunamis caused disruptions in the phone service to many Alaska communities, including Seward, Kodiak, and Anchorage.
2. Ask students what other methods people might have used to communicate with each other. Explain that radio was used as a means of getting information and help to the people devastated by the tsunami and their families.

3. Play the “Alaska Amateur Radio” track of the “ATEP Oral History” CD. Discuss what was heard.
4. Introduce the “1964 Earthquake, News Reports” track of the CD by explaining that the recording is of a newscast broadcasted by Anchorage based KENI-Radio after the 1964 earthquake, and rebroadcast by Fairbanks based KFAR-Radio. In the recording, an unidentified KFAR announcer reads a report from KENI concerning death tolls from the 1964 earthquake. A list of people unaccounted for in Seward is given and Perry Stockton, mayor of Seward, is interviewed by Ty Clark regarding the damage in Seward.
5. Hand out the STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Tsunamis on the Air Waves” and ask students to answer questions and take notes as they listen to the “1964 Earthquake, News Reports” track of the CD.
6. When the CD finishes, ask students to form pairs or small groups to discuss what they heard and answer the remaining worksheet questions.

Critical Thinking:

Activity Response Method: Divide students into 5 groups and provide each group with a copy of the “ATEP Oral History” CD, a CD player and headphones or a quiet place where they can listen to the CD. Assign each group the following tracks to listen to:

- Group 1 – Track 1
- Group 2 – Tracks 2 and 6
- Group 3 – Track 3
- Group 4 – Tracks 4 and 7
- Group 5 – Track 5

Provide transcripts if desired or if the CD does not perform as expected. Ask students to share responses to the recording within their group. Students can begin their responses with phrases such as, “I was surprised to learn... I learned that... I wonder if...” If time allows, ask students to share their group’s responses with the rest of the class.

Extension Idea:

- Within small groups, ask students to write and then record or perform a hypothetical newscast detailing the events of the 1964 tsunami.
- Ask students to listen to several tracks then identify commonalities.
- Invite tsunami survivors to the classroom to share their stories with students.
- Take students on a field trip to visit a ham radio operator for a demonstration.
- Ask students to ask an adult at home or in the neighborhood what they remember or know about the 1964 earthquake and tsunamis.

Answers:

1. Reports of damage and deaths; a list of people unaccounted for in Seward; an interview with the mayor; a description of the destruction caused by the tsunami in Seward.
2. Answers may vary.
3. According to Stockton, Seward’s industrial area sustained the most damage while the business district was in good shape. KIBH Radio in Seward was destroyed. Stockton himself was in

Anchorage when the earthquake struck. Two people died and 31 people were unaccounted for in Seward. The All-American City celebration had been postponed. Seward had received offers of assistance from other All-American cities.

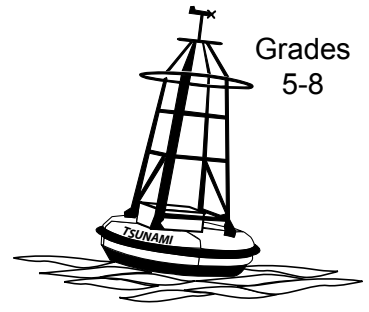
4. c. All-American City

5. No. Explanations may vary.

Name: _____

Student Worksheet

Tsunamis on the Air Waves



Directions: After listening to the “1964 Earthquake, News Reports” recording, answer the following questions:

1. What type of information was reported on the radio after the 1964 earthquake?

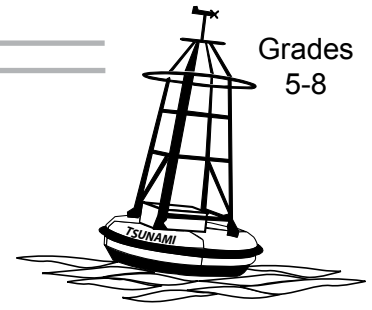
2. Why might the reporter list names of people who are missing?

3. What did the mayor of Seward have to say about the earthquake and tsunami?

4. What celebration was going to occur in Seward, but was postponed on account of the tsunami?

- a. July 4
- b. Labor Day
- c. All-American City
- d. Best Small Town

5. Do reporters always have full and accurate information? Explain.



Transcription: Track #1

Transcript of a segment from “Candy McGuire is interviewed by Mary Jane Pediangco on December 3, 1994 in Kodiak, Alaska” by Mary Jane Pediangco, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-81.

Mary: How old were you when the tidal wave hit Kodiak?

Candy: I was eleven.

Mary: What do you remember about it and the earthquake?

Candy: Um, it was Good Friday and everybody was home for the holidays, you know, or Easter Holiday. We had Good Friday off. So we were laying around relaxing. My nanny (the lady that babysat me), Reka, was over, and my mom were sitting at the dining room table. Our house overlooks Potato Patch Lake so we had a pretty good view of everything that was happening. And, one side's the ocean, the other side is Potato Patch Lake. And, um, I was laying on the couch. My brother was there somewhere, my little brother was there somewhere.

My dad was sitting in his chair watching TV, and I thought there was a monster under the couch lifting me up, so I jumped off the couch and looked at the couch like it was, you know, this monster because I was scared of monsters back then. And there was nothing. And, by this time everybody else was looking around and everybody started running for the door. It's a natural place that you go during tidal, er... earthquake is for... so you can look outside and kind of hang on to the door frame.

And so there were my mom, my dad, Reka, me, and my little brother standing at the door looking out. I was in the back so I couldn't really see but I could peek out and see the tree tops swaying back and forth and I could see the parking lot and the cars. Our Corvair and our Volkswagen were um, like almost touching. They'd go, they were going in opposite directions and they would come to the middle and almost touch. And, um I didn't see it, but the people... my mom (I think was in front), um, saw the lake that had three- to four-foot deep ice on it crack and big chunks of it fly up in the air. It was very loud. It's a very...It sounds like... uh, uh well, if you could imagine everything around you moving. And all of the... uh it's...it's just very, very loud, a loud roar. And it lasted for five minutes. Five minutes is a long time to have the earth move underneath your feet and be terrified. And that's what we were. We were terrified.

And then it was over and, um, I can't remember what happened exactly right after, but I remember my dad's drink fell off the coffee table and one of our mirrors fell and broke. That's about all that really happened at our house. And uh, we went outside. And during an earthquake a lot of times the water will suck out of an area and come back. And, basically that's why, um, there were chunks of dock floating down the channel. And there happened to be one chunk of dock that had a small airplane and a man standing on it. He was yelling and screaming for somebody to come and save him. And so there was a boat going out there to get him. I don't know. I think they tied it off and drug it somewhere to save the airplane. One of the neighbors came running up from down below and said their fence just went.

And at this time we still didn't know that, um, tidal waves came after earthquakes. We had no idea. We didn't know anything about it. So it didn't make any sense. You know, we didn't really understand. And so, um, the radio was telling everyone to go to high ground. And we didn't really know why. So, um, we, my mom and dad gathered up all of our paper work, the cancelled checks, um, different receipts. And, uh, we got in the car and drove downtown.

My babysitter, Reka, I was real close with. I spent the night with her a lot. And her Chihuahua had just had puppies and I had been promised to spend the night with her that night 'cause I hadn't been able to see them. The night before my mom said, "You can see them anytime don't worry about it." (I never told you this story last time.) And so, um I was going to go downtown and spend the night with her. We were gunna, we were driving down to check to see how the puppies were 'cause she, her house was downtown. And, um, we drove down Rezanof and we got to the bottom and they had it barricaded. They told us we couldn't go through and the streets were all wet. And, we thought that they were scared of fires from the oil and stuff. Or, you know, there's, maybe oil got leaked out of the oil barrels, and, um they were spraying down in case of a fire. And, we didn't know that there were tidal waves coming in all ready and wetting down the streets and so we turned around and went back home. And, um I never did get to see the Chihuahua puppies because they all died in the tidal wave. And, um, what happened to them is, was strange because the house was still there and you could see the water line where the water went up to about a foot below the ceiling. It was like...it was like around where um, Mac's Sporting Goods store is right now. And there's a lot of houses back behind, um, the front road there. And, um, the big dogs, there were two adult dogs there, that were alive and they had spent the night on the mattress that had floated a foot below the ceiling, but the puppies all died, but you could see where the mother dog had tried to pull them all up on this mattress and keep them up there, but, um they all died. So I never got to see the little baby puppies. That was traumatic for me when I was eleven years old.

But anyhow so then we went back home and, um, we figured we'd go up and stay in higher ground up at a friend's house, the Christoffersons. And they lived about five or six houses towards going out of town, um, from the Jr. High School, and we could see the ocean from there and, um, it was high enough up where we felt safe. And my dad played the sax. I'm not sure why we were up there except it was safe, they invited us, and he played the piano and my dad played the saxophone. So we went up there and there were a bunch of kids up there that all knew each other. And, um, one of the parents went down to find their dog and came back with a case of whiskey that they had found. That they saw in one of the stores, I guess.

There was, there were tidal waves coming and going all night long and people would go out and look for stuff even though there were tidal waves coming and going. And, um, um, I remember my mom talking on the phone, right before we went up there, to a friend in Oregon and she was constantly saying "Oh. Here comes another one, there's another one." There were aftershocks, and so every time we'd have another big, another jolt it was like being on a boat. It moved, um, all night long, the island moved. We had a lot of aftershocks and it just never quit. It was never still. We had them for months later, also.

And, um, so we went up to their house, and um, they played, and danced, and drank whiskey, and, but the, all the chandeliers, the, the chandeliers they used to have in those days that hung over the dining room tables, were all, um, I remember mostly them. We had one, and people that we stayed, the house we stayed at had one and they moved all night long. And, we could hear the roar of the waves if we would look, peek our head outside and look down towards town, we could hear the roar. And during this time, it was, you know, all of town was being demolished and it was kinda like this loud roar happening, it's a big... like a big storm.

And, let's see, then um, about midnight we decided it was over. So, we went home. We got home and we ran down to the ocean shore which is the channel across from Woody Island and, um, the water was running parallel to the shore rather than, like a tide runs in to the shore and it was

black with oil. We looked at it and we ran back up the hill. And, um, my mom and dad had realized that out in the lake you could, you could just barely see some silhouettes and there were, um, the old Beachcombers, a log cabin, all of the small boat, or the small, um, small planes airport that was down on Miss--Mission Beach was in the lake and the trailer park and, about, well we didn't know how many cars then, but there were 50 or 60 cars in the lake. And, um the ice was all pushed around the shore. It was not in the lake, just all these silhouettes of these houses, and... Well, we went to bed and um about one o'clock in the morning about an hour after we got here my mom said she (I was asleep), my mom heard this huge roar and went and looked out the window. And, all the houses and all the trailer...trailers, and everything that was in the lake was pushed down, all the way down, to one side, all the way back to the other side, and brought all the way back down and then brought to the middle and dropped down by uh... uh water that came into the lake from Mission Beach.

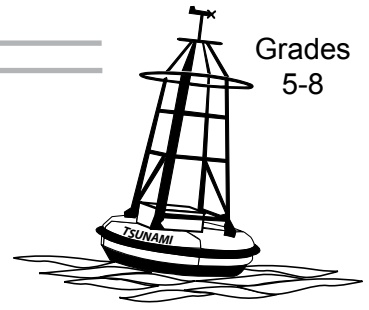
Mary: Did anybody die in the lake?

Candy: No, nobody died in the lake, but I do know one family who, um, lived down in that house who had to run across the ice that was cracked in their stocking feet. The Legrues: Jeannette and Antoinette and Raymond Legrue. And, um, to get away from the tidal wave they had to run across the ice. That sounded pretty scary to me.

So, um, the next day there was no telephones, no electricity, no running water. My dad put the coffee pot on the burn barrel outside our house. And, um, nobody worked, nobody was allowed downtown. There was, um, no way to get anywhere, um, because you couldn't go through town. And most the places were all destroyed or disaster areas. So everybody kind of wandered around and looked at all the damage and stuff. Oh this was on a Saturday. And, um, I wandered down to where the old Beachcombers used to be, where the Salvation Army is right now. And, I was with my, our new dog, who was eight months old at the time, and I got down to the very bottom of the hill, about a quarter mile away from our house, somebody came running up from the beach screaming "Everybody run! A 90 foot tidal wave is coming." And due to the fact that the tidal wave the night before was 15 feet, everybody ran, stampeded to their cars and took off. And, I was running hysterically home. Everybody drove right past me, finally somebody stopped and picked me up right before my house and dropped me off. And, I ran in and told my mom and dad. And, um, we listened on the radio. We didn't hear anything. Finally we realized it was a rumor. It wasn't true, nothing happened, nothing came.

So, then, um, we decided to, we were being warned to go to higher ground again, so we packed up once again, and moved...oh no... I know what it was... There was no running water or no heat or anything at our house so we went to a house—a big house; that is now, it was the Chandley's house then, it is now one of the older houses facing Baranof park. And, um, they had a fire place in a big house so five of us families went and stayed there for the night. And, um, we put on plays for our, the parents all night long.

And what I didn't know at that time was that one of the men that was there had T.B. and all of his children were exposed to T.B. and, I didn't know that 'til the next year when my brother and I got tine test and it was positive. All the rest of my friends had been on the pills 'cause they had found that out. But, they, during a disaster a lot of time they miss people and we were two people that were missed, but we'd already cured ourselves so it was okay and we never did take the pills. We had to have X rays from then on.



Transcription: Track #2

Transcript of a segment from “Iver Malutin on Growing up in Kodiak” by Brenda L. Kramer, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-85.

Brenda: One event that I can remember, or cannot remember being here, but remember in history of Kodiak is the tidal wave. Do you have any information?

Iver: Oh yeah.

Brenda: What was that like? It seems pretty frightening to me. What was it like for the people?

Iver: Okay. I was working on the, we were building Rezanof at that time. I was working construction by then. That was in 1964. And, uh, we were basically, almost to where the hospital is right now, clearing trees. And, uh, then, that night we were all sitting down to the dinner table (I will never forget it), and, uh, just sitting down to eat and my brother got up and he got himself a glass of water and he put it right on the table and he got me a glass of water and put it right there and I remember that then the house started shaking and it was big kind of a rolling. It wasn't just, not just sh-- just big rolling. And, so, so we went outside and the trees were just like a, a fishing pole, like [makes sound] just like, make, when you jiggle really fast with it. And, uh, people were just screaming and my mother was trying to calm the Navy people. There were a lot of Navy people here at that time, their wives were just screaming and she calmed them down and you couldn't drive car. You couldn't even stand up outside.

So, when...after, uh, the first shake stopped we went down to check my brother's boat. He had a Seiner. We went down to the harbor and, uh, we walked down the rack that went off to the boat, and it was tied alongside another one so we put more lines in it. And I happened to look at the, uh piling, you know, that, and I noticed that the poles were coming up almost an inch at a time, just coming up really fast. And I hollered to my brother, I said, “hey we better get out of here because it looks like the water is really coming in.” So we went running through the dock and it was quite a ways. And, by the time we got to the dock, the water was almost level with the dock. And, when we got, then it started coming up over the dock, so I said, “hey we better get out of here,” so we jumped in the car and I went home. And, uh from the dock, the height of the dock, it must of came up another 15 or 20 feet over the top. And, uh the reason I know that is because after, when we went back to work, we, they took all, all the equipment and all the Mullins construction crew downtown to start cleaning up. And it was big barges up the, you probably saw pictures of the boats that were all up, right up all over the place, and uh, uh, so we start cleaning up and I will never forget that, old Kraft and son had the grocery store here at this time, and they had a big safe, oh, its probably, uh maybe about twice as big as your refrigerator, Probably about 6 feet wide, and maybe about 7 feet tall, and about 3 or 4 feet back, deep and uh, we found that about oh, right across from the police station in a ditch, in a big... it used to be a big creek that used to come up there and the salmon used to come up that creek. And uh, so, we got, uh, a loader and we got it out and we took it back down to Kodiak Motors. But that safe had moved, oh man, I don't know, a couple thousand feet.

Brenda: That's a lot.

Iver: Yeah. But everything was intact in the safe because my niece was the bookkeeper for Kraft. After, uh, they got the water out everything was OK.

And, I remember the next day, Saturday, we went to look for my brother's boat 'cause the harbor was literally just wiped out. There was nothing there. And there was boats on the beach, all over the place. There were just boats scattered all over. There's still some of the boats on the beach. And, uh we went all over looking for the boat and Kodiak Western had a huge, uh, building that they used for keeping their airplanes in and working on planes, and the roof was floating out there, just the top of the roof. And, we went in the building and there was all kinds of supplies in there, and I told him, "we should just anchor this thing here." And he said, "Naw, they will find it." I said, "okay." And every—everything's floating in the bay, everything. Boats out on the beach and it was just horrible, so, bundles of lumber lying all over. We didn't find the boat so we went back. And, uh, what else can I say about the earthquake? I'm just trying to think of what else to say about it, really.

Brenda: Well, about how, how long did it actually take before they started getting in supplies for the people? Did they, were they able to do it right away or did it take a long time?

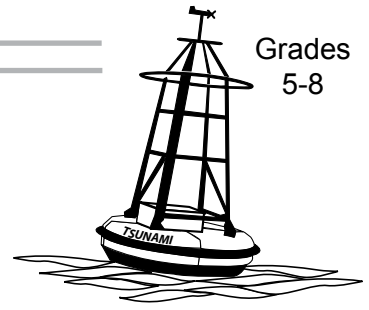
Iver: Well, there was a lot of confusion, and, and, and, once they got, ah, got, uh organized and finally deciding what, how they were going to do what, it didn't take long. Uh, lumber was coming in, supplies were coming in, going to the villages. No, it didn't take that long. But, as far as the buildings are concerned, [unintelligible], I don't, I don't think that there was one building that really fell down or collapsed on account of the tidal wave. It was all water damage that damaged everything.

Brenda: That was in, that, I had the other misconception that it actually collapsed some buildings, but it didn't.

Iver: No. No, none of them. And when we cleaned, uh, up the downtown, everybody talks about your house under the doorways and windows is the safest place to be when you're, probably that's true, but if you could get upstairs, if you have a gable-end house, gable on the end of your house, that's the strongest place. If you look at all the pictures after the earthquake, every one of them houses, the gables are still intact and, and, when we were out on the bay they were floating away. But, the rest of the house was gone but the upstairs was all intact. It would be like a raft, like a house.

Brenda: Very interesting.

Iver: Um hm. That's the strongest part of your house, upstairs.



Transcription: Track #3

Transcript of a segment from “An Interview with John Reft, Kodiak Alaska, Conducted April 5 and 7, 1993” by Marilyn Davidson, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-37.

John: But that day, uh, my dad and my uncle, Tom Gallagher, and Uncle Charlie Reft were over here on Near Island and they were jacking up this house and it like a... refuge or something for the animals and it had tilted over on one end, so they blocked it up and straightened it out and while they were under there, doing that, the tidal, er the earthquake hit. And they ran out from under it, ya know, and it crumbled down, uh, after the, the quake hit so bad, you know, that, uh, it took the five-horse outboard that was in their skiff or small outboard, anyway.

Marilyn: Um hmm.

John: And they were right over here in this little lagoon here on Near Island. It shook the island and the skiff and stuff so bad it popped that outboard right off of the skiff and knocked it about twenty feet down the beach. Just popped it right off.

And then the tide started coming in and then when the tide went out they noticed it, you know. They grabbed it, threw it into the skiff and when the tide come back in again, why they jumped in their skiff and starting rowing toward the, oh, it was the D & A dock then, and, uh, the oil float down there and my cousin [Unintelligible Mickey?] Gallagher and I were waiting there and we thought they were running in the outboard and here they were just guiding it along with oars, man, they were just flying right toward us with that, you know, tremendous tides are running in and out. I guess even the channel dried up. But, ah, we tried to get up to, uh, my dad to go up with us, but he said no, he was going to stay there with my Uncle Charlie because he was on, he was on his own boat the Mermaid. He didn't want to leave it so we ran up together to get my aunt at the Polar Bear, at the restaurant.

Marilyn: Um-ha.

John: I guess, my dad was doing fine on the boat with Uncle Charlie and then Foggy Cape started to go under (a boat), tied to the dock. So he jumped off the Mermaid, started that up, cut it loose and then he went over and he cut the Silver K loose. He had that... he towed that behind and then he's jogging up and down the channel, ya know, in this Foggy Cape towing the Silver K, my uncle right along side of him. They were doing fine. Then the owner of the Foggy Cape just started... the D & A dock went under, he come running down with five or six other guys and hol-lered for him to come in and pick him up so my dad swung in and they all jumped onboard and they called him [unintelligible] Larsen [unintelligible] Afognak. John Larsen. He took over his boat then and, uh he just started heading out the channel and he cut the Silver K loose that my dad had the towrope on it. He started running out the channel, he was trying to get Fred or, uh, Teddy Panamaroff from Ouzinkie, who was worried about his family. He was trying to get them around to Ouzinkie on the outside. So they got out in Spruce Cape there and they got through the first

two waves and then the last they heard them on the air was, "well, here comes the third one. It's a big one, don't look like we'll make it through this one." That was the last they ever heard of them.

Marilyn: Ummm.

John: So, dad drowned right in here, on Spruce Cape on the Foggy Cape. Oh, no, the Spruce Cape, not the Foggy Cape. The name of the boat was the Spruce Cape and it drowned, er... it went down out here on Spruce Cape during the tidal wave. Foggy Cape was Leonard Halverson's who was a sister ship to it.

Marilyn: Hmmm.

John: So, that's the last we ever... saw of him.

Marilyn: Uh-hm.

John: And I think they found just John Larsen, the guy with [unintelligible] boat. They found him out there by the Loran Station, way up there in the cliff, in the trees...

Marilyn: Oh my gosh!

John: Just washed way up there.

Marilyn: Um!

John: But he was the only one that was ever found out of the six or seven guys on it. But the whole town... I mean, I was downtown when the wave hit and umm... I remember, I was just crossing the street in the main town there and then they had some pavement down there and, uh, all of sudden, you know, it just hit so hard... ya know, and it got so violent and... they streets were just tolling.... ya know... you couldn't even stand up. Finally, I just got down on my hands and knees and... felt like the world was coming to an end or somethin'. You'd look up and, ya know, the telephone poles, they were just swaying, ya know, just tremendous. The ground was just rolling and the buildings were just, ya know... It felt like everything was just going to open up and just swallow ya' right up. It seemed like it went on for a tremendous long time, I couldn't believe it. And then, when it was over, the thing I remember was women coming out of Kraft's supermarket with bags, when it hit, they didn't know what was going on and their eyes got SO BIG. That was the scariest part of the whole thing for me, was to see the expression on people's face.

Marilyn: Um.

John: They didn't know what was happening, like they had bags of groceries and they just started shaking and then pretty soon it got rolling and earth... they just screamed and threw their groceries and their eyes, they were just huge, ya know and fear... ya know. There was a tremendous amount of fear... but that's the thing I really remember about that, was the people's expression during the quake. So, anyway, after that was over we went over to, uh, the restaurant and checked on my aunt and stuff and then we ran down to the dock, ya know and different things. My uncle, Tom Gallagher, he was volunteer fire department, he ran to get a fire truck and police were getting things going to warn people about the waves and it was pretty chaotic.

Marilyn: Oh yeah!

John: Uh... it wasn't that, like a big wave would come in, that's 'cause the islands broke the waves up out here. It was the surge, ya know, from the tide and it would come in, you know... creeping up in the fire trucks and, you know, the people, and to get out of town and get up to high lands and everybody was going up Pillar Mountain. So, we ran home and my aunt wanted to get her parrot and her poodles and this and that in the car. So, we went on up there and then, uh, the loud speaker came on up there, "All National Guards people report to the Armory with gear and everything within fifteen minutes." Man we tore out of that mountain without all regard... and all the guardsmen, whoever had a car, ya just jumped on, came down, grabbed our clothes. And, we were dressing, 'cause when they said fifteen minutes, you were there, standing in rank in fifteen minutes, ready to go, so. We all went in, lined up, got orders about everything, and we were on duty for three weeks. We lived in the armory night and day, and ate and everything in there. We never went out. And then we lived up there for three weeks, patrolled through the town, and ya know, stoppin' all the looting and all that stuff that was going on.

Marilyn: Um-hmm.

John: Between us and the Marines...

Marilyn: Um-hmm.

John: Then after the tidal wave was over then I took, uh, leave and went to Orange, California, to where my sister was living.

Marilyn: Um-hmm.

John: Told her everything that happened, ya know, what I knew about it... and Dad disappeared. So that was, that was one bad day.

Marilyn: Yeah.

John: People can't imagine how violent this earth shook. I mean, it was like it was all going to open up and just swallow you in, you know, like it was just going to... It was like I guess the end of the world, it could be. I don't know how else to explain it.

Marilyn: Um-hmm.

John: It's... it's tremendous. Bad experiences.

Marilyn: Um, do you feel like, if anything like that ever happened again, your house is pretty close to the water here, would you be safe?

John: Yeah, it survived it.

Marilyn: It was here then?

John: Um-hmm.

Marilyn: Yeah?

John: The other, the house that I lived in when I was a kid right down below here disappeared during the tidal wave. But this one here survived it.

Marilyn: Was this where you lived then?

John: No, we bought this here in '73.

Marilyn: Um-hmm.

John: I worked with the state [unintelligible] for three years. Just before Heather was born we bought this house. We got married in '70, you know we moved here in '73. But, it survived it then and unless there was a tremendous huge tidal wave, it would probably survive it again.

Marilyn: Well, certainly nothing has come close to that.

John: Nah, but there was a lot of 'em washed out.

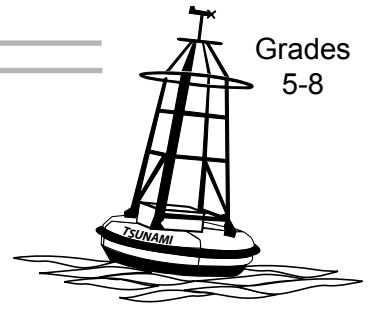
Marilyn: Uh-huh.

John: Course, the whole town was washed out, down there where the town is... and rebuilt, the boat harbor. A lot of changes were made [unintelligible] and, uh a lot of fill. There was a lot of land in this area sunk and the other end of the island raised up.

Marilyn: Hmm.

John: It just kinda tilted, the island itself.

Marilyn: Interesting.



Transcription: Track #4

Transcript of a segment from “Interview with Thelma Johnson at Kodiak, Alaska” by Eleanor K. Sander, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-17.

Eleanor: So, when the tidal wave came, I mean, you all must have thought that it was, like just the end of the world, or whatever...I mean...

Thelma: Well, we had just come home from Mass, it was Good Friday and we had all gone to church. I was working at the, for the airlines at the time, Pacific Northern Airlines.

Eleanor: Pacific Northern Airlines, okay.

Thelma: And, uh, so we had come home from Mass and we had just finished eating dinner... and, uh, we couldn't eat meat in those days, so it was scrambled eggs or whatever and all of a sudden my... everything started shaking and my oldest son, Chris said, “Dad, what's happening, what's happening?” We said, “Oh nothing, Chris. Don't worry about it, it's just an earthquake,” and it went on and on. And, we looked out and could see the wires slapping together and the sparks flying, and Chris was only about, what was he? Ten. And the children had a little play house outdoors and one of the neighbor children, a little girl, was down there and she was hammering a nail in the wall to hang a picture up in the play house, and all of a sudden the door opened and she came crawling in on her hands and knees saying, “I didn't do it, I didn't do it.”

Eleanor: Oh, bless her heart!

Thelma: [Unintelligible] In the meantime, my, the chandelier was hitting the ceiling, the doorbell chimes were clanging, and the place was really shaking, you know. I said, “Get down on your hands and knees.” So I said to the kids, “Let's get down on your knees, let's start saying the Hail Marys,” which we did. Well, we finally got to the door and, and we didn't dare go out, it looked like the hills were rolling, and the wires were slapping together, and there was fire flying, and everything. Then, of course, all the lights went out and Oly, being the manager of KEA, had to take off, so he left and, uh, Mark went with him. Well, then Chris and I were at home and we were doing the dishes and we'd go to the window and Chris said, “Mother, look out and look out the window,” he said, “The tide is way, way out.” We didn't have the radio on, we didn't think about a tidal wave or anything. Must have been a half an hour after the earthquake hit when [unintelligible]. So we went and I said, “Oh! Isn't that strange? I wonder what is going on.” And I came back into the kitchen. Finally, “Mother come quick, the tide's back in again.” So, that was the first wave.

Eleanor: It's here!

Thelma: And then, we saw Mark, he left KEA and he came running home, we, of course we could see everything from here, he kept running home, he looked like a little ginger bread man, just running as fast as he could. And, uh, of course, we didn't see Oly for a long, long time. And, uh, later that

evening, the MP's and the police came, and said, "Get to higher ground." And, I said, "Oh no!" And, as Oly left he said, "Stay here, you are safe. No matter what happens," so when they came they said, "No. Get out. Get to higher ground." And I said, "Well, my husband said to stay here." They said, "Get out!" So, we had to take our boots and put our coats on. We started up the hill to this big tree where the children always played. And as we were going up, the lady who lived up above us, she had several children and her husband was in Seattle at the time, it was Pat Bonnie, her husband's name was Bix.

Eleanor: Bix, right.

Thelma: And, she had this little basket of puppies, so we stopped and helped her with her children and helped with the basket of puppies and all of us went up to this big tree and sat under the tree. And, uh, and one of my boys, I think, brought a radio along, and then we realized what was happening. We heard about Seward and Valdez. And, and, uh, we just didn't know what to think, so we stayed up there quite some time. And, then Oly managed to come home from KEA, and the house was full of people, and he walked in and he said, "Where's my family?" And, uh, somebody that he didn't know said, "Oh, do you live here?" Because, they were taking people from lower ground and saying, "Get to higher ground." And, everybody's houses were open, and, you know, and they could just go in anywhere that, uh, you know, they could find shelter. So, he was out on the road there yelling for me, and saying, "Thelma, Thelma, come on down." So, the children and I and, and my neighbors we finally all went, came on down, you know, and, uh, thought that we'd be safe at home.

Eleanor: So, how long, uh, how long, then, during all this time, I mean, how long, what kind of timeframe was it you didn't have any lights, didn't have any water?

Thelma: [Unintelligible] The first quake came in at 6 o'clock, the first wave came in and, I think, the last one was to come in around 2:30 in the morning. We couldn't see it because it was so dark, but it did come up as far as the police station at that time.

Eleanor: Goodness.

Thelma: But, uh, and, when we got up the next morning, we looked out and it, everything was just a shambles, you know, the boats had come up through their... just knocked everything down.

Eleanor: Your community had been devastated overnight.

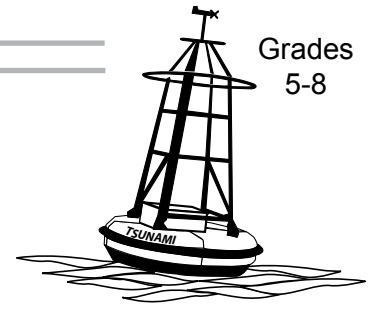
Thelma: Oh, yes, I looked up and I went, "My gosh! They'll never be able to be put this back together again." I thought surely we would have to pick up and move. But, uh, then there was the problem of the electricity, and they were afraid there were live wires all over, of course, there was a lot of displaced people. A lot of them stayed up on Pillar Mountain, you know, and, uh, just slept in their cars. And, then they had places roped off. And, of course the Marines were even, even way back then, were afraid of looting, which I don't think there would have been too much of that, because everybody was so upset trying to help each other.

Eleanor: Help each other. Yeah.

Thelma: So.

Tsunamis on the Air Waves

Grades
5-8



Transcription: Track #5

Transcript of a segment from “An Interview with Lynn Saupe on the 1964 Earthquake and Tsunami” by Olivia M. Brito, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-114.

Olivia: So during the time of the earthquake, where...where were you at?

Lynn: We were living in a, in a house that we had bought a few years before up on, on top of, up on the side of Pillar Mountain. Um, the address up there was number 5 Hillcrest, but there was no street there, it was, it was just a convenience address, I guess. There were three houses way up on the top most layer of houses and we lived in the middle one. One of them is since gone. It slid down the mountain in the mud slides a few years ago, a couple years ago, but there's still two of them there and we lived in one of them for eleven years. And, we were there during the, uh, earthquake and tidal waves. That is about--I think it's, I think they said it was about 220 feet above sea level, so we were safe when the tsunamis came and we had a front row seat to watch the whole thing.

Olivia: So you were at home at the time this happened?

Lynn: Yes, I just got off work, uh, and I then had a, uh, a day off the next day. And, uh it was in the evening, we just, we just finished our dinner and uh, and I was taking a cup of coffee into the living room to turn on the TV and watch the news and, uh, and the thing struck, the earthquake hit. And, we grabbed our two little kids, at that time we just had two little kids, one about three years old and one just a year old I think. And, we ran out of the house. And then, by that time the earthquake was so violent that we couldn't go any place. We did get out of the house and down below it on a little tiny flat lawn we had out front. But then we couldn't go any farther, we couldn't even stand up for a while, hanging on to each other and hanging onto the kids. And uh, and, we watched the, the ground along the mountain side there, it was just heaving like waves on the ocean, like two or three foot waves. It was uh, it was scary and like I said, we couldn't stand up on our own, we had to hang on to something. Then we were afraid the house would come down on top of us...

Olivia: Oh gosh.

Lynn: ... because we were directly in front of it and below it. And uh, then it was so violent we thought maybe the side of the mountain would slide down, some...you know, the overburden of rocks and stuff, but it didn't. Apparently it was just dry enough to hold in place.

Olivia: So there was no rain at all?

Lynn: No. The, the day had been fairly nice, eh? Partly cloudy, and, but we had some sun that day, it was pleasant and calm. And, uh, and it was in March, late March, the 27th. It happened to be

Good Friday and, uh, 5:36 in the evening it was, the thing hit, the earthquake, the first one, the big one.

Olivia: The big one. So, there were several after that, or...?

Lynn: Yes there were. There were at least two fairly big ones later in the night and I don't remember the times of those, but it seems to me that a couple of hours after the first one we had another pretty wild, violent one and then somewhat later that night, uh, maybe five, six, seven hours later or early the next morning or something, we had another one, but they were nothing like the first one. The first one, at the time, or soon after, they...they reported it was a 8.3 on the Richter scale, uh, of a, of a scale of ten but, uh, but then they later revised that when they started getting reports in from all over the south-central part of Alaska to an 8.6 and then recently, just within the last, uh, year or two, couple of years, uh, I read scientific reports on how they have, uh, revised that again and now they call it a 9.2,...

Olivia: Wow.

Lynn: ...which is extremely violent,

Olivia: That's amazing.

Lynn: ...the most violent one ever to hit North America apparently, that's ever been recorded, anyway. And it probably was, uh, partly because it, it was, uh, so violent and so big an area. It was something, an area all the way from, uh, Yakutat to, in the east, to King Salmon in the west, and uh, north to south it was like from, I don't know, halfway to Fairbanks, I don't know what, Trappers Creek, or someplace up in that area, they felt it. Talkeetna area and then down here to the south in, uh, Chignik, so it covered an immense area.

Olivia: Wow. So where, whereabouts was the epicenter of it...was ...?

Lynn: The epicenter was up in the upper Prince William Sound not far from the town of Valdez and near the Columbia Glacier, if you know that part of the world. And it also happens to be just a few miles from the, uh, site of the, the, I think, 1989, uh, Exxon Valdez oil spill

Olivia: Oh, wow.

Lynn: ...which was at Bligh Reef just I think 5 or 7 miles to the east of the quake epicenter.

Olivia: Amazing. So, um, did it cause a lot of damage here in Kodiak?

Lynn: Uh. Well, it, it caused damaged to, uh, to the breakwaters around the small boat harbor but they were much smaller than they are now. Uh, the rock rip-rap, they call it, uh, that, that they had built

the breakwaters with was, uh, mostly much smaller rocks and boulders than they used when they rebuilt it, but they were in the same location. And the earthquake, uh, was so violent it, it shook them apart. So that after it was over only about, uh, a half or a third of each breakwater still showed above water.

Olivia: Oh wow.

Lynn: The rest of it was just scattered under...

Olivia: Oh, okay.

Lynn: ...under the water some place. And so later, the, what was left of the breakwaters didn't afford, uh, a whole lot of protection against, uh, storms when they occurred until it was rebuilt, a couple three years later. But, uh, and then, there was a few buildings around town in those days that were made of concrete block and uh, I think there were some houses, and, that had, uh, brick chimneys or concrete block, uh, chimneys for their fireplaces, or whatever, and those were damaged, some of them. And any building that sat on concrete foundations, uh, not all of them, but I think that they were subject to some damage from the quake itself. But, most of the buildings in those days, uh, even downtown, were wood frame buildings and many of them, including our house and lot of other houses around town sat on, uh, not concrete footings, but on pilings, uh, set down in the ground into bedrock and then the house sitting on top of it. And so when the earthquake hit, even though it was so violent, uh, those houses mostly just bobbed on the surface like corks or something.

Olivia: Oh wow.

Lynn: And uh, and uh, many of them were not, not damaged. Our house wasn't damaged, things fell out of the cupboards and, uh, glasses and dishes and bottles of stuff and everything fell out of the cabinets and broke all over the floor. TVs fell over and the refrigerator fell over, but it leaned against a, a breakfast counter. But it was a new one and then it got a dent in the front of it when it fell over. Things like that, but, the structure itself was not too badly damaged. The main problem in our house, and I think a lot of houses, was that after the quake, we had a lot of trouble opening and closing windows and doors that used to fit, were just right and they would catch and rub, they couldn't be closed and they couldn't be opened.

Olivia: Oh yeah. Yeah, I used to, uh, live in that house, as a matter of fact, the same house. Last year we rented it for, for the school year. So uh, we did talk to your wife about it and she said, "Yeah, we, we were up here at the time of the earthquake." So I can imagine the view that you had of everything and how scary it must have been way up on that hill too.

Lynn: Yes. After the, after the earthquake scare when we thought the mountain would slide down on top of us then it was a good place to be up there because we were way high above the water. So when the tsunamis came in, uh, we were safe enough up there.

Olivia: Um hm. So when the tsunami hit how long was it after, how long did it hit after the earthquake hit?

Lynn: I think it was 33 minutes. It was uh, the earthquake, the first one occurred at 5:36 in the evening and it seems to me that it was 5 or 6 minutes after 6:00 when the first tsunami hit here. The uh, epicenter was, like I said, in upper Prince William Sound, and that's about 320, about 350 air miles northeast of here, so it took a while for the, the water motion to reach here. It's a good thing it did take that long because, uh, if it had been a shorter time, I think there would have been a much greater loss of life here on the island.

Olivia: So people were warned about the tsunami?

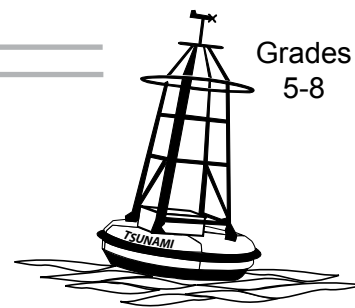
Lynn: Well, after a quake that violent, and if you live along the coast you just expect that there might be a tsunami. We didn't know that there would be one but, but a lot of people were aware that it could happen. And the people who were down in the low-lying areas, most of them ran away and got to higher ground. A lot of them started climbing up the side of Pillar Mountain. And, uh, they went right on past our house and right up the side of the mountain. A lot of others got in cars and drove up the road too, on the back side of Pillar Mountain to get to higher ground. Others went to places in town that were a little higher than, than along the shore. But, then there were a lot of other people who were downtown, uh, shopping or, or, uh, in the restaurants and bars, stores, who, and the business people themselves. Uh, that's a low-lying area. The, uh, troopers and the police and then soon after that the, uh, Shore Patrol from the Navy base, uh, tried to evacuate everybody from the low-lying areas.

Olivia: Oh, okay.

Lynn: And, they had the sirens going and warning people and chasing them out of there. But a lot of people also wanted to get their boats out of the small boat harbor, because they thought if there was a tsunami coming, they would be able to save their boat if they could get it out of the harbor and, uh, out to the open water.

Olivia: And were the Troopers letting them do that?

Lynn: Pretty much, but it, for a while anyway. But, uh, I think that, uh, everybody is, was pretty afraid that there would be a tsunami, or could be. And so, but, before the, before the troopers could get organized to evacuate everybody a lot of the people ran down there to the boat harbor to get their boats out and many of them did. But, uh, but some didn't, and that's why we had, uh, uh, considerable losses of life here in Kodiak. It wasn't from the earthquake, I don't think anybody was killed or injured in the earthquake itself, that I know of, but there were a number who lost their lives in the first tsunami.



Transcription: Track #6

Transcript of a segment from “Rose Wallace on Unga and Kodiak Islands 1950’s-1980’s and Native/Norwegian family life, Urbanization, 1964 Earthquake St. Marys and Kodiak Christian Schools” by Kim Robinson, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-119.

Kim: But you were in Kodiak in 1964. Why don’t you tell us about what the experience was like for you during the earthquake and the big tsunami that hit?

Rosa: Hmm, at that time I, um, it was Good Friday, like today is. And, I, uh, it was a beautiful day, I remember, and everybody was home because at that time schools were dismissed on Good Friday. Um, so everybody was home, and I was over at my brother’s house going to babysit for him because he and his wife wanted to go out to dinner together. And the earthquake started. I was sitting, and I thought I was getting dizzy. And my brother, who had been in a tsunami before in Unga, understood that it was going to be a tsunami because he went and looked down at the... for some reason he could figure, he figured out by look – going down and looking at the water, staring down at the beach – his house is right on the water front. And so he said there was going to be a tsunami, so he had me go home. And I lived right where, um, Saint Herman’s Seminary is right now. Our house was right there on that lot. And, uh, so he sent us home and uh, my dad told all of us to go up...

And, oh, the earthquake, I felt the earthquake. And it rattled and shook, and you could see the telephone poles swing and the trees bending. And I wasn’t downtown where, where all the mess happened, where all the sidewalks cracked or anything. Because most of Kodiak had dirt roads, Rezanof was not there yet; it was just a rolling hill of field grass and um, basically, Kodiak was centered from the uh, um, uh, uh, Mill Bay Road was the main road, and Mission were the main roads, and, uh, where Benny Benson Cutoff went, that’s were the, uh, uh Mission Road went up to Mill Bay Road, and there wasn’t any houses or anything out there, out past Rezanof. And you could take Mill Bay Road all the way out to Abercrombie and out to Monashka. That’s where, [unintelligible],uh...

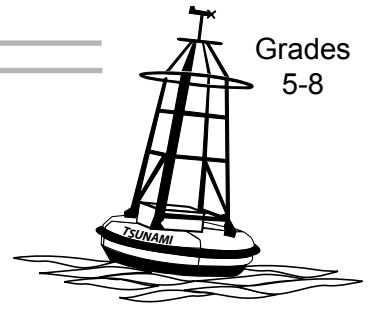
Anyway, to go back to the story of the earthquake, the earth, uh, uh, quaked all night long and I can remember sitting in the dark. There was no electricity and we were at our house. And our, uh, [unintelligible] brother and his family stay at our house. My dad figured that if the water was going to come in, we could get across the street before it got us, because it was, uh, just a matter of just going up the neighbor’s stairs, and you’re up on another level. And it was up above the hundred-foot mark, I believe. So, it was scary, to me, because you didn’t know what was going on, and you heard all kinds of rumors. And my dad had one of, one of those old fashioned radios where you could pick up, uh, the news from, uh out in the rest of the world. And they were talking about Kodiak having sunk, and I was just going, “what where they talking about?” And, uh, it just, uh, this tremendous fear I felt there. And then after a while I went, before the sun set, my brother and I and his wife went out in the car, and we could see the little island, I don’t remember the name of it, out, out in the, beyond the boat, boat harbor. Down by the boat harbor, you could see it going under the water, and then the water receded, and coming out, and then, you could see houses floating out to channel, and, you know, people on them. You couldn’t do anything about it. And I could see the water rising up over on Near Island. And I believe it went up to the fifteen-

foot level. And all those kind of eerie things.

The thing that stuck me about the earthquake was before it shook, it was very still, and eerie. There was, you couldn't even hear birds twittering or anything, and it was just like nature was pre-warned it was going to happen. And, just, it was a scary night, but the next day, you know, there was still trembling going on and everything, but you were just glad you were alive. Your family was all together, and you were safe, and our house was still there. And we were just thankful that everything it was in its place, and when we looked around town and could see the damage, it was horrendous. But we were just happy that we were alive, and the hospital was still there, where it was, that building was still standing there. It's just really interesting to me, you know.

Tsunamis on the Air Waves

Grades
5-8



Transcription: Track #7

Transcript of a segment from “Parasovia Muller on Living in Ouzinkie and 1964 Earthquake” by Tracy Powell, part of the Kodiak College Oral History Project, housed at the Rasmuson Library Oral History Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tape # H96-49-86.

Tracy: Paras, you mentioned that one of the things that you heard about on the radio, that you used the radios for was during the time of the tidal wave you would hear what was going on. Tell me what, what do you remember about when the earthquake and the tidal wave came? How, what, what was it like in Ouzinkie then?

Paras: It was such as beautiful evening. Not a ripple on the sea. The whole sea was like a mirror. It was so flat, calm. It was beautiful and it was so deadly quiet, no, nothing making noise, no dogs, or birds or nothing. It was odd and it was, well we were just about to leave. My sister stayed across the river in that house and my, uh, my, uh, children – two of them – just came back from Anchorage; one was in the hospital, one was going to school, but they were all home. We were going to sit down and eat, have our dinner, and then, then, two of them went to see their Auntie Martha and crossed the river. Just while they were there, that all of a sudden, uh, earthquake started. Slow motion. I said they were running across. The bridge was going just like that, and the hills that was just like waves but, uh, when during, but, uh, earthquake. Then, we were....it was real low water, but when I looked out during that shaking, the water was way up. Big swells was washing on the beach. My husband was home that time. They were home from, uh, crab fishing. I told him “What happened, is this a tidal wave or what?” I don’t know. We didn’t know it yet. So that was the tidal wave and earthquake.

After that, we, oh, I baked kuliches and pies and dyed eggs. I filled about two boxes from of some to take along. Then we went on the Albert’s boat, Marine Greer. All of us, we were going to go into our boat. They told us to come into the bigger boat he had and his, uh, family, too. Seventeen of us were on the boat – his family and ours. So we stayed there one week. Everything was drifting on the beach...oil... oh, gas and oil. It was rotten. The doors in the house were just rotten. Took a long time to disappear, that, uh, smell. So we stayed aboard one week. We used to sleep with our clothes on in case of another one, uh, come again. And, so, anyway... [Unintelligible]

Tracy: So it, when the tidal wave came it covered everything on Ouzinkie?

Paras: Not everything. It was so far. It covered up the beaches, and, uh, [unintelligible] when we went outside they said to go out in the deep water. We were outside of Wood Island, of Long Island. Gosh, there was lots of boats there. That night it looked like a city, too many of the boat lights, you know. Everybody went out there in the deep, deep water. Then that big swell would come. It wouldn’t feel it much – slow motion – it just goes from big, you know. Oh, I don’t want there to be another earthquake or tidal wave! No, that’s too scary!

Tracy: Oh, yeah. How did you find out that it was coming? Did you hear that over the radio?

Paras: Uh hmm. But we seen it was already splashing on the beaches, start taking some of the things drifting out.