

The Life

Men and women describe the life of commercial fishing

We are pleased to present an opportunity for those involved in commercial fishing in the Pacific to describe the way they work, the way they live. If you have a story to tell, send it to editor@pacificfishing.com.



F/V Hekla, another boat Jerry Tilley fished from, ends her last voyage in the city of Kodiak following the 1964 Alaska earthquake.

Tsunami!

By Jerry Tilley

The (Almost) Last Supper

*Jerry Tilley was born in the fishing village of Tokeland, Wash., in 1931, and has lived the life of the sea and the fishing industry since. In another episode from *The Life*, he recounted a frightening encounter with ice aboard the *F/V Hekla*. Here, he talks about the Alaska Earthquake of 1964 and its associated disaster as seen from the deck of a fishing boat.*

Kodiak is an island located in the Gulf of Alaska, 58 degrees north and 152 degrees west. On March 25, 1964, our 75-foot wooden shrimp boat, the *Fortress*, arrived in Kodiak at the Eastpoint Seafoods dock to offload 100,000 pounds of shrimp to its processing facility. This may sound like a big payday, but the price was only 3 cents per pound.

The *Fortress's* crew consisted of the captain (Ted Moseley), the cook (Buck Lorton), the engineer (me, Jerry Tilley), and our new deckhand and web repair expert (George Horn). He came aboard to replace Oral Burch. Oral's brother Al Burch had called from Seward to inform him to come home as their boat the *Celtic* was out of the shipyard and ready to go fishing. (The *Celtic* rode a wave up into the trees somewhere in Seward and never made it to the water again.)

Early in the morning of the 27th (Good Friday), after the shrimp were offloaded, we cleaned up the boat and moved under the ice chute to take ice for the next trip. We helped Oral get his gear off the boat and to the airport. We had to wait a few hours until the tide was low enough to allow the ice to gravity-feed down the ice chute into the *Fortress's* fish hold. We had determined that about 5-5:30 in the afternoon the tide should be at the right level.

Even with the main engine noise that now sounded like a diesel locomotive, we could hear the wave tearing the town apart.

The weather was unbelievably beautiful for Kodiak for this time of year. It was about 30 degrees, no wind and just a few scattered clouds.

I drove to my house on Potato Patch Lake, about two miles out on Mission Road, and completed the installation of the new washer and dryer that I had just purchased the day before. I removed all my clothes and bedding from the boat to wash them. I put on clean clothes, a pair of Levis, a flannel shirt, my wool socks, and XtraTuff rubber boots. I grabbed my Navy surplus jacket and hurried out the door back to the boat to help with the icing. Some of the clothes were in the dryer and the rest in the washer. I would return to get them after we iced up and before we left for the shrimp grounds around midnight. The rest of the crew lived aboard the boat. I was the only certified Kodiak resident on board.

It was almost supper time and I didn't want to miss out on anything our cook prepared. Fortunately for us everything he prepared was great. Tonight we would feast on fresh halibut cheeks, macaroni salad, fried spuds, and onions, plus fresh baked biscuits.

Supper wasn't quite ready so we went about our chores making ready for our midnight departure. I went down the ladder to the engine room about 5:30 and started the main engine to let it warm up so I could oil all the rocker arms while it was running. It was a 4-cylinder, 150 horsepower Atlas slow speed diesel. It practically filled the engine room. The front of the engine had a very large fly wheel that probably weighed a half-ton, and once you got that wheel turning you better stay clear. The engine when running produced a sound like "ka chug, ka chug, ka chug," not like today's diesel engines that purr like a tranquil kitten. I went forward of the main engine, using caution so as not to brush up against the big round turning half-ton monster, to the bank of batteries and proceeded to fill them with water as needed.

As I was pouring water into the battery cells from a small can, the boat started to vibrate up and down, not sideways as if another boat were passing by, but unlike anything I had ever experienced. It got so violent that I couldn't hold on to the can or the batteries. I looked back at the engine thinking the flywheel was coming off or the engine was out of control and ready to leave the engine room. Once I had convinced myself that this was not the case I made my way past it and crawled up the ladder to the deck.

From the deck I looked up under the dock, and it was rolling like waves on water and the shims were falling out from under the planks and the ripping sounds we heard were the big spikes being pulled out of the planks caused by the undulating dock. The light poles were dancing with such intensity I was certain they would snap. The wires were whipping up and down with such force they were singing with a swishing sound. The boat was shaking so much we could hardly stand up without holding onto something. It was quite obvious we were having a massive earthquake that didn't seem to want to stop quakin' and shakin'.

I had experienced an earthquake while in a courthouse in Montesano, Wash., in 1949. It lasted about a minute. I didn't time this one but it seemed to me that it lasted about 4 or 5 minutes. While we were all standing on the deck, looking up under the dock we looked over at the boat harbor, and the rock breakwater sunk as we were staring at it. We then turned around, and we were looking over the dock, not under the dock. (The island sunk a little over 5 feet.) Everything was happening too fast. It was difficult trying to arrange all of this in the brain to make it acceptable. Then at the same time the bottom under the dock where all the cannery waste had accumulated for years roiled to the surface and brought some nose-hair-removal, eye-burning odors with it. At this point we came to the conclusion that the whole island had sunk in a couple of seconds. When this sudden drop occurred, it tightened up our tie lines so tight we couldn't get them off the cleat. We just stood there for a few more minutes before anyone could react. Ted, the captain (also known as the skipper) stepped off the boat to go tell Jim Major, East Point's manager, that we were not going to take ice because now the tide wasn't at the right level and besides that the man working in the ice house was long gone.

A very big, husky young man was in the ice house that was built on top of the cannery roof. It was swaying with such violence we were surprised that it stayed up there. When the shaking and swaying stopped he came out of that small crawl-through door like he had been shot out of a cannon. He hit the deck running, and all you could see was his rear end going up the hill kickin' up gravel.

Jim Major came out on the dock and was going to move my truck but couldn't get it started. It was an old navy surplus panel truck that I used to carry my diving gear. I had a knife switch under the steering wheel that only my dog and I were aware of. I told Jim to forget it and get out of there. I said, "Don't worry about the truck, it'll be OK." I am an incessant optimist.

All of a sudden we snapped out of our earthquake-induced stupor, and the first thing I did was look for the fire ax to chop the lines off the cleats. I mentioned to the captain that we should get away from the dock right now because we were sure to have a tidal wave. The main engine was running so all he had to do was put it in gear and pull away from the dock.

We pulled out into the middle of the channel about 100 yards off the dock and drifted in front of the cold storage on the city dock and the Union Oil dock. In just a few minutes the water started receding like some unknown force had pulled a gigantic plug. This was the second shocking, unbelievable event of the evening. The water level continued to drop until we could see the bottom at the face of the city dock. The water level had dropped at least 25 feet in a matter of minutes. We asked ourselves, "Where did the water go, and when do you think it's coming back?" The vessel *Anna A* was sitting on the soft mud bottom in front of the city dock, and Norm Holm's king crab vessel *Neptune* had snapped her lines and was lying on her side on the bottom between the Union Oil dock and the cold storage dock. The wheelhouse of the *Neptune* was lying seaward. Amazingly, all the king crab pots were still secured to the deck. We could see that Arne Hansen had the *Sea Quail* out in the channel as well as Dal Valentine on the *Rosemary*. We couldn't see into the boat harbor as

Never criticize the cook

When the boat wasn't pitchin' and jumping up and down, our cook took advantage of the calm and outperformed. That day – Good Friday 1964 – I asked him, "Hey, Buck, where did you get the recipe for this epicurean delight?" He just shrugged and told me it came off the back of a cement sack.

Always praise the cook regardless of what is being prepared, because one complaint and you are automatically the cook forevermore. The cook and the skipper never have to do the dishes, so the other two crewmen aboard are usually more than willing to perform the task.

We would do anything other than cook. When I first came aboard looking for a job, the skipper asked me if I could cook, I told him, "Sure I can cook." I was really desperate. He said, "Sorry, we already have a cook." He then said, "Can you mend net?" I said, "If I have to but I'm not very good at it." Third time is the charm, and there is only one job left, and I was going for broke. Then Ted said, "We already have a net man. How are you at engineering?" I gave my standard reply: "No problem." He then said, "OK, jump aboard."

I hated mending 1-inch mesh net with frozen fingers.

we were too far out, but we imagined that most of the boats were sitting on the bottom. I thought there were over a hundred boats in the harbor of various sizes.

The temperature was dropping a little, but there was no wind. What water there was left around the area was as flat as a pool table.

Our supper, dishes and all, was still on the table untouched.

All four of us climbed the ladder to the flying bridge. The flying bridge is on top of the wheelhouse, where identical controls to those in the wheelhouse are located. When the vessel is coming into a dock or critical maneuvering is required, from up there the visibility is much better. We wanted to have a better view of the unknown disaster that was about to unfold.



Not taken on Kodiak Island, but this photo illustrates the power of the 1964 earthquake hundreds of miles away from its epicenter.

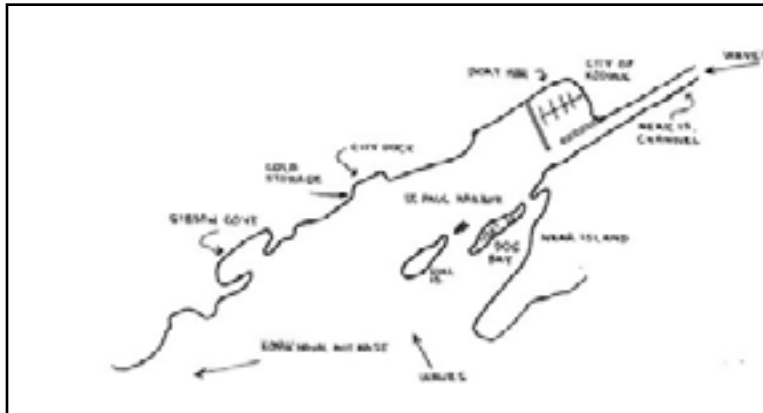
We had marine radios and citizen band radios, or CBs, as they were called, and so did everyone else. So the communications within the area was loud and clear. The radio was alive with chatter. We were all wondering what was going to happen next. I mentioned to no one in particular that we had better get ready for a rush of water because when it came back in to fill that gigantic hole, it was going to be something to behold. I'm not sure about time because I didn't have a watch and I don't think anyone else did, either, because when you work with nets on a rolling deck you don't wear anything that could catch on the web. We were probably out there about half an hour when we heard over the radio that a 50-foot tidal wave had just hit Cape Chiniak. We made an immediate and unanimous decision to head into the wave, thinking we had a better chance of survival that way.

Of course we had no idea where the earthquake epicenter was or from which direction the wave was coming, but we thought being out in the open area of St. Paul Harbor rather than in the channel or the confines of the inner harbor would be the best move at the time. I had this vision in my head of this little 75-foot boat climbing the vertical wave and the wave breaking just before we reached the crest. We were heading southwest out toward the Navy base trying to see the white foam teeth of this monstrous wave coming at us at hundreds of miles an hour.

We were about adjacent to the Gibson Cove, approximately one mile southwest of the city dock, when we realized that the boat was starting to rise on a very large swell. We were at about a 20 degree angle being carried backward towards the town. The skipper pushed the throttle full forward and we were still going backwards. Ted told me to go down and drive a wedge in the throttle on the engine. I jumped to the deck and shot down into the engine room without touching one rung of the ladder.

The main only turns about 300 rpm, and when I drove that wedge under the control lever it cranked up to about 400 rpm, way over what it was designed to do. I hurried back up to the flying bridge because I didn't want to be in the engine room when the boat rolled over or sank. The additional revolutions on the main engine must have

helped because, just as we were right in front of the cold storage dock, we broke over the top of the swell and were looking into the second floor of the cold storage building. I saw my truck lifted up and disappear under the surface. I guess it wasn't very water-tight.



This map drawn by Jerry shows some of the locations mentioned. For a description, see the end of this article.

Even with the main engine noise that now sounded like a diesel locomotive, we could hear the wave tearing the town apart. Once the skipper had determined that we were in the clear, he sent me down to pull the wedge from the throttle. The wave came in so fast that the *Neptune*, which had been lying on its starboard side on the bottom, just snapped to an upright position and then floated between the two docks. Ted edged the *Fortress* in close enough that I could jump aboard and tie on a tow line to get her out of what we had considered a very dangerous place. We managed to get her alongside and made her fast to the *Fortress*. We then proceeded to round up small boats that were floating aimlessly. Most of these boats were beach seiners that had been stored for the winter on huge

racks alongside the cannery. We salvaged 13 of these little boats and tied them off to pilings near the King Crab Cannery dock. We managed to do this with the *Neptune* secured to our vessel.

One of the largest king crab vessels anyone had ever seen in this area was the *Chief*. It was about 150 feet in length and was secured to several pilings north of the city dock. There was no indication that it ever moved other than up and down with the variations of water levels. Just inside of it is where we secured all the small boats. There were no city lights anywhere. We did not have big flood lights on the *Fortress*. All we had were deck lights as we never fished after dark. One of the boats cruising around trying to stay out of trouble had a large searchlight flashing around, but it was no advantage to us.

We had just moved out into the harbor when the second wave roared in through the Near Island channel from the northeast and into St. Paul Harbor from the southwest. As the wave from the northeast came smashing through the narrow channel, it brought with it the fuel dock and fueling floats with all the fueling reels attached. Alaska Packers cannery went past us at about 20 miles an hour, and I thought I saw an airplane but couldn't be certain. It appeared that Sutliff's entire stockpile from his lumber yard, some still bundled, was moving past along with everything else that would float.

Then I heard this voice from the water hollering "Hey, Jerry, Jerry, over here." I hollered up to the skipper to stop the engine, someone was out there. Again, "Jerry, over here, wait, wait." I recognized the voice and hollered back, "Al, is that you?"

We were near the nonexistent entrance to the boat harbor trying to lasso another boat when the northeastern wave hit us and drove us sideways into the southwestern wave, and the combination of the two forces generated a giant whirlpool. We were now going backwards with the main engine in full forward position in this swirling vortex with about a 10-degree list. The skipper told me to go down and drive that wedge back into the throttle, which I did in record time. The skipper had the wheel hard over to no avail.

There was a red house on the hill just north of the city dock that had been washed from its foundation and was floating along with all the other flotsam, only this house had somehow managed to enter the swirling vortex that

the *Fortress* was in. It started to break up and disappeared right before our eyes. We could look right down into this black hole. This incident caused a large knot to form in my stomach. I think this condition is known as fear.

Floats from the boat harbor were on the outer edges of this whirlpool, and one of them hit the big boat, the *Chief*. It shot out and rammed us a violent blow that rolled us hard over and allowed us to escape the clutches of the swirling current. (This blow broke a couple of planks and cracked a rib, though we didn't know it at the time.) The main engine exhaust pipe was red hot and blowing sparks and flame three feet out the exhaust. This was not a good sign. After we had that little whirlpool experience I went back down to the engine room and removed the wedge. I was pleasantly surprised that the engine wasn't on fire. The engine room must have been 130 degrees, and the old main was hot and smokin'. I oiled the rocker arms and checked 'er out before returning to the deck. I didn't want the old girl to quit now.



Another view of the destroyed city of Kodiak.

The skipper said, "I think we better get back out in the middle and forget about all the other boats and concentrate on saving ourselves." We had no problem with that decision. Not knowing what to expect next, we tried to stay out of the way of all the debris in the water. We couldn't see uptown, but from the conversations on the radio, the town, whatever was left of it, had about half the boats from the boat harbor plugging the streets. We did witness some of the vessels going over the breakwater, and some of them were grounded on the rocks. The first wave evidently transferred some of the boats from the harbor to new locations up town, and the second wave removed some and took some others farther up town.

We headed out to the middle of the inner harbor and managed to grab another small boat and took it over to the pilings where we had secured the other boats. We heard Bill Cuthbert answering someone on the radio when they asked him his location. He said he wasn't sure, but he thought he was up by the old schoolhouse and had tied his boat, the *Selief*, to a telephone pole. We knew he had a load of live king crab aboard that he was supposed to unload. The crab would be getting very thirsty by now. They eventually unloaded the very dead king crab into a dump truck and hauled them away.

We realized the town was torn apart because some of the buildings were out in the harbor, but we had no idea of the extent of the damage. It was obvious the boat harbor was destroyed. Some of the floats were out in the bay, and we saw two small boats still tied to one of them. About this time another wave came in, and some of the boats that were up town like the *Henning J* came back out and were out of sight in a matter of minutes. The *Henning J* was found on the rocks on Holiday Island three days later, a total loss.

Then some connection of the cold storage's ammonia system must have broken loose, because the anhydrous ammonia saturated the air. There was still no wind to blow it away so it just hung over the water. The ammonia was so strong that seeing and breathing was difficult. We had tears dripping from our cheeks. We tried getting close to the deck to breathe, but that didn't help. I went into the engine room, Buck and George went into the

galley, and I don't know where the skipper found fresh air. The engine room wasn't fresh air by any means, but it was breathable. We continued farther out in the harbor from the cold storage building and finally the air became more tolerable.

On deck, it was very dark with no lights other than a few of the manned vessels running around looking for survivors or anything else worth the effort to salvage. Then I heard this voice from the water hollering, "Hey, Jerry, Jerry, over here." I hollered up to the skipper to stop the engine, someone was out there. Again, "Jerry, over here, wait, wait." I recognized the voice and hollered back, "Al, is that you?" It was Allen Vincent, and then we saw him. He was in an extremely small punt that couldn't have been more than 6 feet long. He was on his knees paddling this wood chip of a boat with a little piece of wood about 3 feet long. I threw him a line and pulled him alongside.

He climbed aboard and got down on his hands and knees and kissed the deck several times. We asked where he had been. He said, "I was in the boat harbor when the shaking started, and then I was trying find out what was going on when floats started groaning and sinking and the next thing I know water was rising and this little punt came flying by and I grabbed it and jumped in. I have been up town twice and back out, up the channel, down the channel, I have been over to Near Island, and I think at one time I was about to the Navy base, but I rode that last one back here." He said he couldn't see too much but he sure heard a lot of screaming and crashing buildings. He said he was just hanging on for dear life. He was wet, cold, and shaking. His eyes were red, and he was complaining about

the ammonia-saturated air. We got him into the galley, where it was warm.

The main engine exhaust pipe was red hot and blowing sparks and flame three feet out the exhaust. This was not good. After we had that little whirlpool experience, I went back down to the engine room and removed the wedge. I was pleasantly surprised that the engine wasn't on fire.

Our entire dinner was still untouched and sitting on the table.

We drifted around with the big *Neptune* still tied alongside, trying to figure out what to do

next. No one had a clue when the next wave was coming, if any. I didn't know at the time how many waves came in and out, but it seemed to me that we had one about every 45 minutes or less all night long. The great advantage, if the only one, through all this was the weather. All the stars were shining as you can only see when there are no lights and no air pollution to spoil the view. The only air pollution was the ammonia escaping from the cold storage. There was no wind, and the temperature was probably just below freezing. There was so much going on minute to minute that we had no time to think about anything other than save the boat, ourselves, and anything else we could do to help in this time of chaotic uncertainty.

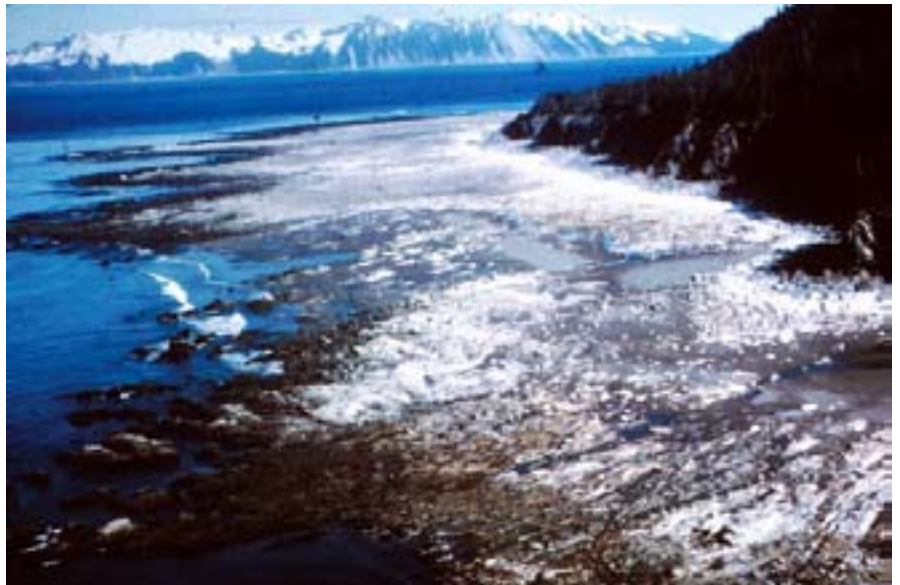
As daylight started to vaguely appear we were greatly relieved. Not that we thought it was over; it is just that your mind and body seem to function better when you can see what you are doing. By this time we had determined that it was safe to move in toward the city dock if it was still intact and get rid of this boat that we had tied to us all night long. That was our next move. It was just light enough that we could see the city dock was still there. The dock appeared to be stable, although lots of planks were dislodged and the dock's surface was clean. Not a single pallet, crate, or vehicle marred the cleansing of the deck performed by Mother Nature. The buildings at the city dock appeared to be intact. We tied the *Neptune* off to the dock with plenty of slack and moved back into the channel to wait for more daylight and maybe another wave.

When light brightened the sky enough to see, it was a sight to behold. The bay was full of boats, boat harbor floats, lumber, roofs of buildings, some with the rest of the building still attached beneath, and the flat surface of the water was covered with oil. The rock breakwater for the boat harbor had boats hanging off of it and perched on top of it and lying along side. We could see boats uptown and saw the 80-foot *Hekla* that appeared to be perched on top of the bowling alley. The radio was still checking on everybody, and all night long Arne Hansen on the *Sea Quail* gave reports to Dottie Valen of the Alaska Communications System on the miscellaneous boats' locations.

The *Kingfisher* was floating in Dog Bay as if nothing had happened. There didn't appear to be any damage whatsoever. During the night's turmoil, Arne Hansen on the *Sea Quail* grabbed it as it was going by and towed it over there and released the anchor. He wasn't aware that the owner, Fritz Deveau (a crab fisherman and the mayor's brother), was asleep on board. Passed out would be more accurate because dropping an anchor right over your head should wake up the soundest of sleepers. The story goes: Fritz got up the next morning, walked out on deck, looked over at the location of the boat harbor, saw there was no boat harbor, saw some boats lying on their sides in the streets and the unbelievable mess of what was once a town, and then crawled back into his bunk thinking he was having a nightmare.

The *Fortress* was still floating and the old Atlas was still running. The engine's high speed, fire-belching performance during the night apparently did no harm. It was now broad daylight, and people were starting to move around and check out the damage. There was a lot of damage to check out. It was a catastrophic night. Most of the downtown area's buildings were gone.

We tied up to the city dock not knowing what to do next when Charlie Warner, a friend of mine who had been staying at my house while working on the construction of the newly rebuilt cold storage, came down on the dock. He had spent the night up on Pillar Mountain. I got off the boat, and the two of us walked on the broken plank dock over to the cold storage to survey the damage. Just as we got inside the building a tremendous aftershock just about knocked us down. Our exit was immediate. We got in Charlie's truck and managed to get part way to my house by driving over and around whatever was in the roadway. We had to walk about a mile as the road wasn't passable. We came up over the hill where the Beachcombers nightclub was located. My house was just to the right and in back of the Beachcombers on Potato Patch Lake.



Uplifted sea floor at Cape Cleare on Montague Island in Prince William Sound in the area of the greatest recorded tectonic uplift on land (33 feet). The very gently sloping flat rocky surface with the white coating between the cliffs and the water is about a quarter of a mile wide. The white coating consists of the remains of calcareous marine organisms that were killed by desiccation when the wave-cut surface was lifted above high tide during the earthquake.

We both stopped and looked at the unbelievable sight before us; we couldn't talk. No Beachcombers, no Potato Patch Lake, and there was no sign of a house where Jerry Tilley once lived. We walked over to the location of the house and found a pipe wrench. That was it. Even the concrete foundation blocks and what little grass I had were gone. Potato Patch Lake was a lagoon. I had the clothes I had on my back and nothing else as it all went out to sea. Three oil paintings of my three kids was my biggest loss. My dog, a wolf and McKenzie River husky mix, was gone. I called and called, then we started walking around the area and found the dog in a tree. He had a bone sticking out of his back and couldn't walk, but he was sure tail-wagging happy to see me. With some neighbor's tender love and care he did survive.

One thing I was thankful for other than the fact that we made it through the worst night of chaos I had ever experienced: I had loaned all my diving gear to Jack Woosley, who lived up on the hill away from the action of the sea.

There we have it: Jerry Tilley ended up with some diving gear but no house, no clothes, no bedding, no truck, and no money as I had spent it all on my appliances. But I certainly had lots to talk about.

One other strange occurrence after the tsunami action finally calmed down — the level of the water didn't appear to change but a few inches for days. It was like a lake. There was basically no tide. This phenomenon wasn't explainable by anyone I talked to. Even some of the scientists who arrived soon after the action had subsided couldn't explain it. It was several days later that the tides started to resume normal function.

Later, as the details of damage to other villages and communities rolled in, it was determined that this was an earthquake of a magnitude never before recorded in North America. It was later established that it was magnitude 9.2 on the Richter scale. Some of the people heard announcers on the radio from down in the South 48 claiming Kodiak Island had sunk into the sea. It did sink, but not completely.

A lot was happening in the town while we were out in the harbor, and all we knew about is what we heard on the radio. Those on the radio didn't know the extent of the damage until Saturday morning, March 28. Near Island Channel was clean; Kodiak Airways floats and all the planes were gone. The shipyard was gone, Standard Oil dock and fueling floats were gone, Alaska Packers cannery and dock were gone, and the big hardware and marine supply store was gone. There were a few pilings left in the Near Island channel, but other than that nothing remained.

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Saturday morning, after Charlie Warner and I returned to the boat after surveying the damage in the city and the area where my house once was located, we stepped aboard to have a cup of coffee. The meal from the evening before was still on the table. It remained untouched. Ted, Buck, and George were sitting at the galley table drinking coffee, all in apparent delayed shock.

One of the newer 80-foot steel king crab vessels, the *Jaguar*, went down that channel northward end over end, according to a witness, and ended up on the bottom in 85 feet of water between Woody Island and Kodiak Island. This boat was raised several years later by two divers, Jerry Tilley and Bill McLinn. It was purchased by Fred and Ruth Brechan and renamed the *Walter N.*

The official Kodiak City report of April 6, 1964, listed 35 boats sunk or aground, 17 missing, 25 with major or considerable damage, and 20 with slight damage.

The epicenter of the earthquake was about 300 miles northeast of Kodiak Island in Prince William Sound very close to Valdez, Alaska. The first wave hit Kodiak about 30 minutes after the earthquake, so it was obviously traveling at 600 miles per hour.

Kodiak's downtown area was virtually destroyed. The bars must have lost their doors because the town was littered with thousands of bottles of booze, cases of it. Word was issued to all, "Do not drink the booze, it may be contaminated." So all the people I knew, and some I didn't, volunteered to test every bottle they could find. It was later determined that all the unopened bottles were free of contamination. No one believed that contaminated statement for a minute.

There was no telephone communications to the outside world until some telephone people got together and managed to get the system working early Saturday morning. In the meantime, some ham operators were in contact

with others on the mainland and got the word out that Kodiak Island had not sunk into the sea. In the first seven days after the disaster, the emergency communications system handled about 3,000 telegrams.

The U.S. Navy airlifted about 300 homeless people to the South 48 states and loaned the city some emergency generators. Power was restored to some of the town in a couple of days.

The city had discussed the possibility of urban renewal in the near future. The town needed some upgrading and repair, but not performed by Mother Nature. We were not ready.

Ben Gerke was my insurance agent. Friday morning, after purchasing my new washer and dryer, I had paid him a visit and raised the insurance on my house and contents. I paid him \$43 for the additional premium.

Fortunately, his office was not destroyed, and he was there on Monday morning when I walked in and told my sad story: My house had burned down. With wide eyes and obvious shock, he said, "Really, when did that happen?" I answered, "About 10 minutes before the wave washed all the ashes out to sea." He looked at me, smiled, and reached in a drawer, sorted through some papers, and handed me my \$43 check. Then he said, "I'm really sorry, Jerry, but you didn't have tidal wave insurance." I said, "This I already know, why did you think I told you it burned down?"

I did have full coverage for fire insurance.

It just wasn't my day.



Another view of damage, this time from across Prince William Sound: Tsunami waves came in from the sea via Resurrection Bay in the background to overwhelm Seward.

Getting your bearings

Kodiak is about 250 miles southwest of Anchorage. The city of Kodiak is situated on a narrow bench at the northeast tip of the island. Mountains rise abruptly behind the bench, which slopes northeast to southwest down to the island-studded St. Paul Harbor. Twenty miles southeast of the harbor is Cape Chiniak, the eastern most point of the Island.

The Kodiak boat harbor is in the northern most point of St. Paul Harbor and is surrounded by a manmade rock breakwater. The larger open area of St Paul Harbor is mostly unprotected to the southeast and is open to the Gulf of Alaska.



Jerry Tilley rests on the bow of a boat nudging toward an Alaskan glacier 18 years after he rode out the waves spawned by the 1964 Alaska earthquake.

There were several canneries and other fishery related businesses located on the shore of the harbor and the channel between Kodiak Island and Near Island. Kodiak Electric's generating plant was located in the channel. At one point in the channel, the distance between the two islands is about 100 yards.

East of the boat harbor entrance, across the Near Island Channel, is a very small indentation in the rock shoreline named Dog Bay. I don't know why it is called Dog Bay; maybe someone lost their dog there. The depth of the channel is fairly consistent at about 10 fathoms.

The shore-side facilities were attached to the shore with their docks constructed far enough into the channel to accommodate fishing and freight vessels. All the docks were

about six feet above an average high water.

The Kodiak city dock was one-third of a mile southwest of the boat harbor. It had most of the structures built on pilings jutting out into St. Paul Harbor. The city received all the town's freight there. The city warehouse was located there, along with Kodiak King Crab Co., Eastpoint Seafoods, and Alaska Cold Storage. The next dock in this area about 100 feet southwest was the Union oil dock. Gibson Cove was one mile southwest of the Union oil dock.

The Navy base was four miles southwest of the Kodiak boat harbor.