

01-74-04 SIDE A

1964 Earthquake symposium with Robert Merritt, Dr. Parker and others

Recorded in August 1964

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

Poor audio recording

Recording starts with presentation already in progress. Microphone is continuously bumped, background noise and muffled speakers. Unidentified speaker talked about setting up emergency facilities. He said people mobilized themselves rapidly and got themselves out of the dwellings. He talked about the lack of immediate panic. He thought that people are by and large totally ignorant about earthquakes. He himself didn't take in the amount of destruction there really was. Within the next 24 hours Providence Hospital didn't knowingly admit anyone primarily for psychiatric reasons. There were minor injuries and complaints. Very few people came who didn't have serious injuries. The psychological reaction just didn't occur. People started mobilizing the survival gear they had and got vigorously to work. This phase in the Anchorage area carried through the first three to four days. By that time most of the utilities were in operation to some degree. He asked someone if this was the same situation in Seward. Most of the person's comments can't be heard clearly. He talked about cases they had in the hospital. They did admit people to the hospital who were having a hard time with their losses. He talked about the reaction to the tidal wave in Seward. Another unidentified person from Kodiak talked about reactions in his town. He talked about the initial reaction to the earthquake. [most of the recording until 20:25 is difficult to understand] One of the panel members talked about seeing over 200 patients at Providence Hospital. Their total mortality rate was about seven or eight people. There was a question posed to the panel about the reaction of people who already had some form of psychological problem. One

panel member from the Alaska Psychiatric Institute talked about their emergency system and what happened to their patients during and after the earthquake.

The moderator introduced Dr. Parker. Dr. Parker talked about immediate responses to the earthquake such as excitement, anxiety and some fear. After immediate responses in most cases there was a feeling of a need to provide service to others to help. After the earthquake people were responding to the aftershocks by judging their strength. There were some physiological responses to the anxiety. There was also relative personalization. When the radio came back on it was under the auspices of Civil Defense. Having knowledge helped the individual a great deal. Rumors can be very destructive in this type of situation. Immediately after the earthquake people were getting together to share resources. Later on there was reported a feeling of guilt for being lucky and not sustaining injuries or loss. In the first few hours there was excessive fatigue. There were changes in eating and drinking patterns. Anxiety continued to exist and later there was anger. There was a generalized depression in the community. When he visited Seward he did not feel this depression in the community. Aggression was channeled into rebuilding. The cooperative feelings dissipated after a month.

An unidentified person said based on their observations they did not think they would have any great surge in their psychological cases. [Recording is difficult to understand.] Community reaction varied according to location. He talked about reconstruction after the earthquake. Some people did leave the area right after the earthquake.