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NO ASSOCIATED
AUDIO FILE!

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transcript.
We only seem to
have tape
for 2nd
interview.*

CHARLES "BUD" CASSIDY, JR.
ON
A CHILD'S MEMORIES OF THE 1964 GREAT EARTHQUAKE/TIDAL WAVE

by
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The following interview was held on November 25, 1990 with Charles "Bud" Cassidy, a Kodiak, Alaska, resident. The interviewer is Donna F. Smith, a student in the Alaska History class at Kodiak College, Kodiak, Alaska.

DS: Where were you living in Kodiak at the time of the earthquake and tsunami in 1964?

BC: We were new to Kodiak in 1964. We had just moved up from San Diego, in fact, just arrived in Kodiak ten days before the earth quake and tidal wave. We arrived on the 17th of March, which was St. Patrick's Day, and being Irish, we thought it was a fairly appropriate day to be coming to Kodiak and starting a new beginning. We were living in an Aleutian home on Thorsheim Street. Back then it was called North Boulevard, but now it is called Thorsheim Street. My brother and I, who of course had just moved up from San Diego, spent most of our days kind of wandering around behind the Aleutian home houses in hip boots. It was the first time we had saw snow and, of course, coming from southern California, we were real thrilled with the prospect. So, we had on my dad's hip boots and passed our days by walking in the deep drainage ditches behind the Aleutian homes in the snow. Our evenings were spent listening to a radio because the TV that was there was armed forces TV that didn't begin until 4:30 in the afternoon and actually went off at 11:00. But, we had a radio, so we spent most of our time trying to tune into radio stations all up and down the west coast. We thought it was pretty neat living in Alaska and being able to hear all the way down to southern California and Mexico and as far east as, I think, Texas. Moving to Kodiak and to Alaska in general was a little bit hard to get use to because we were, again, southern California types and coming to a little town like Kodiak, which would rain sideways as well as get dark so early. It was real interesting that after you got tired when it was dark, we'd be eating dinner and doing other things and all of a sudden getting tired and wanting to go to bed and find out it was only 6:30--7:30, where the evening had just started.

On the day of the earthquake, we happened to be across the street in Shirley Monroe's house. And I can remember quite vividly when the shaking started, I happened to be in the front room--living room--and Shirley happened to be in the dining room. In the Aleutian homes, there really isn't that kind of separation--formal separation--between dining room and living room, more of a psychological one. But, I remember the whole house shaking, and the Aleutian homes did tend to shake quite a bit, and things starting to fall off like on top of the refrigerator. Some of the things off the wall were falling onto the floor. And, I remember Shirley yelling, "It's an earthquake", and everyone just kind of standing there

trying to gain their balance as we were shaking. Fairly interesting.

DS: What was your age at the time?

CC: As I mentioned earlier, we'd gotten here on the 17th of March. Well, as it just so happens, my birthday is on the 21st of March. So, we arrived in Kodiak on the 17th, I had just turned 10 on the 21st and the earthquake occurred on the 27th. So I was still reasonably young.

DS: What were you doing when you felt the earthquake?

CC: I can't quite remember exactly what I was doing. We had just moved to Kodiak and the Monroes, who were across the street, had four children--two boys and two girls, and since we were new to Kodiak and these folks lived so close, we happened to be introduced to them first.

I always spent a lot of time listening to Walt Disney records--"Friar Briar", "Bobby"--which is a story about a dog who was a terrier, and a whole host of different Walt Disney type stories that were on record.

DS: How did you/your family hear about the ensuing tsunami?

CC: It was interesting after the earthquake was the fact that in a short period of time I remember the police driving around neighborhoods announcing over their car intercom systems exterior speaker that we had a large earthquake and that a tidal way was pending and that we were to actually go to higher ground. So, I am assuming that they drove through all the neighborhoods--Kodiak was fairly small then so it didn't take a whole lot of time. The radio was also a good source of information about the ensuing tsunami, although there was a little confusion. We were still trying to get over the fact we had a large earthquake and all the confusion that goes into having an earthquake and the damage that was done in some of the other cities. Now, also we had to worry about was tsunami. We thought that maybe though something fairly catastrophic--now we were trying to deal with something else.

DS: What did you do?

CC: I remember the sort of the sense of panic that occurred when we heard tsunami. In fact, I think I remember something about a 100 foot tsunami--100 foot or 1,000 foot still meant a big wave--and we were just concerned about where we should go because we were new to Kodiak and didn't know very many folks and weren't real sure what we were going to do. It was interesting, I remember, looking out the window up the North Boulevard and seeing the fact that the traffic was actually gridlocked, that everyone was trying to get up to Pillar Mountain because that was the high spot in town, but because

of the panic, the real need and desire to actually get up the hill, the traffic was actually bogged down. We had bumper to bumper traffic all the way down North Boulevard, down the road a fair piece. So, it was fairly confusing. We happened to go up to Shirley's parents' house, who lived on Hillside--the higher Aleutian home street--and spent the night there. My father actually had worked that day out on base and had to stay out there so we were separated from my dad but did, in fact, go up to Hillside and spend the night. I remember my mother having us go to bed early because she had enough to deal with, let alone two kids--my brother is actually two years younger than I. So, she asked us to go to bed, which we did. Again, because it was March and the nights were fairly dark early, there was never any problem about going to sleep although we slept a lot in those days.

DS: How did it affect you in the following months during the rebuilding?

CC: Well, I am sure it affected different individuals in different ways. I think as a kid, what I can remember, is the fact that the earthquake occurred on Good Friday, that means Easter was shortly to follow. All of the stores downtown had been destroyed except for City Market. We really had not got a good feel of the town so we weren't real sure what things were still in business. Although, it became quite evident, because everything was in short supply, that there was a store open and that was City Market. City Market was high enough and far away enough from the coastline to actually not sustain any damage, or if it did, it was little damage. I remember, quite vividly, that it was Eastertime, and my parents hadn't made any preparation for Easter. And Shirley Monroe, in fact, brought over to our house some Easter baskets with candy and eggs and those types of things. And, it was a real treat because here we had just moved again from California and really thought we weren't at the end of the world but you certainly could see it from where we were at and to have Shirley, this angel, come across the street and try to normalize the whole thing by bringing Easter baskets. It was real exciting. What I found real interesting about the town was as you walked downtown to view the damage, you really couldn't get downtown because there was marshall law. They had Marines patrolling the downtown areas from looters. But, we were able to get up on the hillside to look down over the town, and what really struck me was the sight of all the fishing boats actually being dispersed randomly around town and all the houses that were in the water. I describe it as someone saying switch and the houses and the boats automatically switched their locations. What else that struck me was the breakwater. The breakwater was actually in small segments that were turned at different directions all around the channel there, and I wondered about the amazing power of a wave to be able to move a breakwater like that around. I remember the town slowly rebuilding. One of the big things

that was always interesting to me was the Krafts calendar, which came out every year, had a new picture of the downtown store under construction as construction occurred. And, eventually, once it was built, how the town started developing but downtown was solely turning into what we see it today. But, everything was downtown. The old Orphiem Theater was across from where the Shelikof Lodge is now. I remember when the Shelikof Lodge was built, a modular structure that they had shipped up and built sort of in modulars, of course. But seeing all the construction, always a hub of activity downtown. The fishing fleet was just getting going again and we had a lot of military folks. Construction was booming because it was all the post-earthquake money that was helping rebuild the town, the urban renewal type money.

I think the biggest effect that the earthquake and tidal wave had on me was the fact that I eventually became a geology minor where most of my papers in college were on earthquake and tidal wave mechanisms from the 1964 earthquake. I've always been interested in rocks. I was a big rock collector as a kid and, I think, because of this natural interest in rocks and geology, I gravitated towards natural disasters, earthquake being one, the landslide being another. But, I think living in a place like Kodiak, having these sort of natural catastrophes based on the structure of the rock had a lot to do with what I pursued in college and actually what I've continued to pursue in a profession. Earthquakes are a fact of life here where we are in a major earthquake zone, and I wouldn't be surprised that another earthquake and tidal wave of similar magnitude and intensity occurs again, and it will be interesting to see how the town reacts to this sort of second round of a disaster.