

## Tidal Wave Narratives

by Kathryn Chichenoff and Lucille Davis



The following are outlines of the conversation.

Kathryn Chichenoff: The day after the tidal wave I got out of the hospital because I had a baby. We went up to Pillar, my whole family. Other than that, that is all I know. I was at home, I just got out of the hospital that morning, but I was at home during the earthquake. We went up to Pillar then, my sister-in-law picked us up, my family, my husband, with their four boys, there must have been about 14 of us in their little car. We went up to pillar, and I was the first one in the building because I had just had a baby. We were going to have everyone else in the car, but eventually they let everybody else in. And then we went down at four in the morning I think, we went down to Phil's place and I think it was two weeks later we had that little sharp one again, wasn't it? I remember it was two weeks later, and I was at my old place and we were sitting around the table, Julie Knagin's mother was visiting, and the kids had just gone back to school. It was so hard and so quick we didn't have time to do anything. It was so strong we just sat back down. You know we kept having tremors after that, but it was two weeks later it was really strong. We just didn't have a chance to do anything, but that is all I remember. The next morning early we could see boats floating out in the ocean. Looking out the window, boy that was surprising. I think it was the next morning too that the water line broke we thought it was oil. But the next day Sonny went to Afognak to pick his folks up, he took the boat and went and got his mom and dad from Afognak not knowing if they were ok. But I think they were up the mountain or somewhere. It was powerful.



I remember I had four kids, and I got them all outside because the house was just crackling. And I got outside and I realized I forgot my baby in the bedroom. So I went into the back, I had to walk all through the house, and when I got in there I just grabbed my baby and I went out and I got to the kids and it was so strong. The kids were just screaming it was so strong. So I just stood there. Sonny had just gone downtown because Jacob Lukin had just bought her a pair of shoes. So he went to pick them up. And I told the kids it would be fine, it was just an earthquake. Well, in the meantime the sky was just black, we were right below the mountain there. And it was just like this. And I don't even remember what I did with the baby. But when the kids saw their dad, they were just like seagulls, they all started screaming and crying. I didn't panic. I guess I was shocked, I did not think the world was coming to an end.



Lucille Davis: I would have to do mine from back in 1936. That was my first experience. It was 1936; Dennis and I were talking about it the other day, because Karluk was a large village at that time that is way before '64 earthquake when they were wiped out. And this happened in 1936, when it first started it was in the afternoon. The villages down there had outside toilets, when it first happened, the church bell rang, and Nikita, Sophie's dad was in starist at the time. The church bell rang, we were young but I remember that very much. Down in the valley you would see all the houses and the church bell rang and then



it shook, and it shook. And that bridge that crossed over was waving. But we didn't know it was an earthquake until her dad shouted earthquake. We were little we didn't know it. So we were sitting up on the hill and we were watching it, fascinated. And all of sudden the tide came in and covered up the island, and it went back out. It came in and went back out. We saw Susie go into the outhouse after the first tidal wave down in the valley, and then the big one came in and she was in there, the poor thing, the tide came in and she couldn't figure out where she was, her toilet moved to the other spot and she was still in there. We didn't have tidal waves, we were scared, and this was our first experience with tidal waves. But afterwards it was not very fun. That was my first experience with a tidal wave.

The other tidal wave, we were clam digging, Barbara and I. We went down to dig clams, and again we didn't know it was a tidal wave, because they had radios, but they were only used for emergencies at that time, because everything was silent and secret during that war. We were down there and clam digging, and she said, the tide is coming in, and so we moved up a little bit, and then it went back out again. And she said that the tide was going back out again. Until Jack called from his speaker and said it was a tidal wave. So we came up, and right behind us, we were just in time. Right behind us came a big one; we got out of there just in time. That was in 1945, in the month of July sometime.

On the '64 earthquake, I was up in Anchorage when that happened. This was on Good Friday, and I was looking for a hat for Easter. I just got out of the hat shop and we were going over to Elmendorf, and my husband was in the service then. So we were cutting across to go to the commissary, we had just come out from J.C. Penny's when that happened. The elevators locked and everything. People got locked in there, the concrete crumbled up high, just like great big mountains. Some of the cars locked in the earth when it spread open and closed. So we got up to Elmendorf, and the telephone poles were going way down, and we were in a car and it wasn't too bad, and then all of sudden he opened the door, because my husband thought we got flat tires. We were both out there and there were no flat tires. All of a sudden I looked down at the ground, and the ground was looking like it was going to split open. But we didn't know. So we pulled up to the driveway of the commissary and there were people coming out, and when they all came out the warehouse collapsed. So I got out of the car, and I told my husband, I said boy, we caught the people coming out, there won't be that many people in the commissary and I can look around. And I got to the door and the MP asked where I was going, and I said I was going to the commissary. No you are not he said, and by that time all those cans were rolling all over in there. And then our kids were in the village, and my oldest daughter she had already had experience talking about tidal waves and she was the one who took care of our children, her brothers and sisters. And we got through the first gate and I said, I am walking home. They stopped the cars. So we got home, and it was getting dark, that is was made it so bad, no lights, no water, and the military people were trying to take care of us on this side, and all over Anchorage. And another little one hit right after midnight in Anchorage. That was the one that I was more scared of, because the first one I didn't really know what was going on. It just took us of guard.

It was Easter Sunday, and the church that we used to go to was Greek Orthodox, that is where Russian Orthodox came from, so they told us to go to a Baptist church on Muldoon, well we couldn't cross over because the ground was all crumpled up, but that is where we had our Russian Orthodox Easter services. But I didn't see the tidal wave it was all crumpled up.



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