THE LUXURY OF FORGETTING

The town of Seward after the 1964 Good Friday Alaska Earthquake

by Doug Capra © 2018

The first 48 hours

In 1964 spring arrived in Seward a week before the big shake. On Good Friday, March 27 mild weather throughout the day along with late-winter's significant daily light gain, brough hope and joy to all Alaskans. As evening arrived at 5:36 p.m. the temperature dropped to about 38 degrees with no wind, not even a breeze. Most people were at home. Many suffered from the flu which had spread through Seward. A few were working but there were no major gatherings.

At 213 Third Avenue, Donna Kawalski cooked salmon cakes for dinner. She had just broken one egg into a bowl and held another in her hand. Scotty McRae and his family relaxed at home not far from the shores of Resurrection Bay. An 80-car freight train, the last 40 cars filled with highly inflammable aviation fuel, rumbled north to Anchorage. Andy Endresen and his brother, Eddie, a Seward Police Officer, worked on their family fishing boat at the small boat harbor while third brother Frank, stood on another family vessel tied up at a ramp below their shop. Not far to their south stood the Texaco oil tanks. Two men and a woman sat in a small fishing boat tied to the dock. Longshoreman Dean Smith worked fifty-feet above ground operating one of three waterfront gantry cranes at the Alaska Railroad Dock. Alaska Standard crewman Ted Pedersen stood on the pier as the vessel unloaded fuel.

It happened just a few seconds after 5:36 p.m. -- 40 miles west of Valdez, 80 miles east of Anchorage, 130 miles northeast of Seward in Prince William Sound – a slipping, sliding, grinding, crashing along the Pacific tectonic plate as it skidded by the North American tectonic plate. The largest earthquake recorded in North America – the 1964 Good Friday Alaska Earthquake.

Can you imagine a 9.2 earthquake today in January during a blizzard or fierce north wind with extremely low wind-chill factors? Perhaps we don't have the luxury of forgetting. Perhaps we should consider all kinds of scenarios. Much has been written about the moment of the 1964 quake itself in Seward and the first 24 hours. Some stories are less known than others. Less has been written about what went on during the first week and months after the quake – how the city and emergency agencies responded – the work, cleanup and recovery.

Bertha McGhee, a house mother and supply secretary at the Jesse Lee Home, was in the dining room with the children and her 91-year-old mother when the quake struck. Her mother, Viola, had arrived from Ottawa, Kansas for a visit on March 17. In September, mother and daughter returned to their hometown in Kansas for a visit, and Bertha related some of her earthquake experiences to the local newspaper. "Our policeman says he thinks he's the only man in the world who was ever chased up the street by a boxcar," she said. "It wasn't even on a track. It was atop a wave."

What impressed Bertha was how well the town responded. "Crucial in our experience was that our town had a well-defined, well-organized Civil Defense Department within the city government that immediately took charge. There was a committee on food, health, hospitalization, clothing, transportation, housing – everything!

When this happened, each committee took care of what it was supposed to do. Beginning as early as Saturday after the earthquake, they got out bulletins to wherever people were gathered telling them where they could go for help they needed. Everything in the way of Civil Defense was arranged for."

The earthquake ruins were all around them. Within the first twenty-four hours some were known to be dead and many were missing. Water was contaminated, damaged homes were dangerous, temperatures dropped below freezing when the sun went down, food wasn't always available, sanitation issues had to be solved immediately, black smoke filled the sky from the still-burning Standard Oil and Texico tanks and soot covered everything. Survivors worried about who had lived and had died and about their friends and relatives Outside who worried about them. Most in Seward were focused on the here and now, but in the back of many minds an uncertain future festered. "Where are we going to live?" "How are we going to earn a living?" "What's to become of Seward now?" To make matters worse, the frequent aftershocks caused anxiety and sometimes sent people scurrying to safer areas.

When the shaking stopped, it was only the end of Chapter One and the beginning of the long story of recovery. The day after the disaster, Saturday March 28, the city and the Seward Chamber of Commerce began issuing a series of mimeographed bulletins. They distributed over 800 copies to various locations around town – 300 to the high school, 150 to homes around town, 25 to Bayview, 50 to Clearview, 35 to Forest Acres subdivisions, and 50 for out along the Seward Highway.

Bulletin number one contained health and other information: "All water must be considered contaminated," it warned. "To render it fit for drinking, add two drops of

Purex or Clorox to each quart, or one tablespoon to a fifty gallon {drum} or boil for ten minutes." People were told not to use their toilets. "Get a garbage or other fair-sized covered container in which to dump solid sewage. The city will be able to get a dump truck to collect this refuse starting tomorrow – Sunday!" Citizens were urged to conserve gasoline which was in short supply. Those who lived "in the area bounded by Adams, Monroe and Fourth Avenue" could return to their homes. They were asked to make space available for those who needed it.

Since Seward Mayor Perry Stockton and City Manager Bill Harrison were out of town, it was important to assure citizens that authorities were in control. Delmar Zentmire was appointed acting mayor. Because City Hall was damaged, meeting headquarters would be at the public health nurse's office in the hospital basement. A group of citizens was appointed to assemble a list of those reporting in or who had been seen alive, so officials would know who was missing. "Get a base of operations," the bulleting ordered, "and stay put so you can be located." For those without homes, cots and food was available at the high school. "There have been a few casualties so far," the bulleting noted. "Let's all continue to cooperate and assist each other in any possible way."

On Easter Sunday, March 29th, officials issued two bulletins. Bulletin No. 2 announced that a dump truck would make the rounds to pick up honey buckets, a euphemism what we used to call chamber pots to hold human waste. A loudspeaker announced the honey bucket arrival – which was important – because there would be only one pick up per day. "You are urged to use this service," the bulletin warned. "Failure to dispose of this refuse may result in sickness or disease. Please comply with

this request during this trying time." Arrangements were made to get word to friends and relatives on the Outside. People were asked to put outgoing mail in the outer mail drop at the post office. A ham radio operator -- who could relay messages to the outside – had set up at the hospital, but the city and civil defense officials would not take responsibility for the delivery or conformation of these messages. Typhoid shots would be given on Monday, March 30th from 9 a.m. to noon at the outpatient clinic. "You must get yours," the bulletin said, "no matter when you had your last shot." The location of other clinics would be announced soon.

Citizens were reminded about contaminated water, damage to the sewage system, and the limited gas supply. Those who were available to work were asked to report to the health center. Since the fire alarm system had been disabled, church bells would be used as a fire alarm. People were reminded to stay put unless they needed medical help or were reporting to work. It was important to compile a list of those who died, those who survived and those who were still missing. "Alaska has been declared a disaster area," the bulletin reported. "Military forces and supplies are being flown in from as far away as Texas to assist us in recovery from this disaster." With the military arrival, requirements would tighten up. "Anyone moving in or out of the city must secure a pass from headquarters," the bulletin said. "Strict rules of conduct will be enforced."

Most stories about Alaska's 1964 Earthquake focus on those terrifying three or four minutes of shaking. Bertha McGhee vividly recalled those moments. "We have minor tremors frequently," she recalled. "When it started, we thought, 'Well, just another little earthquake.'" It proved to be the longest four or five minutes they had ever experienced. Bertha's nephew, Sam Davidson was a house parent and the home's fire

marshal. His wife and children were in another building, the youngsters sick with the flu. He told the children to behave as if it were a fire drill and head outside into the lightly falling snow. Bertha's mother, Viola, was sitting in a chair when the quake struck. A high school boy pushed her in the chair toward the door, and Davidson picked her up and carried her outside to safety. After the major shaking stopped, they went back into the building to gather quilts and coats for warmth as well as other needed items. That night they stayed in a bus and cars. Soon others from town seeking higher ground joined them.

The Second 48 hours

By Saturday -- March 18, 1964 -- the fire caused by the exploding Standard Oil tanks had died down, but the Texaco tanks continued to burn for days. Over that weekend, aftershocks and two more explosions along the waterfront kept people edgy. Four docks were completely destroyed along with the Alaska Railroad (ARR) dock and the waterfront tracks. Two ARR cranes fell into the bay. The waterfront was no more: a warehouse and part of a second were gone; the small boat harbor was demolished along with 30 fishing boats and 40 pleasure craft; a destroyed summer halibut cannery that had employed to 80 workers reminded locals that ten percent of the economy had been commercial fishing.

Fire destroyed three homes and the city's emergency generating plant. Fifty miles north, lines from Chugach Electric's Cooper Lake plant had been broken. The quake and tsunamis made 83 houses unsalvageable. Fifteen percent of the town's residences– 261 homes – were damaged. For the first few hours after the quake Seward had no communication link, until amateur radio operators contacted the Alaska Standard. That ship had been moored at the ARR dock and managed to escape into the bay during the

quake. Their radio operators relayed messages from Seward to the Outside world. One of their first messages was "Seward is burning." Local and state offices in the Old Federal Building (on the site of today's City Hall) were beyond repair, and water and sewer systems unusable. Fortunately, Seward's 30-bed hospital was not damaged. Their emergency generator provided power until a larger one took over. Mac Lohman got large garbage cans from the hardware store, chopped through the ice at First Lake, and with a detail of men hauled water continuously to the hospital, which became a temporary City Hall and the staging ground for local officials and emergency crews working on recovery.

Once people found safety by Friday evening, Margaret Hafemeister noticed the confusion connected with everyone seeking missing family members. As the Alaska Dept. of Health and Welfare (ADHW) director for Kodiak, Seward and the entire Kenai Peninsula, she sent people to the elementary school to get names of those staying there. By Saturday, she organized a census committee of local women who knew everybody in town. They filled out family cards and sent scouts to learn who could be accounted for and who couldn't.

On March 29, 1964 – Easter Sunday – officials distributed two more bulletins to the public. Bulletin No. 3 told citizens where they had to report to get their typhoid shots. They had three options: Dr. E. W. Gentles' office (at Metcalf's store at Mile 5); Dr. J.B. Deisher's office in town; and the Air Force Recreation Center at the old "San" area (the old Tuberculosis Sanatorium). "No patient will be admitted to the hospital," the bulletin warned, "without first having come thru the doctors' outpatient clinic and being authorized…" Officials listed times doctors would be available and advised that elementary first aid and supplies would be available at two locations: Leroy Dryson's

home at Mile 5.5, and John Walsh's home at Mile 7. The local bank would begin opening between 9 and 11 a.m. but only for deposits – no withdrawals would be allowed for the present. The bulletin continued to remind locals about the mail-drop and limited gas supplies. Those without Purex or Clorox to purify their water could obtain pills at the Emergency Operating Center in the hospital basement. By now those needing housing were scattered around town at the hospital, high school, elementary school and friends' homes in town and at Forest Acre.

On Monday, March 30th, Bulletin No. 4 repeated much information, but added something we don't often associate with disaster responses. These were the days before disposable diapers and clean water wasn't easily available. "Babies bottoms are getting raw," the bulletin reported. "Cleanliness and fresh air (!) are simple effective treatment. Wash the baby's bottom after each wet diaper as well as each bowel movement. Get the urine washed off as well. Expose to air if possible for a short time between changes. Use plastic pants as little as possible." Hot meals were available at the high school: breakfast between 5 and 9 a.m.; lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; dinner, 5 to 9 p.m. Ray Lee, Asst. Director of Civil Defense in town, took over feeding operations. Wilma Zentmire and several other women directed the cafeteria. People collected milk, cheese, meat and other food from stores, cafes and homes. The Air Force Recreation Center prepared rations and the Army Rec Center sent three cooks to join the women working at the high school cafeteria. A chicken farm out of town sent fresh poultry to the high school. With no heat for their chickens, they decided to butcher 5,000 of them. Willard Dunham, in charge of obtaining manpower, sent out a work crew to help with plucking and cleaning.

The call for workers became more specific. No longer was it "anyone who wants to work," but now it was "anyone capable of work" was to report to the hospital basement. "An attempt is being made to restore power to many homes within the city today {and} on high ground," the bulletin reported. "There is now power to the city limits. Forest Acres does not have power and may not today," it added. Beneath that announcement, the first list of missing persons appeared: Hatch, Jesse; Chapman, Charles; Cain, Millard; Besancon, Eugene; Kvernplassen, Mr. and Mrs. and family, four of five; Lundberg, Fred; Moe, Victor; Spadaro, Frank; Walunga, Mr.; Simonds, Bob, Louise and mother; Brossow, Fred; Fink, Less; Torgramsen, Torgie; Elliott, May; and Osmonovich, Mike. Daisy Grosvoid and her four children, as well as Carolyn Lee and her two children were also reported missing – but a footnote said they "went to Anchorage on Friday, left Seward 2 p.m."

By Tuesday, March 31st, the immediate outlook appeared brighter. "It is with a great deal of pleasure," Bulletin No. 5 reported, "that…considerable progress is being made…for your health and safety. Electric service has been put in, in most parts of town, and other areas are being worked on." The sewer lines had been checked out and people could now use their toilets, but only in Clearview and in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Avenue areas. "In no other areas of town may you use the sewer system," officials warned. "The reason for this," they explained, "is that the line draining this end of the bay is completely plugged out across the demolished Railroad Dock. If you use the sewer…you are simply going to back the sewage up in somebody's home." A digger had been requested, people were told, and would be in town next day. It would unplug the system allowing a drainage into the bay. Officials anticipated most would have sewer

usage by Tuesday night. “If you notice that sewage is running any place other than where it should be, please notify us immediately, as we do not want any health problems.”

The American Red Cross had set up headquarters in the St. Peter’s Episcopal Church basement. “We would stress that anything they do for you will be on a grant basis, and you will not be billed for it,” locals were told. That was an important message. Some felt uncomfortable about accepting charity; others didn’t want to be laden with debt. “For those women and children who have no clothing left, the Red Cross will distribute necessary clothing to them from the second floor of the high school building, starting early Wednesday morning, April 1st.”

The honey bucket patrol still made collections around town, but local officials made a request, “It will be easier to dispose of if you will place newspapers or plastic bags in the bottom and around the sides. I would suggest that you use only the supply of newspapers and such materials which you have on hand at home.” More typhoid vaccine had arrived and those who hadn’t yet received their shots were urged to do so. Some offices had moved: Dr. Wagner, the public health nurse, and Willard Dunham’s manpower office had located to Dr. Deisher’s Clinic. Water was still contaminated, but the city water department was trying to get it flowing in some areas. “You should test once in a while,” the bulletin said, “to see whether or not you have water.”

That evening (Monday the 31st) smokers would finally be considered. “Cigarettes will be distributed on a one-package basic, *to smoker’s only*, with this evening’s meal, at the two food distribution points.” By this point, the town had most health and welfare emergency situations under control – and the focus began to move toward cleanup and

reconstruction. Bulleten No. 5 reported, “We are anticipating the arrival of the Corps of Engineers at any time.”

Typhoid, Telegrams & Bunny Boots

Only hours after the quake -- one can imagine survivors settled for the evening worrying about missing friends and relatives, sharing personal stories and relating others they had heard. They had yet to hear the story of the McRae family whose house had been lifted up by the tsunami and carried into the woods. That first night they spent on the roof. Soon that story would be spread across the country. Survivors may have heard rumors of a man who, escaping the small boat harbor, crawling under a bouncing railroad care, floundering through oil as a fire spread in his direction, and leaping over a crevice, only to get his foot caught as the opening closed, leaving a boot behind. At the time they may not have known it was Andy Endresen. Was it true that the first wave ripped loose a fishing boat moored at the dock with two men and a woman aboard and heaved it over the seawall? It was -- and later people learned the full story. During that terrifying journey, the men had shoved away from their vessel burning oil and debris on the water with poles and boathooks. The three ended upon on the Airport Road where they headed to high ground.

That first night stories may have been told about those in cars who had out run the tsunami as they headed by the lagoon out of town. Other cars got caught the water and people had to flee from the vehicles before the backwash carried them out into the bay. Later survivors learned about longshoreman, Dean Smith, cce the crane operator 50 feet off the ground at the Alaska Railroad dock who watched in

horror as the facility below him broke apart. As the crane bounced back and forth on the tracks he managed to climb below to safety. The story of Ted Pedersen became a legend. A crewman on the Alaska Standard, he was working on the pier at Standard Oil dock as the vessel unloaded oil. When the world beneath him disintegrated he lost consciousness. When he came to he found himself eight feet above the ships deck on a catwalk. You can find more about that story in *Kachemak Bay Years: An Alaska Homesteader's Memoir* by Elsa Pedersen. Many have heard Donna Kowalski's story. She had been preparing salmon cakes and was about to crack an egg when the quake struck. It was Good Friday and as a Catholic she was preparing a fish dinner. Her children were scattered all around town so she headed out looking for them Several hours later, having secured the safety of her family, she stopped at a friend's house to check on her. As they sat down over a beer, her friend looked at Donna and asked her if she was going to crack the egg that in her beer. Donna had been toting that fresh egg in her hand for several hours.

As Seward residents recovered that first evening in homes and shelters, they may have recalled those first moments after the shaking stopped – the shock, the confusion, the fires, the debris, the soot – the search for family members and the escape to higher ground with a light snow falling on the slippery ground. Most residents seemed dazed, Willard Dunham remembered, but there was little panic. He represented the State Employment Office and would soon be recruiting workers for the cleanup. "It was kind of like a bad dream," Dunham recalled. "It's quite a sensation to see a town you've lived in for over 20 years, nothing but fire for as far as you can see." Open fissures proved a hazard in some public areas. One of the

largest was three feet wide and thirteen feet deep. Dunham parked cars alongside it to prevent accidents. With the Cold War in the news, some initially thought Seward had been attacked.

What had impressed Bertha McGhee – a house mother at the Jesse Lee Home -- was how well the town responded. “Crucial in our experience was that our town had a well-defined, well-organized Civil Defense Department within the city government that immediately took charge,” she recalled. Today we think in terms of earthquake and tsunami preparation. To understand where people were coming from in 1964 we need to see the Good Friday Earthquake within the context of the Cold War.

Early Seward newspapers, often reported small, even sizable earthquakes, but with littler fanfair. For example, on Feb. 26, 1924, a one-paragraph story on page four of the Seward Gateway is titled: “Heavy Earthquake Shock Hits Seward Early Morn.” The newspaper writes: “One of the heaviest earthquake shocks felt here for many years was experienced last night about 2:10. The shocks continued for what seemed several minutes, terminating in a long drawn out tremble of the earth.” The next day a three-paragraph page-one story headlined “Seward Visitor Not Used To Earthquakes.” Lieut. Claton Bissel of the Army Air Service was in town to help prepare for the Round-the-World Flight which would stop in Seward. He was surprised by what the newspaper now called the recent “slight tremors” and the snow slides that followed. He couldn’t understand why the earthquake wasn’t a front-page story. The Gateway said the town was used to earthquakes and snow slides, and that to record them all would take a much larger newspaper. A brief

editorial that day joked about what constituted news – something happening in an unusual way. A halibut boat coming into Seward isn't news; but one sailing up a Nebraska river would be news. Same with an earthquakes and snow slides – no news in Seward but they would be "nine-day wonders" in South Florida."

In 1964 Seward and other coastal Alaska towns had no official earthquake preparation plans. They were used to shakes of varied strengths and the thought of a tsunami was far from their minds. What they did have plans for and thought possible was an attack by the Soviet Union with an atomic bomb. Everyone remembered the Cuban Missile Crisis, and some even realized how close we had actually come to war. Many still remembered the bombing of Dutch Harbor in June 1942, and the fear Seward had of being the next target. Those of us who lived through the Cold War vividly recall "Duck-and-Cover" drills in school and neighbors building fallout shelters. Seward's quick response to the 1964 earthquake wasn't because the town was prepared for such a natural disaster. Seward was ready to move quickly because its Civil Defense organization had prepared for a nuclear attack.

On Wednesday, April 1st – four days after the quake – the City of Seward's Bulletin No. 6 announced that the Federal Housing Authority (FHA.) had homes available for those displaced by the disaster. "These homes are located in the Clearview Addition," the bulleting said. "Due to limited number of homes available you are urged to contact Mary Ann Balmat at her office in order to obtain occupancy." Later that day, the city issued Bulletin No. 7. By this time, four days after the earthquake – people needed to wash their clothes. "Areas in town that have

been approved for occupation will for some time face a possible shortage of water," citizens were told. "All users are cautioned to use water sparingly."

People occupying some private homes were still told not to flush toilets. "We hope that sewers will be cleared in a few days in some areas." Detergent wash water could be dumped into the nearest street drain, but washing clothes had to be conducted on a schedule. Those on First Avenue could wash clothes between 8 and 9 a.m.; Second Ave., 9 to 10 a.m.; Third Ave., 10 to 11 a.m.; Fourth Ave., 11 to 12 noon.; Fifth Ave., 3 to 4 p.m.; and Sixth and Seventh Ave., 4 to 5 p.m. Clearview could wash between 12 noon and 3 p.m. "It is felt that if all water users cooperate in this plan, we can forestall any water turn-offs." These days when tragedies and disasters happen, many counselors and clergy quickly appear – and some think this is something new. But after the 1964 earthquake in Seward, the high school teacher's lounged was set up as an office where local clergy and councilors could meet with people needing this kind of assistance.

Early on the day of the earthquake -- Friday, March 27, 1964 -- Seward Mayor Perry Stockton and City Manager James Harrison drove to Anchorage. Ironically, that evening they were scheduled to appear on television to invite Anchorage citizens to celebrate the next weekend's celebration of Seward's selection as an All-American City. The town was one of eleven given the award by and National Municipal League and Look Magazine. Another irony – the selections had only been officially announced on Thursday, March 26 – the day before the earthquake but, as one can imagine, in a small town like Seward everyone knew the "secret." The day before the earthquake, the town's mimeographed local newspaper, The Pettycoat

Gazette, made the announcement in a front-page story. “The Big Secret that everybody has been talking about for a month – and nobody has let slip from town,” the newspaper wrote, “can now be told and plans made openly for the award celebration on April 4th and 5th.”

Then the next day the disaster happened and the mayor and city manager were out of town. The Seward Highway was impassable, and Acting Mayor Delmar Zentmire knew Stockton and Harrison wanted to get back to town but chunks of ice covered the airport runway. There were no fissures, but all the planes, including the Civil Air Patrol craft, were destroyed. Zentmire saw to it the runway was quickly cleared, which allowed Stockton to arrive at 11 a.m. Saturday followed by Harrison at 12:30 p.m. on the next flight. The two immediately went to the hospital where city and emergency offices were located.

The city attorney was in charge of the bulletins that were run off on the hospital mimeograph machine. The April 1 Bulletin No. 7 announced that the U.S. Corps of Engineers had inspected the high school and would soon file a report as to when the building could be reopened. “All of the school teachers…joined together,” the bulleting announced, “have sent a signed statement to the city council, expressing their desire to continue with this year’s school, and pledging their support to this end.” Only two more months of school was left, and seniors must have been concerned about graduating – and no one wanted classes to run through the summer. Too much recovery work was needed. By this time, survival and escape stories from Seward were circulating around the country in the national press while the town still and more reporters arrived in town. Don’t go shopping for food, people were

told in Bulletin No. 7. "In consideration of your grocery merchant, give him time to recover before you ask for his services." Everyone was encouraged to eat at the central feeding places. "It is much more practical for us to furnish food at one place than it is for everyone in town to eat at home."

Bulletin No. 8 on came out on Thursday, April 2nd. With military troops patrolling the town, local officials wanted citizens to know that the city itself was in control. "The Civil Defense Department is a branch and department of city government, fully under the city council, as is any other department." City Manager Bill Harrison was the acting Civil Defense Director. "At no time was jurisdiction surrendered to anyone else," the city assured people, "nor will it be surrendered to anyone else." Kim Kowalski-Rogers recalled the National Guard soldiers standing guard wearing their huge Bunny Boots. These boots were new to most Seward children who were fascinated with them. Kim remembered the soldiers amusing the children by letting them stand on the big white boots.

With city hall damaged and now located in the hospital basement – and with many other things on peoples' minds -- the city council established a moratorium on tax, utility and other payments for thirty days. "It is suggested at this time that you take care of yourself and your family," they said, "knowing that most people are more concerned with this than with money you might owe them." Gov. Egan had just notified Seward that the Snow River Bridge, which had been knocked out by the earthquake, would be repaired in four days, safe enough at least to get to Homer, Kenai and Soldotna. It would be another two months, Egan said, before Seward would have road access to Anchorage.

People who had never had a series of typhoid shots needed to get them. Those who had received the series just needed a booster. As of April 2 -- 2470 shots had been administered, but officials estimated that 772 people still needed the complete series. “For those who have not had the series before or who do not know whether they have had such as series, the public health nurse will be scheduling a second and third and fourth shot.” Medical professionals still feared the spread of disease. “If you are one of these {who haven’t had the typhoid series), will you please present yourself for the second shot…” Seward Drug Co. had located in the hospital basement across from the Civil Defense Office to fill prescriptions. Deputy Magistrate Genevieve Schaefermeyer operated out of her home for those who needed help, especially with salvaging items. Four service stations were now open: Gateway Texaco, Modern Motors, Saindon’s Services and C & S Motors. There would be no more restrictions on fuel.

No open fires were allowed in the city or surrounding areas. “Please comply with this,” the city warned. On Friday, April 3rd, people might begin hearing the fire siren again, the bulletin said. Church bells had been used to announce fires right after the earthquake, but now the siren was fixed. “It will be used for fire warnings only,” the bulletin assured, “and for nothing else. Do not consider it to be an earthquake or other alert. Fire only.” People were still jumpy with all the aftershocks interrupting the already tense situation. The city was afraid some would interpret a siren as a warning to move to higher ground to escape a tsunami. Those without running water were asked to report to city hall in the hospital basement.

And that evening, Thursday, April 2nd, the Liberty Theatre offered a free movie – giving locals a respite from everything else on their minds.

Once things settled down to a reasonable extent, people's thoughts may have turned to the irony of Seward's All-American City award and the upcoming scheduled celebration that everyone knew wouldn't happen as scheduled. A kind of post trauma gloom set in. By now, many in Seward had been able to get letters sent out notifying loved ones that they were okay and describing their experiences. Getting it down in writing seems to have helped many through the despair. Mrs. Ethel J. Bell sent a letter to her parents in Prague, Oklahoma that was published in the April 29th Prague News-Record. A week had passed since the disaster and now "Earthquake blues" seemed to envelope the town. "Possibly many at that moment would have pulled up roots and gone to the south 48 states," she wrote, but all 21 bridges between here and Anchorage were damaged beyond use. To fly out was a rare commodity." After her family exited their shaking house, she wrote: "Suddenly, three blocks away near the shore, one of the huge storage tanks toppled and exploded into flames, setting off 3 or 4 others. Then, just like a Fourth of July string of fireworks, the oil tank cars in the loaded string of trains…successively exploded , and the other oil company's tanks at the north end of town near the rail tracks were set off and exploded." Most in Seward did their best to shake off those "Earthquake Blues," including Mrs. Bell. "Spring is arriving," she ended the letter. "We have rhubarb leafing out nicely already. Chives up, lots of other things leafing out very soon…strawberries, currants, raspberries…time to start hothouse plants."

Other Alaskans quickly came to Seward's aid. That was part of the Frontier Code and had been throughout the new state's history. Telegrams and offers of help were arriving from all over the state. Soldotna and Kenai donated a huge truckload of clothing and bedding which had been given to the Red Cross for distribution. Bulletin No. 8 issued on Thursday, April 2nd tried to reassure citizens that help from other Alaskan communities was on the way. Mayor Stockton printed an example of the kinds of telegrams the city was receiving: "All people of U.S. Army Alaska express their sympathy to the people of Seward and regret that the All-American City will not be able to celebrate its great triumph on the 4th and 5th of April. We sincerely hope that the city will soon be back in shape and will win further honors. The {Army}Biathlon Team will be ready for Mount Marathon {Race} on the 4th of July. I personally look forward to good fishing as soon as the road is back in shape." Signed – Major General Ned D. Moore, Commanding General, USRAL.

This was reassuring, but what Seward citizens might not have realized was that the irony of their situation became a national news item that made the town's destruction stand out. Within a few days after the quake, stories about miraculous escapes in Seward were already circulating in Associated Press (AP) articles. Already – cities and towns across the country were planning funding raising campaigns to help Seward's, especially the ten other recently designated All-American Cities as well as past award winners. Seward's plight had made national headlines. The town had expected help from other Alaskan communities. What they didn't expect was the outpouring of help – the letters and telegrams – from across the country.

The Letters and Telegrams

Journalists call it their peg or slant or angle. It's what makes a story relevant, timely and of human interest to readers. Every story can be told or framed many different ways. Perhaps the first decision a journalist makes is how they will tell the story because that determines their introduction or lead, their method of organization and their conclusion – that's the frame. Some stories require real creative thought to find that special angle. With other stories, it's a no-brainer.

For journalists trying to frame the Seward story after the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake, the angle quickly became obvious. The timeline was clear: On Thursday, March 26, Seward was named one of eleven All-American Cities. That was a national news story in itself with a focus on what the town had done to achieve such recognition. That day news stories touted Seward's courage, its refusal to succumb to economic reversals. By 1961 much of the military had left town, fish processing plants had closed as well as a freight company. Other economic woes plagued the city. "Seward, Alaska, was named an All-American because of a recovery from the threat of extinction," one newspaper reported. "Instead of accepting their fate," the report went, "the citizens voted to pave the gravel streets, while the town council put its entire capital improvement budget for 1962 -- $34,000 – into harbor improvement." Fish production increased by 600%. The Women's Club raised $27,000 and transformed an old store in to a 10,000-volume public library. Volunteers built a relay station on a mountain for television reception. "This new spirit is bringing industry back," the story went, "with two new business expected to open up 120 jobs." The theme was about a successful struggle and fight against economic adversity, but the press didn't cover some of the political and

social controversies that had beset and split the town during those years. It was during this time – on Dec. 11, 1961 – that the lighted Christmas tree first went up on Little Bear Mountain. Perhaps that was an attempt at healing. (See that chapter in my book, *The Spaces Between: Stories from the Kenai Mountains to the Kenai Fjords*).

With tremendous excitement, the town planned a celebration of its All-American City award for the weekend after Easter. Some journalists were still working on their angle for that story when the next day -- Friday, March 27th, coastal Alaska was hit with 9.2 earthquake, the largest earthquake ever recorded in North America. The shake was followed by several tsunamis that killed twelve people in Seward, destroyed much of the town and wiped out the economy. It didn't take much creative thinking for savvy journalists to figure out how to frame the new Seward narrative. Now it was a double-comeback story filled with exciting escape and survival narratives. With today's technology – especially i-phones using twitter, Instagram and Facebook -- breaking news can be almost instantaneous when an event like an earthquake happens. Not so in 1964. Initial reports were quite sketchy because of communication breakdowns and the Seward Highway was impassable – but our airport was intact and only needed to be cleared of the ice covering it. The Associated Press (AP) and other media arrived in Seward within a few days after the quake.

That irony that the disaster happened on Good Friday, and that the theme of Easter Sunday is resurrection, made the story more interesting. That Sunday, a reporter for the Fairbanks News-Miner noted the empty streets – no dogs or children or families dressed up headed for church. Smoke rising over the harbor. Soot covering everything, even Mount Marathon. Men in blackened and rumpled work clothes gathering in small

groups. Soldiers with guns patrolling. Men with Civil Defense bands attached to their sleeves. Volunteers jamming the work centers. Children playing in school corridors while their parents sat quietly in small groups sharing stories, reading the bulletins, asking each other about food and water. Word had probably spread that President Lyndon Johnson declared the 49th state a major disaster area. Alaska Senators Ernest Gruening and Bob Bartlett pressed for immediate aid. Seward City Manager James W. Harrison made headlines pleading: "Please make it simple, with no red tape. This town is not going to fold up, but we couldn't float a bond issue on peanut butter right now.

One of the first escape stories to hit the national press by the first of April was told to the AP by Linda McRae, who they described as "an attractive brunette high school honor student." A photo of her – bruised knees and all – accompanied the article with the headline: "15 Terrifying Minutes – 8 Rode on Rooftop, Cheated Giant Waves." As the tsunami approached "We ran to the back of a friend's house and jumped from oil barrels on to the roof of the garage," she said. "We knew the garage roof wouldn't be strong enough so we jumped up to the house roof. I carried the baby, -- my brother's 3-week-old son. About two seconds later, the first wave hit. It took the garage and tore it all to pieces and tore the porch and all the bedrooms off the house. We floated away on the part of the roof over the living room for about a block. It was pretty rough. We were swirling between trees for about 15 minutes before we finally lodged against four trees. We hit them so hard we were scared the house would split."

Readers must have been on edge wondering what happened next. "My brother Doug tied us to the trees with television leader wire," Linda continued. "By then it was dark. About six waves came almost reached the roof, but the rest rose only to the attic.

When the water left, we could get down into part of the house. We found two candles and a can of peach juice for the baby. My mother held him most of the time – he was in a baby quilt and we never uncovered him. But he's got a cold now. We poked a hole in the roof and got some boards floating around us to go under the roof so we'd be protected. We tore the insulation off the roof and wrapped ourselves in it. I was the only one who wouldn't go inside – I wanted to see everything. The moon was out and it was clear. We saw dogs float by and we saw our care float by and turn over. We thought the whole town was on fire. We were there about 12 hours. By then the ground was mucky and if you didn't walk on boards it was up to your waist. My brother walked about three miles for help, and we finally were rescued. I was real scared, just hoping they'd find us. and I was scared I'd never see my boyfriend again."

Other compelling tales followed in the press, but this dramatic and early first-person account of the McRae family escape helped set the tone for how the Seward earthquake story would be told. The twelve deaths in Seward were tragic but – all things considered – it was a miracle that dozens more hadn't died. Six years after the earthquake, after having researched and studied accounts of all the Alaska communities affected by the event, the National Academy of Science wrote: "Probably nowhere in south central Alaska on March 27, 1964, were there more hair-breath escapes than among the 2,300 inhabitants of the seaport town of Seward, the southern terminus of The Alaska Railroad."

The first towns and cities to take special notice of Seward were the other nine named as All-American Cities for 1963 – Minneapolis, MN; Sidney, OH; Woodstock, IL; Alexandria, VA; Aztec, NM; Gastonia; NC; Louisville, KY; Oil City, PA; Roseville, CA;

and Woodridge, NJ. Several sent telegrams right away but it took a few days for them to arrive and sometimes quite a while for Seward officials to respond. The town had too many other things on its mind. But the telegrams and offers of help kept arriving from all over.

On April 2, Albert S. Whiteley wrote, "As the Canadian representative for the state of Alaska, I am writing to express my deep personal sorrow and the sympathy of the people of Canada for the great loss in life and property suffered by Seward." On Friday, April 3rd, Seward distributed Bulletin No. 9. A week had gone by since the earthquake and the town would soon have a working radio transmitter. Major Bob Reeve and Stanton Patty had radio station KVI in Seattle request the equipment. Station KADA in Raymond, Washington (owned by singer/actor Gene Autry), responded with the donation and everyone moved quickly. During the evening of April 2nd, their chief engineer with help from the Tacoma Police Dept. dismantled the transmitter, took it by truck to the airport where Northwest Orient Airlines flew it without charge to Anchorage. The Air National Guard then flew it in a C123 to Seward on April 3rd and planned to install it in the library. Seward's KIBH radio station manager, Ray Doyle, began transmitting the next day. Once the station went on the air, they broadcast important information and the printed bulletins ceased.

On April 4th a telegram arrived from the Mayor Frank E. Mann and his city council in Alexandria, Virginia: "Our deep compassion and sympathy go to you and citizens of Seward, who have suffered in the earthquake and tidal wave. We are contacting Red Cross to learn of specific immediate ways to help. Alexandrians will want to give now and later to help rebuild your courageous All America City. Let us know of

project we might take on during the year to assist." Telegrams from all over Alaska arrived in Seward as well. Mayor Joe McGill of Dillingham expressed sympathy and offered help. K.D. Cobin at Dillingham added that, "Dillingham Public Utility District offers what assistance available here. I can come ready to work also one inside electrician." Mayor Mark Jenson of Douglas wrote, "The pictures of the waterfront were almost unbelievable, and it is certainly going to take some federal aid to replace the dock structures that were washed out. Our City will certainly add our voice to anything that can be done for you."

Juneau, Kodiak and Nome offered to supply transportation, schooling and room and board for any Seward students if necessary. Ketchikan expressed their "profound understanding in a situation almost insurmountable," and offered any help "within our means." Kotzebue's Mayor Earl W. Perisho offered assistance and praised Seward for its "courageous determination to rebuild your city." Palmer Mayor Theodore O. Schmidtke wrote: "The people here are anxious to help in any way no matter how slight, such as collecting needed clothing, household supplies or any other items of necessity. Skagway Mayor Malcolm A. Moe extended his sympathies and added: "You have proven in the past your great courage and foresight and we are confident you will go forward speedily in repairing damages done to your city." Mayor John W. O'Connell of Sitka also offered sympathy and help.

Meanwhile stories flooded the nation about Seward's endurance and determination -- not merely to survive but to prevail. Only five days after the earthquake, on April 1, the national press reported that "The All-American City flag was raised for the first time over earthquake-ravaged Seward, Alaska." It was too soon for an official

ceremony, but town on Resurrection Bay would at least get that flag up and flying. It would help boost morale. "City Manager and civil defense director James W. Harrison took a few precious moments from his 24-hour a day pace to perform the ceremony," the newspapers said. City councilman Richard Kirkpatrick and Red Cross disaster director, Ed Brandhorst, also participated in the flag raising. The event made statement that Harrison verbalized to the press: "We are lifting ourselves up by our bootstraps," he said. "Our morale is topnotch."

Strength. Courage. Resilience. Self-reliance. Leadership at its best. All part of the frontier myth, and Alaska was The Last Frontier. But this wasn't a tall tale or fable – this was reality. It was the frontier myth in action in a state that had only emerged from territorial status five years earlier.

Bulletin No. 9 announced that the city council had met with Local #60 ILWU. The union offered to "remain and do the job of longshoremen, and any other work to be done in order to reconstruct our city, and remain a work tool that can be depended upon." Members were asked to attend the next meeting for more information about work, and to sign up with Willard Dunham to begin helping immediately. Bulletin No. 9 appears to be the last one issued. The radio station took over announcements on Saturday or Sunday. The next official written notice came from Mayor Perry Stockton dated April 14th. It summarizes the event and the facts known at that time. The city estimated two million dollars had been lost in the fishing fleet; 86 homes were lost and 261 damaged. The entire industrial area was completely destroyed and no jobs were available in Seward except for cleanup and reconstruction.

Meanwhile, letters and telegrams from all over the country and Alaska continued to arrive. William P. Woods, President of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce stated the deep concern of five hundred Seattle businessmen. "I assure you that immediate attention is being given to possible relief through federal legislation as well as through private financial channels." Private individuals offered aid. Mrs. Dorothy Hyatt of Puyallup, Washington wrote a letter to her local newspaper organizing help for Alaska and asked Seward's mayor for a list of names of families who needed aid. The Sarasota, Florida Breakfast Club offered help. Rev. Wyburn Skidmore of Glendale, Arizona's First Methodist Church, had recently been in Seward and had concern for the city as a whole and for his personal friends. Handwritten notes arrived like the one sent by John W. Ryan of Syracuse, N.Y. asking the city to put him in touch with a family with a boy who was fourteen to sixteen years old. Ryan had clothing and other items he could donate.

Stories and photos of Seward citizens like Herbert A. Smith, known locally as "Happy Jack" helped produce more letters offering help. Hap played the harmonica and could imitate any train sound – especially appropriate for a rail town like Seward. He could also imitate barnyard animals with his mouth organ if asked, and he often entertained at benefits, donating his talents to worthy causes. "The big, burly, rough-hewn Hap, a longshoreman, right now isn't sure where his next $10 is coming from, other than the Red Cross," the press reported. His home was completely destroyed, and a photo showed him with his son Ed poking around in the ruins. One of the few items he saved as he ushered his family out of their home to safety was his precious harmonica which he kept securely in his pocket. Ed and his brother Ole had worked on the "honey bucket" brigade right after the quake. "I was proud of my lads," Hap said. "They have learned the

importance of helping others – that's what I've always wanted to see from my seed." Hap had been a miner, a fisherman and a soldier. Now he was a member of Local 60 of the Longshoreman's Union. "My church has no walls – it's the golden rule," he told reporters. As he and Ed poked around the ruins of his home he reflected, "I'm not sure I'll rebuild on this spot…But I'm not pulling up anchor. I'm staying in Seward…They're going to rebuild the railroad, and the Red Cross is helping us rebuild. It's going to be all right."

That story about Hap with the photo appeared in the May 17, 1964 issue of The Morning Call from Allentown, Pennsylvania. Allentown had been a past All-American City winner. Oil City, a town in the same county, had recently won the award along with Seward. Earlier that month, Allentown and Oil City had provided a special gift to the earthquake-ravaged town along Resurrection Bay.

15 Tons by Trailer – Children's Letters -- Recovery

One of the towns that took special interested in Seward was Allentown, PA, a past All-American City. Not long after the disaster, that town began "S.O.S. All-America, Allentown" – a plan to send a tractor-trailer full of all kinds of supplies 4,700 miles to Resurrection Bay. By April 27, 1964, the vehicle was on its way – filled with everything, including a kitchen sink. Nearly 800 people donated items to fill the 40-foot trailer which, according to the local newspaper, was so crammed that there "isn't even room for a pack of cigarettes." Former mayor Jack Werner was scheduled to be on hand to participate in a ceremony that would send the mission on its way. In addition to the supplies, the local Red Cross raised $21,090 for Seward.

By May 9th the trailer was in Seward unloading with the help of ten city workers and 20 National Guard soldiers. There was so much that it took a week to unload and distribute, and the weather for early May was unusual. “Distribution of the goods over the weekend,” the press reported, “was being carried on in temperatures near freezing, with winds up to 40 miles an hour.” Seward Mayor Perry Stockton reported that 86 families had lost everything, and these supplies from Allentown were distributed to at least 50 of them. One family received an automatic washing machine; another got a stove, two complete beds, two chests of drawers, living room and dining room furniture and clothing and dishes. The 40-foot trailer had a large “Save Our Seward” sign along its side to advertise the trip. The Resurrection Bay Historical Society asked if they could keep the sign, but the Allentown group wanted to keep in on the vehicle as they returned home to further publicize the mission. After unloading and spending a few days in town, the Allentown trailer left for home.

Seward Mayor Perry Stockton eventually sent Allentown a letter: “Thanks Allentown for the All-American spirit expressed in the S.O.S. campaign to aid us after the Good Friday disaster. God Bless You.” With the letter were some gifts – a dozen books, a large fishing net, glass fish floats, colorful rocks, one of the town’s All-American City flags, and a sprig of artificial flowers, forget-me-nots. With these items was a list of 22 Seward residents who were originally from Pennsylvania. The letter and gifts went on display in a store window at Allentown. Oil City, in the same county, had become an All-American City along with Seward that year and joined with Allentown with aid. In response, Seward made them honorary residents. “Each and every person in the City of Oil City,” the proclamation stated, “has been granted all the rights, privileges

and obligations of honorary citizenship as a citizen of the City of Seward, Alaska, in commemoration of all the aid and assistance which has been given to the citizens of the City of Seward, Alaska by all the persons in Oil City, Pa."

It was now late May and recover efforts continued. Three months after the earthquake, on June 27, Seward celebrated its All-American city status. There wasn't a lot of money for a fancy celebration, and few large spaces were available for a large group. The event had originally been planned for the first weekend after Easter. There would be a parade with the high school marching band, a ceremony and all kinds of activities. Young Chris Branson went to the high school that Good Friday morning to pick up her uniform with other band members. Chris met her friend, Virginia Nelson, at the school. They were so excited. It would be the first time they ever marched in a parade.

But the parade never happened. What some people later called the "1964 Easter Disaster" made sure of that. Most children knew Virginia's father well. G.O. Nelson who occasionally drove a school bus. He and her mother, Margaret, lived along the Airport Road not far from the bay. After the shaking stopped on Good Friday, the Nelson family saw the bright light of fires where the Standard Oil tanks exploded. They decided to leave to stay with friends on higher ground, but couldn't escape from their house because the doors were jammed. Mr. Nelson had to take the hinges off. After the family got out, he put the hinges back on and locked the door. They were fortunate. Not long after the first tsunami flatted their house. Virginia lost both her flute and her band uniform. A few days later the family found their freezer and refrigerator two block away. The refrigerator was

standing upright, and when the opened its door, everything was in place except for one broken egg that had fallen out of its carton. So much for the celebration and parade.

Through May and June more condolence letters arrived in Seward. Perhaps the most poignant and inspiring ones came from children. One was attached to a letter from Mayor Walter Zirpolo of Woodbrige, New Jersey. Zirpolo wrote: "May I take this opportunity to forward to you a copy of a letter I received from one of our school students. It is a small token but at the same time a large contribution to the healthy development of children – teaching them to 'love thy neighbor' – who will go on to be our future leaders. I thought it would be of interest to you." The letter Zirpolo attached is dated April 27, 1964, addressed to the mayor and neatly printed. It reads: "We are children in Colonia #17 School. We are in the first grade. Mrs. Casteras is our teacher. We know about the Alaska earthquake. We decided to help the children who were in it. Our class sold cookies to make some money. We made $20.00. Will you please let us know where to send this money for the children? We want the children in Alaska to know that we think about them. Thank you."

In Bethlehem, PA, 10-year-old Kim Marie Shortell, a fourth-grade student at Saints Cyril and Methodius Parochial School, started a drive to collect $1000 for Seward to help equip at least one destroyed schoolroom. By May 12 the press reported she "had topped $800." Since the youngster had to get special permission from the city to conduct the fundraising, local Mayor Gordon Payrow held the money for her. Woodstock, Illinois, one of that year's All-American Cities, held an auction that collected $826.19 for Seward. In mid-June, Seward received a money order for $6.15 from the Third Grade at the Greenwood School at Woodstock. The letter accompanying it read: "Our class was

very sad when we heard that there was an earthquake in Alaska. We heard that Seward was damaged badly. We were very interested in Seward because our town of Woodstock, Illinois is an All-American city just like Seward. We wanted to help…We would like for you to pick some boy or girl of some family that lost everything in the earthquake and do something nice for them. Please buy something with the money to make them happy again. We will appreciate it if you do this for us." Seward responded a few days later: "The letter from your class and also the check in the amount of $6.15 received, and it is very difficult to express one's feelings in a matter such as this. Please convey our sincere appreciation to your class and we will see that some youngster is taken care of as outlined in the letter." As the immediate emergency diminished along Resurrection Bay and time allowed, more letters of thanks went out from Seward to others across the country. That summer the Seward Highway opened again connecting the town to Anchorage and further north. Despite all the obstacles, the town celebrated its Silver Salmon Derby in August 1964.

A year after the earthquake, on March 31, Seattle Times reporter, Stanton Patty wrote, "The wounds are healing, but the ache continues." Anger added to the pain. "Unlike Anchorage up the line," Patty observed, "Seward has lost ground since the disaster. Seward's long reign as Alaska's most important seaport may be over. The government port of Whittier nearby and Anchorage port are threatening to smother Seward." City council member Del Zentmire admitted that the town had "an uphill struggle on our hands, but we're not quitting. We are hopeful – and we are scared."

Stanton Patty's article continued, "Seward is in a fighting mood. Most of the longshoremen, Seward's mainstay, have left for work elsewhere." Before the earthquake,

90 percent of the towns economy was the longshoring payroll. “No cargo ships have called {in Seward} since December,” Patty wrote. “A freight train on the federally owned Alaska Railroad crawls to Seward once a week over still twisted tracks.” Seward’s new city manager, Fred J. Waltz, was disappointed with the Department of Interior for strengthening the Port of Whittier. “Whittier is a government port using federal monies in direct competition with a city such as Seward,” Waltz complained. A 39 million-dollar Alaska Railroad dock was among the many projects planned or under construction in Seward. A new state-city office building would soon be underway along with a new maintenance shop and power plant. But most of the workers were transients. What would become of the town once all the construction ended and the workers left? There was other good news. The Coast Guard cutter, Sorrel, would make Seward its permanent port bringing with it thirty new families. Despite the setbacks, community spirit prevailed. “Most of us wouldn’t want to live anywhere else,” Mrs. Hans Hafemeister reminded the public. She represented the State Welfare Department in Seward. “We believe we’re going to have one of the nicest, best-planned cities in Alaska when this is over.” City bond issues and federal money helped fund many projects. Seward was determined to rise again like the Phoenix, the ship the Russians build along the shores of Resurrection Bay in the 1793.

For the determination, tenacity and community spirit that rebuilt Seward after Alaska’s 1964 Good Friday Earthquake, the town of Seward received a second All-American City Award in 1965. (Seward earned a third award in 2005).

In June 1966 the new Alaska Railroad Dock was completed. Summer passenger trains began running in May 1967. That year Alaska celebrated the centennial of its

purchase from Russia. Gov. Wally Hickel arrived in town to dedicate a bronze plaque commemorating the building of the Phoenix.

By 1968 the Alaska Railroad had built a new ten-million-dollar dock. There was a new Small Boat Harbor and a nearby fish processing plant that froze salmon, halibut and prepared red caviar. Another fish-processing plant was in the works. Pioneer Alaskan Harry Kawabe helped organize the Japanese-American Development Company which capitalized $200 million to encourage Japanese investment in Seward. His nephew Albert moved to Seward to promote the plan and became prominent town booster. Three lumber companies operated in town shipping round logs and cants to Japan. This was the year Seward began its sister-city relationship with Obihiro, Japan.

In 1968 the Alaska Department of Fish & Game chartered the Viking Queen to investigate fishing possibilities in Resurrection Bay the Gulf of Alaska. The vessel found scallop beds, and in 1969, the New Bedford, Massachusetts scallop fleet sailed to Seward and eventually moved there permanently. That same year Halibut Producers Co-op sold their plant to a Petersburg concern and renamed it Seward Fisheries with Linne Bardarson as manger. They produced four million pounds of halibut in 1970 and during 1972-73 Seward Fisheries became the top producer on the West Coast. The herring fishing industry with its Japanese market – fish and eggs – flourished in Seward in the 1970s.

In April 1968 the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner – looking back four years to the Good Friday Earthquake, reported: “Easter symbolizes rebirth (the City of Seward was not twice named an All American City for nothing). The people of Seward soon recovered from their shock and grief and started planning for a new Seward economy.”

By then some in Seward didn't even want to say the word "earthquake." Many called the event "the 1964 Easter Disaster." The town wanted to look forward, not backward. Jack Werner, a leading Seward businessman, commented, "We were sick and tired of Alaska's perennial summer feasts and winter famines and we were determined that Seward's new economy would be diversified and have year around stability."

"Seward is not forgetting tourism," the Fairbanks News-Miner noted. "Located as it is in the midst of some of the world's finest fishing and hunting country and surrounded as it is by some of the world's most exquisite natural beauty, Seward has always been a favorite vacation place for Alaskans and for visitors from outside states." We had the famous Mount Marathon Race and the well-known Silver Salmon Derby. "The word is now getting to dedicated Waltonians {fishermen} that the Resurrection Bay Silver Salmon is one of the greatest sporting fish in the realm," the Fairbanks newspaper reported. "Each year more and more sportsmen from the outside states and many places in the world come to Seward to participate in this event." Seward Chamber of Commerce president, Mrs. Wilma Zentmire, commented: "We think that Seward is Alaska's ideal vacation spot and we advertise and promote Seward as THE FUN CAPITAL OF ALASKA." Kester Dotts, Seward City Manager, said: "Seward is now burgeoning forth with a diversified, stable economy that is going to handsomely reward its citizens. It is to be an economy that should be a prototype for all of Alaska." A diversified economy --that was Seward's goal -- the plan behind all the recover and rebuilding.

Geologists tell us that it's not a question of if we get another huge earthquake like the March 27th Good Friday event. It's just a matter when it will happen. It could happen tomorrow or in twenty or fifty years. But it will occur and we need to be ready. We

shouldn't live our daily lives dwelling on disaster – but we should keep it in the back of our minds. We should make sure we have supplies ready to survive on our own for about a week. We may not be as lucky as we were in 1964 when the earthquake struck in late March at a low tide in relatively good weather. If it happens in January or February in the midst of a blizzard and/or with serious wind-chills, we'd be looking at a different scenario. We can't necessarily assume all our modern technology will work – devices like our cell phones. We might even have trouble with satellite phones. It wouldn't hurt to locate people who operate ham radios and some who know Morse Code.

We need to be ready. We can't afford the luxury of forgetting.

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Doug Capra writes from Seward, Alaska. He's the author of *The Spaces Between: Stories from the Kenai Mountains to the Kenai Fjords*; the Forewords for two illustrated books by American artist Rockwell Kent, *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure* in Alaska, and *Northern Christmas* published by Wesleyan University Press; many historical articles, essays, poetry; and a few plays. In 2023 the Alaska Historical Society presented him with the Evangeline Atwood Award for his work. After a career teaching high school and college, he worked for many years as a ranger at Kenai Fjords National Park. Contact the author at capradr@yahoo.com for permission to reprint The Luxury of Forgetting.

During 2028-2019, Capra followed Rockwell Kent's journey to Alaska a hundred days later, day-by-day, week-by-week, using many sources, including the letters that went back and forth between the artist and his wife, his lover, and his friends. Here is a link to that site and some of the topics he covered. You can explore the entire site, week-by-week, by using links on the left side of this page. https://rockwellkentjournal.blogspot.com/2020/08/links-to-specific-chapters-in-this-book.html Below are two links with presentations Capra did for Alaska Historical Society Annual Meetings:

- Doug Capra – *The Last Homesteaders: John and Carolyn Davidson at Driftwood Bay* https://alaskahistoricalsociety.org/about-ahs/conference/2021-conference-presentations/
- Doug Capra – *The Turbulent Genesis of Rockwell Kent's Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska https://alaskahistoricalsociety.org/about-ahs/conference/about-ahs-conference-2022-conference-presentations/*