

# Cannikan A-test: an in depth view

Excalibur writer Robin Rowland who lived in Kitimat at the time of the catastrophic Good Friday earthquake which hit Alaska and coastal British Columbia in 1964 writes why he opposes the nuclear test in the Aleutian Islands.

By ROBIN ROWLAND

I was watching television, my parents were talking in the kitchen and my sister was in her room. It was about 8:10 pm.

As I rose to go into the kitchen, the chair behind me hit my legs; the dining room table shook. My stomach tingled; the candy dish on the table moved.

In the kitchen, my mother felt her chair move. Later she realized it was the floor moving under the chair. My father thought there had been a heavy explosion, perhaps at the local aluminum plant.

"What was that?" my mother asked.

"Earthquake," I said suddenly realizing what had happened. At 13 I was very excited about the idea.

A few hours earlier, at 5:36 pm the earth along the gulf of Alaska had moved, causing a major earthquake. The radio told of heavy damage and deaths in Anchorage.

The quake raised the beach at Kodiak two feet, a crevice broke open so suddenly and so violently it split a tree neatly in two; the main and after shocks produced gigantic tidal waves. Valdez was hit both by the quake and one of the waves. Kodiak had a dozen waves and tremors, Seward went up along with its oil tank farm, three waves washed away the village of Kaguyak.

That is how I remember, with the help of an old National Geographic, what happened on the periphery of the Good Friday earthquake.

It reminded us all that we lived on the greatest

series of faults on earth — the Pacific Ring. We had a part of the faulty earth's advantages. Twenty miles from town were the Lakelse hot springs where you could swim outdoors when it was below zero. One hundred miles to the east in the Nass valley is Canada's little known volcano. Lava Lake is a beautiful piece of unspoiled wilderness.

The Good Friday earthquake was the strongest to hit North America since 1899. At the end, 115 were dead, 4,500 homeless; Anchorage, Kodiak, Valdez, Seward and other fishing villages lay in ruin.

Slightly north at Sitka, Alaska, 16 foot waves crashed ashore. Waves hit Port Alberni on Vancouver Island and wrecked fishing boats as far south as Crescent City in northern California. Seven hundred and fifty million dollars damage was done in Alaska alone.

The memory of the terror may explain in a small way the heated opposition of the people of Alaska, British Columbia, Oregon, Washington, California, Hawaii, and Japan to the upcoming Cannikan nuclear test on Amchitka in the Aleutian Islands.

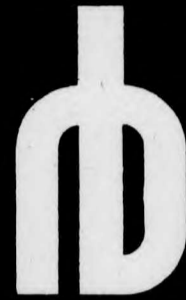
For the ecologically minded, it is part of an environmental issue with fear of radiation leakage and subarctic eco-system damage. But most important is the risk that the highly unstable crust in that region will be affected causing disastrous consequences.

To continue the Cannikan test, even if there is only a minor risk, and few say the risk is minor, is complete and utter madness.

The U.S. moved their tests from Nevada to the Aleutians and the smaller electorate. Yet I question the right of the U.S. to set off the test anywhere.

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