

MEMORANDUM KEPT BY CHIEF RADIO ELECTRICIAN HOBAN B. SANFORD, U. S. COAST GUARD

At 0130 Xray, 1 April, 1946, at which time I was awake and reading, a severe earthquake was felt. The building (CG Unit 368 - Unimak A/F Station) creaked and groaned loudly. Objects were shaken from my locker shelves. Duration of the quake was approximately 30 to 35 seconds. The weather was clear and calm.

Knowing that the volcanoes to Northward of the building had been active at one time, I immediately looked in that direction for signs of renewed activity and upon seeing none made a round of the building to see what, if any, damage had been caused by the tremor. Inspection failed to reveal any damage other than objects shaken from locker shelves. The crew were all awakened by the quake.

Intending to call Scotch Cap Lightstation on the phone to ascertain if they had felt, or been damaged by, the quake, I went to the phone in Operations, but Pitts, RM2c, had already done so and he stated they had felt the tremor and that Pickering, MoMM2c, who was on watch at the lightstation, had said that he was "plenty scared" and was going to call Dutch Harbor Navy Radio to see what information that unit might have regarding the earthquake.

At 0157 Xray a second severe quake was felt. This one was shorter in duration, lasting approximately 15 to 20 seconds, but harder than at 0130 Xray. I again looked towards the mountains for any signs of volcanic activity, but still could see none. I made a second round of the building to see if any damages had resulted but none was apparent.

The crew was gathered in the Recreation Hall discussing the shocks, their probable cause and location when a crew member stated he had talked with Scotch Cap Lightstation after the second shock, and they were attempting to contact Dutch Harbor Radio for any news of the quakes.

At 0218 Xray a terrible roaring sound was heard followed almost immediately by a very heavy blow against the side of the building and about 3 inches of water appeared in the galley, Recreation Hall and passageway. From the time the noise was heard until the sea struck was a matter of seconds. I should say between five and ten seconds at most. Ordering the crew to get to the higher ground of the DP D/F building immediately. I went to the control room and, after a couple of calls to Kodiak and Adak Net Control Stations, broadcast a priority message stating we had been struck by a tidal wave and might have to abandon the station, and that I believed Scotch Cap Lightstation was lost.

(Message: - PPP NMJ NNA NNFV NNBT TIDAL WAVE MAY HAVE TO ABANDON
THIS PLACE X BELIEVE NNHX LOST INT R INT R XXX)

Received no answer to calls or receipt for message and did not know until daylight that the receiving antennae had been carried away. Electric power was fluctuating badly and starting for the generator room to ascertain the cause and extent of damage, I found that D'Agostino, Etm1c, and Campanaro, Rm2c, had voluntarily remained behind to assist.

Water had struck the switchboards through a burst in door and the voltage control regulator was burning on the back of the board. EtMlc D'Agostino used a CO2 extinguisher while I shut down the generator. This placed the station in darkness.

Companaro found and lit a kerosene pressure lantern and we proceeded to make emergency repairs. The switchboards were shunted and the generator connected directly to the line. This restored lighting and some power circuits. Companaro was sent to call back some members of the crew to get more clothing and canned goods to be taken to the DP building in case of a second wave. While crew members were thus engaged, D'Agostino and myself made a rapid survey of damage. At 0345 I went to edge of hill above Scotch Cap Lightstation to observe conditions there. The way was littered with debris, and the lightstation had been completely destroyed. I returned to the DF Station and with D'Agostino, continued cleaning up water and muck about generators. At 0550 had one generator running full power, at this time transmitted a dispatch to the DCGO, 17ND, via Kodiak re conditions. At 0700 went down to the site of the lightstation, the sea by this time having receded to its usual limits, and in company with several crew members searched among the debris for any signs of bodies of personnel. On top of hill behind the lightstation we found a human foot, amputated at the ankle, some small bits of intestine which were apparently from a human being, and what seemed to be a human knee cap. Nothing else was found. At 0725 was informed Sarichef Beacon heard. At 0800 sent out searching parties to attempt locate any trace of Scotch Cap personnel. Searching parties later returned and reported no trace of the lightstation crew. The crew of the lightstation was comprised of Petit, CBM, OinC; Pickering, MoMM2c; Dykstra, Slc; Ness, Slc, and Calvin Flc.

Searching parties were out daily when ever weather permitted until 20 April when CBM Sievers of CGC CLOVER, which was establishing a temporary light on the site of the destroyed light, located a body which was identified as Paul J. Ness, Clc, a member of the lightstation crew. The body was viewed by several crew members and myself and all agreed that it was Ness, who had high cheek bones, slightly prominent upper incisor teeth and a small goatee. The pharmacist mate from Unit 368 had been observing the large toes on both feet of Ness and the nails were pared away from the sides. This condition, also existed on the feet of the body. The remains were wrapped in an old blanket and canvas and removed to above the high water mark, pending burial instructions from DCGO, 17ND. On 22 April at 1030 CBN Sievers; who was conducting a search to eastward, returned to Unit 368 and stated he had found another body. With several crew members I proceeded on to the location, but was unable to identify the body. The body was decapitated, disenboweled, and in a poor state of preservation. A home-made monel ring on the right hand could not be identified by any member of the crew of Unit 368.

At 1100 crew members who had been searching to westward reported they had found the right thigh and foot of a man. The foot could not be identified. These remains were gathered in old mail sacks and placed in a rough coffin. The body of Ness was placed in an individual coffin.

At 1545 23 April, the body of Ness was buried in an individual grave, the unidentified portions of bodies were buried in a common grave adjacent thereto. The graves are at the seaward edge of the western bank of the first ravine to the eastward of Scotch Cap Lightstation and are approximately 300' yards from the site of the light, near the graves of two Russian seamen. The graves are plainly marked with white wooden crosses with brass plates securely attached, and are well covered with rocks to discourage depredation by animals.

The area covered by searches was approximately 5 miles eastward, 4 miles westward from Scotch Cap Lightstation, and inland to the high water mark of the tidal wave.