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The Loma Prieta Earthquake of October 17, 1989, A UCSC Student Oral History Documentary Projec

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Abstract:
On October 17, 1989 at 5:04 p.m. a 6.9 magnitude earthquake on the San Andreas Fault shook the Central Coast of California and lasted for fifteen seconds. The epicenter of the quake lay near Loma Prieta Peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains, about ten miles northeast of the city of Santa Cruz, deep in the redwoods of Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. The focus point was at a depth of ten miles. This earthquake killed sixty-three people and injured 3,757 others, and caused an estimated six billion dollars in property damage. It was the largest earthquake to occur on the San Andreas fault since the great San Francisco earthquake in April 1906.

While the national media covered the damage in the San Francisco Bay Area extensively, far less attention was paid to the effects of the earthquake in Santa Cruz County, where the earthquake was actually centered. In the city of Santa Cruz much of the downtown Pacific Garden Mall, composed of older brick structures located on unconsolidated river sediments, collapsed, killing three people and injuring others. Ten miles to the south in Watsonville, a largely Spanish-speaking city, buildings also crumbled and people were killed. In the Santa Cruz Mountains, landslides closed many roads including Highway 17, which traverses the rugged mountains between Santa Cruz and San Jose, and for several days traffic was allowed through only in escorted convoys.

In the spring quarter of 1990 the Regional History Project sponsored a student internship class entitled, "An Interdisciplinary Oral History of the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake". Randall Jarrell, who was the project's director for many years, was the instructor for the class, which was co-sponsored with UCSC faculty members John Dizikes in history and Conn Hallinan in journalism. Five students signed up for the course. They completed eleven oral history interviews.

One of the interviews is with Barbara Garcia, who was director of Salud Para La Gente, a bilingual primary health care facility serving the greater Watsonville area. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, this community organization stepped in to address the enormous problems created by the lack of bilingual/bicultural volunteers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross. Diane Chang-Wilson interviewed eleven members of a fifth grade class at Rio

del Mar School in Aptos. Chang-Wilson's oral histories provide candid reflections from children on how they felt and experienced the earthquake. Other interviews include Quinton Skinner, who was a UCSC student and an employee at Universes Records on the Pacific Garden Mall at the time of the quake; seventy-two year old Mayme Metcalf, who managed a small apartment complex in the Beach Flats area of Santa Cruz; Ramona Noriega, a UCSC re-entry student and mother of four children; and several narrators who had committed to a program of recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs when the earthquake happened. These oral histories illuminate the diverse subjectivity of this historical event in ways that are not captured in news photos and articles, and geological or engineering reports on structural damage.

Supporting material:

Full Audio
Full Audio Steve Garvin
Full Audio Mayme Metcalf
Full Audio Michael Murray
Full Audio Ramona Noriega
Full Audio Rio Del Mar School
Full Audio Quinton Skinner

Introduction

On October 17, 1989 at 5:04 p.m. a 7.1 magnitude earthquake on the San Andreas Fault shook the Central Coast of California and lasted for fifteen seconds, although to those on the ground its interval seemed much longer. The epicenter of the quake lay near Loma Prieta Peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains, about ten miles northeast of the city of Santa Cruz, California, in the redwoods of Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. The focus point was at a depth of ten miles. This earthquake killed sixty-three people and injured 3,757 others, and caused an estimated six billion in property damage. It was the largest earthquake to occur on the San Andreas fault since the great San Francisco earthquake in April 1906.

The quake damaged buildings and roads as far as seventy miles away in San Francisco, Oakland, and the San Francisco Peninsula, particularly in areas subject to liquefaction. The highest concentration of fatalities, forty-two, occurred in the collapse of the Cypress structure on the Nimitz Freeway (Interstate 880), where a double-decker portion of the freeway fell, crushing the cars on the lower deck. One section of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge also gave way, causing two cars to fall to the deck below, leading to the single fatality on the bridge.

Because this quake took place during rush hour, there could have been a large number of cars on the freeways, endangering many hundreds of commuters. Very fortunately, two Major League Baseball teams (the Oakland Athletics and the San Francisco Giants) were about to start their third game of the World Series (the game was scheduled to start shortly after 5:30 pm) in Candlestick Park near San Francisco. Many people had left work early or were participating in baseball-watching parties at home. As a consequence, the usually crowded highways only had light traffic at the time.

While the national media covered the damage in the San Francisco Bay Area extensively, far less attention was paid to the effects of the earthquake in Santa Cruz County, where the earthquake was actually centered. In the city of Santa Cruz much of the downtown

Pacific Garden Mall, composed of fifty to one-hundred-year old brick structures located on unconsolidated river sediments, caved in, killing three people and injuring others. Ten miles to the south in Watsonville, a largely Spanish-speaking city, buildings also crumbled and people were killed. In the Santa Cruz Mountains landslides closed many roads including Highway 17, which runs between Santa Cruz and San Jose, and traffic was allowed through only through in escorted convoys.

The UCSC campus also sustained damage, although thankfully no lives were lost. On October 22, 1989 Chancellor Robert Stevens sent a letter to President David Gardner reporting a preliminary estimate of eight million dollars in structural damage, three million in property loss or damage, and nearly one million in cleanup and recovery services.[1] After the earthquake, the campus reinforced the Natural Sciences II building, and the new supporting exterior beams can still be seen today. In the McHenry Library building, stacks on the third and fourth floors of the library that had not been securely bolted collapsed, spilling thousands of books that were heroically reshelved by library staff in the weeks after the quake.

The Regional History Project is part of the University Library, and was founded in 1963 to document the history of the Central Coast of California and the history of UC Santa Cruz. Within days after the quake it became clear to project staff that this historic event cried out for documentation, and plans soon commenced to offer students an opportunity to get involved in this effort. In the spring quarter of 1990 the Regional History Project sponsored a student internship class entitled *An Interdisciplinary Oral History of the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.* Randall Jarrell, who was the project's director, was the instructor for the class, which was co-sponsored with UCSC faculty members John Dizikes in history and Conn Hallinan in journalism. Five students signed up for the course and completed eleven oral history interviews. The weekly class meetings, as well as individually scheduled meetings with students, included an introduction to oral history interviewing techniques, a broad discussion of primary

1. See *On Campus*, October 27, 1989.

sources and the strengths and drawbacks of oral history evidence, and instruction in research methods in preparation for conducting interviews. Each student was required to produce a single, indexed, sixty-minute tape-recorded interview with an accompanying introductory essay and a brief biography of the narrator. Class discussion and reading included an introduction to oral history methods, subject research in preparation for interviewing; the ethics of working with narrators and the writing of releases/contracts protecting narrators; and the preparation of a question outline for each interview. A list of prospective narrators was provided by project staff, and student interests were matched with the topics to be documented. (See appendix for several documents related to the independent study course).

The resulting oral history tapes were archived in the Regional History office. Due to the time-consuming nature of oral history publication and the staffing constraints in this very small office, nearly seventeen years have passed until this publication of the Loma Prieta earthquake interviews. We are happy to be able to make this archive of compelling documentation of this historic event available. The oral histories illuminate the diverse subjectivity of this historical event in ways that are not captured in news photos and articles, and geological or engineering reports on structural damage. Here are a few examples of this multiplicity of voices:

Quinton Skinner, who was an employee at Universes Records on the Pacific Garden Mall described his initial emotional reaction to the quake:

> I'd never ridden a doorway before. Holding on to this doorway as it . . . it was like a circus ride. I remember that one of the coherent thoughts that I had was—this is going to go one way or the other at this point. Either it's going to stop, or it's going to pursue some course that I have always feared, coming from Ohio . . . either it's going to stop, or else the sidewalk is going to cave in, the world's going to come to an end, and I'm going to be swimming . . . The funny thing was I was kind of indifferent. Basically my feeling at the time wasn't one of fear. It was largely indifference. I remember just taking stock of the situation and saying, this is unusual. Hmm. Very unusual. It was so fast. I think fear largely comes from anticipation.

Seventy-two year old Mayme Metcalf lived alone in an apartment in the Beach Flats area of Santa Cruz. When the interviewer asked her how she dealt with the earthquake she said:

Well, I got through it, so it didn't bother me. What comes, will come. I don't have no control over it. And like in the bible it says, in the last days people will run for cover and there won't be any. So why run? Stay where you're at! Get under a desk or a table or cover your head with pillows. That's my advice.

Ramona Noriega, a re-entry student and mother of four children, expressed concern over the vulnerability of her paraplegic daughter, and for the general condition of disabled people during an earthquake.

I was grateful to the neighbors that thought about us, you know. But I thought for her, if she would have been maybe alone, an older adult, she would have needed someone to help her. Because she was totally, totally dependent on all of us (crying) and she was very frightened. So I think that maybe this place should be more equipped to help people that are disabled, or under a condition where they can't help themselves.

UCSC student Steve Garvin said:

Everyone thinks it's very exciting and thrilling or something to be in an earthquake, but after it's over it's really boring as hell. You do nothing! You have no power. You might read a book, but you can't concentrate because you're so stressed. All the newspapers talk about is the earthquake, so you sit and talk about the earthquake for hours on end and then you get bored and you throw a football around or go to the beach and swim in contaminated water. (laugh) I mean, there was like nothing to do.

One of the most historically valuable interviews in this collection is with Barbara Garcia, director of Salud Para La Gente, a bilingual, primary health care facility serving the greater Watsonville area. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, this community organization stepped in to address the enormous problems created by the lack of bilingual/bicultural volunteers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross.

We stayed at the park to about one in the morning. Very quickly people were out in the park asking questions. I realized at the point that most of the people who were out in the park were Spanish-speaking. And I realized that most of the emergency response teams from the police department, the fire department, and the paramedics were not Spanish-speaking. I was very concerned with that and realized that we were going to have to . . . all of my staff (and at that point there was about thirty-five staff members), were all Spanish-speaking, and I realized that we were going to have to stay open.

Diane Chang-Wilson interviewed eleven members of a fifth grade class at Rio Del Mar School in Aptos. As she writes in her introduction, "Children were included in the aftermath of October 17, 1989. The news media printed articles on trauma for children. There was reporting of services and shelters for children. Also, there was general concern for the psychological well-being of children who experienced the "Big One."

Chang-Wilson's oral histories provide candid reflections from children on how they felt and experienced the earthquake. For example, Lia Buchanan remembered,

> Well, see, my mom makes jam and all the jam fell out of the cupboard, and when my sister came in the house she looked at all the jam, and she said that she said that she wanted to have jam and toast for breakfast. And right when the earthquake happened my mom was on the phone with one of her friends and he said that he was getting married right when the earthquake hit. So my mom wondered what would happen when they really got married!

And Ivan Wilson, who was at the E.A. Hall School playing football when the earthquake hit, said,

> It sounded like a jackhammer, and it was getting louder and louder. And when I was going to hit the ball I fell over right on my behind. (laughter) Then everybody ducked and everybody was scared. It was sort of fun because we were in the park but all around houses were blowing up and it was pretty scary for people, even for me for a while.

Several of the narrators had embarked on a program of recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs when the earthquake happened. The narrators in this volume all were able to stay sober, and their reflections on how they got through the earthquake and its aftermath are quite moving. For example, D. saw the earthquake as a spiritual experience, a catalyst in his life:

> More than ever, I wanted to be sober. I watched people coming down the street with beers in hand. I watched some drunken behavior. Maybe a little envy went on, but I just didn't want it. I think part of it too was that I was having . . . it's something that I've enjoyed in life during any kind of traumatic time, is that if I am able to get enough balance in myself, at the moment just after some kind of traumatic event (nothing of this scale had ever happened before), but any kind of traumatic event, the gift that I can get sometimes afterwards is this ability to get very philosophical and be in touch with the way I feel about the world and about life. I wanted that. I didn't want to interrupt the quality of that experience for myself by drinking. Even though it was painful. I was in a lot of pain and a lot of disorientation."

One of the other strengths of this collection is its geographic focus. Several of the narrators lived in the working-class, largely Latino/a area of Beach Flats in Santa Cruz. This impact of the earthquake on this area was not covered extensively by the news media, especially out of Santa Cruz. In a similar vein, the interview with Barbara Garcia about the effects of the quake on the largely Latino population of the city of Watsonville

also deals with an underrepresented group. Diane Chang-Wilson's interviews are with schoolchildren who happened to live in Aptos; their family's houses were located within a couple of miles of the epicenter. Finally, these interviews illuminate the experience of a diversity of UCSC students during the quake, and thus are an important part of the history of the UCSC campus.

These tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, edited for continuity and clarity, and organized into chapters. I would like to thank transcriber and student editor Lizzy Gray for her work on this volume, and my former colleague, Randall Jarrell, for her foresight in teaching the earthquake oral history class. Copies of this oral history are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; in Special Collections and the stacks at McHenry Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz; and on the UCSC Library's website. The Project is supported administratively by Christine Bunting, head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Virginia Steel.

—Irene Reti
Director, Regional History Project
May 2006

Barbara Garcia

On June 12, 1990 I interviewed Barbara Garcia, the director of Salud Para La Gente at their administrative offices on East Beach Street in Watsonville.Salud Para La Gente is a bilingual, primary health care facility serving the greater Watsonville area. The clinic is accredited by the state of California, and is funded by patient fees and various grants.

The interview is just under one hour, but is full of important information, despite its brevity. My main interest in talking to Barbara was an anthropological one: to see how power was distributed among the various emergency service providers during the night of the earthquake and the days, weeks, and months following it. I had read in various local newspapers about the poor response by both FEMA and the Red Cross to the needs of the Latino community in and around Watsonville, and was curious to learn more about the situation. I also feel it is important to make an extra effort to document experiences of such communities, who are generally not as well represented in the media and government as other communities may be.

I met with Barbara for the first time on June 4, when I expressed to her my interest in interviewing her in order to document an element of the experience of the October 17 earthquake, and my specific interest in hearing more about the Spanish-speaking community's experience of it. I gave her a list of possible questions and topics for discussion (see Appendix) and made an appointment to do the interview June 12.

We essentially followed the framework which I had initially proposed, which is why on the tape you hear changes in topic without hearing me asking questions. This approach worked well, because it let Barbara be in control of the pace and depth of each topic, while still following a directed line of questioning. I was very satisfied with the results--the story is Barbara's, and that is what I wanted. It is important to me that people speak with their own voices on subjects important to them, and I feel this happened in this interview. My interview training is anthropological, which I think accounts for this desire to let the informant speak for her/himself. This interview is certainly not journalistic, and is historical in that it is a fairly pure piece of one person's experience of an event. The interview provides information about the needs of the community, the role of Salud Para La Gente, Barbara's thoughts on how the city, county, Red Cross, FEMA, and Salud Para La Gente worked together (and didn't work together) to deal with post-earthquake needs, and also Barbara's hope for and thoughts on future changes in the organization of official emergency response to natural disasters. In reading this transcript, it is important to remember that Barbara has had years of experience in the Watsonville community and that she is a powerful and important person there.

—Jennifer Jordan

Jordan: It's June 12, 1990. This is an interview with Barbara Garcia by Jennifer Jordan for the Regional History Project at UCSC.

Salud Para La Gente

Garcia: My name is Barbara Garcia. I've worked in social services for about twenty years, and I've been involved in the Watsonville community for about fifteen years in

different capacities and different agencies, providing social services, administering services as well as direct services. The major part of that has been with the farmworker population, monolingual, Spanish-speaking of the Pajaro Valley, and also experience with youth programs in the Los Angeles area.

Salud Para La Gente is a community-based, primary care clinic. We're licensed with the State Department of Health. We primarily serve the low income [residents] of the Pajaro Valley, and that valley includes all the way to northern Monterey County, the little city of Pajaro, Las Lomas, Aromas, all the way up to Castroville, and then all the way up to the Aptos area, and some Santa Cruz people do come to Salud Para La Gente's program. We provide direct medical care, and also social service advocacy, as well as a health education program that includes pre-natal and AIDS education. We are in downtown Watsonville. We're located close to the plaza of downtown Watsonville.

The Immediate Effects of the Quake in Watsonville, California

Since the earthquake was centered in Watsonville, about ten miles out of the town, the downtown area of Watsonville experienced a lot of the major shakes in the area. It really impacted the area. Our agency stays open six days a week, nine to nine, for most part, except Saturday we go to six. So we were in the middle of our workday at 5:04 p.m. on October 17. At that point I had left the administration office and went to the clinic because of my concern with the building. We usually have at least thirty people in the building at all times, because we're providing services.

When I got down to the clinic, all the staff members except a couple were out of the building; all of the patients had since gone home. I got there about ten minutes after the quake. At that point we started pulling supplies out of the clinic. We weren't sure what structural damage we had in the building. We wanted to take out as many supplies as we could. And we set up a MASH unit at the plaza. Part of the reason for that, was that about five or ten minutes after that we had somebody brought into the clinic stating that there were several people hurt at the park. What had happened was that across the street from the park there was a bakery, and a three-story building. Much of the debris of the bricks from the facade of the building had fallen. There were people in the bakery as well as on the second floor, kids who were doing Tae Kwon Do. So some of those kids had run downstairs and had a lot of bricks and things fall on them. By about 5:30, across the street from the park, we had at least twenty people that were hurt. We had one woman who had . . . at that point we didn't know what exactly she had, we were stabilizing her, but she did . . . it was a fatality, she did die several hours later. She had a crushed pelvis. We had several kids that had broken legs, and a lot of people that were just . . . contusions and bruises from falling debris from the brick building.

We stayed at that site, at that point. It took a long time for the fire trucks to come or anybody else, the paramedics to come to take these people out of the park. They stayed there for at least an hour after the quake. We, at that point, set up as many supplies as we could. We got tarps, put them on the ground, and at that point the police department did sanction us as an emergency clinic.

We stayed at the park to about one in the morning. Very quickly people were out in the park asking questions. I realized at the point that most of the people who were out in the park were Spanish-speaking. And I realized that most of the emergency response teams from the police department, the fire department, and the paramedics were not Spanish-speaking. I was very concerned with that and realized that we were going to have to . . . all of my staff (and at that point there was about thirty-five staff members), were all Spanish-speaking, and I realized that we were going to have to stay open.

We closed down the clinic about one [a.m.] that [night], with the knowledge that we were going to have to open our doors the next morning as soon as we could, and also try to figure out a plan for what we were going to do for the next couple of days. That night I was able to get in touch with several other staff members, and we made a decision to open up for twenty-four hours a day for the next five days, especially in the light that we understood there was hardly any bilingual personnel to provide services to that population.

I took a quick tour of the community that night, and there were hundreds of people at any open space in the community, mostly the schools. We had ten tent cities by that next morning. Some of those tent cities included Callaghan Park, E.A. Hall School, the football field of Watsonville High School, all of the existing parks in the area. There were people there very concerned with going back into their homes, and also because of thousands of aftershocks that we were having.

Providing Emergency Health Care and Other Services

The next day we opened up shop. That night I [had] also put on the radio the message that staff was to come in if they could come in. So we had lots of our staff members show up the next day. We set up twelve-hour shifts. We did not have electricity in the building. At the park, the night of the earthquake, the police department had given me a police radio. I kept that radio and continued to access supplies that I needed from the city, especially a generator to keep lights on, and to plug in the phones, which was needed. That police radio really was . . . it allowed me to access the supplies I needed. The next day was a very, very hot day and we had hundreds of people coming in and asking for aspirin and . . .

Jordan: Who were the supplies coming from?

Garcia: They were our own supplies. We had supplies. By that next day, I was trying to access more supplies. And we had a hell of a time trying to access supplies. Several problems. One was that the city of Watsonville and Santa Cruz County have historical problems with communication, and networking, and working together well. Some of that experience comes from the very bad city council that we had. That was a very isolated council, and did not like the county getting into their business. That was the attitude throughout the quake. We went to the city council chambers that night to see how we could help. They told us they were totally under control and for us to leave. So we did not have a very good cooperative effort with the city. The city was trying to do everything on their own, without even an ability to talk to the community that was most

in need. So we tried to continue to knock on their doors and make sure they understood that we were well-experienced in dealing with people's needs, and also with the monolingual Spanish-speaking [population].

So we continued to stay open. The city did acknowledge our presence and also responded to my request over the police radio. I had gotten a major generator, and water, extension cords, so we could plug in the phone systems. Because if the phones are electrical like ours are, they won't work if the electricity's out. So we had to set up a generator to be able to use the phones. We didn't have 911 for a while. Then we did not know the condition of the hospital. So what our role was, was to stay open 24 hours for the next five days to allow some respite for the hospital, as well as to provide some personal care to the people in the downtown area, which we knew were for the most part Latino and Spanish-speaking.

Within the next couple of days we had an overwhelming amount of supplies and volunteers. Some of that came from people just hearing over the radio what was going on. We quickly had to organize ourselves to be able to handle the amount of volunteers and the amount of supplies coming in. By that first Saturday we were able to organize . . .what we realized was that there were a lot of people in outlying areas that were not going to be able to access information nor services, because we have a very isolated community. We have a lot of little towns without any clinics involved. Plus we had heard that our sister clinic in Hollister was down, that they had had some damage. So we called a local RV dealer and asked if he would be willing to lend us a couple of RV's so

we could go out and do some mobile clinics. He did that, and we had two mobile units by that first Saturday that went out to the outlying areas of Las Lomas, San Juan Bautista, Castroville, Pajaro and all the migrant camps, the outlying migrant camps. Through that first couple of weeks, we saw over four hundred people in those mobile units. That team had for the most part an MD or nurse, an outreach worker, and a mental health counselor. As the days went on, more and more volunteers and more and more supplies came on, and it didn't seem like it was ever going to end. We continued to provide services on a twenty-four hour basis. I stayed for several of the days that we stayed open for twenty-four hours, and there were people coming at all hours of the night, especially after some of the shakes. We had a major light that we were able to use to kind of light up our part of the street so people really found some respite there with us.

The Emergency Response from the Red Cross and Other Agencies

The Red Cross emergency response . . . I would say as a total the entire emergency response was very poor. Like I said before, the city and the county did not work very well together, so they were not communicating with each other. As far as the system of emergency response, it's supposed to be the cities and the counties are supposed to set up emergency operating centers, and those two centers worked independently with no communication whatsoever with each other, to my understanding. Our city denied help from the county. They were under the impression (and I've read their report), they were under the impression that the impact of the quake was in San Francisco, and they felt they did not want to access things that they may not need. They did not realize that they were in the epicenter of the earthquake. So their response was very, very poor, although

their emergency response people, the firemen and everybody else acted according to their roles. But [in terms of] overall vision or overall control, or leadership, they were very poor in their response.

The County Health Department was also very slow. Their health center was not open until the next Monday, so they were closed almost six days. They did not help us until several days later, and that was after much pressure by myself. I finally had to call the State Department of Health and inform them that our County Health Department was reluctant in providing help to us.

The first couple of nights there were a couple of Red Cross shelters that were open. I think one of the things that we learned about the Red Cross was that we had thought that they came and they did a lot of things for us. [But] basically nobody really knew what the role of the Red Cross was during in a disaster. Since then we've found that the role of the Red Cross was to provide shelters, and food at those shelters. They did do some of that. The critique that I have of the Red Cross basically is their lack of Spanish-speaking volunteers. Our estimate at the end of that quake was that there was only one volunteer in the Tri-County area, of San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties, only one Spanish-speaking volunteer, one Latino volunteer. So many of the people that came to our community were not Spanish-speaking, nor did they have experience in working with Latino families. So personally, I had some real bad encounters with the Red Cross, personnel-wise. Now one of the problems that is also with the Red Cross is that since it's a volunteer organization, there's not a lot of control that the Red Cross has over the

volunteers once they're there. And there's a real poor coordination, at least that I saw, happening. So that you could never find somebody that was in decision-making power. You always had these little encounters with these little volunteers that would have attitudes, and it got to be very difficult for you not to have a very negative attitude about the Red Cross because of the representation that they had of the volunteers.

I learned very quickly that I wasn't going to negotiate with anybody unless they had authority to do so. I met with the Tri-County directors of Red Cross and tried to inform them of some of the issues that we had. Several things occurred, some of them by the volunteers of the Red Cross. One came in and critiqued what we were doing at the clinic, wanted to know what we were doing, and questioned two doctors who were providing care. She was a nurse and she was a volunteer. We were very offended by her attitude, and she wasn't very cooperative, just came in as if she was in control and was taking over the community. And that gave us a very bad impression of the Red Cross.

The next thing that we had to deal with was the fact that the Red Cross had sent blankets in right across the street from one of our buildings. (We had four buildings in the area.) And we had a near riot, because the Red Cross did not want to accept the blankets and the guy who was driving the truck saw all these people wanting blankets, and started throwing blankets to people. That caused a mini-riot in the middle of our street, and we had to call the police to come in to try to control the situation. So we were very, very concerned with the role of the Red Cross, with the lack of coordination of the Red Cross, and also the lack of volunteers in the Red Cross that were Spanish-speaking or

bilingual/bicultural. But we tried to continue to work with them. And they opened up several shelters in the community.

There was a really racist attitude by the city council. They were totally paranoid. They felt that we were going to riot, and they brought in the National Guard. Not too many people know that the city of Watsonville called in the National Guard to control the people in the parks. The Red Cross wanted to consolidate the tent cities because they needed to get people in major areas. Interestingly enough, they pulled them out of the schools, and the schools were wanting to start school the next week. There was a real lack of sensitivity by the school district, I felt, in responding to the people who needed the shelters. The shelters that were created were very isolated. They were very hidden from the major community. And they looked like military encampments. It rained several days later and they were muddy military encampments. Many people were moved by military trucks; their stuff was just thrown in the trucks, they were put in the trucks and taken to different shelters that they had [been] consolidated [into]. Those shelters became the [County] Fairgrounds, Callaghan Park . . . not Callaghan Park, Callaghan Park in fact became a very independent park and there was a great deal of controversy around that. I'll talk about that later. The established shelters were in Ramsay Park, in this area, and the Fairgrounds.

The first couple of days the Red Cross was serving bagels. They were not very . . . not that bagels are bad, but they were not very culturally in tune to what people needed. People were still working. Two days later after the quake the fields were still being

picked. And people had to go to work. If you did not make it there for dinner at a certain time that they wanted you to, which they could not control because of the work situation, you would not get any dinner. There were a lot of people who became advocates within the Red Cross shelters and advocated very strongly with the Red Cross to start be a little more sensitive culturally [to] what was going on with the people working.

The Red Cross had a hard time working with the city as well. There was a particular park, Callaghan Park, that neighbors had moved into. The city did not want to keep that as a shelter. They wanted people to move into the more isolated, unseen military encampments. And this group refused to do that. This park is on a major thoroughfare through the city, and the city, in my opinion, did not want to have an eyesore in a major thoroughfare in the city, and tried to force this group to move. The night before the National Guard had come in, I had seen how the city of Santa Cruz responded to the homeless population.

Jordan: Which night was that?

Garcia: Probably that Thursday or Friday night. Apparently the Civic [Auditorium] had a leak in it. So they were moving people from the Civic Center to another shelter. They brought in the transportation system, which is a transportation system that serves the entire county. They brought in buses and moved them with much dignity to the next shelters. That was very different from how they treated the Mexicans in our community.

They basically threw them in trucks and passed them off to the next shelter, with no regards to much of their dignity, from my understanding from a lot of people's comments to me, and also some of the things that I saw myself. So we were very angry, a lot of Latino activists, especially since they continued to want to move people, and basically supported the people in Callaghan Park to stay where they felt more comfortable about staying.

That political situation became more and more heated over the issues of environmental issues. That was the issue throughout the shelters that I was concerned with, was environmental issues. Through that process we provided medical services to all the shelters through mobile units, and also having the nurses visit all the shelters. The county did finally by the next week get the public health nurses to the shelters, and tried to incorporate some of their services.

One of the critiques was that this County Health Department did not respond in a more proactive way around infectious diseases. They were waiting for things to break out, instead of being more proactive and doing assessments on families in there, and finding out that there were kids with chicken pox or whatever . . . so we were real concerned about that. We were also concerned with the lack of the city . . . because of the fact that the city does not have a health department, and only the county does, and the fact that the city and the county did not cooperate very well in the past, they were very . . . They did not have any medical expertise and were telling people to drink the water. We were very concerned with the water and the condition of the water due to the fact that the

tests had not been completed. We have a community that is in very close proximity . . . You go past one block and you're in Monterey County and you come back one area and you're in Santa Cruz County. And in Pajaro, which is one block away, you cross over a bridge and you're in Pajaro. On the other side, in Pajaro, the water was bad; in Watsonville it was okay. And it was very difficult to explain to the city council that they should not encourage people to drink the water like that until the tests were all done, and to tell people to use bleach. We had a very innovative approach to the bleach issue. We were an AIDS provider of prevention, and part of our AIDS prevention program has safe sex kits that include not only condoms and information, but also bleach bottles, a couple of ounces of bleach. So we took thousands of those bottles and passed them out to people and taught people how to use them, We took those out to the shelters; we took those out to the parks where people could use them to make sure . . . unless they were drinking bottled water.

(sigh) The city had no translators, and even once the inspectors came in to inspect the home, there were signs they would put up: green meant that your house was okay, yellow meant that it was limited occupancy, red meant that you had to evacuate, you couldn't be in the building because it was unsafe. These signs were not in Spanish. They were only in English. People didn't understand them. We became a major translator for the city.

That first Sunday of the quake we put together a big party. We fed over fifteen hundred people in the park, and basically encouraged, if not forced, the city council and other

members to make presentations. We would translate for them. We had a lot of political battles with the city council. Historically, we had just been going through an election process of a Supreme Court ruling to go from an at-large election, which really kept a lot of Latino representation from the city council, to a district-wide election. We were right in the middle of that when this quake happened. **this needs to be footnoted** The city council was very, very paranoid, as well as reluctant to work with any Latinos in the community, because we were in the process of a change in power within the city. Watsonville is sixty to seventy-five percent Latino. We had one Latino on the city council who was basically representing the developers. So he really was not representing the majority of the community members' concerns.

So we were in the middle of that. We had campaigns going on very strongly. We utilized a lot of people who were working on different campaigns. They had just been doing door-to-door voter registration, and so we used those same people doing door-to-door registration as assessments. We put together a damage assessment. We had over two hundred volunteers that first weekend. We had not only the mobile units and not only the twenty-four hour service that we started, but we became a major social service provider in the community. For instance we had a plumber who came, and during the damage assessments that people would do, because we had over forty, fifty, sixty, seventy people coming in that morning, students from the campus and other volunteers who wanted to do something, so we gave them assessments. They went out door-to-door. We blocked out the city and gave them chunks, utilizing the same experience we had with voter registration. We went door-to-door and asked people how they were

doing, gave them resources, talked to them about their water, talked to them about the kind of services they could get, talked to them about the shelters, the food distribution, what's going on there, and then identified some of the needs that they had. At that point we had a volunteer plumber. We also identified those people that needed plumbing. [The volunteers] came back with those assessments, whatever addresses they were, put [those addresses] up on the wall, whatever they needed, whether it be food or water or whatever. Then a volunteer plumber would come out and take those addresses down, go out and fix some of the plumbing. I think we fixed seventy homes within the first three or four days we were there. This is just one plumber doing all this stuff.

I had to be a very strong advocate with the Red Cross and local health care systems. I had to really be very vocal and very, very angry with the local health services to [get them to] respond to the needs. Fourteen miles away sitting in the county seat was, as far as I was concerned, a thousand miles away. They were very out of the loop about what was going on here. Finally, [after] about the first week we did get a meeting with the CPO's in the areas and just tried to communicate with each other about what each of us were doing. And it was during that time that I had my worst experience with the County Health Department, in which they told me that all the people needed in our community were aspirins, and they didn't need all the services we were providing. We quickly had to be political with the county.

We quickly got demystified about what the Red Cross was all about. The Red Cross basically is seen, and . . . I mean, I even had this impression of the Red Cross, that the

Red Cross would come in and do everything for us. And they're very limited in what they do. The medical services they provide . . . they have nurses, volunteers, but they are not even allowed to give oxygen. The amount of services they can do is triage, basically looking and finding out what they need, and referring them out to the hospitals or whatever services are available in the community, and maybe aspirins. But as far as any other types of care they can not give, they do not give. And then they just feed the people at the shelters. We thought they did a lot. But they did a limited scope of work. And the Red Cross, from my understanding, nationally only has one percent Latinos within their whole national volunteer base. Which is a very dangerous situation due to the fact that many . . . well, when you look at California, the largest minority that there is, is Latinos with Spanish names who are monolingual Spanish-speaking. You would think that the Red Cross would need to be prepared bilingually, trilingually, for communities. If this happened in the San Diego Valley, or in the middle of LA, or in Pacoima, you would have a real situation where many people would not be able to access information because of the lack of Red Cross's ability to talk to them. The Red Cross is made up of volunteers; it's made up of local people; it's made up of people nationally who run around working on disasters. And so you have a lot of people who have a lot of expertise in disaster response. But they don't have a very strong cultural diversity program. So that became a real problem within the community.

Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]

The Red Cross was just one of many problems that we had. FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency] took forever to come into the community, and when

they did come they didn't have any bilingual materials. They blamed it on Hurricane Hugo, which had happened previous to the earthquake. Nor did they have staff members who spoke Spanish, when they first came to town. We personally called Congressman Leon Panetta, to make sure that FEMA was aware that we were aware that they were not prepared to come into the community. The other thing too was in the first meeting that we had with FEMA, I personally asked the question, if people without documents were eligible for services. And they said no. I walked out of that building to the nearest media people I found and made that report to them. And within the next day or two FEMA had changed their response to that.

So FEMA has provided a lot of problems for community members, and their ability to access for damages done to their home became a really bureaucratic nightmare. In fact, most people are still dealing with it, and we're already nine months into the year after the quake. And so it was . . . all the disasters. In our opinion, the earthquake happened and then the disasters started. And those disasters were the federal emergency response agencies, as well as our own city council, and our own city. Our own city was terrible as far as their attitude. They were very racist, and the fact that here they were dealing with the largest community of their city, which they had totally ignored for the last fifty years, it was very obvious that they did not know how to even meet the needs of the community, or less, even want to.

The press coverage for the Watsonville area. I think I have to blame some of that on the city. The city, again, was watching TV. I just finished reading their report. And you could

tell in the report that they were very impressed by the Nimitz freeway and the Bay Bridge, and it took them days to realize they were the center of attention. So they did not do the kind of press coverage that even we did in our agency. I think we brought more attention to this area than the city did. I realized that we were not going to get coverage by the local media. I realized what was going on, that Watsonville was the epicenter. And we quickly started talking to every major Spanish-speaking media that we could get our hands on, and all the media that we could regarding the area. So we contributed to the press coverage. But again, the World Series was going on, you had major press there in San Francisco, and I think that's why most of it was centered there. The Latino community was just basically ignored. Most of the politicians that came to town ignored the Latino community, because we were ignored by the public officials. We don't have any representation there, and they were not bringing people to come to look at the epicenter of the earthquake. So the city of Watsonville contributed to the lack of press coverage, as far as I was concerned.

Community-based Organizations

One of the things that we've learned from the quake is that you have your natural disasters, which are brought on by nature, and then you have your unnatural disasters, which we live with everyday. In our community we had an unnatural disaster of the lack of housing, the lack of political representation, the lack of bilingual personnel, and the lack of, really, resources for the community. We don't have a lot of CPO's in the community providing services to people. We have a minimal mental health program in this community. We are one of the major providers of services. We were at one time the

smallest agency in this community, and now we're one of the largest agencies. In comparison to communities I see, we're a very small agency. We had on the unnatural Richter scale a 7.1 earthquake also. So you add the 7.1 unnatural disaster to the 7.1 earthquake, and in reality we had a 14.2 earthquake.

We're trying to use our model of what happened here to help other communities. One of the things that we're going to do is we're working . . . I've just been asked to sit on a national Red Cross Task Force on Cultural Diversity to look at the issue that in most minority communities the only power bases that we have are community-based organizations. The only place where you see us congregating in a situation where you can access our expertise, is in community-based organizations. We're not in the schools. We're not in the government agencies. We're mostly in community-based organizations. That's our political base. And in order for the Red Cross to access who we are, they need to deal with community-based organizations. FEMA needs to acknowledge community-based organizations. FEMA only recognizes only recognizes cities and counties. They do not recognize community-based organizations. After this earthquake they did, because the city here just felt apart. They were totally disorganized. [There were] stories that they were out on the highway detouring major trucks with supplies coming to town, because they couldn't handle the overflow. Not because the need wasn't there, but they didn't want to deal with all the stuff that was coming into town. And so they were detouring major trucks with supplies out of town. That's the insensitivity that we had going on in our community.

So the outside agencies like Red Cross and FEMA have to really assess each community they're in, in order to assess what kinds of services, what kinds of things they can kind of dovetail on. The community-based organizations in our community are very strong, and they're very sensitive, and they have a lot of experience of working with the community. We were pretty much shined on by the major players within relief. Although we were providing major relief, we were pretty shined on by FEMA. The Red Cross, of all the groups, really was the one who most responded to what our critiques were, and most immediately would try to do something about it. That was because we finally got a Latina from Washington, D.C. to come out. She was very responsive to some of our concerns, actually moved people around, took people out of major leadership roles. Part of the issue was that no one had experienced this level of a crisis or emergency before. The Red Cross is doing a reevaluation of their disaster responses. FEMA has to do a revamp of their responses. So this caught us by surprise, caught us with our pants down, actually, and it's made the major relief programs review again their ability to respond to a major natural disaster, especially in the kind of cultural communities we have. It brings up all of the major issues, their lack of affirmative action, and the fact that they are not representing the community that they serve.

The quake brought to a community that was already in a natural disaster a lot more pain and a lot of losses. We had over 500 homes lost, over 178 businesses lost. Our downtown area looks like a ghost town. Major buildings are not there anymore. During the process of that, mental health issues became a very big issue. In fact, today we're still dealing with aftershocks. We still have kids who are still dealing with that. We still have kids

coming into the clinic emotionally traumatized, not wanting to go to school, afraid that something's going to happen.

I don't see us being able to really repair ourselves from the quake for at least another five years, economically ten. I mean, we were already at a zero percent vacancy rate, and now we have almost 2000 people living in FEMA trailers that took forever to come. Red Cross has never had shelters as long as they did here. I think their shelters lasted thirteen weeks, something like that. They've never had people stay in shelters that long. And a lot of that was based on the fact that there was no place to put them. And so they were forced to bring in the trailers. FEMA was very reluctant to send in the trailers because there was a hurricane in North Carolina, Hurricane Hugo, which after it left Puerto Rico hit North Carolina; they brought out thirty trailers and only three were used. So they were saying, "Well, we're going to bring out these trailers and they are not going to be used." Well, let me tell you. 150 trailers are here and 150 trailers are being used, and there's still more trailers needed. We have probably about 400 people in motels still, in the motel voucher program. We still have people living in shelters.

Some of the issues that came up with the Red Cross I thought were very ridiculous. The Red Cross didn't want to provide shelters for people who were already homeless, which was to me idiotic. As long as they were already here, they need to shelter everybody. The homeless were affected by the quake as well. And some of the mental health needs of the community. The Red Cross had 52 million dollars [in donations] left over from the quake, and were about ready to leave the community, until a lot of people in

communities in the Bay Area put pressure on the Red Cross to leave their money here. Salud Para La Gente applied for a 250,000 dollar grant to provide post-quake services. We did receive that amount from them.

We're trying to work with the Red Cross. The Red Cross is a volunteer organization. So it's only as [good] as its volunteers. We believe that we need to be much more involved with the Red Cross. We need to make them more aware and more responsible to the community that they are serving, more responsible to their contributors. And we believe strongly that the only way we're going to do that is by being involved with them, and basically giving them that direction. They certainly won't find out by themselves. So that's one of the reasons why I'm working with them on a national level to try to give them some ideas about cultural diversity. What we'd like to see happen since we're a primary care clinic . . . there are over 500 primary care clinics in California. We would like the State Department of Health to work with us in providing some direction for health centers as part of their licensing or funding procedures to have to have a disaster plan, and part of that is to have to have a letter of agreement with the Red Cross. We believe strongly that if our staff had been trained as Red Cross volunteers, that many of our staff members could have been running some of the shelters, and been in the forefront of providing services where people know them, they see them and they know them every day. I think that would have alleviated a lot of the issues that we had, and also provided a bit more quality care. Even in a disaster, people need dignity and they need quality service. You don't treat people . . . you know, throw things in a bag and just give it to them. You do it in a way that's dignified. People are already going through

enough trauma. They don't need to be treated like peasants. And that's how I saw people being treated. We opened up a distribution center by force because the Red Cross doesn't receive donated items. So you have hundreds of people coming in bringing shoes that don't match, bringing old clothes, wanting to donate, wanting to contribute. We probably had a twelve-foot by twelve-foot filled with clothes. We had to figure out quickly . . . I had to hire twenty staff members to be able to do all these services that I'm talking about: the RV units, the translation in the social services division . . .

Jordan: Where did the funding come from?

Garcia: The funding came from out of our pocket. And part of the issue was the fact that we decided, the board and myself decided that we were going to have to do it, because no one else was going to do it. We said, "If we don't do it, it's not doing to get done." We made the commitment financially to do it. We said, "We're going to have to fight FEMA for it later.

Jordan: Where does the funding come from for the clinic itself?

Garcia: We get money from our patients who pay fees, and we also get grants. We have a grant to provide for the farmworker population. We have a grant to provide for the amnesty population. We get different kinds of grants, like with the AIDS program. So we utilized some of our savings to provide these services, and I made a commitment that I would fight FEMA all the way for it. Because part of the role of FEMA was they were not

recognizing community-based organizations as emergency relief programs. They paid the city. They paid the county, who, as far as I'm concerned didn't do the quality work that we did within the community. Yet we got denied in our FEMA request to get back money that we had put out. And we haven't [inaudible] processing with them now. As of June 12 ,we still don't know from them. So we're out almost 250,000 dollars, our cash flow. And we're beginning to feel it now.

Planning for Future Disasters

Hopefully through this terrible situation we went through, there will be other . . . that we can learn from our mistakes. One of the biggest concerns I have is that I don't see anybody doing anything. It's like we forgot. It's not happening again. "The next one? Oh yeah, yeah. We have to do that." Even us, locally, right after Earth Day we had people who came and cut down the PG&E lines. So we were out of electricity for the whole day, which put all of us back in the real traumatic issue of, "Oh no, not here again. Where's the extension cords?" "We gave them all away." "Where's the batteries?" "We gave them all away." "Where's the lights?" "We gave them all away."

It's very easy to be just feeling like, oh it's gone. It's not going to happen again. But we have to recognize we are in a natural disaster zone, and we have to be prepared. We just went through our five-year strategic planning as an agency, and I'd never seen a strategic plan include a natural disaster as part of our threats. And it's true. We have to be prepared for a natural disaster. We were in the midst of purchasing a new building for the clinic. Now that we've finished our plans, we've included the ability to be on

generator. Also, our facility could also be used as a shelter. We have two large multi-purpose rooms and also a kitchen that could possibly be used for feeding. So that way we're trying to prepare ourselves so that our facility will not have to face what we faced what we faced the last time, unless we have major structural damage, which could be possible.

So we're creating disaster plans for ourselves, and I've done a lot of workshops on disaster preparedness. I never thought that we would have to deal with the level of care and the level of services that we did provide. I never thought that we would have to do that. No one was prepared. Not even the disaster experts were prepared for this. I commend our agency, because I think we did very well in the process. And I hope that we can model for some other programs ways to be able to be prepared for a natural disaster.

Jordan: What about the conference that you are going to be going to with the Red Cross?

Garcia: I've gone to a conference in Puerto Rico. I sat in with the people running the clinic in Puerto Rico for the hurricane. The difference between them and us is they had two days notice that it was coming. (laughter) And also on pesticide poisoning that happened in Florida, where sixty farmworkers just ended up coming to the clinic being sick and being poisoned. There was a lot of common threads that we all had to deal with as far as how you deal with people coming in to the clinic. For instance, in our agency we

had major meetings every night deciding on our next organizational chart. I've never made so many organizational charts in my life.

I've never implemented services as fast as I did in those few days after the quake. In fact, we had a major staff retreat a day before the quake. We purchased the building across the street, an empty, big building. We brought staff in there to get a feel for what it would be like. We had our plans of our new building there, and we also did some future planning visions of what we wanted to do. One of the plans was to have a mobile unit. And when they asked me what about mobile units, I said, "Well, I thought that was a good idea and we could look into it, take the time to do it." Never did I think that we were going to have that mobile unit within four days. Now whenever we have retreats we get really scared that something's going to happen the next day. (laughter) Although I tell you, that retreat really allowed us to be much more prepared, because we had gone through a whole day retreat together so we were pretty close. Everybody had gone through a real . . .you get kind of tied in with each other once you go through those day-long retreats. So we were somewhat prepared, at least emotionally about it, with each other.

I had to send staff home. Basically, we were survivors helping survivors. And all of us, after five days of staying up for 24 hours you're not very useful in that condition. So part of the important piece of providing disaster relief is to help those who help other people to make sure that they're . . . . Because there're lot of symptoms that start happening. You can't talk right. You can't keep [up] a conversation. You can't finish a sentence. You're just on the edge. For the most part our staff worked very well together. We had a medical

exam everybody went through every three days to check in how they're doing, how they are feeling, have they eaten because many of us forgot to eat, forgot to drink water. We had to take care of ourselves as well. So we did that. And a lot of us got sent home. (laughter) Take a couple of days off.

It was really bad. I was telling one of my staff members they had to go home, and I didn't realize they didn't have a home to go to. So many of us had never . . . I went to my home once and everything was in the middle . . . and I walked out. So many of us still had things that we hadn't even finished for ourselves while we were coming out working. Many staff members were very scared to come back to work. They didn't want to be in the building any more, and so we had a lot of traumatic events happening even within the clinic. We provided lots of mental health counseling for staff members, and also encouraged people to take vacations. And we're still kind of coming out of it. We're kind of feeling the edges. I know I am. After six, seven months, I'm ready to take another week off. Especially when you're talking about it all the time.

Probably once a week, I've had researchers, somebody questioning, oh yes, I mean every department you can think of coming in and asking us . . . I'm very open. I'd like to spend time doing it, because I think it's a real important lesson for us to learn. We feel very fortunate we were able to respond. And the fact that we were open . . . had we been closed, we probably would have been slower to respond. But because we were in the middle of our workday, and we saw the whole impact of what happened in this community, we decided we had to do it. We're a major player in this community in

providing services to the Latino community. We are the power representation of it. We don't have it in the city council. We don't have it in the county. We don't have it anywhere. And so community-based organizations, Latino-based are the power brokers within the community. We were the only ones who could call a major event happening. We were the only ones who could fund those kinds of things. And so we really took that responsibility very strongly.

Jordan: Anything else you want to add?

Garcia: I think that's it. I think that it's real important that that history be told, because this quake, as many of you can see out in the community at large, is seen as the San Francisco accident, and in reality it happened in Watsonville to a very large, poor Latino community.

Jordan: Thank you very much.

Question Outline—Barbara Garcia

Brief Biography
Your experience of the earthquake itself
Your experience the night of and day after the earthquake, personally, and in terms of the emergency health care needs of the community.
Salud Para La Gente's involvement in emergency health care in that same time period
Your impressions of the Red Cross emergency response
Salud Para la Gente's relationship with the Red Cross and local health care services during the days after the earthquake
Your impressions of the Red Cross short -term response, including the official tent city and other relief efforts.
Your impressions of the Red Cross's relationship with the Watsonvile community, or with elements within the Watsonville community.
What were your expectations of the Red Cross's role in emergency health care? Were your expectations met? What could the Red Cross have done differently to better meet the needs of the community, if anything?
How do you feel about the press coverage for the Watsonville area?
Do you feel that outside agencies responded sensitively to the needs of the Watsonville community, both in emergency, short-term, and long-term ways?

Quinton Skinner

I chose Quinton Skinner as an oral history subject for two reasons: one, he was working at a store in the middle of the Pacific Garden Mall at the time of the earthquake and so experienced firsthand the immediate effects on an area that was perhaps struck as hard as any throughout Northern California; two, as an employee of an independent downtown business that struggled to regain its footing and succeeded, Skinner was in a position to witness and describe the trials of a small business in that extraordinary situation and the steps it took to achieve restoration. The story of Universes and Discount Records, both owned by Ernest Hill, ends (and begins) happily, as on May 17, 1990 Hill opened a reconstructed store at the old Discount Records location, combining stock from the two stores.—Jonathan Shapiro

Shapiro: So the first thing that I need is your background, biographical information, your name, what you are doing in Santa Cruz, where you come from.

Skinner: My name is Quinton Skinner. I grew up in Columbus, Ohio. I moved out here approximately four years ago to go to the University of California, Santa Cruz. I'm a fourth-year student here, about to graduate. I'm graduating this December 1990. That's really the reason I came out here, was to go to school.

Shapiro: Were you living in Santa Cruz when the earthquake hit October 17?

Skinner: Oh yeah, I was. It was fall quarter of my senior year at school, and I was doing my usual thing of working part time and going to school full time. I lived at the time, and continue to live about a five-minute walk from the heart of downtown. I live on Canfield Street. It's next to the San Lorenzo River, and it's across the Laurel Street Bridge. I live a few hundred feet from the river. I can see it from my window.

The Heart of the Pacific Garden Mall During the Loma Prieta Earthquake

Shapiro: So where were you at 5:04 p.m. October 17, 1989. There was a very large earthquake in Santa Cruz County felt throughout the Bay Area. And everybody knows what they were doing at that time if they were involved in it. What were you doing at that time?

Skinner: I was at work at the time.

Shapiro: Where is work?

Skinner: At that time it was Universes Records on Pacific Avenue on the Pacific Garden Mall. I was working the usual 1:00-8:00 shift. I was in the heart of the Mall.

Shapiro: Where is Universes exactly?

Skinner: It was in the middle of the Pacific Garden Mall, about halfway between Mission [Street] and Laurel [Street], which you could arbitrarily draw as endpoints of the Mall.

Shapiro: What's the nearest cross street that you would get on to Pacific?

Skinner: Soquel [Avenue]. It's a couple of doors from Soquel, across the street from Woolworth's [store].

Shapiro: Okay. So you were working at the time the earthquake hit?

Skinner: Yeah, I was working at the record store.

Shapiro: What *exactly* were you doing when the earthquake hit?

Skinner: Well, my co-worker, John, his shift ended at 5:00, and he had left. He had forgotten his bike and he came back for it. It was stuck in the back of the store. At the exact moment the earthquake hit, that is 5:04, I was actually listening to a record on the turntable that had been made by someone who had worked at the store before. It was a vanity press kind of thing. And John came back to pick up his bike. He had his bike, and he was standing in the doorway. We were laughing about this album, because it was really just one of the most absurd pieces of music you've ever heard in your life.

Shapiro: Some guy who you used to work with?

Skinner: Yeah, it was the most twisted cabaret jazz you could possibly imagine. It was just hilarious. And we were debating things like, is it supposed to be funny? What was Sam up to? We were literally in the middle of having a good laugh about this album, which I would love to hear again, but it was lost in the dust. But we were literally laughing about it at the time when the said seismological event occurred.

Shapiro: So what was your first impression of it? When it . . . if you can remember back, and some people can't, but if you can remember, what was the first thing that you thought?

Skinner: Well, the way the building was structured, we were on the ground floor. It was a very long and narrow store, and upstairs from us was a dance academy where they held dance classes. You could hear them dancing upstairs. You could hear them creaking around at times. And my first impression was that they were doing something incredibly loud up there, because it sounded as if someone had dropped an incredibly heavy desk or something on our ceiling, their floor. It was just a very loud bang. The sound hit before anything else. It sounded like something was going on upstairs. So in that second before I realized what happened, I thought, well, someone upstairs was being very, very irresponsible. And I felt a bit cross about it.

And beyond that, I kind of placed the sound . . . It was an incredibly loud sound. I thought it had come from upstairs, but then I was able to place it more, and it sounded as if there was someone in some room . . . God, in the core of the earth banging a hammer on a giant anvil, Augustus or something down there in the core of the earth, forging some kind of magic story.

Shapiro: It sounded like it was coming from beneath you?

Skinner: Yeah, and indeed it was.

Shapiro: That's right.

Skinner: Yeah, the first thing *was* the loud sound. It was one of the loudest sounds I've ever heard. That, of course, was followed by . . .The idea of a thousand airplanes on the roof. It was just incredibly loud, the sound. It was just . . . You couldn't hear anybody. I don't know if people were screaming, or panicking, or saying what the hell, because the sound was drowning everything out.

Shapiro: How long did it take you to register that, hey, this a major earthquake?

Skinner: Well, I didn't know if it was major, because I came from Ohio. I'd lived here for three years, and the only earthquake I'd ever felt before was one in Ohio.

Shapiro: So you had felt an earthquake there before? I didn't think they got earthquakes back there.

Skinner: I mean, it was the kind of thing you might feel if somebody was pounding a jackhammer next door or something. If you didn't know that's what it was. Just the slightest little vibration. In the Midwest it's very big news if you have a tiny little earthquake, which here you might not even notice. So I didn't know that it was major at that point. I did register the fact that it was an earthquake once the motion started, which was . . . something like a fun house, where you have to get . . . you know, like in a fun house where you have to get from point A to point B, but the floor is divided into sections and it's going back and forth. And each section isn't congruent with the next one, and basically the rules have been turned upside down because the very ground you are standing upon is in motion. I'm sure at some point the word 'earthquake' came to mind.

Shapiro: So what did you first do? How long did it take you to react, and what was your first impulse? And did you act on that impulse, or did you do something else?

Skinner: I guess I could just run though the whole chronology of the thirty seconds.

Shapiro: Fifteen seconds. It was fifteen seconds.

Skinner: Was it? Okay. I could run through the chronology of that million years. It seemed . . . I guess, if you had asked me at the time I would have said it was about thirty seconds.

Shapiro: I guessed fifteen myself, actually.

Skinner: You were outdoors.

Shapiro: I was outdoors when it happened. Other people guessed a minute. There's really a discrepancy.

Skinner: No sense of time. Well, basically the store was wooden, and it started to shake, and I don't know if it's true or not, but I swear I could see the walls undulating. It's kind of like if you were to take a shoebox or a cardboard cracker box and sort of bend the sides so that you were kind of turning a rectangle into . . .

Shapiro: I see.

Skinner: And the creaking of the wood was incredible. It sounded like there were decades of creaks that were being saved up, and they all came out at once. It sounded like a squeaky bed. I looked back. There were maybe six or eight customers in the store.

Shapiro: What were they doing?

Skinner: Well, they were doing . . .they were doing the earthquake dance. (laugh) Immediately the power went out. After about two seconds the power went out. And the store was very cave-like.

Shapiro: I've been in that store. It's very long. High ceilings.

Skinner: Yeah. And the only light other than electricity is from the windows in the front. And that's only good for about ten feet. Once you get back there, it's completely dark. Immediately the power went out. The stereo died, which was good, because the needle was bouncing all over the record. The fluorescent lights that were suspended from some kind of chains or something were swinging back and forth. Tapes were flying off the walls. The customers were . . . the customers have very narrow spaces to negotiate between the racks. It's a very narrow store, very packed, very inefficient. They were rocking back and forth. And one of the funny things was . . . you know, you don't have many times like that in your life where everything really is up against the wall. That's when you experience a very natural reaction. And the reaction of the people in the store was to look at me. Because for some reason, I was the authority. I was running the store, and because that was happening in the store they looked at me.

Shapiro: So everyone turned around and looked at you?

Skinner: Yeah, they all looked at me as they were rocking back and forth among . . . It wasn't really a dangerous atmosphere. There were tapes flying, but tapes don't hurt you. I mean, the threat was deadly, but there wasn't anything lethal going on.

Shapiro: Things didn't fall from the ceiling, or anything like that?

Skinner: No, they didn't. They looked like they were going to, but they didn't. They were fluorescent tubes. Somebody could have been cut. But basically the threat was that the building was going to fall down. And they looked at me and I looked at them. No one really had any ideas as to what to do, because no one was able to even to stand up straight. John, my co-worker, was yelling at me, "Quinton, get out from behind the counter! Get in the doorway of the store." He had read his earthquake safety pamphlets. So I did. I negotiated around the counter and to the front door of the building. The travel time was probably a couple of seconds longer because of the motion, because I was walking like a drunk, basically. I was reeling and staggering. But after I made it to the doorway, the window that I was standing next to broke and a lot of glass flew. It seemed to kind of explode. Later on I found that the door frame was such that the front door wouldn't close. All of the framing was bent. The window just couldn't stand the bending and . . .

So I made it to the doorway. At that point I kind of quit looking back at the people.

Shapiro: Was there noise? Could you hear the people making any noise? Were they screaming, or . . .

Skinner: No. I couldn't hear a thing. All I could hear was the rumble, and feel the violence. The rumble and the creaking. It was as if someone had the building on a board. Like when you're a child and you have a board, or if you're an adult and are so inclined, you have a board with a tin can under it and you try to balance on it. That sort of creaking and instability. It was like someone had placed a giant board under the building with a tin can, and they were playing with the leverage on either side. And the building was rocking back and forth. It didn't really seem that the rocking had any kind of reason behind it. It was just rocking.

At that point I'm in the doorway . . .

Shapiro: And John's in the doorway.

Skinner: Yeah, and somehow we had twisted around, and were facing each other and looking at each other with expressions that are hilarious to think about now. Basically riding the doorway. I'd never ridden a doorway before. Holding on to this doorway as it . . . it was like a circus ride. I remember that one of the coherent thoughts that I had was—this is going to go one way or the other at this point. Either it's going to stop, or it's going to pursue some course that I have always feared, coming from Ohio.

Shapiro: The California Big One.

Skinner: Yeah, either it's going to stop, or else the sidewalk is going to cave in, the world's going to come to an end, and I'm going to be swimming . . . The funny thing was I was kind of indifferent. Basically my feeling at the time wasn't one of fear. It was largely indifference. I remember just taking stock of the situation and saying, this is unusual. Hmm. Very unusual. It was so fast. I think fear largely comes from anticipation.

Shapiro: That's interesting.

Skinner: I wasn't really that scared. I wasn't happy. I didn't really feel anything. I just felt like, hmm, this is completely out of the realm of experience and expectation, and I could die, or I could live or . . .

Shapiro: You weren't particularly afraid of dying at that point?

Skinner: Well, no. Because I couldn't really conceive of that. It was just like, well, I don't know what it's like to have a building cave in on me, and I'd never even thought of it. It's not like: oh, God, the building's caving in! I've always worried about this. It was just like . . . It's just not something that you worry about every day. If there's a threat of it happening, it's so out of your range of experience and expectation. In my case at least, there was no fear reaction. There was no real reaction at all, besides just kind of taking in

details, which I think is why I remember all these details. There was nothing to do, really, but just kind of take it in.

Shapiro: Ride it out. So were you standing in the doorway when it finally subsided?

Skinner: Yeah, it finally stopped. And silence. Silence.

Shapiro: It was silent! You heard silence when it was done?

Skinner: Yeah. For a couple of seconds. Then one of the customers came out and he was just saying, "Oh, my God!"

Shapiro: He came out from the store?

Skinner: Yeah. I kind of strolled out to the sidewalk and looked around. And he was just saying, "Oh my God, that was so huge. That's got to be at least an 8.0 [magnitude]. That's the biggest earthquake." He was just the prophet of doom immediately. I vaguely knew him and I just looked at him like, now you're the prophet of doom. What next? And so I look around and there's this . . .

Shapiro: So you're outside now?

Skinner: Yeah, I'm out on the sidewalk.

Shapiro: Is anybody else on the street?

Skinner: Yes.

Shapiro: You're out there. What do you see? I mean, the Pacific Garden Mall is national, international news at this point. As far as Santa Cruz went, the Pacific Garden Mall took it the worst. You were right there in the middle. What did you see after it ended?

Skinner: Well, the actual physical geography of that area before it happened of that block was . . . There's Woolworth's. There's a few stores. It was a fairly dense area of old buildings, and trees. A very narrow street. It was very condensed. Well, I went out and the first thing I noticed was the cloud of dust coming down the street. It was coming from the west, from Laurel Street. There was a huge cloud of black dust. And I remember thinking at the time, that is all of the dust in all of the cracks of those buildings for the last hundred years. It's finally been . . . it's been given a good dusting. And then I turn around and I hear this high-pitched, shrieking sound, and out of the doorway from next door to the record store come about twenty little girls, about eight or ten years old, in pink tutus, ballerina outfits, shrieking and crying incredibly loud. They came streaming out of the door, like twenty of them.

Shapiro: They were running?

Skinner: Yes. Because they were upstairs. It must have been so much more violent up there. It was the most surreal thing I had ever seen. Twenty little eight-year old ballerinas just hysterical, freaking out. Their parents weren't around. They were just . . .

Shapiro: There were no adults with them that you saw?

Skinner: Yeah, there were. There were instructors, but only three or four. But everyone hit the street. You find out how many people are actually in an area when everyone leaves the buildings. There were a lot of people.

Shapiro: All of a sudden?

Skinner: Yeah. Out on the street. Everyone cleared out of the buildings, because obviously they might fall in.

So I was standing there and I sat down. I just sat down.

Shapiro: On the sidewalk?

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: Right on the sidewalk?

Skinner: Yeah, I just had a seat. And kind of looked around. And I noticed that across the street on the corner a building had caved in. I think it was a stationary store on the corner.

Shapiro: The Hallmark store?

Skinner: Yeah, next door to Discount Records.

Shapiro: Like Lincoln [Street] and Pacific [Avenue], that area?

Skinner: Yeah. And there were some law offices upstairs. You know, where there's that giant vacant lot now.

Shapiro: Yeah.

Skinner: It had caved in. The upstairs had caved in. I noticed that.

Shapiro: I'll bet.

Skinner: And I was listening for . . . listening for screams or moans or whatever. There wasn't really any of that going on. It seemed like whatever had happened had happened. Some people were . . . You know, in any situation like that everyone has their own unique reaction which demonstrates an aspect of what they are. Some people were

starting to organize. Immediately, people were saying, "We've got to go find and dig through the rubble." And other people were saying, "I've got to go home." Other people . . . I was basically just shocked. The first thing I thought of . . . well, not the . . . After my boss had come from across the street, where he owned another record store, Discount Records.

Shapiro: He was across the street at the time?

Skinner: Yes. Discount Records, the front of the store caved in. Because the building on the corner that I had mentioned before, the Hallmark store that had caved in, had caved in in such a way that a lot of bricks fell through the roof of Discount Records.

Shapiro: Oh, that building was taller?

Skinner: Yeah. And it collapsed the entire front of the building. And from the front, looking across the street, it looked like the entire building had collapsed. I knew people who worked in there. And . . . you know, skull and crossbones at the back of your eyelids, that kind of thing. You're just thinking . . . You're thinking, well, anything goes at this point.

Shapiro: So you're thinking, there's death now.

Skinner: There's death.

Shapiro: Did you think that before it stopped?

Skinner: No, I was thinking Big Death, like the death of the continent. I wasn't really thinking . . . My boss came running across the street, and evidently no one was even hurt, because only the front of the building had collapsed. From the front it looked as if the entire building was ruined. But they managed to get out the back of the store. My boss, Ernie, came running across the street. He's freaking out. I can imagine what he was thinking. His livelihood was destroyed. His life was destroyed on top of everything else. He just walked up and locked the door. He looked at the store and he was just saying, "Oh shit." He locked the door, and he just walked off. And I thought, oh, my things are in the store. My schoolbooks. A quarter's worth of notes. A lot of work. For some reason I was thinking . . .

Shapiro: You thought, school.

Skinner: Yeah, no matter what, those notebooks in there are invaluable. You can't put a price on them, because they have two months worth of thought written down. So I got out my keys and I went into the store, crawled through al this rubble, not . . . When you say rubble people are thinking boulders and beams. It was like that in some places where people died. But here it was glass and tapes.

Shapiro: A lot of dust, probably.

Skinner: Incredible amounts of dust. I grabbed my things and I walked out and I locked the door again, which was funny. I'm locking the door but the windows are completely gone. I remember thinking, I wonder if this means that I don't have to finish my shift? (laugh) Because I had another three hours to work. And I just started walking. I walked past this collapsed building and there were a lot of people standing around.

Shapiro: Was that the Hallmark store?

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: So you started walking down Pacific Avenue?

Skinner: Well, yeah, only a little ways. I went down Lincoln towards the Nickelodeon Theater. And that was one of the buildings. That was in the national papers when George Bush [Sr.] walked by it and said, "Look what an earthquake can do." There were people sitting outside and they were yelling inside, "Is anyone in there? Is anyone trapped?" Nothing. Silence. It just . . . If you've ever seen a brick building reduced to a pile of bricks. If there's anyone in it they are not alive. I honestly don't know if anyone was in there at the time. I think the official thing was only two people died in the whole Mall, right?

Shapiro: Well, the official counts vary.

Skinner: Well, there was that woman at the [Santa Cruz] Coffee Roasting Company.[1]

Shapiro: And at Ford's Department Store.

Skinner: I think those are the only two. I don't know how anyone survived that. I really don't know. But at that point I just . . . Personal considerations kind of took hold, actually.

Shapiro: So you did some calling yourself. You joined the crowd and you were calling.

Skinner: "Is anyone in there?"

Shapiro: "Can we help you?"

Skinner: No. Nothing. And I was experiencing a panic reaction, in a way. Basically, my heart rate was freaking out. I could look down at my shirt and watch my heart beat. I was having the most incredible adrenaline rush. I've had some health problems in that area in the past and I was thinking, I've really got to calm down. I can't lapse into some sick state, because the emergency facilities are going to be strained. And there's no . . .

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1. At the time of the quake, in the Santa Cruz Roasting Company building, two young people lost their lives. Shawn McCormick, aged twenty-one, was the first person to be found dead on the Santa Cruz Mall, in the Roasting Company. The next person to be located was Robin Ortiz, aged twenty-two, an activist, who died inside the collapsed Roasting Company building as well. The Roasting Company storefront, after the quake, filled with boards, bricks, glass, and sand. Ms. Ortiz's body was found under six feet of bricks. The third person to be located dead on the Mall was Catherine Treiman, a seventy-five year old woman who died in the collapsed Ford's Department Store.

Shapiro: Oh, you thought of that right away?

Skinner: Yeah. Oh yeah. I thought, I've gotta to keep my grip here and not let my heart beat go wild. Because even without a conscious thought of what was happening, my body told me something very serious was going on.

Shapiro: So you're walking on Lincoln towards the Nickelodeon [movie theater]. And you have your heart pumping in your chest.

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: So what did you think you should do? I've got to calm down. And your next step was . . .

Skinner: Well, I was walking with John and he had his bike and we just . . . People were crying and freaking out at that point. There was just a lot of emotion.

Shapiro: A delayed reaction.

Skinner: It started really sinking in for people. And we looked at each other and said, "Discount is destroyed. Discount Records." That was our common . . . for some reason that was our common take on it. "Discount is destroyed." Something that had some

permanence about it, a building, was destroyed. For some reason that seemed to sum it all up for us at the time.

Shapiro: So where did you go after that?

Skinner: I started walking down Cedar Street towards Laurel. I was just going to head home.

Shapiro: So that's interesting. You didn't . . .You live on the other side of the river from downtown?

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: But you didn't walk down Pacific.

Skinner: No, I didn't. I don't know why. I didn't walk down Pacific, which would have been a much more interesting walk. The next day it was sealed off with chain link fence. So I never actually saw it. I was there, but I really didn't see that much because I kind of bugged off Pacific immediately. I just had the sense that Pacific Avenue was a very bad place to be. And there was also this sense that things might fall in. There might be another big aftershock and these . . .

Shapiro: That had occurred to you by then.

Skinner: Yeah. That's where the tallest buildings were. And basically the sense was, you're either going to . .

Shapiro: So you just turned the corner going up Lincoln off of Pacific and you had just been wowed by Discount Records. It looked like it had all fallen in. Had you realized at that point . . . you said when you were across the street it looked like the entire thing had caved in. And you said earlier that it was just the front part that had caved in. Had you seen that by that point that the whole thing hadn't really come down?

Skinner: No. Not until a lot later, when we actually went in and rummaged around through the wreckage and tried to save things did I have a chance to get the true scope of what had happened. As far as I could tell, it had caved in. And like I said, you didn't get to look at anything for long because the next day it was fenced off with a chain link fence.

Shapiro: And you mentioned that you were worried about your health as you were walking along. The shock of the trauma.

Skinner: Yes, it was extremely severe, really. I don't know how anyone else dealt with it, but I felt like an electric current had run through me or something . . .

Going Home to Laurel Street

Shapiro: So where did you go?

Skinner: I went home. I made my way to Laurel Street. Walking along it was . . .

Shapiro: Yeah, I want to know what you saw as you walked along, because that must have been very interesting.

Skinner: Yes. I was walking *very* fast. I was walking very, very fast.

Shapiro: I'll stop you right here first. Had the first aftershock hit by this time?

Skinner: No. There was a big one, a big aftershock.

Shapiro: There was. My memory was that it didn't come for a while.

Skinner: I walked home, walking very quickly, I mean, the whole walk took about five minutes. I remember when I got to Laurel Street I looked to my right, which is towards Mission Street and I remember seeing some smoke. Something was on fire; something was burning. The traffic was backed up for some reason. I guess the reason was the traffic lights were out.

Shapiro: Cars were stopped?

Skinner: Yeah. There was rush hour traffic and there were no traffic lights. Everything caved in very quickly. Not to the extent of community hysteria or anything. But it was

very crowded outside because nobody wanted to be inside, so it was very crowded. And I walked along and the sidewalk folded at certain points; it would fold up into an inverse B shape. I remember tripping over a lot of sidewalk because it was cracked up in a lot of places.

Shapiro: And you weren't looking for it.

Skinner: I wasn't looking. I was just walking in shock. I remember I had to walk across the bridge to get home, which wasn't a thought I really relished, but then I looked and I thought, well, there are about thirty cars on the bridge and it's holding up the cars, so I don't think that the added weight of my body is going to bring it down. Plus, at that point . . . considerations of safety don't mean that much when nature is being very capricious.

So I went home very quickly, thinking, hmm, I wonder if my house is still there?

Shapiro: Really. You were concerned. You thought it maybe came down?

Skinner: Yeah, because I live in a very flimsy . . . I think it is a very flimsy apartment complex, a two-story apartment complex. I lived on the top floor, where this very interview is being conducted.

Shapiro: Now that you mention it, it does feel very unstable. I hope there's not an earthquake right now.

Skinner: Oh, the building creaks when the wind blows. It didn't do it before, but I wasn't so sensitive to creaking before. So I turned onto my street, and I walked along, and I noticed that the people in my area of the building, the four apartments in my little segment, everyone was standing out on the sidewalk. Everyone was outside. And they were all . . . they were all shocked, but basically they had seen their bookshelves fall and their pictures come off the wall, and their glasses break and everything. They found that within the realm of things they could deal with. And I came down the street like Jack the Ripper. I came home and I said, "Downtown is destroyed!" And they all kind of looked at me. Basically, they were treating me like a crazy man, because I *was*. I was worse off than anyone, because . . . I assume it's not just my temperament, that it was a bit more intense downtown because things actually were collapsing.

So we were all standing around. And then the first big aftershock hit.

Shapiro: And you hadn't gone inside your house yet?

Skinner: No, we were standing around outside, just sort of . . . I mean, there was a lot to talk about.

Shapiro: Yeah.

Skinner: And the big aftershock hit, and you could definitely feel it from the sidewalk. You could sort of hear the rumble, feel the shaking, hear the houses creak even, more creaking.

Shapiro: Were you scared all over again?

Skinner: Yeah. Definitely. I mean, I remember thinking well, there is nothing out here that could hurt me. But there still is that whole swimming possibility. And that came and went. And it got down to practical considerations such as cigarettes, things like that. No one had any cigarettes for some reason that day. I had planned on stopping off on my way home from work and picking up a pack of cigarettes. I didn't have any cash.

Shapiro: On you at the time?

Skinner: Yeah. Nothing was open. So I was stuck with no cigarettes, which was . . . Cigarettes were exactly what I needed at that point. So we suddenly turned into this hobo community out there on the sidewalk.

Shapiro: How long were you out there before you went inside?

Skinner: Oh. Probably not long. Forty-five minutes.

Shapiro: That's pretty long. Weren't you curious about what's inside?

Skinner: Yeah, I was pretty curious. I was curious about my cat. My cat was missing.

Shapiro: Your cat was missing?

Skinner: My cat was gone. So that was actually my main reason for going in the house. I was going to go in and find my cat. I went in. My house looked like it had been ransacked by Huns. The television set was thrown across the room. Everything was on the floor. All the dishes had come out of the cabinets. The kitchen was two inches deep with broken glass. Everything was . . . There was no order. It looked like someone had moved in and not bothered to do anything, just thrown everything on the floor. I couldn't find my cat. No electricity. No water. No . . . Basically the apartment was useless. And for some reason the phone worked.

Shapiro: Your phone worked!

Skinner: Yeah. For some reason.

Shapiro: Did it ever go out?

Skinner: No.

Shapiro: That's amazing.

Skinner: The phone worked. I remember thinking, of all the . . . I can't shower, and I can't drink, and I can't eat, and I can't see by it, but it works. So I used it. I called Ohio. I called my father.

Shapiro: That's the first thing you did?

Skinner: Well, after a while. It was dark by that point. It was October 17, so . . .

Shapiro: Right. It probably got dark about an hour and a half after the quake.

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: It was already nearing twilight.

Skinner: Yeah, it might have been after daylight savings time, but I'm not sure. So I called my father. My father had seen it on the news, and he had these cataclysmic ideas. I was completely incoherent, of course. Talking a mile a minute. Made no sense. He told me later I was just completely incoherent. And then when I was on the phone with him it was dark, I was sitting in the rubble of my house all alone, couldn't see anything except by the vague moonlight. And we had an aftershock when I was on the phone, a pretty big one. Everyone outside started screaming at me to come outside. They were all screaming, "Quinton, get outside! Get outside!" So I said, "I've gotta to go. We're having another earthquake." And I hung up the phone. So my father was very upset, you know.

Shapiro: Yeah.

Skinner: I made a few phone calls. I didn't have any problems reaching anyone, actually.

Shapiro: Did you call people in town?

Skinner: A couple, yeah.

Shapiro: And their phones were working?

Skinner: Yeah. I had no problems.

Shapiro: My phone wasn't working. Not at all.

Skinner: How long until it worked?

Shapiro: I didn't get my first call until like 2:00 am. People were trying to reach me and they weren't letting calls in.

Skinner: I heard that there were no calls coming in, but were calls . . .

Shapiro: People in Santa Cruz were trying to call me, too. But I didn't get a call until 2:00 o'clock.

Skinner: Calls going out were okay. Out of the state.

Shapiro: My phone was off. I picked it up and there was no sound.

Skinner: Well, I used it, for whatever it was worth. It seemed kind of silly, but . . .

Shapiro: How many people do you live with here?

Skinner: Two.

Shapiro: Were they here when you got back?

Skinner: Peter was here and Ian showed up about ten minutes after I got home. He was on his motorcycle when it hit, and it knocked him off his motorcycle. He wasn't moving. He was stopped, luckily.

Shapiro: He was at a light?

Skinner: Yeah, he was at a light, a stoplight. And he came home. So we were all there. We were all there, nowhere to go.

Shapiro: So that first night, did you spend it outside, inside? What did you do?

Skinner: Everyone was basically too scared to go inside and spend the night. So people . . . I mean, nobody was really interested in going to sleep for a long time. And everyone in our little compound of four apartments was there outside in a circle around a couple of candles.

Shapiro: There's a grassy area, I've noticed, right front of your place. Is that where you were?

Skinner: Yeah, in a big circle. It was like a demented campfire, you know. We had candles. And everyone brought out all the liquor they had. Thirty dollar bottles of Grand Marnier and I had . . .

Shapiro: This was the time to drink it.

Skinner: Yeah. And we were passing it around. I didn't know these people, and I was sitting in a circle with them passing around strong liquor, and we drank every drop of it. So everyone got drunk. That was basically . . . Everyone very much wanted to get drunk. And we sat out there and people were coming and going up and down the street, you know. One lady came by and said that she heard on the radio that there was going to be a giant tidal wave and we've all got to head for high ground.

Shapiro: Right. I heard that too.

Skinner: She was whacked out. "Come on." And then this guy came from the hotel. There's a hotel about three doors down. This fellow came along, and he said he was from Oklahoma or Nebraska. He had come here for work. He had come here looking for work. He had been here for about two weeks and this earthquake hit and he was just saying, "Do you know if the roads are open? Because I've got to get to the airport."

Shapiro: He wanted to go right then?

Skinner: Yeah, he said, "First chance I get, I'm going back to Oklahoma." He was really funny. There were people coming and going all the time. I mean, I met so many people. The barriers of civilization were broken down, in that introductions were unnecessary. I mean, everyone just . . . The hardest part of meeting someone is finding something to talk about. That was settled. Everyone had something to talk about. So everyone talked about it. And after a while people started filtering off, sleeping in their cars, that sort of thing. I made off to sleep in my car, and I met someone who lived downstairs. And her and I went off to sleep in my car, and after a little while decided to just brave it and go sleep in my room, which was completely ransacked. We sort of had this mattress on top of all of these books. And we spent the night there, such as it was. I found it amazing how quickly you can establish intimacy with someone in that kind of situation.

Shapiro: So that's how your first day was spent after the quake split everything.

Skinner: Yeah. Slept very well. (laughter)

Shapiro: Really? You slept well.

Skinner: Yeah, slept in. I was tired. I slept about six hours. I slept like a baby.

Shapiro: You were one of the lucky ones, then.

Skinner: Yeah, I think I was.

Shapiro: I was sleeping in a parking lot and there were aftershocks waking me up all night.

The Day After the Quake

Skinner: I remember the aftershocks. I woke up for those too, and I just rolled over and went back to sleep. I got up the next day early. It was still chaos, no power and no water. I walked to 7-11 [store] for supplies, which meant wine and cigarettes and a newspaper. There was nothing to cook with. I bought some canned tuna or something.

Shapiro: No gas. Your gas wasn't on.

Skinner: There was no way to cook. I had some canned food. And I went to 7-11 and there was a line of people, about twenty people in line. They were letting in people two at a time to go into 7-11. I waited in line for about an hour. It was about 8:00 a.m. Nothing else to do, so I didn't mind. It was very interesting. I got in and the place was a mess. I

kind of sifted through it. But they had newspapers. They had that day's newspapers. I bought two different papers. They said, "Giant Quake. Disaster." I grabbed those.

Shapiro: "Massive Quake." That was the title in the *San Jose Mercury News*. "Massive Quake." Two words.

Skinner: I grabbed those. I grabbed a huge jug of wine, bought about four packs of cigarettes. I remember thinking, it's so insane to even be exchanging money. But they wanted money. It seemed silly, but looking back on it, it was kind of reassuring.

Shapiro: It seems kind of funny that those would even be there, that the employees would even show up.

Skinner: I know. They were not happy about it, either.

Shapiro: I'm sure they weren't. But they're like a linchpin in society at that point.

Skinner: 7-11 is a linchpin in society, yes. You find that out. And the employees at 7-11 served a vital function.

Shapiro: I mean, they showed up, and a lot of people were grateful.

Skinner: Yeah, I was, for sure.

Shapiro: That's funny. That's where I was, too. I was at the 7-11 on the Westside on Mission the next morning.

Skinner: Yeah, you think, God, there's been a disaster. Where can I go?

Shapiro: 7-11. It's always open. (laughter) Freedom of choice.

Skinner: Yeah, it's beautiful. So I rolled back and put my feet up and read the paper and started in on the liquor about 9:00 am.

Shapiro: So you had a mission.

Skinner: Yeah, yeah. Trying not to think about it.

Shapiro: In those days of following the quake, do you have a very clear recollection of the things you did and what it was like?

Skinner: Yeah. Sure.

Shapiro: School was cancelled until the next Monday.

Skinner: So there was no school. I wouldn't have gone if there was.

Shapiro: But you did mention that you thought of school right away. That was one of the first things you thought of.

Skinner: Yeah. That's because my notebooks were inside.

Shapiro: See, I remember when I got home I was thinking, oh, this is going to make it really hard for me to do homework tonight. It was a thought. It's really irrational, but it's hard to get out of those patterns.

Skinner: "Oh, there's no power. How am I going to do my homework?"

Shapiro: It took me about half an hour to figure out that that was very irrelevant.

Skinner: My housemate, Ian, had a plane ticket for Texas the next day.

Shapiro: The 18th?

Skinner: Yeah. He had it like two weeks in advance. And so he made his way through the rubble of the highways . . .

Shapiro: No kidding.

Skinner: And caught a plane and left. Peter went to Berkeley. He made his way up to Berkeley somehow.

Shapiro: Why did he go there for?

Skinner: His parents live in the East Bay. His mother lives in the East Bay and his girlfriend lives in Berkeley. So he went up to his base of familiarity. So I was alone. But a couple of friends came over. And after . . . I guess it *is* a little fuzzy. I don't really remember much about that first day afterwards. I know that in the three days afterwards the things that happened were: I went to the grocery store and bought some food. It was open. The power came back on pretty soon after. It wasn't that long. I remember being amazed, because in the newspapers they were estimating a week or so. It was really a matter of 72 hours or less. The power came on, which meant television. The cable came on immediately. We had cable TV. My friends were there, and we sat back for about two days, hardly slept, and drank and watched cable news. And just took in incredible amounts of information and detail about it.

Shapiro: Did it occur to you early on (and other people have told me this), did it occur to you early on that the rest of the country and even the world probably knew more, in fact did know more about what was happening to you than you did?

Skinner: Yeah, particularly on that first night, when the city was powerless.

Shapiro: Black.

Skinner: It was black. It was like very primeval. It was like a camp. There was no information. Actually, there was radio. But how do we think of news? It's visual images, television. When you really want to cut to the quick you go for those TV newsflashes because you can see it. That's how you really make a connection. I did feel a little bit cut off by the fact that I could only hear . . And a lot of what was coming out on the radio were rumors, like the Bay Bridge has fallen in, when in fact it was just damaged. But then after a couple of days, we got the cable news and watched it and watched it. And I wrote an article about it. I wrote immediately. I wrote about a four-page story, an article.

Shapiro: Right away!

Skinner: About the second night. I knew someone who worked at the *Columbus Dispatch,* the Columbus, Ohio newspaper, and I had it faxed to them. Apparently by the time it got there it was too late. They didn't want it any more. So they didn't publish it. But I had it faxed there. So I had something to do. I sat down and wrote this article, which I still have somewhere.

And my two friends and I, we did things like watch television. We went out to the A & W and had a hamburger. We just basically were filling the empty time. We were all going through . . . at one point any one of us was going through some sort of schizophrenic despair, or edginess, irritation, anti-social behavior. But it was usually one at a time. It

was odd. At any one point one of the three of us would be insane and the other two would be kind of dealing with each other. Luckily there were three of us, so we kind of neutralized each other.

The Impact on Universes Records and Downtown Business in General

Shapiro: Okay, for this part of this session I want to cover something a little more broad. You said that you worked at a record store downtown. And that was Universes Records on Pacific Avenue.

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: What I'd like to cover is what happened to that business. You said it was an independent business?

Skinner: Yes. Run by one person.

Shapiro: What happened to the store after the quake?

Skinner: Well, it was part of a block that was completely fenced off and inaccessible to the public, I would assume under the jurisdiction of some sort of local disaster relief authority. It was all kind of nebulous at the time as to who was actually in charge of it all. And people talked about FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] coming in and cleaning things up. But nothing really happened. Basically it was fenced off.

Shapiro: What did you think about the status of your job after the quake? When did it hit you that, "Hey, maybe I'm out of a job."

Skinner: Immediately. I assumed that if the block is fenced off, and they are tearing things down right and left . . . it was just completely indeterminate about what point in time there would be any kind of a work situation going on again. So I assumed that I was out of a job for the time being. And of course the idea of getting another job . . . think about how many people were out of work at that point in time. I luckily had resources to fall back on temporarily, so I didn't worry about it too much.

Shapiro: So was that it for this guy's businesses? Did the quake just end it all?

Skinner: Well no, he's back in business today.[1] He went through a temporary situation.

Shapiro: Let's cover that, how he got back. He does have a store open?

Skinner: Yeah, he's combined the two stores that he owned before into one store, which is occupying the building where Discount Records used to be.

Shapiro: The one where the ceiling caved in.

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1. Discount Records is still in business on Pacific Avenue as this oral history goes to press in 2006.

Skinner: The one where the ceiling caved in. It's been rebuilt and kind of refurbished on the skeleton of the old building and he's currently doing business out of it. I think it kind of gave him an excuse to consolidate the two businesses, simplify things.

Shapiro: What do you mean by that?

Skinner: Well, he owned two stores across the street from each other. Why? I don't know. He's been in the business for about ten years. They catered to different clientele and had different stock, but I always had the feeling that it was a bit more bother than he wanted to go through. After a while I sort of got the idea that he would have liked an opportunity to consolidate the two businesses. And the earthquake gave him that opportunity.

Shapiro: So how long was he out of business?

Skinner: Well, it's a little fuzzy now. He was completely out of business for a period of at least a month, a month and a half. After that, there was the temporary measure of operating out of the Bank of America building on Pacific Avenue about a half block down from the old store. There was a bazaar pavilion situation, where there were five or six businesses operating out of an old empty bank building, and we had our corner.[1] He was fortunate enough that the majority of the stock from both of the stores survived. We went in at different points when we were allowed certain amounts of time to go in and

1. After the quake many Santa Cruz businesses were housed in tents, called pavilions, as well as in buildings like the former Bank of America building.

move the stock out, and then moved into this new building and set up again as a temporary measure.

Shapiro: So you actually went back into the buildings and took the stock out? What was that like?

Skinner: Well, it was very bizarre. We had to get clearance from the local disaster management authorities. We had to wear hard hats. The first time we went in we only had fifteen minutes. They only were allowing fifteen minutes to people who owned these businesses to go in and retrieve the most valuable things.

Shapiro: Because of?

Skinner: Why? I don't know. I guess they thought that those buildings which had been standing for three weeks, a month, were going to suddenly collapse. I don't really know. Basically, I think there was a lot of confusion about who was in charge. I think probably the details of that issue are probably best addressed by someone else, because I don't know. It was very complicated as to who was in charge. I remember there was a great deal of dissatisfaction on the part of the business owners, who literally couldn't go in and retrieve the cash out of the cash registers from that business day. But I just worked there.

Shapiro: What kind of work did you do when you went in?

Skinner: Well, the first time we went in we brought out cash registers and the most valuable things, which were the compact discs. After that, in the subsequent times, we went in and moved everything out, all the furniture (which were record racks, glass cases), all of the records and tapes.

Shapiro: This is pretty heavy labor.

Skinner: Yeah, very tiring heavy labor, yeah. And a lot of dust. Sifting through a lot of dust. The building materials were just powder. It was dark. There was no power. It was odd work. But inevitable.

Shapiro: What kind of feeling did you get being back inside Universe's, which is where you were . . .The last time you saw it before you had to go back in would have been . . . first there was a normal situation, then you're in the middle of an earthquake, and then you've left a few minutes after . . .

Skinner: Well, actually the point when they went in and cleaned out Universe's was a day when I had some obligations at the university, so I couldn't go.

Shapiro: So you weren't in there.

Skinner: No, I actually only went in one time afterwards, very close to the time when he opened the new store. It was actually in 1990. It was pretty much cleared out. We went in and brought out a few last things. It was dingy and deserted and very odd.

Shapiro: You went inside Discount, then.

Skinner: That was the majority of the work I did.

Shapiro: Was the ceiling still down, or had they done anything to it?

Skinner: Yeah, you could look up and see the sky. You could look through the ceiling. The front of the building was a pile of rubble, bricks. And no one went near it because there were actually beams and things connecting to the ceiling. And you didn't want to get too close to it because it really didn't look very stable. It looked like if you started jumping up and down in the rubble you could easily bring more down with you. Yeah, it was a disaster site, no doubt.

Shapiro: So you went in and you retrieved the main things from the store, like the record holders and the stock, the records and the tapes and stuff. Where did those go from there? Did those go immediately into the Bank of America?

Skinner: No, they were stored for a time at an empty cannery building. Apparently Ernie knew someone who allowed him to store some stuff there temporarily, as well as a rented storage facility. So they were temporarily stored at a middle point.

Shapiro: So you don't remember exactly when you re-opened in the Bank of America?

Skinner: No, I don't, actually. It was before Christmas. I think it was sometime in November, about five or six weeks after the quake. I worked there for a few weeks and then I went back to Ohio for Christmas. Then I came back and worked there again until early May.

Shapiro: What was that like when it first re-opened and you first started working there? It was Christmas season, right?

Skinner: Yeah. It was very strange. Unfamiliar building. Strange set-up. Occupying space with other businesses. There was a weird feeling of desperate measures to keep these businesses afloat. And the Christmas season was busy, but it wasn't nearly what it would have been before. There was a definite feeling that people didn't want to come to this disaster area to shop. The consumers were fairly sparse. They were there for the Christmas season, which I missed. I left about the 17th of December. But we were open until 7 o'clock at night, and between six and seven you might only have one customer. People weren't going downtown. Especially after dark things became very strange, I think. People didn't want to come downtown after dark for shopping. I think people

associate their consumption and their consumerism with pleasure, and there's very little pleasure to be had in trying to figure out which streets are open, and where can we park and where are the businesses? So I think people probably went to other communities, Capitola, wherever.

Shapiro: What were some of the other businesses that you shared the bank with?

Skinner: Well, there was actually another record store in the same building with us, Rainbow Records. There was Eclectics, an antique store. Pipeline, which sold tobacco and posters, and youth-oriented rock and roll merchandise. There was a T-shirt shop and a bead shop. It was interesting, because the building was definitely thematic. There were record stores, an antique store, the bead shop. It was definitely kind of the counterculture pavilion, which was interesting. There was some thought that went into that. Definitely. Each of the pavilions that was subsequently set up had a theme, which makes sense. And some businesses claimed . . . I heard that some businesses got better business because they had people . . . you know, if you occupied a hole in the wall on Pacific Avenue you might not get that many customers, but if you're occupying space with a more high-volume business you sort of get leftovers. You get people who just kind of wander over. Some people it helped; some people it hurt.

Shapiro: Do you think that was the case with Discount and Universes?

Skinner: Well, I don't really know what to . . . Business was definitely down. From the bank deposits that I did, business was at times literally cut in half of what Universe's did. It was always my assumption that Universes did less business than Discount. So overall, in terms of the owner, he was probably cut maybe a third or a quarter of what he was making before. His rent concerns were definite, and things like that. I don't know whether it was the pavilions being with other businesses or being in the middle of the rubble of downtown, or whatever it was, but business was definitely way off.

Shapiro: Did he have his full stock from the record stores at that place?

Skinner: Oh no, there wasn't room for it. It was very partial stock.

Shapiro: So a cutback in business coupled with a cutback in what's being offered. So how long . . . Are they still in the Bank of America? Are you still working there?

Skinner: No, the original Discount Records building has been rebuilt. A new ceiling, a new roof has been put on. And we've moved into it. It's a much more hygienic and clean and new-looking building than he had before. He has opened up a rejuvenated business there.

Shapiro: How long ago did you move in?

Skinner: Three weeks, a month.

Shapiro: It's pretty recent.

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: How's business been since then?

Skinner: Not extremely good at first, but it's been picking up steadily. It seems to be increasing. The last couple of weeks have been a lot better. It seems like people are figuring out where it is.

Shapiro: What is the address?

Skinner: I don't know. The address of Universes is 1214A and Discount is across the street.

Shapiro: Are any of those buildings open anymore?

Skinner: No, they're still behind chain link fence, awaiting destruction or rebuilding. I guess the owner of those buildings died shortly after the earthquake. He died in a boating accident, or a large skiing accident, or something like that, which definitely complicated what's going to be done. At this point it's still up in the air.

Shapiro: I do recall reading that they were going to keep it open but that was months ago.

Skinner: From what I understood, destruction seems like a possibility. But every time I mention it to Ernie he has no idea. And if he was renting out of that building and he doesn't know . . .

Shapiro: A lot of businesses went under, a lot of big businesses, clothing stores like Pretty Mama's. Lily Wong's is a really popular place downtown. They went out of business. And your boss, who is an independent owner, just one man, do you think he was lucky, or why . . . Do you have any guesses as to why he was able to succeed ,where other businesses failed?

Skinner: I really don't know. I would assume that it's probably a combination of factors. Things just fell in his favor, basically. I don't really know. I don't really know whether those people who went under were renting, or owned their building. He was patient and he retained most of his stock. He was fortunate enough to have a building to move into that was rebuilt and he didn't have to rebuild it. He didn't have to have the capital to do that. The person or parties that he rented the building from rebuilt it on their own so that they could start generating rent revenues again. So he was fortunate in that respect to have a building to move back into. I think that was probably a large part of it. I don't really know. In terms of analyzing the actual intricacies of the finances, I think that that's an issue someone's going to have to do a very detailed study of. I really don't know.

Shapiro: To the best of your knowledge, was he making money? Was he turning a profit with the stores prior to the earthquake?

Skinner: Oh, yes. I think so. For the size of the store it did a very good business, particularly on the weekends, especially during tourist season, when out of town people from San Jose came in. It was a steady business. It always made about the same numbers. It was steady and reliable and he could structure his strategies around that.

Shapiro: So is this move a permanent move for him now, the place that he's moved back into?

Skinner: Well, barring unforeseen disaster. (laughter)

Shapiro: (laughter) Obviously.

Skinner: Yeah, sure.

Shapiro: He's not making any further plans to go anywhere else, or sell it or anything?

Skinner: No. As far as I can tell it's an open-ended business for him. He's been more enthusiastic about it than he was in the past.

Comparing Earthquakes and Tornados

Shapiro: Okay, that pretty much concludes that topic. I want to go back to a little more personal thing now. You said early on that you are from Ohio.

Skinner: Yeah.

Shapiro: Were you born in Ohio?

Skinner: Yeah, in Columbus.

Shapiro: You said that when you lived there you felt one earthquake.

Skinner: Yeah, well . . . Such as it is. I mean, here it's something that you wouldn't even consider.

Shapiro: What did you think at the time when you felt it? You'd never been through an earthquake before.

Skinner: I was about to move out of a house that I lived in and I remember just thinking well . . . I didn't know what it was. I was young. I was a child. I was about eight or nine. I don't know. I remember having some kind of superstitious reaction. I didn't know what that was. It could have been anything.

Shapiro: What kinds of natural disasters or "acts of God" do you have to contend with in Ohio?

Skinner: In the Midwestern climate, one thing you get a lot is very powerful thunderstorms, which are more fun than anything else, once you get used to them. But the things that aren't so fun are tornados.

Shapiro: Ever been in one? What do they have, tornado watches? Is that what they call them?

Skinner: Well, there's a watch and a warning. A watch means that a tornado has been sighted in the same county or in a neighboring county. A warning means that a tornado has touched down somewhere, has hit the ground, which is very destructive. I've actually only seen a tornado once, when I lived out in the country.

Shapiro: You saw one.

Skinner: Yeah, when I lived a small suburb of Columbus. It was very far out in the country, and I saw one off in the distance one time, a black, spidery, snaky thing off in the distance.

Shapiro: How old were you?

Skinner: Oh, I was probably about fourteen, fifteen?

Shapiro: What was that like?

Skinner: Oh, terrifying. Completely terrifying. Heavy storm.

Shapiro: It was raining.

Skinner: It wasn't raining, but just the winds are so powerful anywhere near it. There was a lot of moisture in the air. It wasn't what you call rain, as much as just being pelted with high velocity liquid and being blown off your feet if you go outside. It's fortunate that they have basements in the Midwest, because going down in the basement is the best place to go.

Shapiro: Just to try to bring this around full circle, can you try to give a comparison of what it was like to be in those tornado conditions and then compare them with the earthquake?

Skinner: Well, the main difference is that the tornado is very localized, and even though . . . I mean, in a given summer in the Midwest on several occasions you hear that there's a tornado warning, which means that there's a tornado out there somewhere, you don't know where.

Shapiro: They're very unpredictable in their motion.

Skinner: Yeah. It's been sighted. It's touched down here. Sometimes they split up. There's two or three of them. You don't really know. So you don't really . . . at least I don't, really worry about them that much. If it happens, it happens. You pretty much . . . If it's very close by, you have a basement and you just sit tight. But of course there's no escaping an earthquake. It's not localized. There is nowhere you can go to get away from it. The only thing you can do is look for shelter, which is under a heavy object or a doorway.

Shapiro: That was one of the first things that struck me, one of the first responses that I had to the earthquake, was every person I saw, I had to think: they went through it.

Skinner: Yeah, everyone did. Everyone talked about it.

Shapiro: Just like we're doing.

Skinner: (laughter) Just like we're still doing. It got tiresome. You were thinking, I'm tired of hearing about it. Just shut up about it.

Shapiro: Everywhere you'd look there was evidence.

Skinner: There're constant reminders. Everyone talked about it. Everyone went through it, to some degree or another: "Where were you when you found out Elvis died?" "Where were you when the earthquake happened?" It was the big question. Everyone had their own particular experience to relate.

Shapiro: Is there any kind of comparison you can make?

Skinner: Between a tornado and an earthquake? Abject fear. Complete helplessness. Having no recourse, no escape, potentially. Basically finding out that nature is very capricious and doesn't really care how you're doing in a situation like that. It's pretty much up to you, because there's no one looking out for you at that point.

Shapiro: When you went back to Ohio in December and you saw friends and family, what kind of . . . I mean, they must have really had a different reaction to you coming back than normal.

Skinner: Yeah. Well, they were really glad that I was alive. And everyone wanted to hear the story. Everyone wanted to hear the story. Everyone wanted to know about it. They had their stories too, about how they heard about it and what they did when they heard about it. And they all wanted to hear. That was one of the first things that everybody talked about. I ran into a friend who I'd known before, and she was living in Berkeley at the time. And she had her story to tell. We related our own stories about how it was the

thing that we had always feared and dreaded and it had finally happened. There were relations on a variety of levels. It made for spicy conversation.

Long Term Effects of the Earthquake

Shapiro: Yeah, it did and it still does. Aside from the emotional effects of the quake, especially the very vivid emotions that go along with at the time, did you suffer any tangible hardships from the quake?

Skinner: Financial deprivation?

Shapiro: Sure. If that's what happened.

Skinner: Well, my apartment stood and continues to stand. I had no job so I got a bit low on funds, but never drastically so. There was the problem of living in a town where all my favorite hangouts were closed, that kind of thing. There were a couple of scares. I guess the foundation, which is the concrete slab that my apartment building is built on, apparently cracked. There was some talk of potential demolition and eviction, being condemned. Nothing ever came of it.

Shapiro: That's fortunate.

Skinner: Yeah, so I didn't really experience anything I couldn't deal with.

Shapiro: Did it change the nature of your household relationships? You said you lived with two other people. How did you guys as a household deal with it? Did it change anything?

Skinner: No, it was amazing how quickly things got back to normal. The following Monday we were back in class. We didn't have jobs, but other than that everything pretty much got back to normal. You know . . .I mean, you can simulate normal behavior out of context. You can get back to a routine as soon as that routine is allowed to you, regardless of whether the things that you built that routine out of are still there or not. So very quickly we got back to normal. And in time the world caught up with us.

Shapiro: How about your feeling about the city of Santa Cruz? Do you perceive it differently now than you did pre-earthquake? Do you have different feelings about it?

Skinner: Well, it comes down practicalities. Such and such bridge is closed. That road is closed. Inconveniences.

Shapiro: I think about that every time I come over here to interview you.

Skinner: Right. You have to walk around.

Shapiro: The Riverside Bridge is knocked out.

Skinner: And it still is. It will be six months before there's a bridge there. Things like that. In terms of generalizing about the community, I don't know. I personally usually avoid making generalizations like that. I would have to say that in general there was a great deal of strength shown by people in terms of their power to get back to normal, their power to stabilize and pick up the old patterns. Whether that's a human trait or a Santa Cruz trait, I don't know, but . . . people did come together. People do help each other. They do care about each other. They really do, I found out.

Shapiro: Do you feel . . . and this is probably my last question for you. Do you feel that you as a person changed any from the earthquake? And if so, how, and if not, why not?

Skinner: Well, I've certainly been through something different. I'm not planning on living here much longer. Not because of that, but because my reason for being here is about to run its course. I don't know. I don't really think of it in grand summing up terms. It's been something that . . . you know, for quite a while it's dictated my behavior in terms of it's definitely been something I've had to deal with. I've gotten a taste of what nature is capable of. And especially the idea that the daily routines that you hinge so much of your well-being on are very much subject to instant eradication. And that's something interesting, worth keeping in mind as you go along. I don't know how many people have had the opportunity to have their daily lives disrupted to such a degree. That is something you definitely learn from. It's not something that comes to mind every day, and it's not something that I have any grand statement to make regarding it strengthening me personally, or strengthening the community, or anything like that,

because I don't think it really works that way. I don't think that you can really place these arbitrary marks in time with something like that, to say that moment changed me. It's part of a longer process. I'm sure it *has* changed me, but not in any concrete way that I can think of at the moment. I'm sure though, that ultimately as I go on that it will still be in mind. I can still evoke the image, and I still get very edgy when the building creaks.

Shapiro: Okay, I thank you for your time.

Skinner: You're welcome.

Mayme Metcalf

A student at the University of California at Santa Cruz, I was profoundly affected by the earthquake and the confusion, drama and intrigue which it caused. It was fascinating to watch its effects on every aspect of Santa Cruz and to conceive of a phenomeon which could touch and change in some way everyone in an entire city. I felt honored to be allowed to relive with these people this dramatic experience which rocked many lives, routines, and emotions in our city. After hearing tens of stories already in the eight months since the earthquake, I was not at all bored or indifferent to these. It was an incredible and unique experience to behold and it is still fascinating to see that people remain very affected by it and are still easily moved to tears and to fear, and can so vividly recall minute details and moments from months ago.

Mayme Metcalf was born April 23, 1918 in San Diego, California; she has lived for 46 years in Santa Cruz where she has worked as a waitress, cook, private maid and hotel maid, in the canneries, and as a picker in fields all over Santa Cruz County. Mayme raised a family of four children in Santa Cruz, and now has fourteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Maybe lives alone in a small apartment a block from the beach and Boardwalk amusement park and has for thirteen years. She is the assistant manager of the apartments which surround her own.—ClaireMarie Ghelardi

Ghelardi: Today is the 5th of June 1990. I'm ClaireMarie Ghelardi and I'm a student at

UC Santa Cruz. I'm speaking with Mayme Metcalf, in her home in Santa Cruz, California about her experience with the earthquake that occurred on the 17th of October 1989 at 5:04 pm in Santa Cruz, California. Mayme, what is your birthdate?

Metcalf: April 23, 1918.

Ghelardi: And where were you born?

Metcalf: San Diego, California.

Ghelardi: How long have you lived in Santa Cruz?

Metcalf: Forty-six years and three days.

Ghelardi: And you're an assistant apartment manager here, right?

Metcalf: Yes.

Ghelardi: Have you ever experienced a natural disaster before the earthquake?

The Santa Cruz Flood of 1955

Metcalf: Oh, yes. (phone rings) In 1955 I drove for the Red Cross. I drove for the Red Cross in the flood of 1955 to remove some thirty or thirty-five elderly out of trailers that

they didn't want to leave. They said, "You be careful what you say to these old ladies." And I said, "Oh, I know how to handle them." So I drove in and I yelled at 'em, "Come on you little old grannies! Let's get goin'." And I got them all in the car because they got mad at me. "We're going to arrest you. We're going to turn you in. You insulted us." So I took them to the shelter at the [Santa Cruz Civic] Auditorium and they reported me to the police. I almost got arrested because I called them grannies, and two-thirds of them were old maids. Everybody roared with laughter.

Ghelardi: How did that flood compare to the earthquake? Was it a similar situation?

Metcalf: It was terrible. It just came in and flooded the whole town. And it was just as strong a flood as the earthquake was, shaking everything apart. It just flooded the whole town and all the stores. And down where . . . let's see, I lived in Davenport at that time, and Davenport got out of food and nobody could go out because there was no way into Davenport but through Highway 1, and no way coming from Half Moon Bay, because that was all flooded. My husband told me how he went to work in Salinas in 1937, when they had a flood then. So I got the idea and I told [my priest]. He said, "You do that and I'll pray for you."

So I had a big old yellow Nash, a 1939 Nash, and my lady friend says, "You're not going alone. I'm going with you." She crawled in the car, and my husband says, "You be careful." I called the Southern Pacific [railroad] first and asked them if any trains were going to be on their tracks. "No." "Hey, wait a minute! What are you going to do?" I

hung up. I says, "Thank you. Goodbye." I hung up. He called the Highway Patrol. And here I come a rollin' down the tracks in my car. I had balloon tires. All the way to Salinas. And I loaded up all the groceries I could get from the Catholic Church and I stopped off at Watsonville, the tracks ran that way through Watsonville. So I got off and went to the Salvation Army there and picked up a load of groceries. Then I got back on the tracks and went back up to Davenport, with a full battalion of Highway Patrolmen screaming through a bowl, "Get off the tracks! You're gonna drown." I didn't. I got there and back. And I fed all of Davenport's people.

The Loma Prieta Earthquake

Ghelardi: That's great. Okay. Let's get back to the earthquake. Where were you when the earthquake hit?

Metcalf: I was in my daughter's new van. And we were coming down around Capitola Road by the Golden West [restaurant][1], and the earthquake hit. My daughter, my one daughter, Mary, said, "Ah. I think you got four flat tires, Bonnie." "Not in my new van!" Then Bonnie turned to me and said, "Mama. The wind's not blowing, but the trees are moving and the dust is flying. What's causing it?" And I said, "It's an earthquake." "Earthquake!" I said, "Just be calm and keep driving, and go slow."

Ghelardi: So you kept driving?

1. This restaurant was then located near the intersection of Capitola Road and Soquel, near where the Santa Cruz Medical Clinic is now.

Metcalf: Yes. And the road cracked open. And a man to the side of us, his car was wrecked because he went right over it. So we stopped to help him. Then we got back in the car, and we went to the Golden West for coffee. And when we got out, there were great big cracks in the driveway, so we got back in the van and started back home.

Ghelardi: So you knew it was an earthquake right away?

Metcalf: Oh, yes. I knew it sure was an earthquake. But I had three grandchildren inside the van and I didn't want to upset them, start them to screaming. So I kept my peace. I've been through too many earthquakes not to know how to handle . . .

Ghelardi: So was that the worst one you've ever been in?

Metcalf: Well, yes. That's the biggest one. But in 1952, my lady friend and I went to the Goodwill. And coming back, I pulled over and stopped. She said, "You have a flat tire?" "No." "Are you sick?" "No." "What did you stop for?" "Let the earthquake go by." And here come the earth—boomp, boomp, by the car. I said, "That's an earthquake." "Oh!" I said, "Don't you panic."

I don't want my children hysterical, or scared of earthquakes, because they're going to learn. I'm going to raise them and tell them [what] my mother told me, that the earth sometimes moves to spread out, to make more room for the people. I never thought of that. (laugh)

Ghelardi: So during this last earthquake, were you afraid for your life?

Metcalf: No. I'm a Christian.

Ghelardi: Did you have any friends or relatives outside the area who tried to call you?

Metcalf: Yes. I had lots. One in Hawaii, my daughter in Hawaii. And my son in Los Angeles. And of course, all the wires were down. Everything was shut down. That earthquake just shut the whole town of Santa Cruz down, the community. And lights, gas, and water was shut off.

Ghelardi: Do you remember for how long?

Metcalf: About, I think, six to eight weeks.

Ghelardi: Did you consider leaving the area because of the earthquake?

Metcalf: No. I want to be here when the big one comes. (laugh)

Ghelardi: You do?

Metcalf: (laughter)

Ghelardi: Do you know anybody who left town because of the earthquake?

Metcalf: Oh, yes. Pretty Mama and what is that Wong?

Ghelardi: Lily Wong's. Yes, lots of businesses closed down because of the earthquake.

Metcalf: Yes, lots and lots of business. And they all left except one, Charles Canfield. He said, "They're leaving, but I'm not." He's a native son.

The Effects on Older Residents

Ghelardi: Do you know of any of your neighbors, or people in the neighborhood . . .

Metcalf: Yes. Yes, one lady who used to live here at the Dolphin Apartments on Riverside Avenue. She'd lived here ten years. She moved to the hotel. (laugh) This is funny. (laughter) She said, "I'll never leave Santa Cruz. I'll never go back to Fresno. I never want to live around my family again." And then the earthquake struck and I found her in the parking lot after the earthquake. She said, "I was just over to see how you fared. You didn't get any destruction on the property much?" I said, "No, but I came to see how *you* were." She looked gray. She had the color of gray. "Oh," she said, "You know what I'm going to do? I'm going back to Fresno and I'll *never* come back to Santa Cruz again." (laughter) The reverse of what she said about Fresno!

Ghelardi: Yes. Did you know anybody who lived in the Casa del Rey retirement home

across the street?

Metcalf: Yes, I knew quite a few people there, but they all moved out, had to move out, and the hotel's gone now. I miss it because I used to go there to vote, and go there and get my hair done, and go there to concerts, and parties. They invited me over. And that lady who moved to Fresno, she tried to get me a room right next to hers, and I was going to move in there. But Mother Earth took care of that.

Ghelardi: Do you know if any of the people at the Casa del Rey had trouble after the earthquake?

Metcalf: Oh, yes, we had one tenant who came over here and went to Carousel Motel and then he moved over to Apartment 8 over here, and it just shook him up. I think he's gone to a hospital, because he didn't take any clothes or furnishings or nothing. He left it all. He had emphysema. He said the doctor had given him three months to live and this place was too noisy for him. He was very upset. And then Bill Kepler, my friend, I think the earthquake caused his death. He just . . . Six months after the earthquake he passed away, it shook him so bad. They were going to move him over to La Bahia [residential hotel] and he didn't want to move. He said, "I'd rather die right now than to move."

Ghelardi: Do you know any other older people in the neighborhood who had trouble after the earthquake?

Metcalf: Our other tenant. I went to see how she did, because I checked on all my tenants. And she says, "That was a big one." I says, "Yes. Did it hurt your apartment?" "No." It made a little crack in the kitchen, but not bad. And she says, "But it shook me." But she survived.

Help from FEMA

Ghelardi: Did you seek help from the Red Cross or from other emergency services?

Metcalf: I got help from FEMA because I lost all my clothes because the gas, and electricity was shut off and my clothes I was ready to wash them that day. My daughter said, "Let's go uptown, Mama." I had to go to the bank to get money to wash." I says, "Okay, but I got to get back here to wash my clothes." And it went on and we got to talking, and I said, "Do you notice how warm it is? Clammy?" "No, I heard on TV people saying that's a bunch of bull." Uh-uh. Not with me. That's the first sign of an earthquake coming, when it gets warm and clammy and everything becomes still.

Ghelardi: Earthquake weather.

Metcalf: Then you're going to have an earthquake.

Ghelardi: What did the Gray Bears do after the earthquake, do you know?

Metcalf: They helped a lot of people. They delivered food every week to their shut-ins.

I'm not shut in all the way. I'm partially shut in. But they did a lot of deliveries, and I know they helped the city a lot and the county a lot.

Ghelardi: Were there any interruptions or changes in your life because of the earthquake?

Metcalf: No. It didn't change me. But it sure set me to thinking. (laughter) Before the earthquake, I was . . . not worried, but I was starting to think, gee, I'm starting to get in a rut, you know? I'm down here in this environment—drugs and alcoholics, and I didn't like to live around that kind. But I'm here and that's my lot. That's the way I was thinking. After the earthquake came, it cleared all that up. I'm happy as a lark I'm living!

Ghelardi: Was it hard for you to go back to your normal life after the earthquake?

Metcalf: No. I slid right into it.

Ghelardi: How are you affected now by loud rumbling sounds?

Aftershocks

Metcalf: Doesn't bother me because they're digging up the [Santa Cruz Beach] Boardwalk here, and these big trucks come rumbling through. But every once in a while we've had several earthquakes, pretty strong ones.

Ghelardi: Aftershocks.

Metcalf: About a week ago, this [the phone] was sitting here and all of a sudden it was on the floor upside down. And my phone was going bzzz . . . And I looked and I said, "Oh, no. Not another one of the cats going up onto the shelf. That's their roost when they get scared. My cats, of course, get excited just before an earthquake hits. They got all frustrated for two weeks before that one hit. They were just . . . Well, they were here, there, and everywhere. Their eyes got all glassy and their fur bristled, and they came to me and said, "Meow, meow, meow, meow." (laughter) They really panic. What a mess. I had to clean up.

Ghelardi: So the buses going by your house and the roller coaster don't bother you?

Metcalf: No. They don't bother me. I'm a strong-willed woman.

Ghelardi: I know you are. How well do you think Santa Cruz was prepared for the earthquake?

Metcalf: Well, they had been talking about it in the newspapers and on TV, telling people there was going to be a big earthquake, but they didn't know how big. And that people should be prepared for it and have water in their refrigerator, plenty of food on their shelves. And I think they were pretty well prepared for it. They didn't know how big it was. But they took in their stride.

The City of Santa Cruz's Response

Ghelardi: So do you think the city responded well to it?

Metcalf: Oh, yes. They came around and checked all the units and went across the street and seen all the rubble where the chimney fell. And they have responded real well, as fast as they could. The police were all over the place, like that poor lady that got injured at Ford's [department store], they were right there taking her to the hospital, because the ambulance couldn't get down in there, so the policemen took her.

Ghelardi: Was your neighborhood served well after the earthquake?

Metcalf: Oh, yeah. They came down and checked all the apartments. Made sure it was all right.

Ghelardi: Were you surprised by the damage in Santa Cruz?

Metcalf: Oh, yeah. I was real shocked. But I knew these building were real old and that they had never reinforced them, really. They had just lived here and trusted in the Good Lord, I guess, and they never did take an interest in re- . . . Although they knew the weakness of the buildings.

Ghelardi: How do you think the city should rebuild the downtown area?

Metcalf: Well, if they're going to have two-story buildings they better earthquake-proof them. (laughter) Because we might get a stronger one than this. I don't hope for it, but you never know about this old earth.

Ghelardi: Do you think Santa Cruz pulled together as a community? Did you notice people being helpful and supportive of each other after the earthquake?

Metcalf: Yes, and hugging each other. In fact, I got an earthquake book showing how they hadn't done it before, but in this book that I have of Santa Cruz it shows how people ran up to total strangers and hid in their arms. Yeah.[1]

Ghelardi: Do you know of any looting or burglary after the earthquake?

Metcalf: A little bit, but they got caught.

Ghelardi: Did anyone in your apartments have trouble paying the rent after the quake?

Metcalf: No. They had paid it before. (laughter)

Ghelardi: Yes, but lots of people lost their jobs in the area.

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1. *5:04 p.m.: the Great Quake of 1989* (Santa Cruz: CA, Santa Cruz Sentinel, 1989).

Earthquake Damage to Businesses and Homes

Metcalf: Yes, they lost their businesses. Like, [a man I know had a] furniture store. He lost his business there. And Ryan, he lost his furniture store. It shows him in the earthquake book standing way back in the back. The roof fell in and he had gotten way over in a corner. There were quite a few people in there, too. But the roof caved right in on them, on the furniture and everything. And usually my favorite spot is up around the bookstore [Bookshop Santa Cruz], the post office, and the Plaza Bakery, and the little Italian lady's spaghetti shop down the street from the bookstore. I'm glad I wasn't there that day. Ooh! Her mother would have gotten killed if she'd been there, because she sat right in front of this big, oh, must have been eight-foot-tall cupboard, with dishes in it. Well, right where her mother sat, the bookcase fell over.

Ghelardi: It sure looks different down there, now, doesn't it?

Metcalf: Oh, yeah. God. It looks like a ghost town. If Hollywood wants a good ghost town, come to Santa Cruz. (laugh)

Ghelardi: Was there any damage to your home or your things?

Metcalf: Well, I lost a lot of . . . I had that top shelf all full, you know. And all of that came down. But I was smart. I had one of the maintenance men take four big screws and drill them into the wall to hold the bookcase up. And my TV sat right on the corner of the desk, never moved an inch. But I lost a lamp, an antique lamp. It broke. And a lot of little

things that people gave me over the years, they all broke. And a lot of dishes come flying out, but not many broke. They just sat on the floor.

Ghelardi: Did you stay here the night of the earthquake?

Metcalf: Uh-uh. My daughter didn't want me to. She said, "Oh, no, Mama. You'd be all alone. I want you out at our house." And Mary says, "Me too." We all ended up in the living room. She has two big trees at the back of her house in Scotts Valley. They were afraid that if the earth shook as hard as it did the first time that they might fall over on the beds. So we all . . . Her and her husband and the kids, of course, all climbed into bed with them, and whimpered every time an earthquake hit. I took the couch, and the other girls took the other beds. And we all stayed in the living room. We didn't sleep, because it seemed like every second there was a shake.

Ghelardi: An aftershock.

Metcalf: Yeah, real bad, because we were closer up there [to the epicenter]. Oh, that was a night to behold. I got about forty winks.

Ghelardi: So did you stay there after the earthquake?

Metcalf: No, I came back after the next day because I thought, "Well, my manager might want to question to me, or the police, or anybody come down to see if anybody was

hurt." And the bridge broke, Riverside Avenue. It isn't built back yet, but they said this month they might start. And then that's what I enjoyed, the voting on June 5. [1] Everybody knew Santa Cruz needed money for the bridge and the roads, so they all voted for that. They passed it through. And the gas tax. That's what I call pulling together.

Ghelardi: Was there any damage to any of the other apartments here?

Metcalf: Well, only the chimneys. We lost the chimneys on the cottages over there. That's all. And knocked everybody's things on the floor. They had a good mess to clean up.

Ghelardi: Yes. Lots of people were upset by the media coverage of the earthquake. Do you recall being affected by it? The newspapers and the TV.

Metcalf: Well, I got through it, so it didn't bother me. What comes, will come. I don't have no control over it. And like in the bible it says, in the last days people will run for cover and there won't be any. So why run? Stay where you're at! Get under a desk or a table or cover your head with pillows. That's my advice.

Ghelardi: What was most upsetting for you, or the most difficult thing about the earthquake?

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1. The voters of the City of Santa Cruz passed Measure E, a sales tax to help fund earthquake recovery. The total sales tax received from April 1, 1991 to March 31, 1997 was $20,324,000. See Santa Cruz Public Library local history website: http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/disaster/89quake.shtml

Metcalf: My refrigerator went off! (laughter) And all my food spoiled. I lost about $150 worth of food. And my clothes mildewed. FEMA helped me with that. They gave me $400. And I didn't expect any more.

Ghelardi: Do you know of other people who asked for money from FEMA?

Metcalf: Yes. They didn't get it. Because they had money, see. A lot of them. They told me they didn't get no help. They got it from the Red Cross. But I was real jittery. One thing that jittered me was that everybody got their gas turned off but us. The ten apartments here on Riverside Avenue, they weren't turned off because the pipe had frozen. It rusted and they couldn't turn it off. And that's the most frightening thing, because if we had another good shake like that, it could erupt the gas line. That's the only thing that really shook me. But they gave us a new one, so the next time we can shut it off if. We have to.

Ghelardi: That's scary. How often do you think about the earthquake now?

Metcalf: Oh, whenever we have a shimmy. That gets me to thinking. I go checking outside and see if everything is okay, see if any of the tenants felt it.

Ghelardi: How have you reacted to the aftershocks?

Metcalf: Oh. Well, it's just the earth settling back down. It's [like] after you've had a bad

fall and all your nerves and tendons are injured and they hurt. So, it's like that.

Ghelardi: Do you think more earthquakes will come to this area soon?

Metcalf: Oh, yeah. I imagine we're in for good shakers for a while. See, the right plate of the earth was always shifting. But this time it surprised and shocked the scientists, the left side shifted. And that really got them . . . They're still studying that, what is going to happen when the right plate slid one way for years and years. Now the left plate is sliding. I've got the first earthquake book. I bought it from the *Sunset Magazine* company. It shows what it did to Long Beach. I was in that one. I've been in earthquakes since 1925. I was seven years old, six or seven when that one hit in San Diego. Then we had a big one in Hollywood in 1933. My mother was in a wheelchair and she couldn't get over the ripples in the floor. My brother jumped clear from the door down in the street! And I sprained my head off of it. I was only fourteen then. It scared the living daylights out of me. Then in 1952 to 1957 in Watsonville they had shakers for five years straight. Yeah. Our friends from Arkansas came out, went to the woods. He got tired and he went to the car and went to sleep. And an earthquake came and jiggled the car, and he thought a rock came out from under the car and made the car roll. So he gets out and puts a chunk of wood under the tire on both sides. He got back in and went back to sleep and another one came. He ran back up to the woods and told Noah, "I felt something awful funny." "Yeah, look at our trees. They fell down without a storm." "What is it?" "It's an earthquake." "Oh! You can't see those things. I'm going back to Arkansas. I can see a tornado coming and I can run the other way." (laughter) That was really funny. He

got scared to death. You can't get him to come to California no more. No way.

Ghelardi: Do you ever find yourself thinking about your safety if another earthquake should hit, like when you're standing up by brick buildings or under wires?

Metcalf: Well, I get in a doorway. Because a door jamb is the strongest. It's got double two-by-fours in it, and it's built solid. And why these houses didn't go down, these stuccos, they are made of stucco and chicken wire. Chicken wire, you can bend it any way. It gives. That's why these didn't fall. But one of my brother in laws was a carpenter, and I used to go out and help him on the job, give him a nail. And I pulled a nail out and said, "Look at that! The head's on the other end." "Well, that's for the other side of the house!" he told me.

Ghelardi: Do you have disaster supplies in your house now?

Metcalf: Um, hmm. Jugs of water in my refrigerator. And a lot of food, canned foods. And I have fixed up a place where if a real bad one comes . . . Of course I'd be outside in an open flat. (laughter) But I'm so seasoned with earthquakes, I doubt if it would scare me any too much. Hagler's Market at the corner of Riverside Avenue and Second [Avenue] really got it. They have to tear that down and build it over again. Everybody has to move out of there, because it's just all . . . inside the walls big cracks. And where Bill lived, the great big bolt that used to hold the sign, it's a good thing he wasn't sitting there. It went through the wall and into his lounge. He said, "Look at the hole it made."

So they had to throw that out. But that great big spike that used to hold the sign up, it went right through the wall into the lounge. He says, "And I was sitting on this end, by the window."

Ghelardi: So did experiencing the earthquake cause you to feel uncertain about your life, or change your outlook on life at all?

Metcalf: No, I take it as it comes. I'm too old right now, really, to worry about it.

Rock and Roll with Mother Earth

Ghelardi: Is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience with the earthquake?

Metcalf: Well, the more the merrier! (laughter) I'm not at all concerned about it. I have nothing really to lose. Just my two cats and me. And my children. One night, my phone rang. I said, "Yeah?" Mary Ann says, "It's me. Did you feel that big one?" "No, I was asleep. You woke me up." (laughter) "Oh, go back to sleep then." I go to sleep around nine or ten o'clock, and when I'm asleep I don't feel nothing, unless it's a real good one. I think we had one back in 1982. Now, I had a bed then that had rollers on it. And my bed . . . yeah, it was an earthquake in 1982 or 1984? It was after the flood. 1984 we had one. And it rolled my bed clear across the room to the front window. And another came, and I said, well, I'll lay here and see what else happens. I tried to get out of bed and it swept me back into bed. And so another big one came and it rolled me back against the wall. I

said, now this is going to stop! I'm going to get me a bed that don't have rollers on it. It's a good thing the front door wasn't open. I might have been rolling yet. (laughter) I tried to get up and that one jolt hit me, knocked me back on the bed, so I says, okay, I'll go back to bed. Then I went sailing clear across the room and it put me back where I was. (laughter)

And then in 1985 they had an earthquake, and the Mexicans across the street came out, "Aaah!" They were all . . . They looked over at me and they heard my music going real loud. And I was dancing. Let's rock and roll with Mother Earth! They got in their cars and turned on their music and they were singing in Mexican to their music. They calmed right down. They didn't get scared. It's when you panic . . . If you can keep your mind about yourself. When you panic that's when you get hurt. You could run into a building without thinking and have the whole thing come down on you. You can't do anything in an earthquake. You just stand there and watch, and wonder, ooh, where to go? You don't go nowhere. You just hold your ground. Yep. That's the only way you're going to make it through an earthquake, hold on to yourself. And pray. Prayer helps. Or whatever faith you are.

Ghelardi: Okay. Thanks very much, Mayme.

Ramona Noriega

Ramona Noriega is a single mother of four children living in a student apartment complex for students with families on the campus of UC Santa Cruz. Ramona had recently finished a degree in community studies when this interview was conducted. Her experience with parenting a disabled daughter inspired Ramona to design a support group for Hispanic families with disabled children in Watsonville, California.

—ClaireMarie Ghelardi

Personal Background

Ghelardi: Today is June 6, 1990 and I'm here talking with Ramona Noriega in her home at Family Student Housing at UC Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz, California about her experiences with the earthquake which occurred on the 17th of October, 1989. Ramona, when and were you born?

Noriega: I was born on December 18, 1953 in Los Baños, California.

Ghelardi: How long have you lived in Santa Cruz?

Noriega: I've lived in Santa Cruz for four years. I'm a part-time re-entry student at UCSC, and also the mother of four children.

Ghelardi: What ages are they?

Noriega: My children's ages are eleven, nine, seven, and five.

Ghelardi: And you do have a disabled child?

Noriega: Yes, my oldest child, Teresa, is physically disabled. She was born with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. She's paraplegic and her mobility is with the wheelchair.

Ghelardi: Okay. And what interests or hobbies do you have?

Noriega: Sleeping, at the moment. (laughing) Teresa recently broke her leg, and so I don't do much hobbies and stuff. Let's see. Having some spare time to myself is the biggest thrill in my life right now.

Ghelardi: And what were you studying at the university?

Noriega: I graduated, so I'm an alumni now. My major was community studies, and my interest was with creating a support group with Spanish-speaking parents that have physically and mentally disabled children.

Ghelardi: That sounds great. Okay. So had you ever experienced a natural disaster before this earthquake?

Noriega: Yes, I've experienced a couple of earthquakes before this, but never as big as this one. This was the Big One.

Ghelardi: How did the ones in the past compare to this one?

Noriega: They were just really small ones. In number [magnitude] they were four or five [magnitude on the Richter scale]. They were in San Jose, when I lived in San Jose, and they shook the house and people got kind of shaken up, but it wasn't . . . For me, it was my very first time to even experience an earthquake, because I lived in the Central Valley and I had never experienced them. So that was even kind of traumatic for me, the initial one.

The Experience of the Earthquake

Ghelardi: Where were you when the earthquake happened? Can you describe your experience?

Noriega: Yes. I was driving from UC Santa Cruz to the Bank of America down on Mission [Street] and Bay [Street]. So I was in my car when it happened. I thought I had a flat tire. It was that kind of a sensation. It wasn't until later, when I noticed everybody outside of their apartments, and glass everywhere, that I realized that there was an earthquake. So I was separated from my children at the time.

Ghelardi: How long was it until you saw your children?

Noriega: Oh, about another ten minutes after [the quake]. They were all at home with a baby-sitter. By the time I got back, everybody was out in the parking lot in front of our home. They were already getting evacuated and all the neighbors were coming out. A disaster plan was just taking effect with the [Residential] Life Coordinator. She's the person who runs the program here for Family Student Housing. They were just initiating the evacuation plan when I drove up, so I was able to be with them through all that.

Ghelardi: What were your first thoughts? What did you think was happening?

Noriega: When I first experienced it, I thought the car had a flat tire, so I was not frightened at first. But after I realized it was an earthquake, then I got really frightened.

Ghelardi: Were you afraid for your life or your family's life?

Noriega: I just wanted to make sure that the kids were okay. Because I knew that . . . physically I wasn't hurt and nothing had happened to the car, so I felt safe. I felt okay, but I was worried that I would be separated from the children longer than I was.

The Impact on the Residents at Family Student Housing, UCSC

Ghelardi: Who were you with during the days after the earthquake?

Noriega: I lived in an apartment complex at Family Student Housing. All the residents who were evacuated. We were all camping out outside of the building. So I was with my

children and another neighbor who had come with her kids and her baby to be with us. Because she lived in an upstairs apartment, I was very frightened for her. She wanted to be on a lower apartment, and mine is on the bottom floor.

Ghelardi: So you slept indoors?

Noriega: We slept outside for the first two nights, because everybody was afraid and did not want to go back in. But the night of the earthquake, that evening around midnight or after that, there was a notice that if you wanted to go back in it was safe. You could go back in. They had checked the structures. But nobody wanted to go back in. So everybody camped out for two days after the earthquake.

Ghelardi: What was the atmosphere like out there?

Noriega: At first it was kind of like a little party, sort of. Everybody was out there. There were a lot of people, and they were trying to organize water and food and all that stuff. We knew that we had help from the college, so people weren't really scared. We just felt kind of isolated from the actual campus. Everybody else had electricity going because they were on generators, but our apartments didn't have generators, so we were the ones who were out here without light and water and stuff. We were the worst off on the campus. And we were scared because there was still rumbling going on. There was still a lot of rumbling of the earth going on. Help was being organized right away so the

atmosphere was that, "Yes, we are uncomfortable . . ." But we kind of felt like, we'll get what we need, so we weren't frightened.

Ghelardi: How long was it before the electricity and the water came back?

Noriega: I believe it went on the next day. We could actually have gone into the buildings that night, but it would have been dark. But the electricity came on the next day.

Ghelardi: Did your relationships with the people you spent time with change after having experienced the earthquake together?

Noriega: I think that the neighbors that we had that we were just real casual with became closer. We had already developed some relationships with neighbors that were already close. But there were several neighbors who were just kind of casual neighbors, and after that they became closer.

Ghelardi: How did your children respond to the whole situation?

Noriega: They were frightened too. I think they were really frightened that . . . I'm trying to remember. I think they were just really frightened that something was going to happen. (crying)

Ghelardi: Sure. So how did you spend your time in the days following the earthquake?

Noriega: It was kind of ambivalent. We would swing back and forth, wanting to come back into the apartment. But as soon as a rumble would happen, everybody would run outside. We were just very close by. We felt safer outside. We just kind of camped out and did that kind of thing, but the kids were wanting to kind of play and talk to other neighbors. The little kids started to talk with their other friends, and they'd go to the playground and stuff. That was nicer, that they weren't just all frightened and crying.

Ghelardi: Yeah. Did you have any trouble acquiring food or supplies for your family?

Noriega: Initially we did, because the first notice was, "Get anything you can get," and so everybody was trying to grab blankets and stuff like that. But later that night there was help from Porter [College]. They came to let us know through their residential assistants that there was food at the actual college.

Ghelardi: How long was it before you returned to your "normal" life?

Noriega: We're still not normal. (laughter) I'd say maybe about three months after. Normal life in physical terms [didn't happen] until about three weeks after, when the kids started not being afraid. (crying)

Ghelardi: How long was it before they went back to school?

Noriega: They went back, I think a week after that. School was closed for a good week, that whole week at least. I believe it was a week and a half before they went to school, because they had to check the school, and that took a while. The kids just kind of hung out. Because it happened on a Tuesday, so they were out the whole week, and then I think they closed the school for another week. I'm not really sure about that.

Ghelardi: Was that the same for your school [UCSC]?

Noriega: Yeah, my school started two days after, I believe. But I was in my senior year and I didn't really have to appear at any classes, so it just was the same for me. It didn't mean anything to me.

Ghelardi: I see. Did you consider leaving town after the earthquake?

Noriega: I did. But it seemed to me that there was so much chaos everywhere that it would have been worse to take the kids and go to the Central Valley, where my family's from. All of them wanted us to go. But I just felt like, well, it's going to be over with soon, and it's safer here. I felt safe in the apartment, because I am on a bottom floor. Most of the people who really felt frightened were on the third floor. Every time the ground would tremble they would shake. I didn't feel that same kind of fear. I felt that the structure was pretty safe.

Ghelardi: Do you know of anybody who left town because of the earthquake?

Noriega: Yes, one of our neighbors in our loop. I think there were quite a few people who did leave, but right at the time of the earthquake she got her little son (she was from Los Angeles), and took her son right after the earthquake, just like within hours, and left. She left. She was a first-year student here. We were afraid she was never going to come back, but she did come back. I've heard of other people who just left. They did leave. They left. Even a couple of days later. Whatever they needed to do. They left, maybe a day or so later, after it was okay for the roads. But there was a lot of blockage with Highway 17, so it was hard to get over the hill. You had to really have a good reason to get out of here. They weren't letting people through. That lasted for a while.

Post-Traumatic Stress

Ghelardi: Were there any interruptions or changes in your life caused by the earthquake?

Noriega: Well, it was the beginning of the quarter, so it really messed up my whole psyche for studying. I really was just trying to get ahold of the kids' emotional part, and my own . . . I wasn't physically able to continue with my group because there was a lot of devastation in Watsonville, so that just kind of closed all that down. The support group that I had organized was shut down for the next two months, October and November. That was disrupted, so my research was disrupted. Also, my physical health. I had a back spasm right after the earthquake; about a week after I had a really bad back spasm.

So I was out for like six weeks. I mean, I was getting better as each week went by, but it was a full six weeks, and that took a toll on me.

Ghelardi: Do you think that was stress-related?

Noriega: Oh, yeah. Definitely.

Ghelardi: So did you have a hard time readjusting to your normal life after that?

Noriega: Everything got back to normal schedules as soon as the kids were able to feel comfortable. It took them about four weeks before they even came into their rooms, because we were camping out in the living room. But they were on the same schedule of eating at the same time, taking their baths, going to bed for school. So everything started to get normal maybe two weeks after the earthquake, after school started again. But everything else was just . . . There were so many little aftershocks, that we were in and out of the house all of the time.

Ghelardi: Did you have any specific problems with Teresa, with lack of supplies?

Noriega: I did, actually. I had run out of diapers for her. At the time of the earthquake we were down to very few diapers. I usually go down to the pharmacy and get them, and I called the pharmacy, and they didn't consider it an emergency, so they weren't going to deliver. They were delivering other medications and things to people who were really

severely disabled, or had gotten hurt during the earthquake. So I had to figure out how to get down there. I didn't want to leave the kids. About two days after the earthquake I did finally get a neighbor who watched all of them. I took two of them with me, and we went and got her supplies.

Ghelardi: Was there any damage to your home, or your things?

Noriega: There was no damage at all. I think there was just one tray of papers that I was working on that fell, and nothing else was damaged, not even a broken glass in the whole apartment. Because I was in a bottom apartment. But many of the other neighbors that had top apartments had a mess. It looked like everything fell from everywhere. I guess it was because of my structure.

Ghelardi: How often do you think about the earthquake now?

Noriega: I try not to think about it, except during this interview. (laughter) I *was* getting better. I think about things that . . . if something happens (crying, tape turned off)

Ghelardi: How are you affected by loud rumbling sounds now?

Noriega: We're still pretty shaky. If we hear anything that's out of the normal . . . a big bang sound, or any kind of movement, it's still, there's still this residue of fear. The whole thing comes right back. It's just instant recall and everybody is like . . . inside they

are just really tense and ready to run if there's a big earthquake. But we do go over a lot of stuff now, like, "If there's an earthquake, what are you going to do?" Everybody knows that they are going to run under a table or run under a door arch, or whatever. So there's still that verbal type of . . . if something happens, what are you going to do. It's still happening so many months later.

Ghelardi: Okay. What about the earthquake was most upsetting or difficult for you?

Noriega: Once everybody was together it was a little bit better. (crying hard) But there was always the thought that if we were separated, I wouldn't be able to be with my children, and that was very upsetting. So that's the worst part now, even, is that I feel really scared if they go out if I can't go pick them up or something. They get scared too. They think that something's happened to me. So that's the worst part.

Ghelardi: Sure. You have no control of the situation. It's really hard. Did you have friends or relatives outside the area who had trouble reaching you?

Noriega: Yes, I had all of my relatives, my mother, my sisters and cousins, and in-laws were trying to reach us. They were close, relatively close. They were in the Central Valley and in the San Jose area, the San Francisco area. And they could not reach us for days. They just kept getting busy signals or no signals. That was hard. But the night of the earthquake we got to come into the house, I think about eight or so, I can't remember. But I tried to call, and I could call one person. I got through to one person and I told her

to tell everybody else that we're okay. After that everything went dead, and there were a whole lot of problems. We weren't able to reach people until days after, maybe a week sometimes. There were a lot of problems with the communications system. And then the media was not very helpful also. They covered San Francisco, but they forgot about Santa Cruz and Watsonville.

Ghelardi: Do you think more earthquakes will come to this area soon?

Noriega: Oh, probably. I don't know when the next one is, but since this big one we've already had several aftershocks that were centered in another location and they were pretty strong, not as strong as that one. It's just the earth giving off its pressures, but I'm pretty sure we'll have another one in this area.

Earthquake Preparedness

Ghelardi: How well do you think Santa Cruz was prepared for the earthquake?

Noriega: Oh. With all the media and everything . . . We were kind of isolated because our situation was a little bit different at the university. But I think they weren't that prepared. I'm not really sure. I know they pulled together as the community after. They pulled together with the water and the food relief and all that. It was a good show of making sure that everybody had support. But I'm not really sure, compared to another place, how well-prepared they were. I know that we were not prepared, and we were on the university. At Family Student Housing we were not prepared with water and extra food

and tents for people. There were many couples that had children, myself included, with my small children, we had to stay outside. And we didn't have tents or anything. Being the university, they should have been supplied with a lot more shelter-type of things.

Ghelardi: Did you seek assistance from the Red Cross or other emergency services?

Noriega: No, I didn't have to, because of the way that it was set up here. Our Family Life Coordinator had food and water, and also we were in conjunction with Porter College. They made sure that we had food and water. So it wasn't that bad.

Ghelardi: Were you surprised by the damage in Santa Cruz?

Noriega: Yeah. We were kind of blown away by the way the buildings were just all destroyed and all the people that were hurt. There were about eighteen people killed, eleven to eighteen people killed on the Mall.[1] We were just surprised by how much damage had happened.

Ghelardi: How do you think the city should rebuild the downtown area?

Noriega: I'm not really qualified . . . I don't think that I . . . I just have been a student and I don't live in the city, and I don't really take too much . . . I just haven't been too involved in any kind of an after planning for the city, because I'm not going to be here.

1. There were three people killed on the Pacific Garden Mall, but early reports were of higher figures—Editor.

So whatever way they decide to do it is up to voters and all the people who want to rebuild.

Ghelardi: So you think Santa Cruz pulled together as a community? Did you notice people being helpful and supportive of one another after the earthquake?

Noriega: I think so. I think there was a lot of . . . especially with the schools. The schools developed right away a support system for the kids, and they let everybody know how kids were going to be reacting. All the school districts had psychologists and workshops and meetings where parents could take their kids. That helped the parents a lot, having a place that understood what was going to be happening with the kids, even weeks and months after. So that was great.

Ghelardi: That sounds great. Do you know of any looting or burglary happening after the quake?

Noriega: I heard that there was a little bit of looting by the homeless in the downtown, because they were on the Mall and there was just no way it could be prevented. There were a lot of people who were hungry down there. So I've heard of a little bit. But I didn't hear of anything really terrible happening. I think in Watsonville there was also some looting, but I'm not sure.

Ghelardi: Many people were upset by the media coverage of the earthquake. Do you recall being affected by it?

Media Coverage

Noriega: We were upset because none of our relatives outside of the area knew what was going on. We were just totally ignored. There was maybe one media truck covering the campus, and they covered a fire that broke out, and that's it. They didn't come and check on anybody at Family Student Housing. There was no check of all of the students. They just did real light coverage. I hear from my relatives that were outside of the area that they were really worried, and waiting for the news to say something about Santa Cruz, and they would just talk about the downtown and Watsonville, but they didn't really cover the whole city. So a lot of people thought that the whole city had collapsed into a hole. And they couldn't get the whole picture, because they weren't clear as to what had exactly happened, and how people were doing in other parts of the city besides the downtown Mall. I don't think it was very good coverage.

Ghelardi: Do you ever find yourself thinking about your safety and the safety of others if another earthquake should hit, or planning escape routes from places you are?

Noriega: (sigh) Sometimes we do. We have places where we'll hide, in the case of the earthquake, and then we do have a little bit of extra stuff put away, like water bottles and stuff like that.

Ghelardi: In your home?

Noriega: Yeah, in our home. It's in a cupboard. But other than that . . . One of the things we did acquire from a church were sleeping bags, because we didn't even have sleeping bags. And the church gave us enough for the whole family. So we have sleeping bags, and we have a little bag that's got medical supplies and stuff in it in the closet in the corner. So in that way, we have a little bit of stuff. But when I think about it, it could happen and we could be anywhere. You don't necessarily have to be at home where your stuff is at. So it's kind of hard.

Ghelardi: Did your experience with the earthquake cause you to feel uncertain about your life, or change your outlook on life at all?

Noriega: Yeah. I guess I always did live one day at a time, but this experience has really caused me to . . . I do make plans and I do have goals, but I just live from day to day, with things that happen with my children and whatnot. I think if an earthquake happens, or another disaster, some other kind of thing, you just have to deal with all that kind of stuff then, and everything else just goes out the window. You can start rebuilding once you're stable again. I still have my goals, but I have to deal with everything that happens first. I think this kind of put it into my mind that if something happens that we couldn't control, there's nothing you can do about it. You just have to deal with the crisis and then start rebuilding after.

Ghelardi: Okay, is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience of the earthquake?

Helping People Who are Disabled

Noriega: One of the really bad things that did happen was that Teresa was . . . I was grateful to the neighbors that thought about us, you know. But I thought for her, if she would have been maybe alone, an older adult, she would have needed someone to help her. Because she was totally, totally dependent on all of us (crying) and she was very frightened. So I think that maybe this place should be more equipped to help people that are disabled, or under a condition where they can't help themselves. They need to be located right away, in some kind of a system where they can be located and helped. Right away and not isolated for two or three days. So that's the worst part that happened to us. And I guess that's it.

Ghelardi: Okay, thanks very much.

Steve Garvin

Steve Garvin was born in San Francisco, California March 15, 1967, and was raised in Pleasanton, California. He was a theater arts major at UC Santa Cruz, with an emphasis on filmmaking. He lived in the Beach Flats area of Santa Cruz at the time of the earthquake.

—ClaireMarie Ghelardi

Ghelardi: Today is June 6, 1990. I'm ClaireMarie Gherlardi. I'm talking with Steve Garvin in his home about his experience with the earthquake that occurred on the 17th of October, 1989. Where do you live, Steve?

Garvin: In Santa Cruz, California on Canfield Avenue.

Ghelardi: What is your birthday and where were you born?

Garvin: March 15, 1967. I was born in San Francisco.

Ghelardi: How long have you lived in Santa Cruz?

Garvin: About two and a half years. I'm a student at UCSC. I study theater. I'm actually a film major.

Ghelardi: Okay. Have you ever experienced a natural disaster before this earthquake?

Garvin: No.

The Experience of the Earthquake

Ghelardi: Where were you when the earthquake hit? Can you describe your experience?

Garvin: I was in my room. I was sitting at my desk. The earthquake hits and first I think it's just kind of a little one, because we have those all the time. But then it starts to get kind of big and I start realizing, ooh, this is a *big* earthquake! (laugh) I start to kind of stress out a little bit. I get up out of my chair and I walk over to the door. And as I get to the door, the door . . . we have the kind of locks on the door where you kind of push and turn and that locks the door. So I get to the door, and the door slams in front of me. The earthquake shakes it shut. It slams in front of me. I start grabbing on the door and it's locked. I'm kind of locked in my room, and then I turn to my left and watch my dresser with my stereo on top of it tumble to the ground, and all this stuff go flying everywhere, and my turntable gets destroyed. So I work the door open and I stumble down the hallway and then I go downstairs, and I get to the bottom of the stairs, and at the bottom of our stairs you end up in the kitchen. And so I see this big jug of soy sauce come tumbling out of the cupboard and explode on the floor. Our kitchen for the next like four

and a half days was covered with soy sauce because no wanted to clean anything up. Then I kind of stumble outside.

And all of my neighbors, who I did not at that time know, were standing outside with us, and we were right in front of my house. And there are all these power lines nearby. I kind of live in the slum of Santa Cruz. I don't live in the best area. Some of the buildings are pretty old, and people were talking about stuff falling everywhere. And the house right next to ours, the kitchen just got wasted. I mean, everything came out. We didn't get it that bad at all. Just the stuff that I told you fell, fell. My turntable was destroyed and that was like a nice forty dollars just . . .

And so we're sitting out in front of the house, and this guy gets in his car and turns on the radio, because all the power's gone. And we hear the emergency broadcast signal, the little ooop. And we kind of . . . That was a little scary because at that point no one really knew. I was always under the impression that it was solely for nuclear war warnings. I was thinking wow, you know . . . for a second. But then this guy gets on and he says that a major earthquake had hit the San Francisco Bay Area. Immediately I thought it was San Francisco, and I was convinced that San Francisco was absolutely wasted. Because we had . . . you know, we were in Santa Cruz an hour away and it was just crushed.

Ghelardi: Do you have family in San Francisco?

Garvin: I had a friend, sort of a girlfriend in San Francisco. So I was worried right then for her. She also works in downtown San Francisco, so that's . . . That's always the famous place where stuff gets destroyed or whatever. So I started worrying a little bit. And immediately I remembered that I had bought a bunch of food, in my fridge. I knew now that I was not going to have power for a little while, at least. We thought about getting some ice, and I was thinking about getting some ice, and this friend of mine, more of an acquaintance at the time, but . . . It's weird how the earthquake has changed people's relationships. This guy at the time was like a satellite friend of our little group that we kind of hung out with. And he drives up, and I hop in the car with him and I start to go up to campus to pick up my roommates, because I knew they were up there and I knew they'd want to get back. You always want to be in one place so your relatives can get ahold of you, or whatever. We start driving down Front Street and there's no shop window intact, and there's glass everywhere, and there's incredible traffic jams. So we park it at a bank by Water Street and River Street, down over there. And we just decide to run back to my house. So we jog back to my house, which was far faster than if we had decided to drive. It was amazing, the traffic jam. So I started thinking about ice, and I make my way into the Beach Flats area, which is kind of near where I am, and all the stores are closed, except for this one we find, and we get some ice and stuff. And it's kind of ironic, because we crossed about three bridges, and one of the bridges is out now. It was not safe to cross, and when we were on it we could hear it creaking and stuff. But we didn't realize . . .

Ghelardi: Did you see the damage to it?

Garvin: Well, it was shaking. It was off its thing. We knew that. But we didn't know they would take it out. All the bridges around the area all got hurt. Even the Laurel Street Bridge that is still intact now was messed up and they had to fix it. But I guess it made it. But this is the Riverside Avenue Bridge that's not there anymore.

So we were out over there. We were in the [Santa Cruz Beach] Boardwalk area, and we're kind of hunting around and stuff, looking for ice. Oh, there was this one thing that was kind of sad. There was this hospital back there that was for invalid old people.

Ghelardi: Casa del Rey Retirement Home.

Garvin: Yeah. That's the one. All of these people were poured out onto the street and they were all in blankets and stuff. That was a mess. That was condemned almost immediately. So that was kind of sad because there were a lot of old people who were sitting out there.

Ghelardi: Did it look like they were well taken care of, that they were prepared over there?

Garvin: It looked like they were trying to deal with it as best they could. But I don't think anybody anticipated the kind of thump that we had. It was pretty huge. At that point I don't think anyone really knew just how severe it was. A flood or something like that, you can kind of tell. I mean, there's water everywhere. But the quake hits and then

it's like normal again. It's just nothing works. So I don't think people knew how long it would be until they got power and stuff like that. And that building didn't look damaged, but I guess the foundation was messed up. I mean, my whole neighborhood was covered with bricks from chimneys, and cars that had been smashed from bricks falling from the chimneys onto cars. I walked outside. The first earthquake damage I saw, I looked across the street and there was a slab of sidewalk laying on top of another piece of it. It had actually lifted up and then pushed over and then landed on top of itself. And then the ends of my block, both curbs were just powder. They just recently fixed that stuff. It was there for a long time.

So we were in the Boardwalk area, and we were walking around. And randomly a couple of my friends come by and they decide to meet us over here, and I guess they crossed the Riverside Bridge in a car. So we all ended up back at my house. It was a bunch of friends and there was all this tension. There were exaggerated reports coming out of the Mall that there were eleven people dead. Originally it was something like thirty, "Thirty people dead!" Suddenly it was eleven, and then it was ten, and then by a couple of days later I guess it was two.

Ghelardi: Were you on the Mall? You said you went to a bank.

Garvin: We went to a bank but it was a street up from the Mall. I had a friend who worked at the Mall, in one of the buildings, and he actually walked around down there. He was in a brick building too, but it didn't come down. But he said that it was unreal

down there. I did see stuff, but they cut the Mall off so that no one could get in, because there was tons of looting. And they had the National Guard.

"It Sounded Like we Were in 'Nam or Something"

What was really weird was, a couple of days later when you're sitting around your house all you hear is the sound of helicopters. It sounded like we were in 'Nam or something, because there were constant helicopters from newspapers, Army choppers and stuff. And sirens anytime there was an aftershock . . . It would be really quiet. No one really drove because there was no gas, and you didn't really want to drive. So there would be like . . . There'd be an aftershock, a pretty big one, and then you'd hear sirens, inevitably. Always sirens. It was pretty much choppers and sirens. It was very, very odd. It was very hot right after it happened, those days. It wasn't that fun. I mean, you couldn't shower because there was only cold water. We were lucky. The next day we had power. We were one of the few.

Ghelardi: You had electricity and water and gas?

Garvin: Yeah, we had everything back. It was amazing in our neighborhood because no one expected us to be able to. But we were kind of lucky, I think.

But the night of the earthquake we were hanging out at my house. It had become like a link-up point, and there was like about twelve of us here. I think it was pretty much what everyone did, that I know at least. The college students kind of banded together

and they slept up on campus, or in various houses. There were all these mass sleep-ins. (laughter) And mass sleeping togethers. So I finally get through to my dad around seven or eight, I think. And around that time the second major aftershock hits. It was like 5.5 [magnitude], I think. So I'm on the phone with my dad, and I have to tell my dad, "Oh, there's an aftershock, Dad. It's pretty big so I gotta go. Bye." And he's just kind of like, "Okay, get under a couch!" That was a little odd. I knew he was going to be a little stressed until he heard from me again. So I called him back around eight. And we're just hanging out We're making sandwiches, you know. And I call him up about eight and this guy pounds on the door of my room and he's like, "We've got to evacuate right now, man. There's going to be a tsunami. Tsunami warning! This woman just came to the door and she said there's a tidal wave." I guess it was like a big giant scare that happened. So I'm on the phone with my dad, and I'm like, "Oh, Dad. They think there's a tidal wave now so I gotta get out of here." He was pretty . . . He's like, "Okay, I heard about that. They say it's a hoax but if someone came to your door, get out." So I got out and it turned out to be a hoax.

I drove up to my friend's house. We call him "Condo" because he lives in condoland.[1] I drive up, and I didn't go up Laurel [Street]. I forget why. There was a reason but . . . and I'm driving along and at almost all the gas stations I totally smelled gas. And there was lots of smell of gas and there was no light, which was very eerie. You could see stars, though. More stars than you ever saw, because there's no orange light that blocks it. There's perfect visibility. The astronomers did real well.

1. An area off of Bay Street near the university where many condominiums are clustered together.

So we're up at the condo and there's about twelve of us and we had a big pillow fight and fell asleep. And in the middle of the night there's another earthquake and I had a dream during the earthquake. I didn't wake up. But in my dream [there was] a huge earthquake and I was running from falling stuff.

I don't think the earthquake really had that huge an affect on me. I know other people that it really messed up. It really bothered them. They couldn't sleep. They were tense. But after a while I just got used to it.

The guy that picked me up, that was one of the interesting things, I guess. He actually became a friend that does stuff with us all the time. The earthquake set him up in that. He eventually moved into the condo where we were staying, when there was an opening. But at the time he was really a satellite kind of friend. That's a little side note. But the earthquake did that to a lot of people. I know a lot of people who became good friends.

I had a couple of friends who were really upset by it. And then a lot of people started leaving town. There was like this big exodus to get out, you know. There was only one road open, but you could take it and get to San Francisco. San Francisco was a mess, too. So it was like, wherever you went, you couldn't avoid the earthquake in northern California, unless you went to the East Bay, which I did on a Thursday.

I had this thing happen. The night before the earthquake I found out that this girl I was sort of seeing was seeing this other guy. So I was very upset about this, and was trying to call her the night before, but I couldn't get ahold of her. So she calls me the Wednesday after the earthquake we hash out this problem. After a natural disaster we're on the phone. "Good, you're alive! Now let's yell and scream." (laughter) We had a big old fight. That was the girl who lived in San Francisco I was all worried about, because there were all these fires up there.

Oh, and there was a big rumor mill flying around, I remember that. "Highway 880 had collapsed! The Bay Bridge was in the ocean." All this stuff. And 880 really did collapse, which was pretty horrifying.[1] If anything, that's where the earthquake . . . I mean, Santa Cruz took a lot of property damage, but there were what, eleven deaths in the county, if that. There were many more on 880. The Bay Bridge was a minor thing. It wasn't minor, but it was minor compared to what we had been hearing. We'd been hearing the entire bridge was in the water.

And the next couple of days we spent in the chopper zone, watching the Army troops come in and everyone try to get out of town, and people going home. A lot of people from LA going to LA, which was kind of psychotic, because that's where it's supposed to happen next. (laugh)

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1. Forty-two lives were lost in the earthquake when a 1.25 mile section of the Cypress section of the Nimitz Freeway (I-880) collapsed.

And then time kind of wore on, and I went home and I came back, and stuff just kind of slowly got back to normal. The first week of school, I remember, was post-earthquake slow.

Effects on People

Ghelardi: What was the atmosphere like at school when you went back?

Garvin: A lot people were really mellowed. And a lot of people were more in tune with the ground. I mean, for the first few weeks I really noticed the ground a lot. A minor tremor, or anything, a truck driving by. I was in the Mall in my hometown and felt a minor tremor in the floor. I was on the second floor, and I was just convinced it was an earthquake. You freeze. Because you get taught to just really pay attention to that. I don't do that anymore. It really takes one. But we haven't had one in a while, so I wonder what it will be like. Because the tremors got to you. They didn't get to me as much as to other people. I knew a lot of people who were crying every time there was a tremor. There were houses that were wasted. We lost four houses in this neighborhood, and there was that one neighborhood where there was a fire and three other houses gone. So it was a mess. People really got messed up by it. And they didn't like it. A lot of people left California, from what I hear.

Ghelardi: Were you afraid for your life or the lives of others during the earthquake?

Garvin: I have a difficulty facing mortality, so I didn't really think I was going to die, or anything. As far as the lives of others, I was worried about family members and stuff. But I didn't really . . . The only person I was really worried about was the girl in San Francisco, because I knew that was a mess up there and I thought it was worse at first, until we found out where the epicenter was.

Ghelardi: So you spent the days afterwards with a group of friends.

Garvin: Yeah, barbecuing all the food that I had bought. Because all the ice melted within a day or two and then . . . Actually we had a BBQ that day and then the power came on, so we didn't have to eat it all. I had spent like $130 on food. And then we ate it all. I had all this meat and were just like chowing on the meat and stuff. Yeah, we spent it . . . you pretty much spent it in groups. No one wanted to be alone. I think there were a couple of reasons. First off, because if you were alone and something did happen it was the worst thing to do, because if you got trapped you couldn't . . . People lost limbs and stuff on the Mall. If you were alone and something collapsed you were in trouble. I mean, you were in trouble with someone but . . . It also was companionship.

"After it's over it's boring as hell"

And there's nothing to do. It's very boring. Everyone thinks it's very exciting and thrilling or something to be in an earthquake, but after it's over it's really boring as hell. You do nothing! You have no power. You might read a book, but you can't concentrate because you're so stressed. All the newspapers talk about is the earthquake, so you sit

and talk about the earthquake for hours on end and then you get bored and you throw a football around or go to the beach and swim in contaminated water. (laugh) I mean, there was like nothing to do.

Ghelardi: Did your relationships change? You spoke about that a little bit. Is it true that your relationships changed with the people you spent time with because of experiencing the earthquake together?

Garvin: (pause) I mean, not like drastically. I didn't get a new girlfriend, although I know a lot of people who were . . . a lot relationship creating (laugh). But not for me, really. I hung out with my friends. I think you get a little tighter. But I think it kind of wears off after . . . I mean, everyone kind of bonds because they need to and then they kind of separate out again.

Rumors of Tidal Waves

Ghelardi: What kind of information did you get the night of the earthquake?

Garvin: Rumor stuff. Like I said, we thought the bridge had collapsed. We listened to the radio a lot. The radio was very helpful. Without the radio I think there would have been a lot more problems. The radio really tempers you. It keeps you in control, as far as the numbers of people who knew what was going on. Like the tsunami warning. That was a ridiculous little scare that ran through town, that ran through here. And everybody left. I mean, we were like leaping into cars scared we couldn't get our . . . I jump started a guy's

car because he was petrified he couldn't leave. Everyone was leaving their stuff there at the house. Everyone was just kind of worried that there was going to be this tsunami. And there never was, because we had false information.

Ghelardi: Did that originate from the radio?

Garvin: It may have. I think stuff gets blown up, too. The radio might have said, "Oh, there's a possibility it was off the coast, and if it was, there might be a tidal wave." So it's, "Tidal wave, oh!" And that spreads like wildfire.

Ghelardi: How long was it before you returned to your normal life?

Garvin: You mean like day-to-day things and stuff?

Ghelardi: School and . . .

Garvin: For me it was about a week. The rest of that week was finished and we went back on the Monday. I was supposed to be in a play that was supposed to open the next weekend at a theater [building] that they had to check. So that was cancelled. I think we opened the weekend in a different place. So that was thrown off kilter a little bit. But there was no . . . There wasn't extreme amounts of stuff going on.

Ghelardi: Did you consider leaving town after the earthquake?

Garvin: You mean, for good? Like moving out. No.

Ghelardi: Did you know people who did?

Garvin: Yeah, a couple of people said they weren't going to go to school here anymore. I think that's a little . . . I don't think there's a place in the United States where you can go where you can escape natural disasters. And I'll take an earthquake every fifty years over tornados every year, or Hurricane Hugo, stuff like that, hurricanes. I mean, that's just crazy. With an earthquake, you don't know it's coming, that's true, and you cannot be ready. But the other thing to think about is that it doesn't happen that often and it is, like all natural disasters, a phenomenon you can't prevent. It's just going to happen. I guess I have a fatalist mentality about it.

Ghelardi: No, that makes good sense. Did you have trouble re-adjusting to your normal life?

Garvin: No. Like I say, I was in the play, so I had something to concentrate on. The only thing about it was that it was back to the mundane. And one thing that the earthquake did do was kind of set you up so that . . . I mean, I kind of like it, like a revolt. If the government was overthrown what it would be like, because there would be anarchy. And for a while here there was anarchy in this town. There wasn't robbing and pillaging, but there was nothing going on here. People were just living in shelters waiting for things to happen. You wonder if there wasn't a natural phenomenon, if it was a man-

made phenomena like a revolution or something, what it would be like. I mean, it felt like a combat zone that was a little safer.

Ghelardi: With the helicopters and things that added to that?

Garvin: Yeah, plus the Army guys trotting around and then you hear all this stuff about the looters and all that.

Ghelardi: What were the Army guys doing?

Garvin: They were there to make sure no one looted and keep control. A lot of people in this town are really anti-military, anti-fascist government, (laugh) and I think the Army guys really aggravated a lot of people, and made it seem a lot more serious to them than it had seemed before. You throw Army guys in a nice liberal town like this and people think, "The government's going to move in on us! Martial law." And all this stuff like that. I don't think it was ever remotely near that but there's something about that here that really was aggravating for people.

Ghelardi: They also were bringing supplies, weren't they?

Garvin: I guess. See, that element of it, I really don't know. I didn't . . . Frankly, this is not my proudest moment, but frankly, I didn't leap to help people out. I was pretty much trying to handle my friends and stuff like that. My efforts to help people were extended

to my friends who I thought needed it. I should have probably, but didn't, volunteer to help and stuff like that. A lot of people did. The community really rallied. But for some reason I didn't get the urge to do that, because I just didn't feel like getting my nose in where it might not necessarily need to be. You know?

Long-term Effects

Ghelardi: Were there any interruptions or changes in your life caused by the earthquake?

Garvin: Not except for the play getting moved back. That quarter was pretty weird just because it was really broken. It was like a Thanksgiving break in the middle and then there was Thanksgiving. The time of year that it hit was probably . . . It affected little things in a weird way. Like the World Series. There was the Bay Series and everybody was really excited about it. Two games had gone by and the third game was going to happen, and at least in this house and in other houses I know of, the World Series was like pretty contested. People rooted for the A's or the Giants and that was it. And then the earthquake just essentially destroyed whatever thrill might have been left in the World Series. And then the A's just kind of added to that by winning fast. But by game three, I mean, who cared anymore? It had been two weeks since they'd played. It just wasn't the same. And it's a shame because the Bay Area really could have used a break. And then there was all that controversy crap about the World Series, should they play? I don't know. It was very interesting, the time of year. That it would stop events that we consider so perennial like the World Series. It just stopped it cold. No more World Series

for right now. Pretty random. That kind of thing. That we would have to deal with a different World Series. That's minor, but when you plan little parties around it and stuff, it can be kind be kind of bothering me. The earthquake just kind of . . .

You know how it changed your life, too? Things like the bridge, the bridges that went out. Just re-routes your traffic and makes minor things seem . . . I forgot what it's like to have the Riverside Bridge there. But for a long time that was really weird not having it. It was a quick way to the Boardwalk. Now it's a long walk there. Stuff like that. Or Highway 17 [going to San Francisco and San Jose] was out for a long time. We went to a concert and we had to find an alternative way. That was out, and that was a pain in the butt. We went to a concert one night and we had to take Highway 9 over.

Ghelardi: Constant reminders of it, too when you're re-routed. You confront the evidence of it.

Garvin: Little things like that. Well, there's still evidence of it around here. But yeah, totally. It's just like, oh yeah, there was an earthquake and so we can't take Highway 17. Oh yeah, that's right, there was an earthquake so I have to go around this way. Oh yeah, there was an earthquake this year in October so now that the summer traffic is coming over the hill from San Jose: now this whole town is stopped. It's like a big pile-up by my neighborhood. I used to know secret ways where I could get in and out of my house during the summer. But now all the secret ways are the main ways. You can't . . . When the summer traffic gets here I am like trapped in the car. You can't get out. You have to

get in the traffic to get out and it's a pain. It doesn't come right in front of my house anymore, but I can't get anywhere. I'm cut off. Summer traffic really affects Santa Cruz a lot, how you get around.

Ghelardi: Does it affect you? Does it bring back memories when you see the broken buildings and the evidence of rubble and things that have still not been cleared away?

Garvin: It makes me think about stuff like . . . it really reminds me of a war zone. You go down the Mall and it looks like there's been a war there. Whoever hears this tape might not see it that way, but there are big holes where there were four-story buildings before! A place I used to work at isn't there anymore. It's just gone! And they're not going to build it back. And the Mall just is . . . It's gone from this unique element of Santa Cruz to this wasteland. It was struggling financially before. I imagine now it's just being destroyed. It was just really unique down there, and it's not there anymore. There's chain fences blocking off stuff, and there's graffiti on the walls, and man, if you want to make a war movie go down there right now because you could have a free set. It looks like something's just gone through there and wasted the whole place. It's very eerie.

Ghelardi: How often do you think about the earthquake now?

Garvin: Not at all. This is probably the first time in a long time.

Ghelardi: How are you affected by loud rumbling sounds, like if trucks go by and shake the house?

Garvin: I've kind of cooled on that. Earlier in the year I would have said all the time, but now that it's June . . . that was eight months ago. You just kind of get used to stuff again. I don't really remember sound as being that apparent in the earthquake, because that wasn't what my main memory was. I was on the second floor so I didn't hear the earth, really. I had music on in my room. I had a cd running. And when I came back upstairs, of course there was no power or anything. And when I found my turntable destroyed . . . I've now moved completely to cd. I already had a bunch, but I don't buy stuff now that's on record, because I can't play it. Kind of interesting time this is, because it's the transition between cd and record.

Ghelardi: What cd was on when the earthquake hit?

Garvin: I really don't remember. It might have been a *Police* cd. It was totally intact. My cd player made it. My turntable was all over the floor. It was amazing. Every piece of the turntable was broken. I still have it. I haven't thrown it out yet. It just totally came apart. It was a mess. I saw it and I knew it was . . . I thought, oh, my stereo just got wasted. That was when it snapped into me that something really important, that this wasn't like some little thing that would just seem really big and we'd all go, "You feel that?" "Yeah, that was really neat. We lost power." That was about the point when I realized that this was going to be on Allstate commercials. (laughter)

Ghelardi: So when you're in places that are shaking for one reason or another, it doesn't frazzle your nerves? It doesn't make you uneasy?

Garvin: It probably does. It depends on the situation. You certainly are aware that it could start again. This is the first major quake of my life. I've been in little ones but nothing like that. And it does let you know what can be.

Ghelardi: What about the earthquake was most upsetting or most difficult for you?

Garvin: (pause) Well, personally it was because I was put in a situation where I had to deal with that girl that I was seeing. That whole thing was tacked on. That was probably the most upsetting element. That was a long relationship that was ending. It ended around those days of the earthquake. That was what it was. The earthquake forced it to happen, because we had to talk.

But if you're talking about the actual shaking?

Ghelardi: Just the whole experience.

Garvin: Just the whole feeling of it, it was that. And the feeling that it was kind of dangerous . . . that it wasn't so safe to be in this town, like it used to be.

Ghelardi: Did you have friends or relatives outside the area who had trouble reaching you?

Garvin: Not really because . . . I know of friends of friends who had trouble getting in. But my dad has a cellular phone, so the second the earthquake happened he was on the phone in cellular, so he could get through. He had called here before I had gotten back with the ice. I knew he was all right because my roommate took the call. So as far as that's concerned, I knew that my parents were all right. My dad always kind of acts as a central point, so my grandma who is in Monterey, we got through there. So it was never that tough. It was harder for me to get out than for them to get in, it seemed.

News Coverage

Ghelardi: What did they tell you about the news coverage of the earthquake from where they were?

Garvin: That it was the typical disaster thing, and if they didn't know someone in it, it would have seemed like how we feel when we're watching some natural disaster across the country, where we can't really realize how damaging it is.

Ghelardi: And did they get much information about Santa Cruz?

Garvin: Not at all. Santa Cruz was the total secondary. People still call it the San Francisco quake of 1989. The big quake. Most people didn't even know. Santa Cruz was

the tiny little town of Santa Cruz, according to the news services. It wasn't even . . . It was like, "San Francisco's burning down, bridges falling! And the epicenter was in a little town called Santa Cruz." A lot of that had to do with what the news could use. I mean, I've learned about journalism a little bit. And I just know that they're going to use what they have. San Francisco is a media center. There is all this media and they could just go. Santa Cruz is not a media center and it's hard to get to, as it is. And then when you have roads that you can't use, it's a bear. They didn't have information coming out of here for like two or three days. And then when they did get here, what did they focus on? They focused on the annihilation of the Mall. I don't people really understand that almost every single building here just got hurt somehow. A lot of San Francisco got hurt, but a lot didn't. This town was hit! I don't know anybody who didn't have something happen, be it a jar fall out of the cupboard or something. It was big.

Ghelardi: How have you reacted to the aftershocks?

Garvin: I've kind of got used to them. I kind of just sit through them. I wait to see if it's big and see if I'm going to leave. I don't really think the earthquake has had that huge an affect, as far as that's concerned, on me. On a lot of people it has.

Ghelardi: Do you think more earthquakes will come to this area soon?

Garvin: Well, from the news sources I've heard, they should, because it wasn't even a major fault. It was a minor fault. (laughter) So the good news is yes, there should be more soon.

Ghelardi: (laugh) Did you feel any premonitions about it? A lot of people have stories like that.

Garvin: No.

Ghelardi: Did anything strange happen to you that day before the earthquake?

Garvin: No. Not that I know of. I went to class and I was at my desk. I was kind of a little bummed out because I'd found out the night before about the woman, so, I wasn't exactly, boy, an earthquake will happen tonight. I was thinking, boy, I'm going to have to call her tonight.

Earthquake Stories

Ghelardi: What's the most amazing story you heard about an earthquake experience?

Garvin: Well, the most horrible one was that a friend of mine had just got a job at the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company, where he is still working today. He was supposed to start on October 17. And he called in . . . they wanted him to call in first and they said, "Well, you don't have to start until tomorrow." And the woman who told him that, this

was around four o'clock, and I guess about an hour later the woman who told him that was killed in the Coffee Roasting Company.[1] That one's one of those eerie ones. That one kind of freaks you out. He's like one of the last people who ever talked to her, and it was over such a mundane thing. No one knew. That's another thing.

I heard a bunch of stuff. You know, you hear about the guy who lived on 880 for three days. But personal, incredible earthquake stories, that was really, yeah . . .

Earthquake Preparedness

Ghelardi: That's incredible. Yeah. How well do you think Santa Cruz was prepared for the earthquake?

Garvin: Not at all, I don't think. The city handled it well, but I think it's because the city generally has a very law-abiding public. The Mall got trashed. If there'd been like looting, major looting and stuff, there would have been so many killings. There was no police. The police were out. They went out as soon as it happened. But Santa Cruz has a huge population of homeless and a huge population with no money. I was really surprised that there wasn't a big problem. Not to equate that homeless necessarily means a theft or something like that, but the fact of the matter is, that if you don't have money, and the opportunity is there to get money, and get it easily, you get it. That means my neighborhood too. I know there were robberies, but not a lot.

1. Robin Ortiz was killed when the building next to the Coffee Roasting Company collapse

Ghelardi: Did you have trouble getting supplies in the days after, or food, or anything?

Garvin: Well, I had bought all that food, so not really. I didn't have to stand in the long lines that other people did.

Ghelardi: What about water?

Garvin: We had water right away. We had power, so . . . It was no problem. Just didn't flush the toilets for about a day. It was really kind of an inconvenience. It was not like some people, who had a hard thing where they didn't have water for months. For about thirty-six hours we didn't have water.

Ghelardi: Were you surprised by the damage in Santa Cruz?

Garvin: I was pretty shocked at how severe it was.

Ghelardi: How do you think the city should rebuild the downtown area?

Garvin: I have no idea. To be honest with you, I think that that Mall was dying economically, so I really don't know what they should do. If I had my druthers, I mean, the Mall was a nice thing, but it was inefficient. It seemed inefficient. People weren't going there. They were going to Capitola. Economically it was very . . . it wasn't lucrative. I worked in a store down there. We didn't make any money. And we weren't

the only store. We were a shoe store, which has high overhead, but you also take a lot in. We just didn't make any money! My manager was always bitching about not having any money. So I really don't know. I do think though that the students up at UCSC should get their nose out of the vote [regarding Measure E.] Because I think a lot of the students up at UCSC really have a tendency to put their nose in where they think it's philosophically correct, and these people are talking about their economic life. And a lot of times things like the Mall, the Mall reapportionment issue is going to be scary. Because if UCSC students get involved, they might sit there and try to stop business in this town. A lot of people, that's what they live on. It's people's lives. Santa Cruz has no economy anyway. So I don't know. You can't make money here. I mean, six bucks an hour is a good job here. And so with that in mind, something needs to be done, but I don't know quite what.

Ghelardi: Okay. Have you seen any buildings being demolished or cleared away?

Garvin: I remember watching a video of the Cooper House get wasted. That was the second time, I guess, that the Cooper House had been torn down. I saw them taking down Ford's [department store] and turning it into a big pile of sticks. It looked like a bunch of broken sticks and stuff. It was very eerie. Did one woman die in Ford's [department store]?

Ghelardi: Yes.

Garvin: So it was very scary, because they're washing away a building. Because when you tear down a building you cover it with water. It was very eerie to see them just tearing down this building and washing away a three-story department store. The Mall had a lot of character. It was really great. And it's gone. You walk down by the bus stop now and you look and you see the Del Mar Theater, and I remember when you couldn't see to the Del Mar Theater. That was deep in the Mall. Now that's like the edge of the Mall. It's hard to explain. I have some Super 8 film of the Mall before the damage, the Mall before it got wasted.

Ghelardi: Do you think Santa Cruz pulled together as a community? Did you notice people being helpful and supportive of one another during the earthquake and after?

Garvin: Yeah. I think they were.

Ghelardi: Many people were upset by the media coverage of the earthquake. Do you recall being affected by it?

Garvin: I think people get upset because they get a little hypersensitive. The news is to make money. If you're not aware of that, then you've got some big problems. CBS News makes money. What makes money in a disaster is who died and where and what damage was done, not the Red Cross story. So I wasn't very shocked at that.

Ghelardi: Do you ever find yourself feeling nervous standing under big cement awnings?

Garvin: I did for a while. Up at Performing Arts for a little bit. I used to really freak out by the main theater, because you look up and they're cracks everywhere up there and you're thinking, boy, that is a big chunk of cement that could waste me. But the other thing to think about is that if you're in a situation like that you're probably going to die quickly. (laugh) So, I don't really think about it anymore.

Ghelardi: Do you have disaster supplies in your home now?

Garvin: No. (laugh)

Ghelardi: Did experiencing the earthquake cause you to feel uncertain about your life, or change your outlook on life at all?

Garvin: I don't know. I don't think so. I wouldn't go so far as to say no.

Ghelardi: Did your experience with the earthquake inspire or affect your creative work? Did it give you any ideas for filmmaking?

Garvin: Actually I think it may have suppressed some, because it was draining. It made you physically tired to go through an earthquake. And I don't think that that's a real

place to be creative, when you're tired. It took me a long time to quit being tired after the quake. I don't know if that's something other people have told you, but for me, I was very tired. I just couldn't sleep. I mean, I'd sleep. But even if I slept a lot of hours, you're just drained. Tension. Pressure. Pressure. Pressure. And for many days . . . I liken it to a battle zone. Maybe not as severe. I think creatively it stifled me a bit.

Ghelardi: Is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience with the earthquake?

Garvin: Well, one thing about the earthquake that I thought was interesting was that you could never predict who was going to be affected by it. Some people were really affected by it that I f considered pillars of strength. And then other people that I thought would have an emotional breakdown about tying their shoe, they were totally able to handle the earthquake. It was very weird. It seemed to strike different people different ways, even if they were in the same place, two different people, depending on what they saw or where they were. It didn't seem to have anything to do with damage to the house or . . . That's not true. I think people who really had their house damaged probably were affected more. If they didn't have a place to live, that would certainly mess with you. But it was weird. Different people got affected different ways.

Ghelardi: Okay, well thanks very much.

Garvin: My pleasure.

Michael Murray

Michael Murray was twenty-six years old at the time of this interview. He was born in Artesia, California, and is a graduate of UCSC. He worked at a methadone clinic and as a volunteer for the Santa Cruz AIDS Project. He is a published author, and at the time of the earthquake lived in an apartment on the Westside of Santa Cruz with three friends and his cat, Gibson.

—ClaireMarie Ghelardi

Personal Background

Ghelardi: This is the 7th of June, 1990 and I'm talking with Michael Murray in Santa Cruz, California about his experience with the earthquake on the 17th of October, 1989. Michael, what is your birthdate?

Murray: December 30, 1963.

Ghelardi: And what place were you born?

Murray: Artesia, California.

Ghelardi: And how long have you lived in Santa Cruz?

Murray: Seven years.

Ghelardi: What do you do in Santa Cruz?

Murray: I work at the methadone clinic, which is a drug rehab center for heroin addicts. I'm an intake counselor. And I play a lot of softball. And I do volunteer work at the [Santa Cruz] AIDS Project and I write short stories, sort of.

Ghelardi: Do you have any other hobbies and interests?

Murray: Watching baseball. And my cat, whose name is Gibson.

Ghelardi: Okay. Have you ever experienced a natural disaster before the earthquake?

Murray: The 1985 players with the Dodgers. Ha-ha! Isn't that funny? Other earthquakes? I lived in southern California. So we had in 1971, the Sylmar quake, and several other earthquakes that weren't quite as big as that one, but nothing like the Santa Cruz quake. Because the Sylmar quake happened in Sylmar, which is about ninety miles away from where I grew up, so we got just the perimeter of it.

Ghelardi: How did those experiences compare?

Murray: I was eight, and it was around six in the morning. I was asleep and the closet started rattling, and I thought the cat had got into the closet and was trying to get out. So I called my mom, and I said, "Mom, let my cat out of the closet." Instead, my mom pulled me out of bed and said, "Get under this doorway." (laughter) And that's all I remember about that.

The Experience of the Earthquake

Ghelardi: Okay. Where were you when the earthquake hit, the 17th of October earthquake? Can you describe your experience?

Murray: I was at the East Field House at UCSC, on the field playing softball. I was standing out in left field. We were winning, and it was the ninth inning and they had one out, I think. Then the earthquake hit. And someone on our team I remember saying, "Get down on the ground," or something. And I was like, I don't see any reason to get down on the ground. So I just watched the earth shake. I'd never seen the earth actually move, because it did move up and down and it lasted quite a long time. The windows at the Stevenson Dining Hall, you could see them sort of shaking in and out. None of them broke. And then all these people from Stevenson [College] came out and started screaming and cheering and clapping like it was just the greatest thing that ever happened to them. And then we finished our game after that.

Ghelardi: So you didn't fear for your life at all?

Murray: Not at all.

Ghelardi: What were your first thoughts? What did you think was happening?

Murray: You mean afterwards?

Ghelardi: During.

Murray: I thought, we're having an earthquake, because I'd been through a lot of them before. I thought it went on pretty much a long time. But you couldn't see any damage. Standing in the East Field, there's nothing really to fall over, and none of the windows broke. So I just thought it was a big earthquake and I didn't have any other thoughts than that.

Ghelardi: So you kept on with the game?

Murray: We finished the game. We won. And then we had another game to go to. We play on two teams. The other game was at Harvey West Park. And so I stopped to take my cleats off and I sat down. I was changing my shoes and I happened to look down towards the Dream Inn and there was a cloud of smoke rising up from some place. There was a fire. And that's when I first thought, oh, maybe this is a little more serious than we first had thought here.

Ghelardi: And what did you do?

Murray: Then we got in the car because we were going to go to the other game. All the signals were out and I thought, hmm. Then we got to the corner of Bay [Street] and Mission Street and there was this the smell of alcohol all over everywhere. And we were like, why is there alcohol? And the market on the corner of Bay and Mission, the windows had broken out, and all the booze and whiskey and beer had crashed on the ground out of the cases and broke. It just reeked of alcohol on the corner. And then we went home and the radio stations were out and they were playing the emergency warning sounds. "Stay turned in this area."

Ghelardi: So you just stayed at home?

Murray: So I went home. My friend Jamie was at work, and she lives about five houses away from me. So I went over there and she wasn't home yet. And the phones were out, and all the people that were supposed to play softball in the second game decided that this would be the perfect opportunity to go to the liquor store and buy all the beer and whatever they could muster, and then invite themselves to my house, so that they could get drunk in this time of need. Which sounded like about the furthest thing from what I wanted to do.

Ghelardi: What did you want to do?

Murray: I don't know. It wasn't that big a deal to me. The whole thing wasn't that big a deal. You can't see me shrug on tape, huh? I didn't really care, but they thought it was a party, a big party. I sort of wanted just to make sure that we shut the gas off. And that was about it.

Ghelardi: So who did you spend time with in the days after the earthquake?

Murray: My friend Jamie. Because she was scared, she wouldn't sleep in her house. She slept outside and I slept in the house. And I actually went to work the next morning and we operated without power. And then I had a writing class in San Francisco and I went that night. Actually, the writing class was on Thursday night and the earthquake was on a Tuesday. I went Thursday night to the writing class in San Francisco, and everyone said, "Oh. I can't believe that you even came, with the earthquake!" And I was like, well . . . We came up Highway 1 because Highway 17 was out. And probably some of the people that I live with. And some of the people from the softball team sort of hung out for maybe even a day, or moved around. Because a lot of their houses were destroyed so people were sleeping everywhere. I don't really remember.

Ghelardi: Did your relationships change at all with those people after experiencing the earthquake together?

Murray: I felt like it was a pretty immature response to go out and load up on alcohol. It sort of pissed me off. In a way, it sort of disgusted me.

Ghelardi: Yes. What was the atmosphere like at work?

Murray: Oh, it was pretty hectic. All the heroin addicts claimed that they had to use because the earthquake came. That was their excuse. So we didn't . . . I don't think we penalized anybody for using around that time. And a lot of people couldn't make it, because the roads were out. So a lot of people got stuck in San Jose, and we had to get permission from other clinics to let them dose there, and we cut through a lot of red tape, which I thought was good. Because obviously they weren't going to get their dose if they didn't . . . So we just called up and said, "Look, people are trapped because of the earthquake in certain parts of the country. Can you dose these people?" And the other clinics are like, "Okay. And you dose some of ours." "Okay." So it worked out pretty well. Everyone was scared. There were all those aftershocks. I forgot about that. Those were fun.

Ghelardi: How did you react to those?

Murray: They just happened. I mean, earthquakes don't bother me at all. I think a tornado would, but not earthquakes. You'd be talking on the phone with someone and they'd be on one side of town and they'd go, "Oh. Here it comes." And then you'd hear it and they go, "There it goes." And then it would come and pick up on you, on your end of the phone. "Yep. I've got it now." And then it would pass through. That was pretty funny, I thought.

Ghelardi: Did you have any trouble getting supplies or food?

Murray: We paid like twelve dollars for a bag of groceries, and then they just put whatever into it. Everybody got a gallon of water and something, I forget what else. And then just like whatever you got, like Apricot Nectar or Kern's things or whatever. I think we wound up eating tuna sandwiches for a couple of days. At where I worked all the water was working still, at the County Building. We could go there and wash up. We have a water cooler, so we took our water cooler and hid it so the clients wouldn't take it. Everyone is so suspicious.

Ghelardi: How long was it before you got power at your home and work?

Murray: At work it was like the second day. At my house it was . . . it seems like it was the second day. But maybe it was the third day. It was really quick. They had said it was going to take so long, and it came on really quick again, which was nice.

Ghelardi: So you went straight back to work the next day.

Murray: Yes, but I was late because my alarm didn't go off because there was no power. I was only like ten minutes late, but nobody cared, so . . .

Ghelardi: Did you consider leaving town after the earthquake?

Murray: Not at all.

Ghelardi: Do you know anyone who did?

Murray: Yeah, I know a woman who moved back to New Jersey because of the earthquake. She was totally scared by it. I know a group of guys who just packed up everything right after the earthquake and went to LA and stayed there for a week before they came back.

Ghelardi: Were there any interruptions or changes in your life caused by the earthquake?

Long-Term Effects

Murray: No, other than just like, how it changed the city so that you couldn't walk down the Mall or places that you like . . . When buildings went down I'd look at the building and go, "What was there?" I couldn't remember what was there. And not being able to get into the post office. I had a post office box then. I couldn't get my mail for about a week and a half. It was just little things. Not any big deal, especially compared to people dying. It was just sort of weird not to be able to walk down the Mall, have it all cordoned off.

Ghelardi: Did you have any trouble readjusting to your normal life?

Murray: No. Not at all.

Ghelardi: Straight back into your routines.

Murray: Yeah.

Ghelardi: Was there any damage to your home or your things?

Murray: I had a book fall over on my shelf. That was it. In my room, a book fell over. And my friend's house who lives five houses away, everything came off the walls in her bedroom. Everything was spilled. Her refrigerator fell off the table. I think maybe there were a couple of cracks in the walls at our house, but nothing to speak of.

Ghelardi: How often do you think about the earthquake now?

Murray: Well, usually when I look around at the bridge, the Riverside Avenue Bridge which is out, I go, God, I wish they would put the bridge back again. And if you see the retaining walls. And today on Front Street they were knocking down another building down by the Metro Center across from Kinko's [copies]. I don't even know what was there but they had a crane inside and they were knocking it down, so of course that reminds me of it.

Ghelardi: How are you affected by loud rumbling sounds and shaking?

Murray: Not at all, because they didn't bother me in the first place.

Ghelardi: What about the earthquake was most upsetting or difficult for you?

Murray: The people that crowded around the coffeehouse to wait for them to bring the body of that woman out. I took a woman back to the shelter, one of the clients needed a ride back to the shelter, I think the next morning, or it must have been two mornings later. There was a shelter at the church down by the library [the Calvary Episcopal Church]. So I took her back there and we drove behind the coffee house [Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company. And, I mean, the friends of that woman, Robin Ortiz, were outside and the police were trying to do whatever, or whatever the rescue groups were doing, moving bricks out, and there were at least fifty or seventy-five people standing around with nothing better to do than wait for them to bring a body out. I thought that was pretty upsetting and disrespectful.

Telecommunications Challenges

Ghelardi: Yes. Did you have friends or relatives outside the area who had trouble reaching you?

Murray: Yeah, my mom couldn't get through. Oh, I called my mom, who lives in LA. There are two area codes in LA. One is 213 and the other is 818. My mom lives in 213. I couldn't get through to her. Then a friend of mine called me from San Jose and he said, "I can't get through to my mom." His mom lived in the 818. So I called his mom in the 818,

and I could get through to her. Then I told her to call my mom. So it worked out like that. And there was a woman in New Hampshire who claimed, although I don't know if this is true, that she called every hour on the hour for four days to make sure that we were okay. Because she used to go to school with us in Santa Cruz, and all she heard was that Santa Cruz was leveled and they showed pictures of the Mall only. She thought everything was destroyed. So she called for four days before she could get through.

Ghelardi: Did you hear any other stories from people outside the area about what news coverage they saw?

Murray: Well, like she in New Hampshire thought that the entire city was down and that it was totally leveled. That's what they were telling people, or so they reported. Well, the first thing we heard was that the Bay Bridge had collapsed at rush hour, which would have meant that hundreds of people were killed. But nobody got killed on the Bay Bridge. So that sounds like pretty irresponsible radio journalism to me, since only that one section fell.

Ghelardi: What other information did you get the first night?

Murray: That it would be like at least two days until the power was turned on. That was the first thing we heard. And then they were like, "Well, it could be a week or two." And in fact, it was almost two days, but not quite. (pause) And oh, there was going to be a

tidal wave and it was going to wash out Capitola. I didn't believe that one for a minute, though. That's all I can think of.

Ghelardi: Did you have a radio that night?

Murray: Yes, we listened to it. There was one station broadcasting, KSCO? I don't remember. And they had other people calling in from all over, giving out information.

Ghelardi: Do you think more earthquakes will come to this area soon?

Murray: I don't think they will, but I have no reason for thinking that. I have no idea how earthquakes work, so . . . I don't expect one, though.

Ghelardi: Did you feel any premonitions about it?

Murray: Not at all.

Ghelardi: Have any strange experiences that day before it happened?

Murray: No.

Earthquake Stories

Ghelardi: What's the most amazing or striking earthquake story you've heard?

Murray: I was at Home Savings Bank maybe six months afterwards. And there was this guy who is sort of a street person, who you see around town. He has long brown hair and he carries all his belongings in this box, a brown box. He was withdrawing some money at Home Savings, like some really odd amount, like $6.31. And I mean, thirty-one cents. He was talking to the teller and I thought to myself, okay, this guy's a nut. And then he started talking about how the CIA was following him around and how they were disguised as fags, he said, and the fags were following him around. And then he said something like, "That fag, Robin Ortiz, in the earthquake, she deserved to die because she was a lesbian." And then he went off on drug addicts and how he was never a drug addict and he wasn't a fag, and thank God the earthquake came and killed Robin Ortiz and killed some of the drug addicts." I was just like totally in shock about that. Then I thought, but this guy is certainly not in his right mind. At least I didn't think he was in his right mind. But it still pissed me off.

Ghelardi: Um, hmm. Do you think Santa Cruz was prepared for the earthquake?

Murray: I know I wasn't. I don't think Santa Cruz was prepared. I mean, you hear always afterwards, there was all this stuff in the paper, "Oh, they knew that these weren't up to code and they let it go." And there are all the lawsuits pending at the coffeehouse and at Bookshop Santa Cruz, because the roof came down on Bookshop Santa Cruz, I guess and knocked the coffeehouse over. I don't remember which . . . And it had been documented, I guess, although I had never seen it, that some of the structures needed to be rebuilt, and people just didn't do it. So in that way, no, they weren't

prepared. And plus, the city is laid out so poorly anyway, that when you lose Riverside Bridge, it totally isolated the Beach Flats . . . But at least now we have those wonderful detours with all those very clever sayings on the signs. Those are nice. I like those a lot.

The Response from the City of Santa Cruz

Ghelardi: (laugh) What did you think of the city's response to the earthquake?

Murray: Didn't the National Guard come or something? I guess you have to do that, but I don't know, it bothers me when the National Guard comes somewhere. I don't know. A lot of the people seemed to be getting along a lot better for a while anyway, except I still wonder about all those people crowded outside the coffeehouse to look at the body. Too many people taking pictures, though. Mixed, I guess, is my answer. A lot of people running around scared. I mean, the earthquake didn't bother me, but the people who were nervous and running around and being nervous started to make me nervous, just because they were being so unstable.

Ghelardi: How do you think the city should be rebuilt, the downtown area?

Murray: Oh, I never really thought about it. I don't really care one way or the other. They should probably take care of all the homeless people though, when they're rebuilding it and not make it into a . . . Somebody wrote into the newspaper that they should re-structure the river and put a riverboat on it, in the San Lorenzo River, and have shops all lining the park, so it would increase revenue and people could sit out on a terrace and

have a drink and watch a boat float by. I would much rather see more shelters built, or affordable housing, or something along those lines.

Earthquake Damage

Ghelardi: Were you surprised by the damage in Santa Cruz?

Murray: Yes, I was. Especially to go over to that Hallmark store and look when they took it out. The weird thing is that if you go over there and park, there are still pieces of tile from the floor. You are driving your car on tile that was like the floor. And then that one building had catacombs under it, little tunnels and stuff. That's cool. I'd like to go down there. Somebody told me that there's tunnels all throughout Santa Cruz. Some guy walked up to me on the street and we were talking about it. "Oh, yeah. There's tunnels and they go here and they go down to the beach, and they are all underneath, but nobody will ever tell you about them." But of course he knew. (snort) And he said that the speakeasies and the gin joints and all the places like that were down there too, and all the prostitutes in the 1800s . . .[1]

Ghelardi: Wow. Have you seen any buildings being demolished and cleared away?

1. According to Emeritus Librarian Stanley Stevens, an expert in Santa Cruz history, "The 'tunnels' were created in a period when merchants could save money by buying their merchandise in advance for the entire season or year, and then storing it in the basements of their stores. My impresseion is that there were never 'tunnels' that ran from Downtown to the Beach, nor tunnels that inter-connected with each other. There were these basements under the 'old' Catalyst, in the old St. George building."

Murray: Yeah, I saw one today. And I saw them take down the Cooper House, I think, and the inside of . . . right across from the Cooper House, the Pacific Western Bank, I think it was. They took the inside out and only left the outside [the facade].

Ghelardi: Did you think Santa Cruz pulled together as a community? Did you notice people being helpful and supportive of one another after the earthquake?

Murray: Yeah, I did. For the most part. On an individual basis, anyway. But any time you get crowds together, it always . . . crowds. I don't like crowds. Because then they sort of take on a different mentality. It seems like they're all gawking and stuff. And you know there were out of towners who came down Highway 1—"Oh, let's check it out."

Ghelardi: Do you know of any looting or crime that happened after the quake?

Murray: No, I don't know of any that happened. Oh, I heard about something up in Scotts Valley, somebody broke into somebody's house, or bashed in some windows in a store or something.

Ghelardi: Many people were upset by the media coverage of the earthquake. Do you recall being affected by it?

Murray: Well, didn't the president come here? Yeah. They wouldn't let local papers, reporters in. The Associated Press and UPI came and they let them go in right with the

president, or whatever. But reporters from the [*Santa Cruz] Sentinel* weren't even allowed to get that close. So in New York they had pictures of the Mall before the people in Santa Cruz had pictures of the Mall. And of course they totally distorted what really happened here. Nobody in Santa Cruz really knew what was going on, but everyone in New York knew our business. It seems like we should have known first, since it happened to us.

Ghelardi: Do you ever find yourself thinking about your safety or the safety of others if another earthquake should hit, or planning escape routes from places?

Murray: Never.

Ghelardi: Do you have disaster supplies in your home now?

Murray: No. (laughter) Although I do have an extra gallon of water, because I drink a lot of water and you can't drink the tap water in Santa Cruz.

Ghelardi: Well, that's a start. Did experiencing the earthquake cause you to feel uncertain about your life or change your outlook on life at all?

Murray: No.

Ghelardi: Did your experience with the earthquake affect or inspire your creative work? Did it give you any ideas for stories?

Murray: Yeah, the guy in the bank that talked about Robin Ortiz. And I might at some point write something about the crowd that was gathered outside. Those were the two things that really struck me that week. Of course the other thing was six months later but it . . . Oh, and then in the Ford's [department store], the woman who was helping the woman try on a coat and one of them goes in the dressing room and one of them gets killed and one of them doesn't, because the thing falls a certain way. Something like that I might put in a story. They found somebody's arm. I might include something like that. Certainly not to be exploitative. Actually, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* did run the picture in full . . . with blood and everything and this woman being loaded into an ambulance or something, which I think was totally irresponsible also. I forgot about that. So even local media [messed] up.

Ghelardi: Yeah. Okay, is there anything else you'd like to speak about your experience with the earthquake?

Murray: No, I don't think so.

Ghelardi: Thanks very much.

Rio Del Mar Fifth Grade Class

There are many good reasons for doing children's oral history of a particularly significant event such as the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. Children are impressionable, usually observant and curious. Most children like to talk. Every child likes to feel important. And lastly, children do say the darndest things.

I have been a parent for twenty-eight years. My experience with children has taught me to respect youth's opinions, to value their ideas, open up my formed assumptions to question. I am a firm believer in the future generations of children. Consequently, whenever opportunity offers a forum for children I encourage them to participate. Hence, this project and my selection of interviewees.

Children were included in the aftermath of October 17, 1989. The news media printed articles on trauma for children. There was reporting of services and shelters for children. Also, there was general concern for the psychological well-being of children who experienced the "Big One."

Schools in Santa Cruz County closed until damages could be assessed and/or fixed. Upon the students' return, teachers used creative assignments enabling the children to process the earthquake. The Fifth Grade class of Cammy Ackerman at Rio Del Mar School produced a collective work called Quotes on the Quake, October 17, 1989. *These were the written stories of their earthquake experience, which I used to develop questions for interviewing the children who participated in this oral history.*[1]

Mrs. Cammy Ackerman's commitment to her students and the learning process is commendable. This acknowledgement rewards both her and her class for an outstanding year of impressive achievements. In so doing, it also recognizes the efforts of all teachers who processed the earthquake with their students. We are a stabilized community eight months after the quake due in part to dedicated educators who understood and responded to the needs of our children.

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1. This volume is now at Special Collections at the University Library.

Where was I when the earthquake struck? It was "soccer practice day" for my two sons. On these days their dad picks them up from school, gets them through their homework, coaches them at soccer, and then spends the night with them. On this day, after working at the UCSC Women's Center, I drove over Highway 17 to visit with my gentleman friend in the foothills of Saratoga. Eager to see him, I arrived earlier than expected. In fact, I was expected at 5:15 p.m., but arrived at 4:50 p.m. instead, a most important fact, which I call good luck.

I am a native Hawaiian, born and raised in the islands. The Big Island of Hawaii, the very one with an active volcano, was home for seven years. I have lived with earthquakes; I have accepted this natural phenomenon. Moreover, I like them—earthquakes!

So. Lying in bed, stretched out next to my lover, enjoying a moment of relaxed intimacy, the movement of the bed did not cause any panic, not even a concern. It's not that I am desensitized to earthquakes, I just sort of ride them out and enjoy the ride while it's happening. This was different. The bed is located in the lower half of a two-story, 5200 square foot, newly constructed Normandy-style house. The earthquake was its litmus test. I watched the walls flex. Then my eyes were captivated by the Chinese vase which bounced in synchrony to the jolts. It seemed to me that everything was moving in slow motion. It was surrealism. The vase bounced its way to the edge of the table, tipped, poured water. One by one, the flowers flowed out and onto the Chinese rug. I watched in fascination. My reverie was broken by these words, "Darling, what is happening?"

"It's an earthquake.

"What the hell are we doing in bed?"

My arm was flung aside, and he was up and out. We survived. There was no structural damage, thank God, because he had no insurance. While he checked the house, I tried the phone. Dead.

I knew that everyone (my children) was fine. I correlated their whereabouts. Soccer field. Practice. We were safe. But people had died. I guessed that it was a 7.9! We turned the radio on. The reports weren't good, but it could be worse. We waited. I prayed.

I had heard prophecy of the impending "Big One" which would separate California from the continent, splitting it along the San Andreas Fault. However, I did not believe it, had always dismissed it as some fool's joke. Little did I know that I would witness the destructive forces of an earthquake unleashed upon the civilized world.

Anticipating living in uncivilized comfort, we took inventory and made decisions. Candles would be needed. No phone; no communication. Limited travel. Highway 17 and Highway 9 closed. No access to Santa Cruz.

When I arrived in Santa Cruz two days later, it was heart wrenching. Postcard Santa Cruz no longer existed. My sons were happy to see me in the flesh. We had communicated via telepathy. You think believe, and tell yourself that your loved ones are unharmed. But under these circumstances, who can describe the feeling of a hug.

Returning to our house in Aptos was eerie. We did not know what awaited. The sights left us silent. We lost the china lamp Aunt Laura had gifted to us. One hand-painted plate broke; its mate had not a chip.

Nothing, absolutely nothing had fallen out of the cabinets. No mess. One strangeness, the ceramic vase fell six feet off the bookcase without a scratch. My rock set in the sand garden fell out of the cherrywood tray and broke in two. Who knows why.

It's weird what breaks and what doesn't; who dies and who doesn't; who is lucky and who is cursed; what is destroyed and what remains. I [live] on the border between fatalism and self-determination. Mostly, I live in the Zen tradition. This means I accept what is inevitable; at the same time I choose an autonomous reality. I make the most of the present moment.

Most children live in the present. Perhaps the child in adults is what still allows us to be awed, to still wonder, to imagine. I talk with children to comprehend their world. I wish to share the immediacy of their lives. Candid and serious, children offer a fresh perspective.

I enjoyed interviewing the eleven members of Cammy Ackerman's class at Rio Del Mar School in Aptos, California. the three boys and eight girls who volunteered to participate were courteous, curious, nervous, informative. A special thank you to Cammy Ackerman; without her support and help this project would not have been initiated. —Diane Chang-Wilson

Chris Louie

Chang-Wilson: Today is Tuesday, June 5, 1990. I'm doing oral history with Cammy Ackerman's fifth grade class at Rio Del Mar [school]. This is oral history for the Loma Prieta Earthquake, October 17, 1989, 5:04 pm. I'm going to introduce you to Chris Louie.

Louie: I'm Chris Louie. I'm eleven years old.

Chang-Wilson: Chris, you were doing your homework when the earthquake hit. Do you usually do your homework at this time of the day?

Louie: Um, yeah.

Chang-Wilson: What's your routine like after school gets out?

Louie: Well, I go home and I do my homework, and I have baseball practice. I play outside.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. In your paper you said that the chandeliers started to shake when the earthquake started. What other noises did you hear in the house?

Louie: The TV was moving. The doors were rattling. And there was all this stuff falling down.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. How did you know to run to the door and grab your sister?

Louie: Well, because we learned that in first grade because we did earthquake drills.

Chang-Wilson: You did earthquake drills here at Rio del Mar?

Louie: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Tell me about that.

Louie: Well, we had to go under the desk when this bell rang.

Chang-Wilson: But you don't have desks . . . you didn't go under the desk at your house.

Louie: No.

Chang-Wilson: No, okay. When you were standing there under the doorjamb, what were you thinking?

Louie: I just wanted it to stop.

Chang-Wilson: Pretty scary, huh? Yeah. When you did your earthquake drills at school in the first grade, were you told what to expect in case of an earthquake?

Louie: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Tell me about that.

Louie: We were told that there might be a lot of aftershocks and a lot of noises and fire engines.

Chang-Wilson: You didn't have any electricity at your house after the earthquake? What did you folks eat that night?

Louie: Little boxed things and leftovers.

Chang-Wilson: I remember that you said that your dad got home real quickly after the earthquake and joined you outside. Do you remember what was going on on the radio while you folks were listening to it?

Louie: Yeah, they were talking about the World Series and the Bay Bridge, and all those bridges and stuff, how many people were killed.

Chang-Wilson: Hearing that kind of news, could you imagine the devastation and the destruction?

Louie: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Who decided to sleep in your sister's room after the earthquake?

Louie: My mom.

Chang-Wilson: And how was that?

Louie: It was all right.

Chang-Wilson: How did you guys sleep? With sleeping bags or . . . .

Louie: Yeah, with sleeping bags, and my sister slept on the bed.

Chang-Wilson: What does your house look like now?

Louie: Some things are broken.

Chang-Wilson: Did you lose anything that you valued?

Louie: No.

Chang-Wilson: Do you have an earthquake story to tell us?

Louie: You mean like what happened to me?

Chang-Wilson: Yeah.

Louie: Well, I was working on my spelling and then the house started shaking and all this stuff started falling and I went outside with my mom.

Chang-Wilson: Would you like to go through another earthquake?

Louie: No.

Chang-Wilson: Do you get nightmares?

Louie: No.

Chang-Wilson: And what was it like coming back to school on the first day?

Louie: There were some aftershocks.

Chang-Wilson: Did you go through drills when you got back to school?

Louie: Yeah, one.

Chang-Wilson: Tell us about that.

Louie: Well, we were outside and then the principal said there was going to be an earthquake drill and we had to kneel down on the grass.

Chang-Wilson: And in case you are in the classroom, do you all go under your own desks?

Louie: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: What will you never forget about this earthquake?

Louie: Well, a lot of people, a lot of stuff was broken.

Kate Gorske

Chang-Wilson: Well, thanks very much. Let me introduce you to Kate Gorske.

Gorske: My name is Kate Gorske. I am ten years old. I live in Aptos, California.

Chang-Wilson: Tell me a little bit about yourself and your family.

Gorske: I have one brother. My mom and dad are divorced and I like riding my bike a lot.

Chang-Wilson: You were in Teddy Bear Toys when the earthquake struck. Were you shopping for something for yourself?

Gorske: Well, my mom likes Teddy Bear Toys, and me and my friend were there and we were just playing, because her mom was working the same day.

Chang-Wilson: Describe what happened when you were in the shop?

Gorske: I was inside where the cash register was. And um, I was like in the middle, and my friend and I were talking, and it hit and then me and my friend dropped to the ground and covered our heads and we both yelled, "Mom!" and our moms were covering us and then the lady who was talking to my mom, she was talking to us, she

came and covered both my mom and us. And then the owner came out and he came and he said, "This is the big one."

Chang-Wilson: Okay. What happened to the toys in the shop?

Gorske: They all fell down from the shelves. Some of the toys bounced on us. And some of the video games started falling on me when it happened. But we just ran outside real quick.

Chang-Wilson: Did you know this was an earthquake?

Gorske: Yeah, I knew it was an earthquake. I've been in them before.

Chang-Wilson: Where did you experience earthquakes before?

Gorske: Mostly they've been in the early morning or late at night and I've usually been in bed sleeping, either at my mom's or my dad's house.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Can you describe the feeling of being scared?

Gorske: Yeah, it makes you shake a lot, and it makes you think of what's important to you and your family, and seeing if everybody's all right and stuff.

Chang-Wilson: Yes. Your brother wasn't with you when the earthquake struck. What was he doing?

Gorske: Playing soccer at E.A. Hall [school]. And they heard seven sonic booms because there were houses falling down.

Chang-Wilson: So he was in a safe place and you knew that.

Gorske: Yeah, I knew that and my mom, she drove me home to my dad's house, and then she ran over and got him. I stayed with my dad at my neighbor's house, because their chimney was falling and he helped them keep it on the house. So me and their family were sitting in the backyard, and I was helping take care of the little kids.

Chang-Wilson: Were the little kids really scared?

Gorske: They didn't really know what was happening so they weren't that scared.

Chang-Wilson: You didn't have any electricity later on. What did you have for dinner?

Gorske: Well, my dad made like sandwiches and stuff like that. And I wasn't really in the mood to eat because I was too scared. But we just ate sandwiches. And he just tried giving us some things.

Chang-Wilson: Did your house have any damage?

Gorske: The front window was cracked, nothing fell, and I even have two big sliders and they didn't fall. Everything was just jumbled up, you know, mixed around, and we only had a few plates and a few glasses break and that's about what happened. We didn't have any bad damage at all.

Chang-Wilson: So you were one of the lucky ones.

Gorske: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: And what did you do during your time off from school?

Gorske: I stayed with my family. And then when my dad had to go buy groceries I just stayed with him in the line. I just stayed with my family, stayed under doorjambs and stuff like that.

Chang-Wilson: There were a lot of aftershocks. What would happen each time you had one?

Gorske: The house would shake and it sounded worse because the slide doors would shake and I'd just go to one of my parents, and they'd go, "Get in a doorjamb," and then after the aftershock or during it, they'd run towards me.

Chang-Wilson: Do you feel better now about earthquakes?

Gorske: Yeah, I feel like we've gone through a big one and if nothing happened during this one I don't think anything will happen again. So. Every time we have it I'm usually with my best friend.

Chang-Wilson: Tell me about your best friend. What was it like for her?

Gorske: Well, she had to go to the bathroom really, really bad. But she couldn't get in the bathroom, so she was sort of bad. That 7.1 one didn't scare her as much as the aftershocks do. She lives on a steep cliff, so she thinks the house might fall on the cliff. But it won't. It's safe.

Chang-Wilson: Have you seen the houses that did slide, the damages?

Gorske: Yeah, I was right by there in Aptos Village, and every time I ride by there I can see the big opening where the thing fell . . . you can see from the freeway that guy's house where the other buildings fell into that house.

Chang-Wilson: So you know the power of the earthquake?

Gorske: Yes.

Chang-Wilson: Is there any story that you'd like to tell about the earthquake, that you've heard from others, that you remember?

Gorske: No, I don't really remember. I try not to remember the earthquake, but I do remember when a kid that goes to this school, his name's Calvin, he was in the building right next to the lady that died, in that building down in Santa Cruz. He was right there and he saw it and everything, and now he has like broken toes and everything. He has a big scar on his face. I'm glad they got him out.

Chang-Wilson: Me too. Well, thanks a lot for spending some time with us. This is Lia Buchanan.

Lia Buchanan

Buchanan: I'm Lia Buchanan. I'm eleven years old.

Chang-Wilson: Lia, you were at home when the earthquake struck. Tell me what your normal day usually is after you're done with school.

Buchanan: I come home from school. I do my homework and then I read or watch TV.

Chang-Wilson: Do you like reading?

Buchanan: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: And on this day what were you doing?

Buchanan: Well, I was reading and then I came in the kitchen and saw my mom talking on the phone. Well, I answered the phone and then I gave it to her because it was for her.

Chang-Wilson: And you said you kept trying to move to a door and the force of the earthquake kept moving you back. Describe that feeling.

Buchanan: Well, I was really scared because like I was trying to get somewhere but I couldn't. And I felt like my feet were glued to the ground.

Chang-Wilson: And what the ground doing?

Buchanan: (laughter) Shaking. And I was scared because all these noises . . . like all the glass and everything was breaking and it was really scary.

Chang-Wilson: And mom was on the telephone. Did the telephone go dead?

Buchanan: Well, she dropped it and it landed under a doorway. The phone went dead after she dropped it.

Chang-Wilson: And describe what your house looked like after the earthquake.

Buchanan: Well, my mom ran in and started cleaning up.

Chang-Wilson: Tell me a little bit about your family. Is it just your mom and yourself that live together?

Buchanan: It's my mom, my dad, my sister, and me. And we live in a house and my mom and dad sleep upstairs and we sleep downstairs, me and my sister.

Chang-Wilson: So where was your sister when all of this happened?

Buchanan: She was out on the deck with my dad, squirting off the deck because there are a lot of eucalyptus trees over there and there were some acorns on it.

Chang-Wilson: And what was your deck like?

Buchanan: Well, it was pretty messy because a lot of acorns had fallen.

Chang-Wilson: Did your house sustain any damage from the earthquake?

Buchanan: No, not really. Just a lot of broken things.

Chang-Wilson: What will you never forget about this earthquake?

Buchanan: Well, see, my mom makes jam and all the jam fell out of the cupboard, and when my sister came in the house she looked at all the jam, and she said that she said that she wanted to have jam and toast for breakfast. And right when the earthquake happened my mom was on the phone with one of her friends and he said that he was getting married right when the earthquake hit. So my mom wondered what would happen when they really got married!

Chang-Wilson: (laughter) How did you spend your days after the earthquake?

Buchanan: Well, it was really sunny right after that and my mom didn't want to clean up the rest of the house so we went to the beach on the sunny days, and I cleaned up my room and I helped clean up the house.

Chang-Wilson: Did you lose anything personal?

Buchanan: No, not really. I have this piggybank that my dad had gotten me, of the Cooper House. So I wish I had that because it got torn down too. That broke in my room. But I'm glad because I have a dog collection and I'm glad that they didn't fall off the shelves and break.

Chang-Wilson: Did you tour Santa Cruz town or Watsonville afterwards to see the destruction?

Buchanan: No, not really, because my mom really liked the way the downtown was before the earthquake happened so she didn't want to see it, really. We went down like about two weeks later and saw everything, and then we went to Watsonville too. But the day after the earthquake I did go into Watsonville to try to buy some propane and I saw a bunch of fallen houses and stuff. So I did go into Watsonville, but not in Santa Cruz until later.

Chang-Wilson: Did you see the tent cities then?

Buchanan: Well, I saw some people like camping in their yards, but not really in tent cities. And I saw a really long line at the grocery store. It was past the parking lot, really.

Chang-Wilson: Was your family equipped to go without electricity?

Buchanan: Yeah, we go camping a lot, so we have a camp stove and propane and everything, so my mom cooked on that. But she was getting tired of being in the house and we went out to dinner a lot too.

Chang-Wilson: Where did you go out? What restaurants were open?

Buchanan: (laughter) Jack in the Box and McDonalds and stuff.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. When you came back to school how was that?

Buchanan: Well, I was really nervous at first because we were still having aftershocks and I didn't want to be away from my parents. I was really nervous and scared.

Chang-Wilson: It's important to be close to your family and people you trust.

Buchanan: Yeah, I was really scared right after the earthquake. I was crying. But they really helped me calm down. And by that night I was really calming down a lot.

Chang-Wilson: And how do you feel now when there's an aftershock?

Buchanan: Well, there are not too many, so I'm not really scared, but it just reminds me of how scared I was, so I don't like aftershocks.

Chang-Wilson: Can you describe that feeling of being scared?

Buchanan: No.

Chang-Wilson: Have you heard any funny stories about the earthquake, or do you know people who had funny things happen to them?

Buchanan: Well, just that when he said he was getting married. That was mom's joke. But no, nothing really that funny.

Ivan Wilson

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Well, thanks a lot. I appreciate you spending this time with us. Next is Ivan Wilson.

Wilson: I'm Ivan Robert Wilson. My age is eleven, going to be twelve. I live in Aptos, California.

Chang-Wilson: Ivan, you were in Watsonville at the E.A. Hall playground when the earthquake happened. Can you describe the sounds and what you saw?

Wilson: It sounded like a jackhammer, and it was getting louder and louder. And when I was going to hit the ball I fell over right on my behind. (laughter) Then everybody ducked and everybody was scared. It was sort of fun because we were in the park but all around houses were blowing up and it was pretty scary for people, even for me for a while.

Chang-Wilson: Describe what you saw.

Wilson: I saw houses falling down and a tree going down and some fifty-foot redwood trees fell down and lots of other stories.

Chang-Wilson: How were the people acting around you?

Wilson: Scared. They were running around sort of like stunt people.

Chang-Wilson: And how were your coaches?

Wilson: Everybody said, "Duck down. Get down!" And they were pretty scared too. They yelled for the children to get down and people on the field.

Chang-Wilson: Did you know this was an earthquake?

Wilson: At first, no. And then, yes.

Chang-Wilson: Tell me about your family. Where were they in the earthquake?

Wilson: My family? I have one brother, two sisters, and my mother and father, but they're divorced. My brother was on the soccer field with me. And my father was there too. And my sister, one of my sisters was driving down the highway. And my other sister, I'm not sure. And my mother was driving, I think to her house, until the earthquake happened.

Chang-Wilson: How long was it before everyone contacted each other?

Wilson: It was like around two minutes, well, not two minutes, but it felt like two minutes . . . After the earthquake hit, then everybody was panicking, and trying to see what's going on.

Chang-Wilson: My question is when did you see your mother and sisters again and how long did that take?

Wilson: My sister, it was almost two weeks until I saw her, and my mother, about the middle of the week.

Chang-Wilson: And what was that like for you? Were you thinking about what might have happened to them?

Wilson: Well, at first, no. But after that I did think about them and I worried a little.

Chang-Wilson: When you drove from Watsonville to Santa Cruz what did you see?

Wilson: I saw big cracks on the road and lots of cars and a lot of fires and houses that were broken up.

Chang-Wilson: And how did that make you feel?

Wilson: Um, I thought it was pretty neat, but . . . I know it was . . . very, well uneasy . . . it's hard describing it. I'm scared. (tape shut off)

Chang-Wilson: How did you spend your time after the earthquake?

Wilson: I lolled around my house and tried to play, and fix up some broken stuff, and that's about it.

Chang-Wilson: What broken stuff?

Wilson: Well, it was hardly broken. Only two or three glasses. And I needed to clean up my bookshelf. All the books fell down.

Chang-Wilson: Did you talk about the earthquake to friends?

Wilson: Yes. Because . . . Well, yeah. It was fun to talk about it.

Chang-Wilson: Do you remember stories that other people have about the earthquake?

Wilson: No, not really. Most of the people just were in soccer or in their house and they ducked under their desk or something like that, or ran out of the house, that's about it.

Chang-Wilson: What happened at the Japanese Buddhist temple?

Wilson: Well, there was a big bell and it cracked, and the aftershocks made it a little higher, but it's okay right now.

Chang-Wilson: Is there anything that you would like to tell someone who's never been in an earthquake?

Wilson: Hmm. Don't be scared. Don't panic. Hmm. Try to go under anything that's hard, and be careful.

Chang-Wilson: Is there anything that this earthquake taught you?

Wilson: No. Not really. I want to say that I haven't been in an earthquake before but I don't think it really taught me anything.

Chang-Wilson: What will you never forget?

Wilson: Me slipping. (laughter) And the earthquake happened.

Chang-Wilson: Well, thank you very much. This is Summer Lindeman.

Summer Lindeman

Lindeman: My name is Summer Lindeman. I am twelve years old. I live in Aptos, California.

Chang-Wilson: Summer, tell me a little bit about yourself and your family.

Lindeman: Well, my parents are divorced, and my dad is in Fresno, and my mom lives here, and I have three younger brothers.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. You were skateboarding. Do you go to a special place to skateboard?

Lindeman: No, we just go to the skateboarding park.

Chang-Wilson: So where is the skateboarding park that you were at before the earthquake?

Lindeman: It was on Water Street.

Chang-Wilson: And you had six other kids in the van with you?

Lindeman: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Describe what it was like in the van.

Lindeman: Well, it wasn't scary. We thought it was just a little earthquake and we were just thinking it was a flat tire and making jokes about it and everything, and we were sad that it didn't do any damage, like where we were, because it was really . . . but then when we got home, our house was all screwed up and everything.

Chang-Wilson: What was it like when you walked into the house?

Lindeman: My mom was very scared and she was all cut up because she thought the house was going to come down and she didn't know it at first. The garage door was going down so she had to dive out and she was wearing shorts and she was all cut up. But she was just happy to see us.

Chang-Wilson: Did your mother have to have stitches, or just cleaned up?

Lindeman: She just cleaned herself up and she was okay.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. It sounds like a big mess at the house, with a lot of glass.

Lindeman: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: When you were in the van did you notice the other cars moving?

Lindeman: No, not at first. And then all of a sudden we just saw the stoplight moving and we were right next to it, and the sign was moving back and forth, and the telephone wires and everything.

Chang-Wilson: But there was no destruction of buildings where you were?

Lindeman: No.

Chang-Wilson: When you got home, and after you talked to your mom, what did you folks do after that?

Lindeman: Well, our whole neighborhood met out in the street, and we talked until nine o'clock that night and then we went inside, and at first we slept on the couch but then we were listening to the radio and it started scaring me and my brother so we shut it off. It said that skylights were one of the most dangerous things in the house and we were laying under about five skylights so we just went outside and we slept in our car because you couldn't hear it, you could just feel it.

Chang-Wilson: How old are your brothers?

Lindeman: Well, I have a stepbrother and a half brother and they both live in Fresno. My real brother lives here and he was in the car with me. And he was okay.

Chang-Wilson: What did you folks do with your free time after the earthquake when you were home from school?

Lindeman: Well, we got off the first week of school and our whole neighborhood, we just had like parties and everything at people's houses, and barbecue and everything. And then when there was an earthquake we were all together so we knew everybody was okay.

Chang-Wilson: We had real strong aftershocks. How did you feel when you experienced those?

Lindeman: I was really scared. I wouldn't even sleep in my own room. I just slept on the floor in my mom's room for about two weeks after the earthquake. I don't like earthquakes.

Chang-Wilson: Can you describe this feeling of being scared?

Lindeman: No.

Chang-Wilson: If you had a choice, would you stay in California knowing that we have earthquakes?

Lindeman: Yeah, I guess. Because they only happen once in a while. And the last . . . it had been over thirty years before we were supposed to have another one, and we just got it over with. So it will probably be safer to stay here.

Chang-Wilson: What do you like about California?

Lindeman: The weather.

Chang-Wilson: What would you tell someone about the earthquake?

Lindeman: I don't know. I would just tell them what it was like, that I was really scared.

Chang-Wilson: And how was your first day back at school?

Lindeman: Everybody was mad because we didn't have any aftershocks during school. They were all when we were at home, so we never got to do anything related to the

earthquake at school. But we wrote up a story about the earthquake and we published it and did all that, and they counted it.

Chang-Wilson: Was it good to write your story?

Lindeman: It didn't matter to me. Miss Ackerman thought it would help, but I guess . . . it was okay. It didn't help me or anything. I had to write about it.

Chang-Wilson: Do you think that this is an important event in your life?

Lindeman: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: And do you know why?

Lindeman: Well, it's been recorded in lots of books about it and I feel kind of lucky that I was in it, just because everybody . . . I don't know, it was one of the biggest earthquakes and I was scared, but I guess I was kind of lucky, I mean, I don't know . . . because I wasn't hurt or anything.

Chang-Wilson: I do think you are lucky. We all are. Are you prepared for another earthquake? Because you said you don't expect one for another thirty years.

Lindeman: Yeah, I guess. There started being aftershocks again a few weeks ago when I was in Fresno. I wasn't here.

Chang-Wilson: Do you know any earthquake stories that your friends have told?

Lindeman: No, I don't remember them.

Chang-Wilson: Do you try to forget the earthquake?

Lindeman: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: It seems like a long time ago for me, and yet when I go to Santa Cruz downtown or I drive through Watsonville, I'm reminded that it's still real recent. Have you seen Santa Cruz downtown or Watsonville?

Lindeman: Yeah, a few times. I don't know, I didn't like that. It just reminded me of the earthquake. It was just a few weeks ago.

Chang-Wilson: That you were downtown?

Lindeman: Yeah. And I have to drive through Watsonville every other week when I go to visit my dad in Fresno.

Chang-Wilson: How has Watsonville changed since the first time you drove through it.

Lindeman: Well, the church changed. Stuff fell off the top of it. In the first week or so there was a whole bunch of tanks and stuff on the playgrounds of the school, because they weren't open and you had to check them and everything. It was just very different.

Chang-Wilson: Did you see the tent people in the parks in Watsonville?

Lindeman: What?

Chang-Wilson: The tent people. They came to be known as the tent people after they'd lived there for a month.

Lindeman: Yeah, we saw them and lots of other people.

Chang-Wilson: Is there anything that you want to add about your memories of the earthquake?

Lindeman: No.

Chang-Wilson: Well, thank you very much. We are continuing with the oral histories with Erin McDonald.

Erin McDonald

McDonald: I'm Erin McDonald. I'm eleven.

Chang-Wilson: Erin, can you tell us a little bit about your family?

McDonald: Well, there's four people in our family. I was born in Utah and my whole family was born in Utah.

Chang-Wilson: Have you lived in your house in Aptos for very long?

McDonald: I've only lived there for two years.

Chang-Wilson: And when you lived there did you know that California had earthquakes and that you were close to the San Andreas Fault.

McDonald: No, not until the earthquake happened.

Chang-Wilson: What have you learned about the San Andreas Fault since then?

McDonald: You know. I just found out that we lived by it.

Chang-Wilson: Well, describe to us that day when you were at the house.

McDonald: Well, I was doing my homework and the house started to shake, and I got my brother and I made him go under the table until it was over. And then my mom came in and she grabbed us and then we went outside for the rest of the day.

Chang-Wilson: How did you know to go under the table?

McDonald: Because we practiced it at school when I was at school.

Chang-Wilson: So you've had earthquake drills at school.

McDonald: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Can you describe those earthquake drills and what the schools did to prepare you for that?

McDonald: Well, we had an earthquake drill and we went under our desks and then after a little while then we'd come outside. And got away from all the buildings and everything.

Chang-Wilson: Was there any information given you about earthquakes during these drills?

McDonald: Umm. I can't remember.

Chang-Wilson: You said in your written piece that Mother Nature just had to do her push up and fall. Do you remember that?

Lindeman: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: So do you think Mother Nature does this regularly and it's our human . . . because we live on earth it's something that we should accept?

Lindeman: Yeah, I guess. I don't know.

Chang-Wilson: Do you think that you are prepared for an earthquake?

Lindeman: Yeah, probably, because we've got this earthquake kit and everything and it's got all the stuff in it we need.

Chang-Wilson: How did you do without electricity?

Lindeman: We didn't do that good, because my dad wasn't here and he was in Stockton because that's where he works, and we didn't have any flashlights because he had to take them with him to his work. So we stayed at our friends' house until 11 o'clock that night.

Chang-Wilson: How did you folks cook, or what did you eat during this time?

Lindeman: I didn't eat anything. I was too scared. But my mom and my brother just ate sandwiches and one drink.

Chang-Wilson: Were you scared for a long time?

Lindeman: Yeah, kind of. But after a while it started to get funny.

Chang-Wilson: When you went to your neighbor's house what was their house like?

Lindeman: Well, I went up in their room, because we had to grab her fish because it was in a cup and there was no water in the cup, so we had to grab her fish and when we got into her friend's door, they had a plant fall into the doorway, so you could barely get in. There were stairs . . . But in her room, there was nothing wrong with the room really, though.

Chang-Wilson: How did your dad get in touch with you?

Lindeman: Well, he could call us but we couldn't call him. Our phone would die after two minutes so we only got to talk to him for two minutes. So he just called us and talked to us for two minutes.

Chang-Wilson: It must have made you feel good to hear from him.

Lindeman: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: And going to Stockton must have been good too.

Lindeman: Yeah, but it's kinda boring there.

Chang-Wilson: Did people in Stockton talk about the earthquake here?

Lindeman: Not really, but they just felt it up there a little, not like here.

Chang-Wilson: Erin, do you believe in good luck?

Lindeman: Yeah, I guess. Yeah, I do.

Chang-Wilson: Do you think you are lucky to be part of this 1989 earthquake?

Lindeman: Yeah, because I've always wanted to do something like this and I've never had a chance to until now.

Chang-Wilson: When you say "to do something like this" what do you mean?

Lindeman: I've always wanted to be part of something, important history, one day. And now I get to.

Chang-Wilson: What story will you tell about the earthquake that you'll never forget?

Lindeman: Probably that I was sitting by my table and I'd just put a book cover on my science book and thing of liquor fell on my science book, and the book cover saved my science book.

Chang-Wilson: Good timing, huh? I think that's part of good luck. Thank you. I'd like to introduce you to Stephanie Kolka.

Stephanie Kolka

Kolka: My name is Stephanie Kolka and I'm eleven years old.

Chang-Wilson: Stephanie, you had a real exciting time during the earthquake. Do you want to tell us about that?

Kolka: Well, I was very scared and I ran under the doorjamb, and my dad came running downstairs to get me and we all ran outside and we checked to see if our neighbors were okay, and they were, and we heard a splashing noise in the backyard so we went in the backyard, and our swimming pool was like a tidal wave.

Chang-Wilson: How did you know to run underneath the doorjamb?

Kolka: Well, that's what they taught us in school.

Chang-Wilson: What else did they teach you in school about earthquakes?

Kolka: To duck and cover, get under your desk or under a table, and duck and cover.

Chang-Wilson: Do you think that those earthquake drills you had at school prepared you for the earthquake, the actual thing?

Kolka: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Tell us a little bit about your family.

Kolka: I have a brother that's nine years old. His name is Jeff, and my mom's name is Pam, and my dad's name is Mike. And he owns a dealership in Watsonville, and . . .

Chang-Wilson: What kind of dealership is it?

Kolka: It's a Chevrolet. He sells Chevrolet cars.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Where was your brother when this earthquake took place?

Kolka: He was getting ready to take a spelling test and my dad fell on top of him and my mom.

Chang-Wilson: So they were in another part of the house doing studies together?

Kolka: Yeah, they were upstairs.

Chang-Wilson: You were downstairs. Did the house shake a lot to you?

Kolka: Well, they said that it probably didn't feel as bad as it did upstairs, because a 5.0 hit and I said that's what it felt like downstairs. So it didn't feel as bad downstairs.

Chang-Wilson: Okay, when you drove to Watsonville to see your dad's dealership what did you . . . describe your ride over.

Kolka: I was shaking, thinking that another one would hit. I was real scared. My mom was crying and my brother was really scared too.

Chang-Wilson: What's that feeling of scared like?

Kolka: Like another one's going to hit. You just . . . afraid that . . . something, like a building's going to fall on top of you.

Chang-Wilson: So it's not knowing what to expect, but thinking that something's going to happen.

Kolka: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: And what did the dealership look like when you got there?

Kolka: There was lots of panes of glass and they had all broken and fell on the floor and it was a mess. Computers were down on the floor. Desks were tipped over. It was just a mess.

Chang-Wilson: Compare it to your house.

Kolka: I think they were both really about the same. They were both disasters. And everything was all over the floor still. They were about the same.

Chang-Wilson: Was there electricity in Watsonville at the dealership?

Kolka: No.

Chang-Wilson: You stayed there that night. What was that like?

Kolka: Actually it was kinda fun. But it was kinda scary, too. We were sleeping in the back of the Suburban car, and you really couldn't feel the earthquakes hit, but it was pretty scary.

Chang-Wilson: What did you do for food?

Kolka: Well, my mom had just gone to the grocery store and she came back, and for some reason she didn't set the bags on the counter. She set them in the hallway. And then she was going back down to get more and it hit, so we went back in the house and we just grabbed the bags of food and we put them in the car and went down there.

Chang-Wilson: During your time off from school after the earthquake, what did you do?

Kolka: Well, after a couple of days we went back to normal. My mom still wouldn't let us go outside and play, but she was getting more . . . she was letting us out of her sight more. And we just did regular stuff that we normally do, like ride bikes and play with stuff in the house.

Chang-Wilson: Were you part of the clean-up crew?

Kolka: Well, I did a little.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. How was your room?

Kolka: Actually it wasn't that messy. My baseball stuff was on the floor, and all the stuff that was on my dressers and stuff was on the floor, but it wasn't really that . . . my closet was . . . everything was off the top shelf.

Chang-Wilson: So when you got together with your girlfriends, what kinds of stories did you exchange about the earthquake?

Kolka: Um. Actually we didn't talk about it that much. We just said what our house was like, and that was it. We didn't really talk about it much.

Chang-Wilson: What will you always remember about this earthquake?

Kolka: To be prepared that there definitely will be another one. And you'll be scared, but don't be as scared as you were the first time, because it's just an earthquake and you'll get out of it.

Chang-Wilson: Did you see the houses in Watsonville?

Kolka: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: What was that like? Can you describe that?

Kolka: Almost every house on the streets was down, either cracked or completely destroyed, and the church on Main Street, the steeple was down, and the front half was down. It was a mess. I feel sorry for the people who lived in Watsonville.

Chang-Wilson: Well, I'm glad you and your family got out okay. And if you're going to prepare for the earthquake, what things do you need to be prepared, or how do you prepare?

Kolka: Well, have like extra food and extra jugs of water somewhere where you can get to it if there's an earthquake, and . . .

Chang-Wilson: What was it like coming back to school the first day?

Kolka: Every time there was just a little shake, everybody was scared and just like started getting under their desks or stuff. But then we just all got used to it.

Chang-Wilson: What are you going to do this summer?

Kolka: We're going to go on some trips. Be with my friends and stuff.

Chang-Wilson: Well, thanks for talking to us, and you have fun this summer. This is Lindsey Duncan.

Lindsey Duncan

Duncan: I'm Lindsey Duncan, age eleven.

Chang-Wilson: Lindsey, do you play tetherball a lot.

Duncan: Yeah, I have a tetherball at my house.

Chang-Wilson: Do you usually play with your friends?

Duncan: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Tell us what the pole was doing when the earthquake struck.

Duncan: Well, the pole started shaking and then Bridget held onto the pole, Kelly held onto Bridget, and I held onto Kelly. We all shook with the pole. We didn't want to fall over, so we just grabbed onto the pole.

Chang-Wilson: Did you talk to each other?

Duncan: During the earthquake?

Chang-Wilson: Yeah.

Duncan: No, we just started screaming.

Chang-Wilson: And what was happening all around you.

Duncan: Well, I looked up into the kitchen window, and the lights were falling down, and our big fountain with the flowers in it fell over and our statue fell and the gate swung open and shut.

Chang-Wilson: And then your mom came running out, huh?

Duncan: Yeah, we all ran into the house and got under the doorjamb.

Chang-Wilson: Have you participated in the drills that you had at school?

Duncan: Yeah, I have.

Chang-Wilson: So what did you learn from the earthquake drills at school? How did that prepare you for the real thing?

Duncan: Well, they said get where nothing can fall on you, get in a doorjamb or get under a desk or something heavy. So that's why I got under a doorjamb when I went into the house.

Chang-Wilson: Did you feel safe there?

Duncan: Yeah, kind of.

Chang-Wilson: (laughter) That's a hard question, huh?

Duncan: It might be safer outside, because there's nothing to fall on you. And when I went inside, inside my room, I saw that there was bookcases fallen onto the ground.

Chang-Wilson: So you had a lot of cleaning up to do?

Duncan: Yeah. Our movies fell out. Too.

Chang-Wilson: Did you lose anything that belonged to you?

Duncan: Belonged to me and my family?

Chang-Wilson: I'm sure you had dishes lost and things like that.

Duncan: Yeah, and the fountain I told about and the statue. But my dad glued them back together.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Do they look now like they'd never got . . .

Duncan: If you look closely it does, but if you're far away you can't see it.

Chang-Wilson: Your dad was away in Oregon.

Duncan: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: How did he hear about it?

Duncan: Well, we kept trying to call him, and we couldn't get through to him, but later that night he called, and we got through, and we talked to him for a while. I think we got cut off after that.

Chang-Wilson: So you stayed in the house that night.

Duncan: Well, we stayed in the house, and then when it got to be 7:00 I went over to my friend's house, and my whole family went over there and we stayed there with a

different family, and then all of us drove over to our house and we all slept in my room, eight people.

Chang-Wilson: I think that's pretty amazing. So eight people were in a room. And how did you guys sleep that night? Did you sleep?

Duncan: Not that much. I slept about three hours, not that much, because I was pretty scared.

Chang-Wilson: What's that feeling of being scared?

Duncan: I don't know. I was just laying there and shaking, kind of. Just because every time there was a quake, because my mom was sitting next to me I'd hold her hand every time a quake happened. And my brother would sit up in bed and look around.

Chang-Wilson: Why did they choose your room?

Duncan: Because I have this beam over my ceiling and it's big and it's probably the most safe place we could be, and it doesn't shake as much as the other rooms and nothing could fall on us because everything had already fallen down.

Chang-Wilson: So did you have to take everything out to make room for all of you?

Duncan: No, because my friend Bridget, she slept on my bed, and then her mom and dad slept really close together in this little blanket, and my mom and me slept over in the corner, and then her two sisters slept in the room by the corner, and my brother just slept in the middle. So we had a lot of room.

Chang-Wilson: The days after the earthquake when we didn't have a lot of electricity, how did your family cook, and what did you eat?

Duncan: Well, my friend Bridget, we went over to her house sometimes, and they cooked, because they had a grill kind of thing. And we sometimes . . . like the stuff that we had out, like apples and stuff, and then we could open the refrigerator really fast and then close it again and just get one thing out, or something like that. We had jugs of water saved up.

Chang-Wilson: What are the fun things you did after the earthquake?

Duncan: Well, we stayed outside a lot because it was scary, kind of, inside. And I re-did my room after that because we got another bed and put that in there and I re-arranged everything. That was fun.

Chang-Wilson: When you came back to school, what was it like for you?

Duncan: It was kind of scary, because they said one of the portables [classrooms] had moved six inches towards the cliff over there. But the teachers said that our moms could come check on us whenever they wanted. We could bring stuffed animals to school if we wanted to do.

Chang-Wilson: Did you like writing the story of the earthquake and your experience for the book?

Duncan: Yeah, because when I think back about it I'm not so afraid. When I don't think about it I'm kind of more afraid than I am when I talk about it.

Chang-Wilson: Did you get to talk about the earthquake to a lot of people?

Duncan: Yeah, because Mrs. Ackerman asked about our experiences, and my cousins that live in LA asked about it, and people in Portland asked about it a lot, and my grandmas and grandpas.

Chang-Wilson: So do you feel special having experienced this earthquake and being a part of it?

Duncan: Well, now I do, but I kind of wish it never happened.

Chang-Wilson: (laughter) Why's that?

Duncan: Well, because now I've had it, then I think more are going to happen. Whenever there's a little earthquake, I think it's going to get really big, so I run to the doorjamb and hold on for a long time. And I'm moving back to Oregon, and my friends in Oregon say that if they have an earthquake it's going to be an 8.0.

Chang-Wilson: Oh, really? Well, I hope you don't experience an 8.0 quake and that this is the last major earthquake in your life.

Duncan: I hope so.

Chang-Wilson: Are you looking forward to moving to Oregon?

Duncan: Yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Well, you have a good time there and thank you for talking with us.

Duncan: You're welcome.

Chang-Wilson: Is there something that you would like to say about the earthquake that you haven't said?

Duncan: Not really. I said pretty much all that happened.

Chang-Wilson: Well, thanks a lot, Lindsey. Next we're going to be speaking with Kelly Rogers.

Kelly Rogers

Rogers: I'm Kelly Rogers. I'm ten.

Chang-Wilson: Kelly, can you tell us about your church and your choir and what you do there?

Rogers: We practice songs, and then on children's liturgies we sing the songs in the church.

Chang-Wilson: What's the name of your church?

Rogers: Resurrection.

Chang-Wilson: It's a Catholic Church.

Rogers: Um, hmm.

Chang-Wilson: It's a nice church. So, the day of the earthquake you were with Lori and you were practicing songs.

Rogers: Yes.

Chang-Wilson: Describe that.

Rogers: Well, we were practicing a song . . . I forget what it was called, and the earthquake hit and everyone started running.

Chang-Wilson: Where did you go?

Rogers: I went under a chair, and then everyone else went in the Sunday School room, so I went in there too. Then everyone went outside.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Did anyone give you instructions after the earthquake?

Rogers: The choir teacher did. And then on the radio there were some . . . then my mom and dad.

Chang-Wilson: You said you thought for a moment, this is the end of the world. What thoughts go through your mind at a time like this?

Rogers: I'm going to die.

Chang-Wilson: And what does that mean to you?

Rogers: The church is going to fall on me.

Chang-Wilson: What does dying mean to you? What kind of thoughts go through your head when you think you're going to die?

Rogers: (long pause) It's a hard question.

Chang-Wilson: Yeah. You were scared then, huh? After the earthquake, how soon after did you go back to Resurrection Church?

Rogers: In two weeks we went back.

Chang-Wilson: And at that time did the priest talk about the earthquake?

Rogers: Yes.

Chang-Wilson: Tell us about that.

Rogers: He talked about the earthquake, and what he was doing, and about how we were getting people here at the church, and about the damage and how much it was going to cost.

Chang-Wilson: What kind of damages did the church have?

Rogers: Tile spilled from the roof, and I think it broke one window, and that's all.

Chang-Wilson: Do you remember what your father was doing during the earthquake?

Rogers: My dad was on Highway 17. And he thought that he had a flat tire.

Chang-Wilson: What was your house like?

Rogers: There were broken dishes all over in the kitchen, and a can of soup that we were going to eat for dinner and in the living room a TV fell over, and this big shelf with our

vcr and stuff fell over. In my room only a little ornament broke, and in my parents' room another TV fell over, and closet flew open so we couldn't get in the house.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. You had a mobile home to stay in after the earthquake . . . .

Rogers: We stayed in a mobile home for about three weeks or something. And my grandma stayed with us, because we didn't want to go back in the house until everything was cleaned up and there were smaller aftershocks.

Chang-Wilson: Did aftershocks feel different in the mobile home than they did in the house?

Rogers: Yeah, you can't really feel them that well because the motor home shakes when anyone walks in it.

Chang-Wilson: Well, that was convenient because then you didn't go without most everything. You had water. You had electricity. What else do you have in your mobile home?

Rogers: Beds and blankets and microwaves, TV and radio. (laugh) Everything.

Chang-Wilson: What one single thing will you never forget about the earthquake?

Rogers: The damage it did to our house.

Chang-Wilson: In particular, what?

Rogers: Everything that broke.

Chang-Wilson: Did you lose something special?

Rogers: When I was one year old I got this little doll thing, and that broke.

Chang-Wilson: Yeah. Well, thanks for talking with us. What are you going to do this summer?

Rogers: Go to Hawaii.

Chang-Wilson: Oh, how fun. I'm from Hawaii.

(tape pause)

Lindsey Duncan has something more to add.

Duncan: On our computer desk in our computer room, the computer and the printer fell off onto the floor and we went in there, the printer wasn't broken but it was the one that fell off. But the computer was just shaken and it broke. It didn't even fall off. The printer did, but it didn't break.

Chang-Wilson: How do you account for that kind of thing happening?

Duncan: It's weird, because I thought that the printer would break instead of the computer.

Chang-Wilson: I agree with you. I have a ceramic vase that was on a bookshelf that stands six feet tall. That fell off the bookshelf and did not break. And then I have a rock sculpture that was two feet off the ground, and that cracked in half. (laughter) Weird.

Duncan: Yeah, it's weird.

Chang-Wilson: Thank you. This is Sarah Terribilini.

Sarah Terribilini

Terribilini: I am eleven years old. I live in La Selva Beach.

Chang-Wilson: Can you describe your house to us?

Terribilini: It's basically a two-story with a loft in the top with two little rooms.

Chang-Wilson: And tell us about the 4-H. Do you have meetings there every week, and how long have you been in the 4-H?

Terribilini: I've been in 4-H for two years. This is my second year. We have meetings at the La Selva Beach community clubhouse once a month, and we also have project meetings that are twice a month and once a month.

Chang-Wilson: Describe this organization, 4-H, to us and tell us what a project meeting is.

Terribilini: 4-H is basically a group that gets together once a month and has meetings. It's like a Girl Scout club, except that we have projects. And projects are where . . . you can pick a whole bunch of projects, there's like twenty or something. And I picked rabbits, crochet, ceramics, sewing, and that's it. And I have two rabbits named Jump and Jumper.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. When you do these projects, is there someone that teaches you how to do these things? Or do you do them and exhibit them at your 4-H meeting. How does that go?

Terribilini: Well, for rabbits we learn how to do showmanship, which is a way to examine the health of the rabbit and you exhibit the things that you make at the fair. And you have project reports where you say what you did at the last meeting and what you learned and you can display them at the fair if you want to, and if you feel really good about it.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. So tell us the story of October 17 when the earthquake hit.

Terribilini: Well, in the beginning of the day it was just a normal day except that it was very hot. And then in the afternoon I was in my house and we were having an officer's meeting for 4-H. And so we were just getting ready to go from my house, but we weren't going anymore. We were going to drop off someone from Watsonville, we were going to drop them off. And we were going to go over some overpass that collapsed. So if this lady wasn't late, we would have been crashed, or at least near the overpass.

Chang-Wilson: You're talking about Highway 1.

Terribilini: Yeah. We were at the house and everything just started shaking and we just ran out of the house and stayed out there for a long time.

Chang-Wilson: Did you notice anything different with the animals?

Terribilini: Not really. I just have one rabbit, though. I hadn't seen him much in the morning or afternoon because I had gone to school. So when I got home from school I did my homework and then we had an officer's meeting and I didn't really notice anything except the cat ran away.

Chang-Wilson: Did they tell you in 4-H about any animal sensitivities to different kinds of natural phenomena like earthquake or floods, things like that?

Terribilini: Not really, because I had only been there for one year for rabbits. They are just basically doing showmanship right now. So we didn't really learn much about that.

Chang-Wilson: Did you drive to Watsonville to take this person later?

Terribilini: No, the mom picked them up.

Chang-Wilson: And did she come with stories about Watsonville?

Terribilini: Well, kind of. She was kind of freaked out, but yeah.

Chang-Wilson: Your dad was in East Germany. So what was his reaction to all of this?

Terribilini: Well, he didn't find out until someone woke him up in the middle of the night and said, "Earthquake in Santa Cruz. There was an earthquake." He turned on the TV and it was in a different language, so he just kind of looked at the pictures. They showed the Bay Bridge and all that stuff falling. He called and he got through and he came home with a whole bunch of great stories, but we told him stories that he thought . . . he thought his stories were really great, and we did too, but he didn't know that,

because he thought we were fascinated with our stories. So it was two things put together.

Chang-Wilson: Do you remember stories that happened to your friends?

Terribilini: Yeah, my friend, Rachel Campbell, she's probably been interviewed already, she got trapped in the bathroom. We called them and they said, "Well, one of our kids is trapped in the bathroom." And that's one of the stories.

Chang-Wilson: Do you know how she got out?

Terribilini: Well, she was kind of trapped there because she couldn't open the door because it was all shaking. So when the earthquake, when it stopped shaking, she kind of opened the door and crept out.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. What kind of advice do you have for anyone who has never been in an earthquake?

Terribilini: Hook all your TVs to the wall and make sure you don't have your glassware up where it's really tall and can hurt you if you're in the kitchen. Duct tape all your pictures. We did all those.

Chang-Wilson: After the earthquake?

Terribilini: Yeah. Oh, and put fasteners on all your cabinets, baby locks.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Do you have any brothers and sisters, Sarah?

Terribilini: I have one brother. He's five years old.

Chang-Wilson: What was the earthquake like for him?

Terribilini: It was pretty tremendous. He didn't really know what was going on.

Chang-Wilson: Yeah. Did he have nightmares after that?

Terribilini: He slept in my mom's room. Except one night our cat was in our house because we didn't want her to run away or anything. So our cat went over to my brother's pillow and started licking his face, and he thought it was me, so he said, "Sarah, stop licking me." And then he thought it was a skunk. And then he opened his eyes and it was the cat right next to him.

Chang-Wilson: How's your cat been since the earthquake?

Terribilini: Whenever she feels something or sees something she runs away down the canyon.

Chang-Wilson: And your house? You have no damage there?

Terribilini: Well, we had a leak, but that's always been there, for a while. And we had lots of sheet rock come off, and cracks, which we still haven't fixed because it's kind of hard right now. And that's basically all that happened to our house.

Chang-Wilson: How has school been for you since you got back?

Terribilini: Well, it's kind of nice because you can share your feelings about the earthquake and you can share all your stories and stuff. And it feels kind of good after the earthquake to go to school because you know there's more people around who have experienced it.

Chang-Wilson: Well, thank you for sharing this with us today and have fun this summer. This is Willy Ruddick.

Willy Ruddick

Ruddick: I'm Willy Ruddick**.** I'm eleven years old.

Chang-Wilson: How long have you lived at your house, Willy?

Ruddick: For about six years.

Chang-Wilson: And how did it hold up during the earthquake?

Ruddick: Pretty good, except . . . well, there's a pillar that holds up my house and it was cracked a little, that holds up the whole roof, and we had to fix it and stuff. But it turned out pretty good, actually. A lot of stuff broke, but overall it was pretty good.

Chang-Wilson: You play football. What position do you play?

Ruddick: Mostly on the line. I play tackle, guard, and defense and offense.

Chang-Wilson: Which playing field were you on when the earthquake struck?

Ruddick: We were on Harbor High football field. I had my uniform on, so it was pretty safe.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. Can you describe what was happening around you, or with the people?

Ruddick: Well, everyone was real scared. I didn't really know what was going on at first. It felt like a freight train was coming. It sounded real loud and then someone yelled, "Earthquake!" I kind of fell. And then it stopped after a while, but it kept on shaking for a while. And then after that we looked over on the far side of the field and there was all this black stuff. So we walked over to it and it was like sewer coming up. It was gross. I was real scared because I thought my mom was on the freeway when it happened. But she wasn't, though.

Chang-Wilson: What did you think might have happened to her on the freeway?

Ruddick: Well, I heard about all these people crashing and stuff. Like all the roads split in half and stuff like that. So I was just scared.

Chang-Wilson: Where did you hear about that?

Ruddick: My coaches said stuff like that.

Chang-Wilson: And then your dad came to pick you up?

Ruddick: Yeah, he was kind of real worried. And then we went home and listened to the radio. The radio was playing music, one of the stations.

Chang-Wilson: Where was your dad when the earthquake struck?

Ruddick: He was at home. We had these two girls we were babysitting and when the earthquake happened he covered them up.

Chang-Wilson: When your house was without electricity, how did you folks manage to cook and what kind of meals did you have?

Ruddick: Well, we used our camping stuff. We had lots of candles and we managed pretty fine. It was kind of fun, sort of. We had pretty good meals, hamburgers and stuff.

Chang-Wilson: In your writing you said, "It feels really good to be together with people during this kind of experience." Can you describe the support you got from your family?

Ruddick: Well, just don't worry. I slept in my mom's room for a long time. My brother was at Safeway when it happened. He works there. He hid under a table. Everything was a mess. He took pictures. All the shelves were falling. It was horrible.

Chang-Wilson: I'm sure supermarkets probably looked bad.

Ruddick: Yeah, my brother was pretty lucky, because he was in it. He just ducked under a table.

Chang-Wilson: What did you do with your time after the earthquake?

Ruddick: I liked walking around and looking at things. On my street there was this house that fell all the way down the cliff. Yikes, you know?

Chang-Wilson: Were these people you knew?

Ruddick: No.

Chang-Wilson: What other kinds of things did you see?

Ruddick: Trees that were fallen. There was hardly anybody on the streets. Well, actually there were lots of people but they were all paranoid and stuff. I rode my bike around.

Chang-Wilson: Did you share stories about the earthquake with your friends?

Ruddick: Yeah. I had a pretty good story because I was on the football field with my uniform on. I was in a pretty safe place.

Chang-Wilson: Coming back to school, how was that?

Ruddick: Well, everybody was all freaked out. It was kind of fun. It was fun having little aftershocks at school because . . .

Chang-Wilson: You've done the earthquake drills at school. Did they help you?

Ruddick: I don't know. I guess a little. But I don't think this school is a problem because it's pretty sturdy. In the earthquake nothing really got hurt.

Chang-Wilson: I know Mrs. Ackerman put together this book here and it's filled with information about earthquakes, and this earthquake in particular. Do you feel informed?

Ruddick: Yeah. It's a good experience, I guess, to have one. Well, I'm ready for the next one, kind of.

Chang-Wilson: Do you expect another one here in California?

Ruddick: I don't know. Maybe. I don't know if it will be that big, though.

Chang-Wilson: If there was something about the earthquake that you would like people to know, what would that be?

Ruddick: Just stay calm and don't panic and stuff. Don't go crazy.

Chang-Wilson: And how is your family now after the earthquake?

Ruddick: They're a little different. They're a little more aware of things. Everybody is more aware of things around them. And they are little more tense sometimes. That's about it.

Chang-Wilson: Okay. What will you be doing this summer?

Ruddick: I'm going to take judo and play football.

Chang-Wilson: Well, thank you for talking with us and have fun. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the earthquake?

Ruddick: Just hang in there.

Chang-Wilson: These interviews took place at the Rio Del Mar school playground. The children were receptive, a little nervous. There were times that the questions I asked were very difficult for them. I appreciate their willingness to speak to me and to be part of this 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake Project. It was quite an event for the children and

for their teacher and myself. We hope that this historical documentation will be kept as a living treasure, a memory of our experiences, collectively. As time passes, the trauma of such a catastrophic event seems to fade away, yet buried deep in our self-conscious is the reality that we did live through a trying time, that we are part of a history, that we carry with us memories, and will learn to overcome our fears or to live with them. This is Diane Chang-Wilson, the interviewer, saying goodbye and thanking everyone concerned with this project. It's an honor and a privilege to be part of the historical documentation. Aloha.

Anonymous: D

The October 17, 1989 earthquake caused mental and physical damage to its survivors. Each person had to develop her/his own way to cope with the disaster. Feelings of powerlessness, worries for the safety of loved ones, and fear of death were all stirred by the temblor.

One way many people chose to cope was by taking comfort in excess. Immediately following the earthquake, lines at convenience stores were full of people buying cases of beer and cartons of cigarettes. As soon as supermarkets reopened, lines stretched around the stores as people hoarded supplies. Many personal relationships, sexual and otherwise, intensified. Domestic violence skyrocketed.

For people recovering from addictions, this was an especially trying time. People who had formerly sought oblivion over minor problems were suddenly fighting to hold onto their abstinence in a state of emergency. The fear and insecurity that had caused them to use drugs was multiplied. Yet many managed to stay sober.

The following three interviews look at how several recovering addicts got through the earthquake and its aftermath. Common themes included extensive use of 12 step support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Overeaters Anonymous. They also found ways to help others in order to free their minds from personal difficulties.

Because of 12 step programs' tradition of anonymity, these subjects chose not to give their names. This enabled them to talk openly about issues of their recovery without violating any principle of their major support program.

This interview is with D., a bartender who had been sober one month when the temblor struck. The student interviewer had been sober for a year and a half at the time of the earthquake. The earthquake happened on her 22nd birthday.

Interviewer: I'm interviewing D. about the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Today is June 6, 1990. We're in Santa Cruz right now. Where were you born?

D: San Diego.

Interviewer: What is the date of your birth?

D: September 16, 1954.

Interviewer: Where were you when the earthquake happened?

The Experience of the Earthquake

D: In the Santa Cruz Hotel, at the bar, on Cedar Street and Locust Street downtown.

Interviewer: A block or so from the [Pacific Garden] Mall that collapsed.

D: Yes.

Interviewer: And what were you doing?

D: I was having coffee. The bartender is a friend of mine, so she and I were talking. I hadn't seen her in a while.

Interviewer: Did you know what was happening right away?

D: The first second we all looked at each other and waited for it to end. I don't think anyone quite knew what was going on. And about another second went by and everyone started to run.

Interviewer: Where did you run to?

D: Outside.

Interviewer: What was happening outside?

D: I went down the steps and I stopped short of getting in the middle of the road, because I thought this car was moving. It was a station wagon and it was jumping up and down on the ground. The tires were literally leaving the pavement. So I stopped and froze. Then somebody yelled at me that I was directly under the power lines. So then I

moved. Also, I remember the stop sign was swinging back and forth almost a foot in each direction.

Interviewer: Had you been in earthquakes before?

D: Nothing like this. I had been in a couple in San Diego and one in Davis. And I'd been in a couple in Santa Cruz. But no, never. Nothing anywhere near this. I had never been in a major earthquake where there was a lot of damage and casualties.

Interviewer: Until now.

D: Until October 17.

Interviewer: Where did you go after you ran into the street?

D: I waited for it to end. I remember thinking to myself, why did we bother to run outside? We're about to all go in the ocean. When it lasted as long as it did, the last few seconds I honestly expected to look out and see some point on my horizon develop a huge crack, and for all of us just simply to start dropping hundreds of feet.

Interviewer: Were you afraid?

D: I don't remember having a lot of fear. I was in shock. I don't remember fear. I didn't feel any strong sense of fear. It was just resignation and shock.

Interviewer: What were your first concerns?

D: My first concern was everybody around me. After it had stopped. The people who had been in the bar. I looked around to see if everyone was all right, right outside the bar. Then I went back inside to talk to a couple of the others. There was one woman who was in her eighties, probably. She was still sitting at the bar. She hadn't moved. She just rode it out in her chair. And the bartender was under the table, which I didn't realize. But she was up and okay. That was my first concern. Just to see if they needed my help in doing anything. It seemed to be all right. And then I went across the street to the backside of Modern Life [store], which because of the quake, no longer is there.

Interviewer: It was a clothing store?

D: Yeah, it was clothing and artifacts and collectibles. A friend of mine works there, so I found her out in the parking lot behind Modern Life, and another woman who works there that I know. They seemed to be okay. Then I remember I said to the woman who was my friend who works at Modern Life, "I'm going to do something real stupid now." I had made an agreement with myself not to see this woman, who was my former lover, who I had a lot of pain about for a period of time. And I knew that I was going to run to see if she was okay. She was about three blocks away, over near India Joze. She worked

in this Victorian house near India Joze [restaurant]. And so that's what I did then. I went running to find her.

Interviewer: Was she all right?

D: Yeah. She was okay. Sometimes she works alone. It's a computer lab in a Victorian house. Two other people were there with her because it just happened they were having a meeting when it happened. So she wasn't alone like I feared. They hadn't been hit very badly by it at all. Even the computer equipment seemed to be somewhat intact. When I went in, she was on the phone. She was on the phone to the man that she was living with, who I also had pain about, because there was a very difficult situation that had occurred. In March, April, and May of 1989 is when all that happened, about six months before the earthquake. I left. I said, "Is everybody okay?" They were nodding their heads. She was still on the phone. And I left.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

D: I just went outside. I was planning to walk back to the Santa Cruz Hotel and then I didn't know what I was going to do. And she came running out after me, and apologized for not putting the phone down for a moment to give me a hug. I felt really nervous and embarrassed and also . . . I don't know if I was angry, but I was sad that after this big moment when I ran to see if she was okay, she only nodded at my presence. It felt like a very odd acknowledgement of my entry into this room in such a crisis. Later

on I found out that she and the two people she was with, because of their isolation from the Mall, had no concept that it had been as damaging as it had been.

Interviewer: Did you know right away how damaging it was?

D: Absolutely. Well, I didn't know about deaths.

Interviewer: Not specific damage, but you knew it was a really big earthquake.

D: Yeah, I looked over . . . The Santa Cruz Hotel is on Locust and Cedar and I was able to have a pretty clear vision of the part of the Mall going from, say, Gottschalk's [department store] down to the Santa Cruz [Coffee] Roasting Company. I couldn't see in the Mall but I was looking at large amounts of dust coming off the buildings. And in fact, right over where Gottschalk's was, I remember looking and thinking there was a fire because I saw about eighty feet, this spiral going in the air. But in reality it was dust. And I when I realized that it was not a fire, not smoke, but that it was actually a dust plume going eighty feet into the air, that's when I knew this was really serious. Really serious.

Interviewer: When did you find out about the bridge collapsing, and the deaths?

D: (sigh) I can't really recall.

Interviewer: Were you worried about your house right away?

D: Yeah, after I went over to see if this woman was all right (she joined me after some dancing about, she needed to face up to these other two people) and we went back to the Santa Cruz Hotel because she wanted to use the restroom, which I thought was nuts. There were these aftershocks and . . . But I went in with her and she ran in real fast. We said hi to everybody again, and made sure everybody was going to be okay. Then we went down to where I work at this other bar. They were just closing it up, and apparently nobody had been hurt. So we said hello to the manager and to his girlfriend who was there. And then we went over to where she nominally lived, because she really was staying with this guy. But she had this room in this house where she had lived six months before. That house ended up being torn down. It was pretty badly hurt but no human lives were lost there. One of the people who lived there lost two dogs and was very sad about that. And then we went over to my house and it was a wreck. The structure was okay but everything, my speakers and books and everything was on the floor. As it turned out later, very little was damaged, but it was a wreck. Then we went back to where she works, just because we wanted to find a phone, because my phone wasn't operating.

Interviewer: That was the computer place in the Victorian house?

D: Yeah. And the reason why we wanted to get to that phone . . . I was going to try and call my parents in San Diego and I couldn't get through.

Interviewer: How did you feel about that?

D: I was nervous. I was nervous about what they were probably going through, because both my parents are news hounds. They watch the news. They read the paper and they watch TV a lot. I knew that they would know very shortly after it happened. So I was extremely nervous about that. I wanted to talk to them. I just wanted to hear their voices, I think, too. But it just didn't work out at that time. So then we left there. And this whole time I'm with this woman.

Interviewer: Was that difficult for you?

D: It was extremely difficult. We were holding hands a lot. She was becoming more and more aware, as we made this tour, of the situation. I had been aware, pretty much, from the moment it occurred, because of my location when the earthquake happened. She was denying it maybe? I don't know. She was . . . She just kept looking at me and saying, "This is really serious." And then she'd grip my hand tighter. It brought up a lot of old feelings. I felt a lot of futility. I felt like I was grabbing for whatever kind of intimacy I could get at that moment. And I felt guilty about that, because this was a serious situation. There were obviously going to be injuries, if not deaths. I didn't know about the deaths at the time. But a lot of damage. And my main focus was on . . . it was more than just gleaning what I could from it. I had this strange fantasy that because we were together in the aftermath of this disaster that she . . . That something magical might happen and she might decide to be with me. And I really wanted her to be with me. Badly. I mean, I . . . And it ended horribly because I . . . although looking back I felt I

handled everything really well for what was going on. I ended up . . . After we went to that place I walked her to his house.

Interviewer: To the house of the man she was seeing after she stopped seeing you?

D: Yeah, to her new lover's house where she was staying almost all the time. And in walking her over there, I knew he would not be there because he was over the hill in the Santa Clara Valley. So I knew that it would take him a long time to get home. So with that I felt a little bit of safety, but I still felt very odd about walking her home, walking her to his house. I think I even knew that she considered it her own home too. And that hurt, because we never actually lived together. There was some envy there going on. And as we approached the house . . . it was over in the Seabright area, and as we walked up the bridge where you get to the top. It's where the trestle is that's across from the [Santa Cruz Beach] Boardwalk area . . .

Interviewer: The railroad trestle near the Boardwalk.

D: Yeah. That curvy road that goes up there that leads into East Cliff. As we were walking up I was talking about, "I really want to talk to my folks." So we were talking about that. And also, threaded through that, I was trying to share with her the pain I was going through about being with her and knowing that this was . . . there was a limitation, a boundary, our temporary time together in this really critical moment because of this other man.

We got up to his house, and we started to approach his house. And when we were within about two houses she started running, because she could tell somebody was in there. It was his daughter. And even though intellectually I had known that this was a possibility, that his daughter would already be there cleaning up or whatever, it hadn't really struck me. When I realized other people were in the house, I couldn't handle it. We had tentatively talked about me coming in the house with her, checking it out and making sure everything was okay. But this other man, she and I had spent time in this house when she and I were still lovers. And I feel a lot of betrayal around his living there, a feeling of betrayal and anger.

As I approached the house, she had already run inside. I got up to the top of the steps and I couldn't cross the threshold. I remember his daughter coming to the door, which was open, and just looking at me and saying, "Are you all right?" I said, "Yeah, I'm fine. I'm all right." just to get to her to go away. I didn't want to explain to her what was going on. And then the woman comes back, my former lover comes back to the door. She, meanwhile, has been running around in the house. I didn't know exactly what she was doing. But what she was doing was bringing a candle and the phone from the bedroom out to the living room so that I could call my folks. That was her whole intent and purpose. I had no idea that's what she was doing. She was still, as she told me later, not that night but a couple of days later, she was still focusing on the fact of how much I wanted to call my parents. And she seemed oblivious to the fact that I might be going through pain about being at this man's house. So she came to the door and she looked at me. And before she could say anything, I looked into her eyes and I said, "I have to go

now." She said, "Come in and make the call. Come on in." And I just . . . I looked straight at her and I said, "I can't." And then I remember saying, "You're safe now." Because one of the reasons I had walked her there was that I didn't know what was going on. When there are disasters, there can be gangs or possible things. So that's one of the reasons why I had escorted her to the house. I said, "You're safe now. You're with other people. You're all right. I have to go." And she said, "Okay. Bye." And we didn't even hug, which was very odd, looking back at it. I turned around on those steps and walked down the steps and walked away.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

D: I walked back down that same roadway. By then it was twilight, moving into darkness. When we had come up it was still fairly light. But now it was getting dark. Very quickly it was getting dark. In fact, it was almost pitch by the time I got to the bottom of the hill. The darkness was setting in at a very rapid pace. There were no streetlights, of course, no electricity. And I was like feeling my way down, first down that road and then along the levee, the path that goes along the levee.

Interviewer: Parts of the path had dropped quite a bit from the earthquake, hadn't they?

D: Yeah, it was very difficult to move. Because it was so dark and I didn't have a flashlight with me, I was having to feel my way along. Sometimes I would bump into crevices and almost . . . some were like a foot, a foot dropped or raised. Sometimes it

would be a drop down, and sometimes I would bump into it. There were some cracks that were wide enough that if I would have twisted my foot the wrong way, my foot could have fallen in, and I might have injured myself. So I was moving very slowly and I remember . . . I had so many things now happening with me. I was no longer there for her. I was no longer with her. The fantasy that . . . Because she had even mentioned to me that . . . It sounded as if nobody was at this man's house when we got there, she wouldn't want to stay there alone. She had even mentioned to a friend while I was next to her, when we stopped at one of these houses to see if people were okay, that, "Oh, it's all right because if I can't stay there I'll stay at [D's] house. So I had this . . . This one statement she had made to somebody . . . I was holding this out as a hope. So now that I had left her and walked down this path . . . One, I'm trying to pick my way through the rubble and through these cracks and anomalies on the footpath. And meanwhile I'm becoming very aware that I'm alone. And not wanting to be alone.

Interviewer: Were you afraid of being alone?

D: (pause) I don't think I would describe it as fear. It was resignation. I was almost philosophical. I remember walking along that footpath on the levee, barely able to see, only every so often seeing what it looked like, and mostly just knowing it by feel, and being aware of all the cracks and how everything was out of line, and thinking, the comparison, the metaphor for my own life with this woman, and in general.

Interviewer: How did you feel during the aftershocks?

D: I got very nervous during the aftershocks at first. I was one of those people that, if I was anywhere inside I would be like the first one to the door. After several days I got used to it. And in fact, when the aftershocks finally died out a month later or whenever it was, I got nervous about there not being aftershocks. I missed them. I wanted to feel them. I actually wanted to feel them. I'd rather know that one had just occurred rather than wait indefinitely for another one.

Being in Recovery from Alcoholism during the Earthquake

I mean, one thing, I don't know if it's premature to get into it, but one thing that was going on too, was that I had quit drinking a month prior to the earthquake.

Interviewer: Are you an alcoholic?

D: Yes, I'm an alcoholic.

Interviewer: What recovery are you in?

D: I'm in recovery in a twelve-step program.

Interviewer: And how did that affect you? Did you feel like drinking right after the earthquake?

D: No, if anything it committed me more to not having a drink.

Interviewer: Why is that?

D: Because literally everything had been shaken up in my life that day. I was very aware of how tenuous my stability was in the world. I didn't want to take any chance of putting myself in any condition where I couldn't handle whatever situations would come up. I wanted . . . More than ever, I wanted to be sober. I watched people coming down the street with beers in hand. I watched some drunken behavior. Maybe a little envy went on, but I just didn't want it. I think part of it too was that I was having . . . it's something that I've enjoyed in life during any kind of traumatic time, is that if I am able to get enough balance in myself, at the moment just after some kind of traumatic event (nothing of this scale had ever happened before), but any kind of traumatic event, the gift that I can get sometimes afterwards is this ability to get very philosophical and be in touch with the way I feel about the world and about life. I wanted that. I didn't want to interrupt the quality of that experience for myself by drinking. Even though it was painful. I was in a lot of pain and a lot of disorientation. But I wanted it. I wanted . . . I remember thinking that night, where is a pen and where is some paper? I wanted to write. I wanted a flashlight and a pen and paper. I wanted to write all night. I wanted to get the raw experience down on paper. And I'm glad I didn't, because I don't think that's really what I needed to do right then. But the rest of that whole evening was just so . . . it was like being in a movie.

Interviewer: Were you around a lot of people who were drinking?

D: I stayed clear in the early part of the evening of people who were drinking. I wandered back into town, finally picked my way back along the path and got back into downtown, went back to my house. I remember thinking that no matter what I can move enough off the floor and make room, and get every heavy object off the walls. And then I could sleep in my own place that night. Without light, but I knew I had a flashlight there. I had candles. And I had a coat. I wasn't wearing a coat. So I had warm clothing. And what occurred then, was that on returning to Chestnut Street, where I was living, that street had been closed off for gas leaks.

Interviewer: You were living downtown at the time.

D: Yeah, I was living on Chestnut Street in a garage behind a house. And that whole portion of Chestnut Street had been closed off. Police barricades. I was not allowed to go back to my own house.

Interviewer: Not even to get stuff out?

D: Not even to get stuff out.

Interviewer: Why it was barricaded?

D: They were worried about explosions. There were major gas leaks on the block. That affected me deeply. Then I felt lost. I wasn't with anyone. So now I'm feeling disoriented.

I asked the officer who was standing at the end of Chestnut down by Laurel Street, I asked him how long this might be. He said he had no idea. It could be all night. So I walked away, and I remember I considered that I could sleep on the floor of the bar where I worked, because I had keys to the bar. At least it would be inside. But again, I didn't have a flashlight, and that really bothered me. I thought, well, I could pick my way through somehow and get into the walk-in and at least I would be inside. Again, I was a recovering alcoholic, and I was at that time of the quake, so I wasn't interested in beer but I thought I could get sodas, or at least have something, or potato chips, something that looked like food.

Helping People Phone Home

And then for some reason I let that one go. My main interest was to find a phone. So I ended up at Jack's Burgers, which is on the corner of Cedar and Lincoln. It just appeared to be the phone to be at. I don't know. It had benches. I was looking for something that felt stable. And for some reason that did. Also, it wasn't inside. There was a lot of open area. If I needed to move I could move fast. The line didn't look that long. There were lines at almost every pay phone in the area, every pay phone I saw.

So what I set myself up as then was phone monitor for about two hours. That was my job. And what I did was try every so often to call my parents, and in between times try to fairly keep track of whose turn it was next. Because people were having to retry. I wasn't trying to control it. Nobody seemed to be bothered by the way I was doing it. I just simply was trying to support people in being willing to wait.

Interviewer: Did you feel you had a need to make yourself useful?

D: Absolutely. I had to do something. And yet I couldn't do too much. This woman came up to me and we were talking and she said, "Well, I'm serving food at the red church across the street [the Calvary Episcopal Church]. We're serving food there at the main hall, or right outside the parish hall," and she said, "If you want to, we could use more volunteers over there." But I couldn't handle that. I couldn't handle that kind of structured service. I couldn't handle the idea that somebody would then be telling me, "This is the way we serve food." All I could handle was being a phone monitor. But being also where I knew I would see people, because people were going to be coming to use that phone. Also, I needed to stay there until I got through. I finally got through first to a friend in New Jersey. I actually called New Jersey because it was easier to get through to New Jersey than to San Diego, and asked him to call my parents in San Diego. And he was able to do so. I found out later that night. About an hour after that I got through to my folks directly. And so everything worked out.

Meanwhile, these people were using the phone. The one thing I want to say about the phone was that this one woman was having trouble. She was trying to call collect. She was trying to use the operator. And it just was impossible. So I finally said, "Look. I have a calling card. So dial in your folks' number on the East Coast (they lived in Washington, D.C.). So she dialed in the number. I said, "Now let me do the rest." And I dialed in my card number and she got through immediately. Then she said, "Well, how do I pay you?" I said, "Don't worry about it. I work at this bar and just come by sometime."

Maybe we traded numbers. And I didn't think much of it. I really didn't care if I got the money back.

Interviewer: There was an earthquake.

D: My God, there was an earthquake. I found it almost ludicrous that I was having this conversation and she was so concerned about making sure she paid me back. But then we all were all, I guess, going through our own detailed ways of looking at that night in order not to face the fuller extent of what was going on there. What's neat about that, is less than a month later, her father, whom she had gotten in touch with by using my credit card, came out to help her move. She had to move because of the quake. I ran into her and her father. And I ended up in tears because . . . this seemed like nothing to me. But her father looked at me and just said, "You're the young man that . . ." he looked like he was on the verge of tears, but I could tell he had that kind of stoic older generation male personality. He wasn't going to let himself cry but he just looked at me and I started to almost cry. I definitely got teary-eyed because this little thing that I had done had put her in contact with her parents who were worried sick that she might be dead or injured. And it was amazing to me. That was a really wonderful experience, to find out how something so small during such a time of crisis could become so important, and such an incredible sense of bonding between myself and two strangers, this woman and her father.

Interviewer: How were other people able to make their phone calls? I wouldn't think they would all have had plenty of change handy.

D: A lot of people were making local calls. Almost everybody was making local calls. Other people were putting change in.

Interviewer: For long distance?

D: As far as I know. Maybe a couple of people had cards and I just didn't know. Maybe they just dialed the numbers in. I didn't get to see what people were doing with the phone, because I did make a point once someone started making a call, to move away.

Interviewer: For privacy.

D: For privacy, yeah. I wanted to give people a lot of space. Also, I was really involving myself in the whole process of facilitating the use of this one pay phone, while not controlling it. At any given moment I was willing for anyone else to take the job over. I had to keep that in mind. The idea was not to control this thing, but just simply to be there for people. And that kept me going for a couple of hours, because I had to keep looking at myself and it made me stay aware of my own emotional state because I had to be there for someone else, even something simple like supporting them in using the phone. When I say support, a lot of it was simply when somebody would hang up and look at me and say, "My God, I can't get through!" just look around and say, "I know. All

those lines are busy. It's going to take us all a while." Echoing back what they said to me, but in a calmer voice.

Finally, the other call I made, I got through to . . . I finally thought of someone to call. They hadn't been hit very hard. They had lost their electricity, of course, but structurally they were okay.

Interviewer: They must have been in their house if you were able to reach them.

D: They were near their house. They were just outside their house. It's a little cottage area over on Clay Street. So they were outside and they brought their phone outside so they could hear it if it rang. So this man said, "Come right over. We can put you up." That made me feel a lot more comfortable. I was feeling a lot better after that.

And then when I went over there . . . now it's getting pretty late. It's probably closing on 10 o'clock by then. And I get over there and there's this bonfire in a trash can with all of these pieces of wood sticking out, out in this courtyard of all these cottages. And there's picnic benches pulled up around it. There're probably twelve or fifteen people in this courtyard. And they are cooking a little food. They're drinking. They're drinking a lot. There're six packs of beer sitting everywhere. I guess there was some hard liquor. I seem to remember seeing it. Not too much hard liquor. And then there was wine.

Interviewer: Did they seem to be drinking more than they would be usually?

D: They were drinking quite a bit. And a lot of jokes about drinking were going around. There was a lot of tension, because every so often these helicopters would come overhead with their lights. It felt very strange. It felt very strange to everyone, from what everyone said, and it definitely felt strange to me. The difference is that I was facing it sober. But still, it felt as if . . . there was a part of the whole experience that felt like what I had experienced when I had taken hallucinogens. There was a lack of reality to things, especially the helicopters. It was hard for me to keep in mind that the primary purpose of the helicopter being in the air was to support the safety of everyone, was for rescue and for just general safety for the people living there. It was very hard for me not to view it as a police state, actually, that because of being a disaster area martial law was being imposed. I had a lot of those thoughts running through my head. And that conversation was going around and around this bonfire, "Look at these helicopters. Is this really . . ." Maybe a feeling about it, that they were somehow invasive. And also that . . . people in general said well, as long as this had to happen, it's a beautiful night. The stars. The sky. We're having to be in touch with nature because there is no electricity, and how wonderful. And these helicopters are ruining it. There was this sense that they were intruding upon what should have been a very spiritual experience. But these helicopters were adding noises and sending spotlights down into the area and interrupting what should have been a very serene and relaxing sense.

The Earthquake as a Spiritual Experience

Interviewer: Did you feel that the earthquake was a spiritual experience?

D: Absolutely. Absolutely. Also . . .

Interviewer: Do you have any kind of spiritual interpretation of it?

D: Well, one thing that affected me was that two hours before the earthquake, my sponsor in this twelve step program, who is a person who advises me in matters of sobriety and the spiritual side and how to work the steps, had started me on the third step. And the third step is to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him. And I had a lot of trouble with that step that day. I still do, for that matter. But that day I had trouble with even the beginning of it. And what I finally told him was, "I'll tell you what. Alcoholics Anonymous works on the principle that we don't drink, one day at a time. So what I can do is I will accept, I will turn my will and my life over to the care of God for twenty-four hours. And tomorrow I'll look at it again." This happened two hours before the earthquake. So a lot of my spiritual experience of the earthquake had to do with the timing of starting that third step.

The other thing it did is it got me in touch with the earth, the power of the earth, and the fact that the earth has been here a lot longer than us. In fact, I was deeply disturbed by the lack of spiritual reverence for the moment in most people I talked to. Most people seemed to be concerned with either the party—drinking and using drugs and wow, the drama, the soap opera—just getting caught up in all those emotionally charged ways of looking at the situation. And then other people were looking at it in terms of logistics.

"We have to do this. We have to do that." There seemed to be this confrontation between these two groups. It wasn't always clear who was what.

That's not . . . that's really not fair because I'm sure everyone was internally going through a lot more. But it was very rare that I could look into anyone else's eyes that night, wherever I was, and really be able to connect with them in acknowledging the spiritual reality of what was going on around us. The significance of this event was far deeper than whatever damage it had caused to buildings that were built upon the earth. I mean, if the buildings had never been built, all this drama would not be taking place. I mean, geologically, just in terms of the area, this was a major event. It was beautiful. It was a beautiful restructuring. It's just that we have built things in a way not to take that into account as much as we might. I'm still working on that.

And I'm very disappointed that I was not able to . . . that I wasn't able to go even deeper that night. I almost wish that I hadn't gone to my friend's house. I almost wish that I had just walked the streets all night. Because I . . . even though I did get some sleep and that was probably very good for me, I know it was good for me physically. Being with that group of people around the bonfire really seemed to lessen my ability to go within myself. I eventually excused myself and went to bed, and slept on the living room floor of my friend's house. Because I couldn't handle it. It wasn't only the drinking. I didn't feel that I wanted to drink. It was just the lack of connection I felt with anyone else there. I felt like we should all have been quiet. I didn't feel it was the place or time to be making a lot of jokes. But I didn't want to interrupt that evening. This was obviously a group of

people who knew each other. They were dealing with the trauma in the way that they felt most comfortable. I didn't want to interrupt that, because I was a guest. But I look back with regret in a lot of ways, which is strange for me. I have to work through that. I felt like within a day or two of that event that I should have completely revised my spiritual understanding of life and found a strength that never would have let me down again. But that didn't happen. I got back into my junk, and a few weeks later it was as if it never had happened. I was in my same old games.

It was an incredible night, though. And then the next morning I checked out my house and went through and basically did logistical things.

The Gifts of Sobriety

But the next afternoon or evening was maybe in some ways one of the most revealing circumstances that came out of the quake. And that is that I am a bartender, or was a bartender at the time. I'm not a bartender now. I was scheduled to work Wednesday night. And they opened the next day. They were open for part of Wednesday day. I remember going by there with no idea that they were even considering being open, just to see how things were going, how the clean-up process was going. And that was when I was told, "Come in at six o'clock for your regular shift." I was appalled. I was like, "You've got to be kidding me." And it was like, "Well, we think people need this place. It's kind of a gathering place." So I went along with it. They said, "We'll only stay open until 7:00 or 8:00 anyway, unless the electricity comes back." Somewhere around 4:30, I think, the electricity came on. So by the time I arrived at the pub it was like, "No, we're

not going to say open until 7:00. We'll stay open until 11:00 or 12:00, because we have lights. If the power goes off then just close it down." This is within 24 hours after the quake.

Interviewer: Did people come in?

D: Oh, it was packed! It was packed. There were forty or fifty people in there. I looked around. I looked at the manager who was working the day shift, and he had told me that one of the owners had said, "The electricity had come back on, so why don't you just go for 10:00, 11:00 or 12 o'clock," at his discretion. But preferably stay open later. I still don't know how much the motive was to give people a nice place to be and how much was to bring in a little extra money. Not simply out of greed, but the pub had had a rough financial quarter. It's just the way things work in business. So it seemed like some of it was financial. But I think mostly it was humanitarian. Misdirected, I think, but humanitarian.

But anyway, the important thing was I arrived there, I looked everywhere. I went and I looked out from the bartender's side of the bar. There were two people crying. There was a man talking to himself. There was another woman slapping her hand against the bar and looking at it. (slap, slap, slap) Just looking at her own hand. Not hard, but just keeping a rhythm, looking at her hand. All the conversations were either agitated, or what I would consider, perceive as morose. Nobody was keeping any sustained eye contact with one another. I called the manager in the kitchen and I said, "What's going

on here?" And he said, [inaudible]. I said, "This is crazy! These people are on the brink of a traumatic breakdown. People are crying. People are talking to themselves. People are agitated. We don't know what's going . . . [inaudible] There might be people rolling people on the streets. You want me to serve alcohol and get people to the point of intoxication and send them out onto the streets the day after a natural disaster? There might be gangs out there." (By then I'd already heard about the gangs in San Francisco.) I said, "I really . . . I don't think I can do this." And he looked at me and he said, "Well, you know, maybe we'll only stay open until eight." I said, "No. I think we need to do last call." He said, "Well, the owner said to stay open." So finally I talked to him . . . He couldn't get in touch with anyone but I talked to him long enough that he went walking out there. And I never will forget this. He came walking back in the kitchen. He looked at me like, "My God, what are we doing?" And we went out and did last call and the two of us served people for another half an hour. By seven o'clock we were closed. It was daylight.

And we finally got in touch with one of the owners, the owner who had asked us to stay open. And he was really . . . he wasn't angry, but he was perturbed. He said, "We really should stay open and I don't think that you should have done that." And the next day he profusely apologized to both of us because he had seen the news about San Francisco. He said, "My God. I had no idea. I guess I was in my own pain. I didn't realize."

Interviewer: What was it that happened in San Francisco?

D: Well, the gangs that were going on. There was a lot of violence against people happening. Just a general sense of confusion. That it was dangerous. People were not in in any rational pattern. I had to really look hard at my motives when I had spoken to the manager, because of my own recovery. I wanted to make sure that I wasn't just making a value judgment that people shouldn't be drinking at all. And I worked through that in those few minutes. I really felt that this was not about feeling nobody should be drinking, but if you're going to drink, drink at home. Don't drink in public places where you have to figure out how to get yourself home through impossibly dark streets. The owner did understand it later. The manager understood it almost immediately.

I still wonder about it. Not to give myself any credit, but rather as a way of looking at the gifts of my sobriety, that even with one month of sobriety at that point . . . I just wonder if a large part of my ability to come in and see that situation so quickly was because of my sobriety. I think it was. So that was real special. And I feel that if I contributed nothing else to the health and welfare of people in the quake, my major contribution was pushing that decision through about closing that bar. Because to this day I really honestly believe that if we'd stayed open at least one or two people would have been seriously injured in one way or another. It was just not a night for people to be intoxicated.

Interviewer: How long before the bar was open regular hours?

D: We stayed closed until Friday.

Interviewer: Did people's drinking seem to be affected by the earthquake on Friday and afterwards?

D: Oh yeah. We still were one of the few places open downtown. The Red Room was closed. The Catalyst was closed. I think the Red Room opened that weekend. Pearl Street [Bistro] was closed. The Teacup was closed. Tampico's was closed. The list goes on. Pretty much everyplace downtown except [ours] and the Asti. I think there was one other bar. Maybe it was the Santa Cruz Hotel. And that was it. Lulu's [Lulu Carpenter's Bar] was closed. The list goes on. So we were really busy. My regular shifts were the weekends. So I worked that whole weekend. It was very animated, extremely animated. In some ways it was real close, a sense of intimacy among people who normally wouldn't be intimate. We would all talk about the quake. Some joking about the quake. It had hit the joking stage a little bit. And trepidation. Now and then there would be a minor aftershock, which would occur once or twice during the shift. I remember being really glad that I was behind the bar and sober.

What was really amazing about that weekend was the healing that I could see going on in front of me. I remember playing almost entirely uplifting music, a lot of reggae and some rock that wasn't too loud. And just watching people's faces and watching the way they would share with each other. The thing that really struck me by the end of that weekend, and made me come to tears a couple of times, especially after I closed the bar and only a couple of close friends were around me, was how honored I felt that I was in this place, that I was able to be of service, that so many people trusted me to be there for

them in this way. Because all of these people were coming in who knew me, and they'd see me behind the bar and say, "I'm so glad you're here. I didn't know if you were all right." A hundred people shared their concern about my well being that way. It was great to be able to give something back to them. And it was great that I was able to keep myself stable, to give myself a place to go. And that was to AA meetings during that same weekend. That weekend was where a lot of my initial healing took place. Until then I think I was pretty numb.

Interviewer: Is there anything you want to say to people in the future about earthquakes, or about this particular earthquake?

D: Yeah, I think as a culture it would be really good of us to look at preparing for such events, whether they be earthquakes or any other kind of natural disaster. To honor the earth during these times. And to also educate ourselves as to the nature of such an event. Not only to be physically prepared, but spiritually prepared in whatever way works for each of us.

Interviewer: Thanks.

D: My pleasure.

Anonymous: J

This interview is with J., a 32-year-old UCSC student who had been off drugs for four and a half years at the time of the earthquake.

J: I was born June 6, 1958 in Chicago, Illinois and ended up in California to go to school at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Interviewer: And how long have you been in Santa Cruz?

J: I've been in Santa Cruz approximately one year now.

Interviewer: Okay. Now we're going to talk about the earthquake that happened on October 17, 1989 registering 7.1 on the Richter scale. Where were you when this earthquake happened?

The Experience of the Earthquake

J: I left work early on that Tuesday. I said, "I'm out of here." I don't know why I wanted to leave. I just wanted to leave early. So I left work at like 10 minutes to five. So I was on my way home. I was walking down the street.

Interviewer: Where do you work?

J: I work for Santa Cruz County in the planning department on the fourth floor [of the County Building]! I'm really glad I got out of there, because that building was like five stories high, and I did not want to be in that building. It got thrashed.

Interviewer: So where were you when the earthquake happened?

J: I was walking down Ocean Street and I got as far as Broadway, just before Broadway. And just had no idea. It felt . . . I heard somebody describe it as the road was like the ripples in the ocean. And that's really how it felt. It sounded like somebody going over those cattle crossings. I just felt the movement underneath my feet, the waves of movement under my feet. I went into the street, because the street poles were swaying and moving and being crazy, and all the cars were stopped in the street. I moved to the center of the street because if anything was going to fall, I didn't want it to fall on my head.

Interviewer: Did you know what it was right away?

J: By the time I got in the middle of the street I had to know it was something . . . It took a bit. When it ended . . . and how can you time something like that? They said it lasted 15 seconds, but when it ended I just threw my head back and said, "We survived!" And these people who were in their cars, they were like panting. They wanted me to get the hell out of the street so they could move. They wanted the traffic to continue on a little more. And everything was still shaking. There were supposed to be some more real quick ones, big heavy ones right after . . . but I think my whole body was convulsing so much that I didn't feel immediately the ones that came afterwards.

Interviewer: Yeah, it was hard to tell if it was the earth or your body.

J: I was definitely shaking. I knew I had to get to the ocean. That was my thing. If I could just get to the water. Because I remember . . . everything I always heard about earthquakes was that after one there's always another one. It might be bigger, it might not . . . I was trying to remember . . . it was going through my brain, anything that I'd ever heard about earthquakes. Is there another one afterwards? How long does it happen afterwards? I just never thought I'd be in a big one, whatever a big one was. At that time I had no idea what a big one was, or how big it was here because I had no idea what had gone on downtown. All I saw was Ocean Street had cracked. There were cracks all over the place. It had just buckled up and water was pouring through the cracks in the road. The roads were flooding. People were running out of their houses screaming about the gas being blown all over. It was a really icky, powerless feeling.

There was nothing you could do. All I could think about was getting my butt to the ocean.

Interviewer: Did you think the ocean was a safe place?

J: I did. (laughter) I did. I had no idea at all about the big swell or whatever they call it.

Interviewer: Tidal waves.

J: No idea at all. I just wanted to get where . . . because everywhere you looked there was poles, there was poles and lines, wires. I just didn't want to be . . . When I was walking towards the water there was . . . I knew there could possibly be poles down and electricity, and I knew that water was a conductor of electricity. And everybody was walking through the water. The water was just flooding. The streets were flooding.

Interviewer: From water mains?

J: Yeah, there were broken water mains, broken sewer lines. Who knows what was broken there? But all of Ocean Street, from halfway between Broadway and San Lorenzo [Boulevard], all of Ocean Street was flooded, and all of San Lorenzo and that area was flooded, San Lorenzo Boulevard. It was all flooded. So people couldn't see around the corner. And people were like walking right through that water. That was one of my main

fears, was that I was to be electrocuted. I was going to walk through that water. So I was tiptoeing around it, trying to get around it. I never made it to the ocean.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

J: I ended up on the levee. I found a gentleman, and I hung on to him. He didn't speak hardly any English and I didn't speak hardly any Spanish. I just grabbed him and asked him if he would just stay with me. I didn't ask him, I demanded it. "You've got to stay with me through this! I can't handle it." Oh, God. He was great. He was really great. We stood up on the levee. The levee was demolished. It was cracked. There was a couple foot drop. The path was just cracked. Right in front of you it would just drop a couple of feet. Leading up to the levee, all the ivy that grows along the levee, it was hiding the cracks leading up to the path. So people who were trying to get up onto the path were just falling into these cracks, buried up to their knees and trying to pull out.

Interviewer: The cracks were wide?

J: They were pretty wide. They were . . . probably a half a foot to a foot wide, but then they dropped down, too. You had a good space for your foot, your leg to drop into. And then once you got up on top of the pathway, those cracks were even larger! There was a building, a city water type building . . . I don't know what you call it . . . and there was a garbage can chained to it. The earth had dropped like a foot and a half to two feet, and the garbage can was suspended in the air. I wouldn't have believed that the earth

dropped that much. I wouldn't have believed the land dropped that much if I didn't see that. In fact, that was even creepier than just that the pathway cracking and dropping, I don't know why. The garbage can was just suspended in the air. Where did the earth go? I couldn't imagine where the heck it would go. I don't know, but it scared me.

I stayed there probably for about an hour. The gentleman who was with me said that he didn't have any family and he had nobody around. He didn't have to worry too much about going and searching out relatives. I had a sister up in Boulder Creek that I was concerned about. I wanted to get home because I was living with two women, and that was like the only thing I could think of to be safe, was to get to where they were.

Interviewer: Did you find them?

Beach Flats Right After the Earthquake

J: After about an hour, I walked the rest of the way home. I lived in the Beach Flats, real close to the Boardwalk, like a block from the Boardwalk. There was a real massive fire burning off in the distance and I was really scared that things were going to start blowing up, with the gas leaks and . . . This guy, after an hour, said that he had to go. "I gotta go. I gotta get the truck back to work." I probably would have stayed there for hours, if he would have stayed with me. But once I was alone, I didn't want to stay alone, so I walked home. It was only a couple of blocks the rest of the way home. I had to go over the Riverside Bridge. And that was cracked. Not just cracked. I mean, there were gaps. The bridge was like actually split.

Interviewer: Yeah, that was torn down soon afterwards, wasn't it?

J: It took a couple of weeks, but it sure was. They blocked it off immediately that night so nobody could get access. Pedestrians would walk across it, but they didn't allow any more cars. But I went across that bridge. And as soon as you get over the bridge it leads to where my house is, and I saw all the chimneys crumbled. I saw bricks everywhere. People were everywhere. People were everywhere in the street. A lot more people down in the flats were in the streets than there were down on Ocean and Broadway. There weren't very many people on the streets there.

Interviewer: Was anyone hurt that you saw?

J: No, there were just people . . . People had that look of absolute disbelief, you know, that shocked . . . where you just walk kind of aimlessly. You could just be bumping into each other and not even knowing what you're doing. It was strange. When I got down there were so many people . . . I don't know if it was because there were stores on the corner where we lived. I don't know what it was, but there were just so many people out in the streets and on the sidewalks and . . . I ran into a girl from school and she said, "J., how are you? Are you okay?" I looked at her. I gave her this shocked look of, "Yeah. Yeah." I didn't know what to say to her. I just walked away from her. I didn't even . . . I don't know. And then one of my roommates, C., showed up, and I just hugged her and hugged her, and talked to her. She said we had to get our stuff out of the house, get enough stuff out of the place to sleep in the parking lot for the night. Get sleeping bags.

Get warm clothes. Let's get some food. Let's get what we need out of the house, because we're not going to spend any more time in the house.

Interviewer: Is this the Boardwalk parking lot?

J: Yeah. A huge parking lot. We really crammed a lot of people in that parking lot. One of my favorite parts of being crammed in that parking lot was how my fear had gotten taken away. I used to be pretty scared of living in the flats. The flats were supposed to be the so-called ghetto, or the barrio, that area. I had some fear about the people who hung out in the streets. There was just none of that fear any more. There was none of that fear. The only fear was simply for our lives. Is the earth going to just open up and take us? It was just such a bizarre feeling?

Interviewer: Was there any crime that you saw, like any looting anything that in the area, vandalism?

J: Not in our area. One of the local stores . . . I just remember Hagler's [Market] did open. They boarded up the windows with . . . I don't even know where the heck they got the wood from?

Interviewer: On the corner of Riverside and Brant?

J: Could be. They boarded up the windows. But they still did business.

Interviewer: Without electricity?

J: Oh, there was no electricity. There was nothing. While we standing on the levee for that hour, we watched the city workers try to get through the water. The water was way up to their knees. And they were trying to get their big bolt to turn off the water, the main source of water? I don't know. I know we didn't have water in our area for a long time. A week? Maybe we had water, but it was crummy water. The water pipes had broken, the sewage pipes broken. They were all intermingled.

Interviewer: That first night did you see what happened to the people in the Casa del Rey retirement home that was torn down shortly after the earthquake?

J: (pause) The two girls I lived with, they walked over there; they spent some time over there. I didn't go over there, so I didn't see what was going on. But they told me they went over there and the older people that were living there, the senior citizens that lived in the building were all sitting outside, hanging out. They had a choice. They could either come in or stay out, and most wanted to stay out. It wasn't until a couple of hours later that we got up enough guts to walk around a little bit.

J: Who were you with, mostly?

Interviewer: C. was my first roommate that I saw. And we didn't know where T. was, my other roommate. We had no idea where she was. We knew that she had gone to

school that day. We had no idea of the extent of the damage. We just knew that there was panic, and we knew that something was going on. We didn't know how bad it was. There were so many people out there in the parking lot. We all just hung out together.

Interviewer: What were other people doing?

J: The kids were playing around and acting . . . crazy. There was family, tons of family. Everybody was there. Nobody wanted to get back to their homes. Tons of families. There had to be maybe a couple of hundred people out there.

Interviewer: Were there a lot of non-English speaking families?

J: Yeah, probably three-quarters of them.

Interviewer: Did people communicate well?

J: Fear was a heck of a communication. We did. My roommates and I . . . C. could speak Spanish pretty well. But T. and I couldn't. We were able to get the point across that we had some food if they wanted to eat. I know some families couldn't even get into their houses enough to get clothes for their kids. One woman was out there with just a short-sleeved shirt and the kids just had some shorts on. That kind of communication was pretty easy. "What are your necessities? What do you need?" We were able to get back

into our place, so we got all the extra blankets that we could find, everything that we had for blankets and warmth, and brought it out.

Interviewer: What kind of information did you get that first night? Did you have a radio, or any contact with people outside of the parking lot?

J: Some people had a radio on top of their car. I listened to that mainly. Some station got through, I don't know what it is, and we listened to that for hours and hours. And there was a woman who lived in our little complex that ran a taxi service. She had a taxi cab, She was running around with her little taxi cab, carting people around. She'd come back every hour or so and give us news of what was going on downtown. She was the one who told us that many buildings had crumbled and people were trapped in the rubble. She's the one that told us that the Riverside Bridge, the one that I had just walked across earlier, had moved six feet or ten feet or something. We . . . you know, we . . . At a time like that, you don't know whether she is exaggerating, whether was true or . . . You just had no idea. You just had no idea.

Interviewer: Were you able to contact people out of the state?

J: I have family out of state. I have a sister that was living up in Boulder Creek. It's only about fifteen miles north of Santa Cruz. All the reports were saying, "Don't use the phone. The phones are for an emergency only." We didn't have water. We didn't have electricity. All the gas was turned off, everything. So I didn't even try the phones until

two or three in the morning. In fact, my roommates had the idea to try them first, to see if they could get through. That's when the lines were pretty clear. You could get through. We called Las Vegas to talk to my family and let them know that everything was okay, and could they call the rest of the family. I finally got ahold of my sister, too. And I . . . We had no idea where the epicenter was. We had no idea of the extent of damage elsewhere. My sister lives up in the hills on this mountain and I could just see her hanging onto her house and all her possessions and all her things and just sliding down that hill. I just could see her doing it. She's such a yuppie. (laugh) She loves her money and she loves her stuff, man. First on the radio, I don't know what time it was, maybe 10 o'clock at night, somebody said, "Who wants information about Boulder Creek?" I was running around asking anybody with a radio if they had heard anything about Boulder Creek. Somebody said, "Who wants information about Boulder Creek?" and I went over there. I missed what they were saying about Boulder Creek but I did catch that the epicenter was ten miles north of Santa Cruz. That was just like too close to Boulder Creek. I lost it. That's when I felt just so helpless and so powerless. You just don't know what . . . You just don't know.

I'm really glad I had my friends with me, because I really lost it. Sat down and I just cried and cried, because I thought she was gone. I thought she was gone down the hill. (crying) I laugh about her hanging onto her possessions, but Jesus, it's so true. She'd probably do it. So it wasn't until about two in the morning that I found out that my sister and her husband were okay too. That's a long, long panic attack. It's pretty strange how at that time, you have so many friends and so many people in the county that you know,

but the ones that I really, really had any kind of concern for were real immediate people. The ones you live with, your family. It was a while later until I started even getting concerned about other people.

Interviewer: Were all your friends all right?

A: Every one of my friends were all right. But you got to figure . . . consider, what's all right? You know. To me, I was really happy to just be alive. You go up to where my sister was and they talk about not being all right because they lost their crystal and their china, or whatever. I think because where we lived in a really poor neighborhood that it was so much easier to just be grateful to be alive and not worry about the material things you lost. Everybody down here is just so poor anyways. They live in a day-to-day existence. They feel really lucky just to have food and when you don't have any water or electricity for days you realize how important the necessities are.

So all my friends were okay, everybody. People we knew lost houses. They had to change places to live. People were cramming on each other's couches, trying to make it through together, but everybody was physically okay. I didn't know any of the people who had the . . .

Interviewer: How long was it before you went back into your house?

J: We went in that night, very temporarily we went in to get items, to get a few items and stuff. I wanted to grab all the food I could get. I'm a food hound anyways. So we went in a couple of times after that. But to go in and stay in? God. I don't remember if I . . . The first night we did not sleep there. We slept out in the parking lot. I know I didn't sleep in the parking lot the second night. I heard that other people did. Because the next day when we got up, my roommates and I . . .

God, somehow the *San Jose Mercury News* put out a newspaper. And it had the quake aftermath. I don't remember what the headlines were, but it was gross. They had pictures of . . . there were people who were trying to dig people out from the rubble in the downtown area. They had pictures of what had had happened in Oakland and San Francisco. We just knew it was bad. We knew it was bad in our own town. And we wanted to get downtown to see what we could do to help. We had no idea how many people were buried in the rubble. We just had no idea. I thought that we would go down and try to dig some people out. But when we got down there, everything was roped off. The National Guard was there and everything was roped off and we couldn't get into the . . . we could only get into the outskirts of downtown. We couldn't get into where any of the stores were. We had to walk around the outskirts.

Serving as a Volunteer at the Shelter at the Civic Auditorium

We heard that there was a shelter at the Civic Auditorium on Center Street, so we walked down there to see if there was anything we could do to help. And it was so confusing! There was so much confusion going on. We'd go to talk to people and they'd say, "Yeah,

sign up on this list," or, "Go in the kitchen and see what you can do." And by the time we got to the kitchen, I think that the first job that they asked me to do was to go find some spoons, because there wasn't any spoons. I think they asked my roommates to do it first. I was just kind of tagging along behind. We had to go run around and grab the spoons because they were serving breakfast, some cereal, little miniature cereal boxes, and there weren't enough spoons to go around, so we had to go around and grab people's spoons (laughter) when they were done and wash them so the next set of people could eat.

Interviewer: Where'd the food come from?

J: That was just one of, I believe, seven shelters in Santa Cruz that were started. But that was one of the first, immediate shelters. The food that . . . That was on Wednesday that we got there. The food that got there Tuesday came from Jane Imler's Calamity Kitchen. She had a kitchen that fed the homeless. And she's the first person that got down to the Civic Center and opened up the kitchen to feed people. So the first food came from her and her kitchen, which are from donations from local businesses, local restaurants. After that, because there was no refrigeration, there was no electricity and everybody's food was spoiling, donations came in from everywhere, and a lot of the grocery stores, because everything got toppled in the grocery stores. Broken glass and goey food . . . jars that broke on top of jars. They would just clean up the glass and give us the leftover items. There was a lot of food for the first couple of days.

Interviewer: Were there a lot of people in the shelter?

J: There were many people in the shelter. I know the Civic was full. They had cots in the whole center of the Civic.

Interviewer: Do you know how many cots they had?

J: No, I don't. Later reports were a couple of hundred that were sheltered in there, but I don't know. Many people. Women and children, families, had gone to other shelters. There were other shelters at local churches. The first couple of nights there, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday nights they had many senior citizens from Casa del Rey, the Palomar [Hotel] and the St. George hotels. Three senior citizen residences that went down. They haven't re-opened, either. All three of them. The Palomar they're trying to fix up, and the St. George they don't know what to do. All those people had to be farmed out to somewhere else. It was really hard. They kept the senior citizens. That's where I hung out when I first got to the shelter because that's where I was the most comfortable. I hung out with the senior citizens in this room they had them in. They were the most confused. They couldn't go back and get any of their things out of the building. All they had was what was on their backs. A couple of the people had to be carried down the stairs. They just had nothing. And when I went in the room and asked them how they were doing and what was going on, their only request was, "Is there any coffee?" They were so beautiful.

There were quite a few people. They had housed quite a few people in there for the first couple of nights. And a lot of people were just sleeping out in the streets and in the fields. So, the next couple of nights even more were coming in, the ones that were looking for shelter.

Interviewer: What kind of people were they? You said they weren't families. Were they mostly men?

J: They found homes for the senior citizens the first couple of days. People were coming and taking in . . . if they had a spare room or something they would take a senior in. The majority of the rest of them were the local homeless, from what I could see. There were many other people. Most of the people who weren't the real local homeless would come and get food and take things and leave. They wouldn't stay around. They wouldn't stay in the shelter.

Interviewer: Where would they go?

J: Where was there to go? Probably just back outside again, to stay out. People slept outside, outdoors for a while. Many of the families that I know of had gone to church shelters. There was no way to go to stores. None of the stores were open. You couldn't buy anything. People couldn't get any money, because the banks were closed. Some of the banks had just like crumbled. There was no money system. You had to survive on donations and people sharing and giving. So even the people who just came for food,

they may have had their shelter, but they just didn't have food. They didn't have the resources.

Water. We didn't have water for such a long time. I know after a couple of days one of the beer companies had bottled water in their beer bottles and shipped that over to us. People were coming and requesting tons of water.

Interviewer: What kind of work did you do at the shelter?

J: I first went in, and after searching around for spoons I just asked them if they wanted more help. The first man I met was Frank Lopez and he was a gas. (laugh) It was just so neat to see the people who came out to help. It was so neat to see the type of people. He was a character. He was great. He was one of the local homeless. I asked him what I could do to help and he said, "Come on in. Maybe you could wash dishes." I went in and washed dishes.

Interviewer: Was he cooking?

J: Well, there was nothing to really cook then. The first couple of days we couldn't cook. There was nothing to cook. If there was anything hot we relied on sources from outside, people who did have some kind of propane stoves or something, and they'd bring it in. The first couple of days we survived on bagels and cream cheese and sandwiches. There was a bagelry downtown that just donated every piece of bagel they had. All their

spreads. All their cheeses. Oh, donations that came from everywhere. I ate the best that I had ever eaten, because I was in the kitchen and I got first dibs on anything that came in. I ate the best I've eaten in years. (laugh) We had some good stuff. There was a catering woman and she would come in and drop off things. I wish I could remember her name. She was so beautiful. She said she couldn't come in and donate the time, but she would cook things and bring them in. And she did that every day. She brought something in. She was great.

The other people who worked in the kitchen were also homeless people. The kitchen was opened at the beginning and run by Jane Imler. She was great. They had to bring all their supplies, their plates and napkins, everything from their kitchen came to the Civic to supply the Civic Center. It was a while before the Red Cross came in with any kind of reimbursement. Our first couple of days were done on just from people in the public, local restaurants, local people, the stores.

The Red Cross

Interviewer: Nothing professionally organized.

J: Nothing. After a couple of days they tried to get professional. The Red Cross tried to come in and say that they were going to take over the kitchen. And Jane had worked all day. I mean, we had put in hours that were phenomenal. I wanted to stay there. I could have left and gone. But I wanted to stay, because it kept me busy. It kept my mind off of what was going on.

J: So did you have a core group of regular people in the kitchen?

Interviewer: There was a few of us that showed up every day, and then we had volunteers that were coming in. We always had Jane Imler. We always had Frank Lopez. I wish I could remember the homeless person who called himself the Mayor of the City.

Interviewer: What did he do?

J: He was a cook too. Frank was the major cook. Jane was the supporter. She was the one who kept people going. She was the one who was passing out the hugs. She was kind of the organizer in doing it. There was another woman who was the manager down at the Front Street Pub. She came every day. She couldn't get her restaurant open, so she came down and helped us every day. So there were three, four, or five of us that were every-dayers. Kim. She worked for the Calamity Kitchen too. She was there every day. And every day like all day. We were there through the whole time. The first couple of days we did not shut down the kitchen at any time. Anybody who came in and wanted something to eat, could eat. And the rest of the time . . . after a couple of days we finally decided that we needed to shut down for certain hours. I don't remember what the first night was, between midnight and six. But we had to shut down, because we needed time to clean the kitchen, to re-organize, to re-stock. So the core people, maybe four or five people, and then new volunteers came in. UCSC provided a lot of students. A lot of students came down to volunteer help.

Interviewer: Were you able to use them?

J: We were definitely able to use them. There was so much to do. We were feeding definitely over a thousand people every meal. The Red Cross went through this thing where they wanted to give people vouchers. You had to stand in line and get a voucher for your food, and then go to the food line and turn in your little voucher ticket into the Red Cross. This was their way of counting how many people they were feeding. But to the people who were homeless, and the people that were hungry, they didn't . . . they thought that they had to go buy these vouchers. They thought that they would have to have something in exchange for the vouchers. They did not realize the vouchers were free. And Jane Imler threw a fit. She threw a fit. She said, "You cannot do this. There are people who are not getting fed who need to be fed."

Interviewer: Why were they concerned with the number of people that were being fed?

J: I believe the Red Cross gets reimbursed by the federal government? I have no idea. They needed a figure to give to somebody of how much they had, how many people they had fed. Which . . . I don't know why they would get reimbursed for it, because it was mostly donated food that we were sending out anyway . . .

Interviewer: So did the vouchers discourage a lot of people from getting the food that they needed?

J: It definitely did. The ones that knew the scam, or didn't care . . . how the word of mouth goes, "Hey, you don't have to pay for them." So those people did get it. But the majority of the people were coming in afraid and fearful. They just didn't get that. They didn't.

Another thing the Red Cross went through . . . the Red Cross wanted to take over the kitchen. They came to us after a couple of days and they said, "Well, you guys are doing a really wonderful job. Tomorrow we're going to have Big Mama Red Cross come in and she's going to help run the place. And you guys are going to work under her. We really want you to stay." And the woman came in, and after working a couple of days as our own little crew, a crew that was closest to anarchy as I've ever seen in my life. There was no bosses; there was no leaders. There was no . . . I mean, everybody took care of everybody. I've never seen anything work together like that. Never. We had the music on. People danced. We had a really good time in that kitchen. You had to. You had to have some fun in it or we would never have made it. There was just too much stress, too much pressure, too much work to do. I mean, when you're feeding a thousand people at every meal, you gotta have a little bit of sideline. Something. When the woman from the Red Cross came the next day, the first thing she did was turn our radio off. And everybody just stopped, dead stopped what they were doing and looked at each other and said, "No way. No way. This woman is going to have to go." (laughter)

Interviewer: Did she give a reason for turning the radio off?

J: She said that we couldn't hear each other, which was pretty amazing because we'd already gotten by the last couple of days with hearing each other just fine. I think that her own self was losing control. So every time she turned her back or left the room the radio went back on, and she'd come back in, and get upset. She would try to run things. But she just hadn't been there. She hadn't been there for two or three days like we had been.

Interviewer: So were they from out of the area, the Red Cross people that came in?

J: Most of the Red Cross leader people were from out of the area. There were a lot of people from the local area who immediately joined up with the Red Cross, or volunteered with the Red Cross, wore little Red Cross badges. There was a lot of locals. But the ones that were leaders, the ones that were supposed to be in some supervisorial . . . they were from out of town. They were bused in from somewhere.

Interviewer: Did that seem to make a difference, that they hadn't been part of the earthquake?

J: I think it made a real difference when they were dealing with the homeless. The Civic Center was one of the shelters that had been singled out to house the regular homeless, the normal, local homeless that we have. And Santa Cruz happens to have a large population of homeless. The other six shelters in town were used for other families, the earthquake homeless.

Interviewer: Were there problems arising from having a lot of usually homeless people all cooped up together with supervisors?

J: The supervisors were from out of town. And also, the supervisors that aren't used to working with homeless did not know how to deal with it, didn't know how to deal with them just dragging their blankets around, and didn't know how to deal with feeding them. The Red Cross actually suggested one day that they were not going to feed the homeless-homeless. They were only going to feed the homeless from the earthquake, people who became homeless from the earthquake. And that's when Jane again went through the roof and said, "No way. Either everybody gets fed or she leaves the kitchen." And definitely if she left the kitchen all the rest of us would, and I would not work under the Red Cross. That woman did not know what she was doing, not at all.

I think if the supervisors would have been more local that might have helped, but I don't know how many of the local people will even work with the homeless. Jane happened to work with the homeless so she was comfortable with them. She knew their needs. She was such a wonderful support. She was out in the hallway giving people hugs, and letting them know it was going to be okay. There was just so much fear. The woman was so great. They should have made her Red Cross supervisor, which she probably wouldn't take because she's a wonderful, humble person. She knew where she was needed, and that was in the kitchen to get that food out to people.

Interviewer: I know a lot of people had addiction problems. Did that come up a lot?

J: It came up in the way that they isolated the homeless. The Civic Center was considered the homeless place. There were not any fights. The only fights that occurred were between . . . there weren't any fights like you think of bar fights, you know, when people get loaded and they hang out together. There was nothing like that. The only fights that occurred were people who were just too stressed. We were putting in fifteen, sixteen-hour days working and everybody was trying to hustle. There was just so much work to do. Just in the kitchen alone, you know, not only trying to put the food out and put it together, we were trying to handle donations that came in. I thought of this, because I remember one of the fights that happened was over the guys who were trying to sort out what food needed to be refrigerated. We didn't have a refrigerator. It wasn't until five days later that we ended up getting a refrigerated semi truck, a trailer. That was five days. I mean, we had all this food that we had to refrigerate, that was spoiling on us because we couldn't get one fast enough . . . and there was this fight between these guys who wanted to do the storing differently. So those kind of fights went on, because it was just stress.

Interviewer: Was it a fist fight?

J: It got to be a screamer, but no, there was no fist fights, just screamers. People were on edge. You're going to scream at somebody and somebody's going to scream back. And you end up just talking at the end. That's what happened with that one. "Let's work together."

But with the homeless there weren't any fights. There weren't any fights until the shelter moved up to Portuguese Hall. The Civic Center closed down after the roof caved in and everybody moved to Portuguese Hall. And that's where I heard some fights happened. But I don't know. I wasn't there for that.

The Civic Center's Roof Caves In

Interviewer: How did the roof cave in? Was it from an aftershock?

J: Oh, goodness. Who knows? Every night, like the first couple of nights I slept there, and every night they would let these men come in wearing these hard hats, looking all official. And after working in the kitchen for sixteen hours I had food from head to toe. I mean, anybody who was working in there was just, we were messy. There was no way you could get clean clothes. And you could tell these inspectors or these supervisors, whatever they were, with their hard hats and their clean clothes. They were perfectly clean from head to toe. And after each good shock that hit, they would go around with their flashlights and search the building and look at the new cracks that happened and see if it was still safe. They would always tell people, "Everything's fine. This building is structurally sound."

I believe it was a Monday morning, the following Monday morning, we had gone there to try and get water. We wanted to get our supply of water. It had been raining. It had rained all day, all night. And the streets were flooded. It was just like an insane time to have rain. Such an insane time. It was poorly planned by the rain gods. Just continuous

rain and tons of it. And we were walking to the Civic Center to go get water. You had to go to the shelters to get any supply of water. The water was no good in the town. Or you had to boil the water, or whatever. But we went to go to get water from the Civic. It was early in the morning.

Interviewer: You and your housemates?

J: Yes. Each of us carrying a plastic jug, trying to hold umbrellas. We were too funny. You got so drenched. So wet. There was just no sense in umbrellas at all. And when we got there, when the three of us got there I went inside and I saw Jane. And she said, "Wow, did you see the roof?" "What?" I went inside and one side of the whole roof had caved in, up along the top of the bleachers. It was a section maybe five feet, six feet wide along the top of the bleachers had caved in, and water was running into the bleachers, down the bleachers, and onto the floor. Many of the people who did volunteer work around there were people who were homeless. They were grabbing mops, grabbing rags, grabbing towels, anything. Squeezing them out in buckets, trying to do something to mop up some of that water. It was totally overwhelming. And the rain didn't stop. It didn't stop for a long time.

Jane had told me earlier that morning that the inspectors had inspected the building and everything was fine. Everything was structurally sound. That's the same thing we had heard every day that I had been there. Everything's fine. And then the roof caved in. It was a combination, I'm sure, of the aftershocks, of the age of the building, the

construction, the water. There was tremendous weight on the roof of the water from the rain. I never heard what it was really . . . The building never got torn down. They still use it. They don't have big loud rock and roll music in the Civic any more but they use it for little things.

Interviewer: Was anyone hurt by the roof caving in?

J: Not that I heard of. No. It was lucky, real lucky. A lot of people were hurt because they had to move. Where were we going to move people?

They were busing people out, taking vanloads of people out somewhere for showers. Anybody that wanted a shower, we'd dump them in the van at certain times during the day and take them over somewhere to shower. I was able to walk home. The first couple of nights I slept at the Civic, but after that I was able to walk home and shower. So I was pretty lucky. I could shower and grab whatever clean clothes I had left. It was cold showers. It was cold showers for weeks. There was no way we were going to have our gas turned on. They didn't know if our pipes were broken.

Being in Recovery from Addiction During the Earthquake

Interviewer: You're a recovering addict, correct?

J: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Did you have any desire to use right after that? Did your addiction cause you any problems?

J: I don't know that it caused . . . Oh, it was like other people's reaction to the earthquake made me think about getting loaded. I'd been clean for four and a half years when the earthquake hit. Clean and sober. I had not taken anything. And when I looked at how everybody . . . The majority of the people were reacting. When we were working in the kitchen somebody came in and they brought us a couple of bottles of champagne for the hard-working members. And everybody, "Oh yeah! Yeah, Yeah! This is the way to handle it." We had a Lions Club come in and they cooked for us out in the back. They set up BBQ pits and they cooked these huge chickens and steaks. For two days they were down. They were drinking the whole time. So many people that I knew were using some form of alcohol, drugs, something to calm them down and make them feel better. That bothered me.

Interviewer: Did you feel left out?

J: I felt left out when the people I was working with in my own kitchen, that was my little security place there, I felt really left out when they would go, when they would go out and smoke some pot or do whatever they were going to do. I felt so left out because I had bonded so closely with them and that was my close-knit little group. The cook, Frank, that I met, I hung onto him, and I didn't want him to leave my side. "Don't leave me." I did not want to be left alone. That was my biggest fear. So for them to go out and

to get high and to do whatever they were going to do. Or to go drink. I knew I didn't want to be around it, because I was very, very susceptible. Very vulnerable. When you see everybody else, and that's the way everybody else is handling it, you think that that's the way you're supposed to . . . You have the feeling of, just forget it. I'll do it too. You also have this thing of, are you going to die? Am I going to die? How am I going to live through this?

The day that I lost it the most was the day of the rains, when it was raining and my roommates and I had walked to get the water from the Civic and we found out that the roof caved in. I still hadn't seen my sister. A week had gone by. I still hadn't seen my sister, and I had no idea . . . I knew she was okay but I just wanted to hold her. I wanted to be with her. And there were so many slides up and down Highway 9, the road that leads to Boulder Creek, that buses, traffic couldn't get through. And with the rains, they were saying that the rain would cause more slides. The rain would juice up the land enough to make it slippery enough to want to slide. And I just knew with the rains that I would probably never get up to see her. God, I just thought, if I was going to die . . . You know, we had the floods here in 1982. And those were devastating. And I thought, if we have floods like that again on top of the damage from this earthquake, we won't be able to survive.

So those were the times, that was the time, when I saw . . . a week later. It's raining and I hadn't seen my sister yet. The roof caved in at the Civic and they don't know where they're going to put the people and they don't know what they're going to do. That's

when I lost it. I just lost it and I probably . . . that would have been my best time to get high. That was pretty scary.

Interviewer: Did you go to twelve step meetings during that time?

J: I didn't go to meetings at all the first four or five days because I was really, really engrossed with working at the shelter. But I did go to many meetings later, after that, many meetings.

Interviewer: What did you find the reaction was like at the meetings?

J: Hah! (laugh) Everybody, every single person there was talking about this earthquake, and how they were feeling, and how they didn't want to get loaded, and they know if they could just get loaded they don't have to feel what's going on, and worry about what's going on . . . so many people. I know we lost a bunch of people. I know a lot of people did get loaded because of the earthquake. And a lot of people started smoking again because of the earthquake. "I can't handle it. I need to smoke a cigarette."

Interviewer: Did you have that urge?

J: Oh, yes. (laughter)

Interviewer: You'd quit smoking for how long?

J: Just as long. Four and a half years. Oh, yeah. Because you kind of get this attitude of well, if I can't get loaded on all these other things let me try something that is socially acceptable, which is pretty amusing. But the meetings were full, just full of people flipped out, just flipped out. It was just such a flipped out time. And I could see why. You never knew when another aftershock was going to hit. Any time a bus rolled by, your feet would just . . . Oh, you were so sensitive. You could feel anything that goes by. The bus would rumble by, and you'd feel it in your feet and you're just waiting for that shock to hit. You don't know whether to run or not. You don't know whether it's big enough to where you're supposed to get outside. And run? Where are you going to run to? Everywhere you walk you look to see, what's going to fall on top of me if I sit here? If one hits right now, what's going to get me? Where will I go if one hits right now? It was constant. For a week afterwards we had hundreds, hundreds of aftershocks.

Interviewer: Did you get panicked at every one?

J: I got panicked at every single one. When I stayed at the shelter at the Civic and slept on the cot for a couple of hours, tried to get some sleep, you couldn't sleep because you're just too damn scared to sleep. You just sit there and you lay there and you wait and you wait for another one to hit, and you wait . . . I got a set of headphones and put them on my head and just cranked it up as loud as I could because I didn't want to hear anything. I don't know why I wanted to not hear anything, because you feel it. Your feeling senses are just on high. You can feel anything. It's not so much hearing it as feeling it.

Interviewer: Does it still affect you? Do you feel like you have a lot of leftover psychological effects?

J: (crying) It hurts me right now to just talk about it, just to . . . just to know that it can always be here. It was just about a month ago that we had five or six aftershocks in the morning that were over 3.5 within a two-hour period. That brings back all the memories. It scares . . . I still . . . I was in the library at the university the other night and every chair I sat in, I looked, and I said, my God, if one hit right now that big, these books would be on top of me and I'd be gone. I'd be buried in this mountain of books. Everywhere I sat. Not a day goes by that I don't think about it. And I still think about the safety. Where do I want to be? I think about the buildings downtown. I don't go into many of the buildings downtown any more because I know that it's built on that marsh, or whatever the heck it's built on. There's no real land underneath it. It's the old river bed. So I know if another one hits all those buildings could go.

The Effects on the Beach Flats Neighborhood

I think what hurts me the most is when I see how the homeless were treated, not only the homeless, but anybody that's poor. Down where I live in the flats the Seaside Company owns an awful lot of property in this area, and they own the Boardwalk, and they own many of the buildings here. And you saw that the stuff that made a profit for them, like the Boardwalk, that's the stuff that, those are the buildings that got repaired first. Those are the ones that the Seaside Company decided to put their money into fixing.

Interviewer: Well, with the Casa del Rey getting torn down so fast . . . that was gone several weeks after the earthquake. What did you make of that?

J: They said underneath it got liquefied. The land underneath the building was liquefied. It makes you wonder why is that the only place in all the county that that happened to? It's a real political issue also, because the Seaside Company had wanted to tear down Casa del Rey for many, many years and the city wouldn't allow it to happen because they needed that housing. They needed that lower-income housing. They needed housing for seniors. We just don't have enough of it. We didn't have enough of it and we certainly don't have enough of it now, with three of the major senior citizen centers down in town.

I really believe it was a political action. The Seaside Company used the earthquake as the reason to get what they wanted for years. People were so scared. People were so afraid of buildings falling and collapsing and being not structurally sound. So it was pretty easy to get things torn down, especially when either the state or the federal government, somebody, picked up the tab. All the buildings that were demolished, the tab was picked up by somebody other than the owners. So here the Seaside Company got what they wanted by getting the land cleared, and they also got somebody to pay for it, to demolish it.

Interviewer: There's a parking lot there now, right?

J: It's a parking lot there now, but the plans that are in the works that I hear are going through the city is that they want to build a convention center.

Interviewer: Where the Casa del Rey was?

J: This whole area. This whole area is soon to be . . . All the homes in the flats. They're not going to be . . . I was real surprised because I thought many more homes in the flats would be torn down. We didn't have any inspectors coming along and checking (laughter) here. One of the articles in the newspaper said that they don't have to check the buildings in the flats because the buildings in the flats were soft before the earthquake. They were so bad before the earthquake, that it doesn't matter what the earthquake did. The attitude. I think that's one of the biggest things I learned during the earthquake, is the attitude of people towards the rich and the attitude of people towards the poor. When I go out to the rich area, the definitely affluent area where my sister lives, you hear people talk about how they lost their china. And I know people who have been reimbursed by FEMA and gotten money to rebuild their chimneys or to rebuild little minor material things. Where are the people going to go who don't have anywhere to live at all? Those people were put up in motels for a while. The vouchers ran out after a couple of weeks and that was it for them. The county just said, "Sorry. We can't voucher you any more." FEMA set up a system where people could live rent-free for eighteen months. And I want you to know that I've seen people there who really need it who aren't getting any help.

Good old Haglers, that's my favorite, Hagler's, the grocery store on the corner here. It's being held up by poles. It's being braced up on the outside. There are so many braces holding it up.

Interviewer: The corner of Riverside and Second, right?

J: Yeah. It's also owned by Seaside Company. There are elderly people living upstairs. They rent rooms out upstairs. There's a tiny little corner grocery market downstairs. It's not run by Seaside. They just own the building. They rent it out to a couple. But when I went down to the city to see why it is being held up with braces, and why there's no remodeling being done and nothing being done with that building, and why are there still people in it if it's structurally unsound, they would not hang up an inspection tag. They wouldn't red tag it, green tag it or yellow tag it. They wouldn't say whether this building was safe to be in, or if it was not safe to be in. The city only hung up a tag saying that the owners would be responsible for having their engineer check the soundness of the structure. I went to the city many times about that, to see about that. Why is it that way? My roommate even made some calls to Seaside to see what they knew about it. And they said that they had more important things to fix in the area first, which happened to be the Boardwalk, because the Boardwalk made them money.

When I finally did get ahold of a gentleman at the city who could speak with me, he told me that it had been inspected and that it doesn't have reinforced walls. I asked him why it was in business if it doesn't have reinforced walls, and he said that the engineers and

the Seaside Company were going to get after it and fix it. Here it is eight months later and nothing's done. All kinds of revisions have been done on the Boardwalk.

Interviewer: Well, the Boardwalk was operating after about a month, I believe. Less than a month, three weeks after the earthquake, fully operational. Everything except for the Log Ride.

J: And they even gave discount tickets, five-dollar tickets to anybody who came, and said that all the proceeds for one day were supposed to go towards earthquake repair. They were trying to woo the people back.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else you want to say for posterity, anybody wondering about the earthquake in a hundred years or so?

J: I'm really amazed everybody is asking how come I didn't leave. "Why are you staying in Santa Cruz? Why didn't you leave? Why do you want to stay in a place . . ." Especially since there are all kinds of rumors, geological rumors (laugh) that there's going to be another one, supposedly within the next twenty or thirty years. One of a higher magnitude. And people are saying, "Why be there? Why do you still stay?" I have no idea what the answer is. I have no idea. I've heard other people say that there's hurricanes here and there's twisters there and . . . I don't know. I have no idea why I stay in Santa Cruz. I have no idea why I would stay anywhere in California. Anywhere in California has fault lines. You have a chance of getting in one anywhere. But I just don't

want to leave this town. I like the town. There are many other schools I could go to, but I never once thought of moving. The roads were packed. Nobody could even get in or out of the city and people were like honking horns trying to get out. People trying to run, get the heck out of here. I never once thought of leaving. I don't know where I'd go.

Anonymous: T.

In this interview the interviewer who conducted the previous two interviews in this volume turned the microphone around and interviewed herself. She had been sober for a year and a half at the time of the earthquake. The earthquake happened on her twenty-second birthday.

It's June 8, 1990 and I was born in San Diego, California in 1967. I'm going to talk about the October 17, 1989 earthquake. I'm interviewing myself now after interviewing other people who remember a lot. And I want to talk about my own experience now.

The Experience of the Earthquake

The earthquake happened at 5:04 [p.m.] and it was just after I'd gotten out of a science class, an astronomy class at UCSC. I went to the bus stop and I was just standing there waiting for the bus, when first I heard this sound that sounded like a train coming. It got louder and louder. Then the ground started shaking. It happened pretty soon, but it seemed like I heard it for a long time first.

I knew what it was almost immediately. I remember what I learned in school. I grew up San Diego and we had earthquake drills in school. I remember what I learned is to get

under a table or in a doorway. I looked around and I was just out in the middle of the bus stop, and there was just cement and blacktop and trees everywhere, big redwoods. I didn't see anything to hide under. I didn't know what to do, so I just grabbed onto this woman who was standing behind me, who I didn't know, just grabbed onto her because I wanted to feel someone else. I said, "Get on the ground." I just got on the ground and covered my head and closed my eyes and just prayed to whatever force might be listening. I really thought I might panic because I'd never been through anything like this. I'd been through little earthquakes but nothing like that.

When it ended, I got back up really cautiously. There was a big crack in the blacktop right near where I was, but I didn't see anything falling down. The buildings from UCSC are pretty sturdy and they held up okay. There were a few other people from UCSC by now. We just all stood there. There were probably about twenty people at the bus stop, and we all just looked at each other and sort of laughed nervously. I thought that's all there was to it. I didn't even think about damage to other places at the time . . . I didn't realize that there had been any.

I was standing there at the bus stop and my friend Kristen came up. We were both really shook up. We stood together, and there were some pretty big aftershocks soon after the major earthquake. And we just like stood there and held on to each other. Buses kept going by because the buses were still running. They were totally full. Everyone, everybody was trying to get off campus. We stood in line for three of them before we got on one.

So we got on the bus, and when we got to the base of campus there was a lot of traffic. By the time we got to Mission Street we were just inching along. That's when I started to see some real damage. Most of the windows were burst out along Mission Street. There was glass all over the place. People were already boarding up the windows. It was going so slowly that I just got off at Mission and Laurel [Street] with Kristen, because she lived on Mission Street at the time, and I lived in Beach Flats. So she asked if wanted to go to her house. I still didn't know how big it was. I didn't have a sense of how to get home yet. So I went with her to her house. And it was messed up. Some of the chimneys had fallen out and went in her house, and stuff was all over the place on the floor. By then I could see the fire that was on Felix Street. I couldn't tell where it was coming from. I thought it might be my house, for all I knew. Her housemates were all outside in her courtyard. They were all drinking beer and smoking cigarettes and listening to the radio. I went out there with them. And that's when I heard about the [Bay] Bridge collapsing and all the people being trapped in their cars and the Mall collapsing. They said that we were in a state of emergency. I just like froze inside. Like I said, everyone was drinking. I'm in recovery from addictions like alcohol and other drugs. I had quit smoking about six months before the earthquake. Suddenly I was totally panicked. All these people were trying to hand me beer and cigarettes. I wanted them so bad. That's cause I was so scared and I wanted something to block out the feeling of fear. But I still knew I had to get out of there. And I was worried about my roommates, too, whom I'm very close to. One of them was up at school, as far as I knew. She had a class at that time. I didn't know where the other one was. I felt I needed to try to find them.

So I left Kristen's house and started walking home. It was just crazy walking down the street. I walked down Laurel Street. The traffic was bumper to bumper. There were people walking all over the place. It seemed like . . . I've seen movies about after nuclear wars, people are just walking around with these looks in their eyes like it was a war zone, and like they've all been shell-shocked. I was walking under power lines. I was real conscious of that because I'd heard on the radio about power lines falling. I was looking around me all the time. There were still aftershocks. I was really paranoid about where I was . . . I felt like a caged animal or something. I felt really unsafe. People's reactions on the street were mixed. Some were especially scared; some were coping with it, acting like it was no big deal. I thought about getting water, because I guess I heard on the radio that a lot of water wasn't going to be good for a while. There was a convenience store on Laurel Street that was open. They didn't have electricity but they were selling drinks. I got the last jug of water. And as I walked down the street with it, I just got real paranoid thinking that I was going to be mugged for my water. But I didn't.

Beach Flats

I kept walking. I didn't know what had happened to my house. I was just really completely . . . I just completely didn't know what to expect. I live in this beach shack that's been around here since, I don't know, maybe the turn of the century, 1900 or so. I guess it got through a lot already. It got through a flood before. It probably got through earthquakes before. But I didn't know what to expect. So I came back here and one of my neighbors told me that my one roommate, C., was out in the parking lot, and that everyone was out in the parking lot, all the neighbors. So I went out there. This is the

Boardwalk parking lot, right across from the [Santa Cruz Beach] Boardwalk, on Beach Street between Beach and Second [Avenue], Riverside [Avenue], and I forget what that other street is. But that big parking lot in there. And people had gone into their houses to get blankets and mattresses and stuff to set up a little camp outside, whatever food they could carry, warm clothes, stuff like that. Because we thought we had gas leaks in our house. So we were camping out. And also, we weren't sure about the structural damage. We didn't want to go in, in case an aftershock was going to make things fall even more.

Both my housemates were already there. I was really relieved to see them. C. had done a lot of stuff already, getting blankets out of our house, food and water, right away. She was real brave and efficient in doing what had to be done. At the time I hadn't known most of my neighbors. We live in a court of cottages. There were six real close together. I kind of knew them, but I didn't know them very well. But that was the start of getting to know them really well, and being like a family for a little while after the earthquake, like really a family, where you don't always like everybody, but you need each other and you're all stuck together for better or worse.

So we stayed out there that first night because of the gas leaks. It was a really, really long night, one of the longest nights I can remember. I didn't have a watch or anything. In astronomy that day we had had been talking about telling time by the phases of the moon. So I was trying out that new skill. It turned out I was far off.

It was a night of a lot of misinformation on the radio. I don't know where they were getting their info, but they said stuff like . . . they talked about tidal waves and Capitola Village had been evacuated, but no one made any mention of Beach Flats, which is a poor neighborhood. I felt like we were getting the worst of it, no real information, no aid, because of where we lived. It has a really big Spanish-speaking population. And we were with some Mexican families with a lot of little kids that first night. C. and J. and I tried to take our own minds off of the problems by helping out the kids, helping watch them, taking their minds of it. We told them a lot of stories and sang songs, tried to make it seem like it was a camp. The kids were actually having a pretty good time. All of us kind of forgot for a while why we were out there. We called the camp Camp Funny. That's what the kids named it, Camp Funny, in the middle of all that. It was also my birthday. My 22nd birthday was the day of the earthquake. And all the kids sang Happy Birthday to me in Spanish, *Feliz Cumpleanos.*

Being in Recovery During the Earthquake

I felt a real need to be of service to other people, because there were two parts of me. There was the part of me that just wanted to drink. I didn't think I was going to make it through that night without drinking. I was sure I was not going to make it through without smoking cigarettes. So there was that part of me. And then there was the part of me that thought that if I didn't do those things, I'd have a better chance of being useful to others. I felt a real need to get out of myself, because I was terrified. I thought I was going to die. I was really scared. I wanted to be as brave as everyone else was, but I was just so scared. There was a part of that kept focusing on . . . I was also recovering from

eating disorders and I kept obsessing about the food we had. What are we going to eat? What are we going to eat? We're all stuck out here. And I'm thinking about that a lot. I'm feeling guilty about thinking about that, when I knew that it really wasn't a major concern. I wasn't going to starve or anything, and people were losing their homes. I felt really guilty thinking about stuff like that so much.

C. and I went over to the Casa del Rey retirement home, which was torn down a couple of weeks after the earthquake. We went over there to see if we could help with all these old people who had to be evacuated. They were amazingly efficient. They had everybody out of there. They had a generator set up, and had actually cooked these people a hot dinner by the time I got over there, which was probably about 6:30 p.m. And they gave the old people a decision about if they wanted to stay outside or inside. They moved out mattresses, so that if anyone wanted stay outside they could sleep comfortably on the ground. They had a little section cordoned off close to the doors so that they could sleep inside.

I walked around there a lot. But they had things under control. They didn't need me too much. I did stuff like pick up trash and talked to some of the old people. A lot of them were calmer than I was, and said they'd been through a lot of disasters already, some of them had been. Some of them had been in the 1906 earthquake. A lot of them had been through plenty of other natural disasters and they were pretty calm, for the most part, even though a lot of them couldn't really move on their own, and that was scary. I went back and forth between there and our camp with the neighbors all night.

After the kids were asleep I was still awake. I slept less than most of the people did. Most of them were able to sleep some, but I was really freaked out. Also, I had been off caffeine for about six months, but I had such a compulsion to do some kind of drug, anything, that I drank a cup of coffee, which multiplied my anxiety and caused me to have even less of a chance to ever sleep. And the aftershocks went on all night, really big ones. We were out there in the parking lot. There were broken water mains running through; it seemed like rivers down the middle. You could hear them all night. Helicopters going over. It really frightened me. Emergency vehicles were heard.

One of our neighbors is a tax driver, or was a taxi driver at the time. She doesn't live here any more. She kept driving back and forth, and she was the only information we were getting after a point, from outside our area. We felt really isolated. She said the bridge, the Riverside Avenue Bridge, which was later torn down, she said it had moved twenty feet. It sounded like all the roads were blocked. I was really afraid there was going to be a tidal wave. I had always had a big fear of those. And she kept coming back and saying really alarmist things like "Oh, that was nothing. There's going to be a bigger one any minute." Or, "Oh, it's barely started. They always come in pairs and the shaking is always worse." She was saying a lot of stuff like that and I was getting really scared. In the middle of the night, after one particularly big aftershock, when she was taking a break and trying to get some sleep too, in the middle of this aftershock she just sits up and she yells across at me, "Told you so!" That just made me laugh. I was just so anxious when she said that. It was just so ridiculous to me to be worried about telling someone

something when I was sure we were all going to die. It kind of relieved some of the tension.

Somehow we got through that night. During it we met two of our neighbors, two young college guys that we had never known before, that lived just two cottages away from us. I don't know how we had never met them. They had lived there a month or so. But we met them. They were still sleeping in their house and we saw one of them sitting outside smoking a cigarette at two in the morning. We screamed at them, "No! What are you doing? There's a gas leak. You crazy?" We told them everyone else was camped outside. We just went in their house and started getting blankets out and telling them they were coming with us. They finally went along with it because they were so sleepy and we took all their blankets and they went outside. Pretty damn cold outside, too. Those two guys, we ended up spending a lot of the aftermath of the earthquake with.

One of our roommates went and worked in the shelter the next day. We didn't see too much of her for a week or so. But C. and I got really, really close depending on each other, and also D. and J. I really didn't want to be alone. I was more scared of being alone than just about anything. I wanted to be with C. all the time, and with these other two guys too, and like know where they were, just because I felt like . . . I don't know, like somehow we were really bonded and we had to take care of each other. I felt a real need to watch out for other people and know that they were watching out for me.

The second night we slept in the house. Well, we slept in the living room for about a week. We slept on the living room floor. We just put a bunch of couch cushions down on the floor and slept on those. It was a really strange existence. Our whole lifestyles were totally changed. The university was shut down for a few days. I adapted to this new life really fast, of not having any electricity, usable indoor plumbing, no gas. I just got really used to it. We weren't cooking anything. We were taking cold sponge baths now and then. We hardly went into the other rooms. They had stuff on the walls we thought was going to fall on us. We were real conscious about stuff falling on us. We moved everything to the floor that might fall on us in the living room. We had all this emergency stuff near the door—water, clothes, candles, matches, flashlights. We just had everything set up so we could find it in the dark. We were real scared in the nighttime. It just seemed really scary when we were sleeping, getting woken up by aftershocks. So we tried to stay up as late as we could at night. We did anything to try to stay up. Play cards, just talk. We played a lot of word games and told each other stories, and just sat there in the candlelight. We sat close to the candles, made sure we put them out if we started to get sleepy, because we were really afraid that they'd be knocked over in an aftershock and start a fire.

"Keeping Our Spirits Up"

We did a lot of weird things to keep our spirits up. We had these old birthday party hats and whenever we were in the house C. and I wore them. They were red and metallic. Mine had a big feather on it. They were our good luck hats. We kind of thought nothing bad would happen to us if we were wearing them. We got real superstitious about stuff

like that. Ate a lot of Graham crackers and whatever groceries people brought us. Some Christians from Scotts Valley were giving us groceries. And also J. came home now and then and she brought us strange stuff from the shelter. They gave really weird stuff to the shelter. We had water chestnuts and liver paté and all kinds of obscure, strange food. Huge things of government canned pork. There's still some of that there.

Walked around downtown a little bit and looked at the destruction. It was real . . . real sad, real confused. I felt kind of aimless, like a ghost. I wanted to stay close to home. I wanted to really be a part of my neighbors. I just wanted to be part of this neighborhood more than I ever had before. And I didn't want to need things that other people didn't. Part of my recovery from drugs is that I go to a lot of support group meetings. And during the time after the earthquake when it seemed like I really needed them, I just stopped wanting to go to them. I didn't want to have to need that stuff. I wanted to need as little as everyone else did to survive. I just wanted to need food and shelter, and like, that's it. Not even shelter. We made it all right outside. I just didn't want to have to require stuff like support meetings. I also have a big exercise compulsion, and I just entirely stopped exercising, because it all seemed so stupid. It was like everything got pared away, so that there wasn't very much that was important anymore. It was just important not to be alone. It was important to be as useful to people as I could be. A lot of my sexual stuff, where I have a million random attractions to people, I was finally free of that for a while. It just didn't matter. Just everything was cut back to the basics of staying alive and trying to be good to the people around me. It eliminated a lot of the mental bullshit I carry around all the time.

That first night I was really, really panicked about my parents, because I was sure they'd be really worried about me. And I was really relieved when I was able to call them from the pay phone outside the Westwind Motel about 2:00 in the morning. They'd been calling and calling my house, but I wasn't in it because of the gas leaks.

Post-Traumatic Stress

I got really attached to the whole scenario of the earthquake. My life adapted to it real quickly, and I liked the simplicity of just staying alive and being good to people. It was really, really hard for me, the idea of going back to school. I wanted to hold onto it. I wanted to hold onto the sadness. A lot of stuff just seemed really disrespectful to me, like going back to school. Doing homework just seemed . . . it just seemed ridiculous, out of the question. It just seemed completely idiotic to be caring about doing all the stuff I had assigned in school, after this disaster. It just didn't make any sense to me at all. I was also real jumpy at school, and I was real resentful of people that seemed like everything was normal and fine, and like it hadn't affected them. A lot of people said that they used the time off of school to catch up on homework. I didn't do a thing. I did a lot of staring at the walls, talking on the telephone some with people who needed to talk, playing with the kids in the neighborhood, playing cards. But I didn't do anything like schoolwork, and I couldn't understand how people could keep their mind on something like that. And it upset me when they said they did. It felt like such an important thing that had happened to us, like it was so crucial that we hold onto it, and not forget, and not go back to our regular lives, and not cheapen the whole experience we'd been through. It made me mad when people could go about their normal lives.

C. was real affected by the earthquake also. And when she started to get back to normal, it kind of scared me, because she had been . . . we were both maybe equally flipped out for a while. I felt sort of threatened when she started to go back to normal because I felt like I was going to be the only one left who was really upset. And of course there were tons of people that were. There were still a lot of post-traumatic stress syndrome groups going on for earthquake survivors. But at the time I felt really isolated from all that, and it was really important to me that C. stay messed up too so that I wouldn't be alone.

For a long time I had intense reactions to buses going by and shaking the house. I'd have earthquake flashbacks. They were real serious, where I'd have all the physiological responses. My heart would go really fast. I'd just be instantly really upset and nervous. And it would take a while for me to calm down again whenever things shook. I had one class that was in Kerr Hall at UCSC. It was right near some sort of generator and the classroom shook all the time. And no one else ever mentioned it, but I was really upset about it, because it felt like just like an earthquake all the time. I'd be sweating there. I'd be holding onto the desk until my knuckles were white, just wanting to scream, "Doesn't anyone else even feel that?" But I never did. I sat there in my seat and didn't pay much attention to what they were talking about. I was hating them all for not mentioning the shaking.

I got really open about stuff all of a sudden, as far as having people around in the house all the time. Sometimes I've not liked it when people just dropped by unexpectedly. I always thought I was busy doing this or that, and wanted people to call first. But after

the earthquake I just wanted all the company around I could get. I was convinced that our tiny little two-bedroom cottage would sleep thirteen people comfortably, and I just kept inviting everybody I vaguely knew.

I wanted everybody I knew to come stay with us, because I felt like the more people around, the safer I was. The worst thing was being alone. I was willing to share a lot of stuff that I wouldn't before, like giving away stuff. I didn't worry too much if I gave people food or clothes or blankets. I just wasn't too worried about any of that. The first night I almost let someone drive away with all the cushions off our couch, because I thought they needed them, before I realized that they were just taking them. I ran after the car and told them that we needed those after all, and we got them back.

Strengthening a Sense of Community

One of the really great things about after the earthquake was that I felt like I'd shared something with all these people in the town, and all the people in my neighborhood that I'd been scared of sometimes before. The part of town I live in is one of the only places in the county where people can buy heroin on the street. So it brings out a lot of people that have real intense use of drugs and are trying to support their habits, trying to do whatever they have to to keep getting their drug. So that brings around a lot of people that can frighten me because of weapons and desperation. Like I said before, a lot of people don't speak English and I don't speak Spanish, so that always makes me a little nervous, too. And when I think people are talking about me and I don't know what they're saying, it makes me feel really vulnerable. So there were people around that I've

been scared of, a lot of times I've felt threatened by, especially at night walking around. There'd be these groups of men and if I was alone I would be really scared. And actually at times I've been really careful. I'd lived here about six months before the earthquake and I'd always scheduled classes so I wouldn't have to come home alone at night. And I'd avoid walking around by myself at night at all costs.

But after the earthquake, suddenly there was this terrific openness, and I lost a lot of my fear of people because suddenly they were just people. They had been as powerless as I'd been when the earth had been shaking. Lots of them were going through hell in one way or another in the earthquake. And suddenly I just didn't feel afraid of them. It just didn't seem like it was any big deal. They were walking around the streets, and I was too. They were nothing compared to the fact that the earth could just move and kill us all at any time. So at least for the first couple of weeks, especially, I felt freer from that fear than I'd ever been. And to some extent that's lasted. I feel a lot safer now than I used to. Now I go around at night. I'll still be kind of scared but I'll go around at night. That's when I started walking around some other streets around here too, that I hadn't walked on very much. I live right on Riverside. And that's kind of a dividing line. Riverside towards the wharf is the safer part. But then towards where the river meets the ocean, like Third Street, K Street, Raymond Street, all the streets over there, that's more the hard-core, Beach Flats, scary part. I started walking around in there some more. Looking for damage, looking at people. There was some real interesting stuff going around over there. By the La Familia Center on Raymond Street some big Army tents were set up by the Army, for the people who were out of their houses around there. I went over and

looked around there. There were these huge black tents. I heard later that there'd been some problems in there with families that were staying there and then drug dealers that were seeking shelter. Everyone wanted a place to come in out of the rain. A week or so after the earthquake, there were some really big rains. Just like torrents of rain. I heard that they were making these distinctions, like letting women and children stay in the tents and not letting anyone else, and saying no to any young men they thought might be dealing drugs. That was kind of a sticky situation there.

It was real weird. It was like a war zone for a long time. The helicopters nonstop. People walking around. National Guard people were guarding the Mall to make sure no one was looting it. And they were walking around our neighborhood too, people in camouflage. It seemed like we were under siege.

It also seemed like other parts of the town were getting their services back a lot faster. We were still in the dark for about a week, I think, down here. We'd look around and I could see other parts of the city from where I live. And they had lights on. Everywhere you looked, except close by. Same went for our gas and water. We didn't even hear when the water was getting in. We thought someone would come and announce it to us. No one did.

We were real worried too, about inspectors coming. I read in the newspaper that an inspector was going to go in and inspect every house. We weren't sure we were supposed to be staying in our house until it was inspected. But I never saw anyone come

to look at our house. Someone came and looked at the cottage next door. I was real ambivalent about that, because on the one hand, we wanted to be safe, but on the other hand, we were afraid that they would find something wrong with our cottage and it would be condemned. And we were really attached to this place. It seemed like somehow we got more bonded to our house. Or I did anyway.

I got more bonded to my house and to Santa Cruz right after the earthquake. A few hours after the earthquake I thought about leaving. I thought, I'd love to get out of here, especially because I'm real scared of tidal waves and I was afraid there was going to be one. But after those initial hours, I felt like I didn't want to leave at all. At all! I mean, I've always liked to travel and always been wanting to escape from where I was—the grass is greener somewhere else, I want to be somewhere else, but it just stopped me still. I felt like, I'm part of this place now! In a way I thought it would be sort of exciting to live somewhere else, but mostly I just wanted my house. I didn't want any inspector to come look at it and kick us out.

The Future of the Beach Flats Neighborhood

There was a lot of panic in the neighborhood about the way Beach Flats was going to be completely razed so that the Seaside Company that owns most of this place could build some luxury resort place where they could charge people lots of money instead of keeping it like it is with all the slumlords and all us people paying what's cheap for Santa Cruz, but it is outrageous for packing a lot of people into these places that aren't very nice. Anywhere else would be outrageous in these high rent districts like the

California coast or New York. But not very many places were condemned at all. I don't know if anyone was around Beach Flats. I didn't really see hardly anything. A couple of places, maybe. Hardly anything at all.

We took to wearing a lot of bright colors, C. and I did. It was one of our other little superstitious things. We thought that if we wore really bright colors we'd be safe, like somehow we were going to ward off the earthquake. It was like dressing differently, acting differently. I just felt so different those first couple of weeks. I wanted that to last. I was scared of losing it, scared of going back to normal. I just didn't want to waste the experience.

We ran up incredible phone bills, probably like everyone else did. Money didn't seem too important to me right then, especially when it came to keeping in touch with people I knew and loved in different places. I talked to my family almost every day. My family's in San Diego. I talked to them almost every day for a week or so. I remember one time I was on the phone with my mother, and we had a bad aftershock. I said, "Oh, my God! We're having another one." I just hung up on her and ran outside. I was sure the house was going to fall down or something. I had to go back and call her up and say, "I'm okay."

That was a weird thing. We were trying to figure out if we should run outside or not during the aftershocks. Once we moved back into the house after the parking lot, it was really hard to tell if it was safer in our courtyard, or inside the house, or what. We got so

exhausted after a while running outside all the time, that if it was at night and we were sleeping on the living floor, I ended up just putting a pillow over my head and thinking, well, if the ceiling falls on my head maybe this will soften the blow a little.

When we got the electricity back on, we could listen to the tape recorder again, and all our cassette tapes, music. We started listening to the tape by Hothouse Flowers. We listened to that over and over and over, and it became our soothing earthquake tape. We just listened to it over and over because it seemed really hopeful. I didn't want the electricity to come back on, except I missed the music. I got so I just really liked it being all simple and I didn't want that other stuff.

We also got this joke in our neighborhood. We thought all our houses were going to be condemned, so me and all these neighbors, and we were such an unlikely mix of people. There was a Hawaiian family of four, with a little kid and a teenage son. And there was this other family with a two year old and a teenaged daughter. And this couple living across from us. A real variety of people from all different socioeconomic, racial backgrounds. People that I might not have gotten to know ever if it hadn't been for the earthquake. We all had this big joke about how we were all going to pitch in our money together and buy a ranch, if we had to move. We were all going to stay together and just take up a ranching life, and all work on that.

A couple of weeks after the earthquake the Casa del Rey retirement home got torn down. C. and I went to watch that some. There was a wrecking ball, and it was really

mesmerizing to just watch. They'd spray the water on this building so it would cut down the dust. They would just swing that ball back and forth, back and forth. It was just incredible seeing this huge building, this huge, old, old building just be demolished like that. It stood really strong. It took days before it was all down. It just got smaller bit by bit. It was really sad. We'd joke about that too. It started out being the Casa del Rey. After a while we were calling it the Half a Del Rey. And then when it was all gone and it was just rubble, we called it the Nada del Rey, *nada* meaning 'nothing' in Spanish. It was real sad watching it. This wrecking ball would swing into the side of it, and you'd see little personal things, like the little lace curtains fluttering as the wrecking ball hit. And then afterwards, when it was a pile of rubble, I was walking around it, and I found someone's personal things. I found records that were intact. Three different old records. They were scratched but they were totally intact. They'd gone through all that. There were little bits and pieces of things that had escaped. Now it's all gone and there's a parking lot. They did that very quickly. Got all the old people out of there and tore it down. Sent the old people off to different hotels and stuff. Gave them vouchers.

People were all telling their earthquake stories over and over. First thing you talked about when you hadn't seen somebody since before the earthquake, the question was, "Where were you?" People knew exactly what you meant, "Where were you during the earthquake?" Everyone had their story to tell. It was like the more times they told their story, the more normal it became to be telling it, and the more normal the earthquake got, and the less freaked out people were. The storytelling really helped in that way.

The newspapers started coming out pretty soon. A day or two after the earthquake, the newspapers were all back in commission. There were some real gory photos. There was a real tasteless one on the front page of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. This woman, it looked like her leg or arm was mangled or cut off or something. Full color, all blood red, front and center. Big picture. Really tasteless stuff like that. I guess there was a lot of TV coverage of the bridge collapsing, all over the place. But I really hate TV and it didn't even occur to us to watch the TV news. That would have been too intense, I think, to see all that stuff in moving pictures. It was bad enough looking at still photographs in the newspapers. There were some good things in the newspaper, though. There were a lot of places to go for help, a lot of schedules and dates and phone numbers. Places for all your different needs. That was a good thing.

The FEMA situation was interesting. They came in and they were making all kinds of promises of different amounts of monies for different things, and paying the rent and giving vouchers. I heard they messed up and a lot of people didn't get the money they needed. But one family I knew, they already hadn't been able to make their rent for a long time. They were in the process of their landlord trying to evict them. Somehow they really scammed FEMA and got a whole lot of money out of them, and moved into this place that cost almost three times as much as the rent they couldn't make on the place they were living in at the time of the earthquake. They were living pretty high on the hog compared to their regular living for a couple of months. I don't know what happened to them. So they got an awful lot of money out of FEMA, which was weird, because I guess a lot of people couldn't get the money.

We were trying to get someone to come and stay with us in our house because we decided we could sleep more people in there if someone needed emergency housing. Somehow that didn't work out. We were on the list and never really got called, except by this woman with a baby. And being students, even though we were marginal students after the earthquake, we didn't want to have to have a baby in the house. It would just have been too hard to study or get anything done at all.

Aftershocks

The effects of the earthquake were pretty long lasting. Six months after the earthquake there were some pretty strong aftershocks in the morning. There were maybe four or five in a row, within an hour or so, that measured 3.5, a 4 something on the Richter scale. The first few I was okay. C. was home in the morning, about eight o'clock. I was okay as long as she was there. But then she had to leave, and I was home alone. I didn't realize how affected I was. I had gone back to where I had been during the earthquake when I was so scared to be alone. It started shaking again and I just ran outside. I was just panicked. I didn't have my shoes or anything. I was like running around outside trying to find someone to talk to. A lot of people were real panicked. I got real emotional. I tried to go to this aerobics class I usually go to. And I got those feelings of just total futility, and thinking it was really stupid to be jumping around in spandex pants when we were going to die. I got those feelings again, and I started crying in the middle of the aerobics class and just had to leave. I went to a meeting of my support group and that helped a lot. I felt a lot better after that. But I was just so emotional, and crying. I was so upset. It was like an immediate physical overwhelming reaction. I've had a bunch of those since.

Our cottage shakes whenever buses go by, and lots of times I still feel that, especially if I'm in the bathtub. I get really panicked sometimes about being in the bathtub.

I was in San Diego around Easter for spring break, and I was sitting in downtown San Diego at a bus stop. Santa Cruz doesn't have many tall buildings. I was sitting in downtown San Diego between all these tall buildings and all of a sudden I thought about earthquakes. I thought, oh, my God. We could have one right now and I would just be crushed. There was nowhere, nowhere to run. Nowhere at all. I just thought, oh my God. I don't want to be here. I was waiting for the bus and I just got panicked. And that happens, I don't know how frequently, but it's happened many times since the earthquake.

I was doing a temp job at the Boardwalk last week and I was working in a Ski Ball Arcade. People play arcade games and win little prizes. I was standing in the prize place, and I was surrounded on all sides by glass. There were shelves of glass and china objects, different kinds of objects on these shelves. And there was a land mover outside doing some kind of construction work that was also related to the earthquake. They are still repairing stuff from the earthquake there. But anyway, the arcade would shake. All the shelves would shake. I had these flashbacks to the earthquake, and I was just like, oh, my God, I can't stand back here. I can't take it. I can't do this even for a six-hour shift. I felt under great mental duress. And you know, there're a lot of problems with that, with going through all that all the time. There're problems with working for an employer and worrying about saying I have all these problems, you know? I feel like I'm saying I have

mental problems and it makes me less employable. I tried to decide whether or not I should tell the manager that. And then I thought, fuck, for $5.50 an hour I don't need to put myself at risk if there is an earthquake. And even if there isn't, I don't need to put myself through such mental pain. So finally I told him that it made me really nervous standing back there and I didn't want to because I thought there was an earthquake when the land mover went by. And he wasn't very sympathetic. He just looked at me like he was humoring me. "Well, first of all, that wasn't an earthquake. That's only a land mover." Like any fool should know that, and what was I being so worried about? It was kind of laughable to him, it seemed. It just puts me in a position where I don't want to be thought of as this mental inferior, flying off the handle at every little thing. It's scary. It's something I don't have control over, panic attacks.