

Earthquake Journal/Northridge January 17, 1994

Censored Version

This story starts on January 13, 1994, four days before. I do not know what possessed me to say it but as I left the office that day, I told the girls up front that it was earthquake weather. Rightfully so, no one believed me. Most of us ignore our internal feelings and warnings about such things, not wanting to look or act foolish when nothing happens. I have had premonitions about every earthquake for the last 7 years and have missed on only three occasions.

The morning of the 6.0 Whittier quake in '87, I woke up 4 minutes before it happened, nervous. I turned on the radio, laid back, then jumped up as the news radio host said they were having an earthquake. Three seconds later it hit us. By that time I was already moving to the hall in my Encino apartment. We did not go to work that day. (Point of information. A one point move on the Richter scale is a 10 fold increase in earthquake strength. Therefore the difference between a 4.0 earthquake and a 6.0 is 100 times.)

In '91, I had decided to take a 10 day road trip. Three days before I left, I got bad feelings and moved several important papers and computer disks into my safe deposit box. Remembering back, the lady at the bank commented she had not seen me in many months. I told her that I was leaving town for a few days and had a bad feeling about a possible "natural disaster". We both laughed. She reminded me of it all when I returned two weeks later to pick everything back up. The Pasadena quake hit the first morning after I left. I watched it on CNN from a Sedona, Arizona motel room.

(Aside: Steve had his own story on that quake. He was working on a construction crew that was building the Lake Avenue Community Church in Pasadena. He had arrived early and was about 3 stories up on a steel beam. When the quake hit, he grabbed a nearby beam and held on. What was amazing is that he had a wide view of the ground floor of the building as the quake hit. He said that he watched the concrete floors open and close several times during the shaking. Anyone in the wrong place could have had a foot crushed as the floors closed back up. When the shaking stopped, he went back down to inspect the concrete and could not find any seams. Each time the concrete opened up, the steel rebar inside had closed the floor back up cleanly, just as it was designed to do.)

In '92, I had been out partying late the night before the start of Gay Pride weekend. Arriving home at 2:30 in the morning, all I wanted was sleep. I woke up about 5 minutes before 5:00am, nervous. I laid there in bed wondering why I was upset when the Landers quake hit. Even though I was almost 90 miles from the epicenter (7.2), the rolling motion was very strong and sustained. I stood in the hall between the dining room and back of house. When the shaking stopped I could see from the dining room that the pool had lost 4-5 inches of water. I remained up for the next 3 hours watching the news, only feeling one small aftershock. I decided the worst was over and too far away to be much of a concern so I returned to bed. After just laying down, the Big Bear Quake hit (70 miles away, 6.5). The shock was much stronger, more of a bang followed by strong rolling motions. This time I headed for the dining room patio door to watch the pool wash back and forth like ocean waves. I did not go back to bed.

Back to 1994. On Saturday the 15th, I made a trip to the store to pick up food and decided to get extra candles and batteries while there. I started to get extra water but decided against it as we

had the pool water as backup in the event of a real problem. I also picked up extra peanut butter, beer, and scotch for some odd reasons.

On Sunday, the 16th, William (roommate), Robert (his boyfriend) and I were eating brunch at the house. The day was weirdly hazy. Robert remarked that it looked strange outside today, that he could not see the hills because of the haze. I turned, looked, and said that it was earthquake weather. He asked what earthquake weather "was". I replied that it was more a feeling than anything tangible; that the sky just had a strange tint to it. We all joked about it and left it at that. Robert returned to his apartment in Torrance later that day.

I decided to go West Hollywood for beer bust at the Motherlode around 7:00pm. Will had suggested it and that I should enjoy myself. I had forgotten that Monday was a federal holiday and the line to get in was a long 45 minutes in fairly cool weather. No one seemed interested in talking to me which was generally no surprise. That beer bust attracts a great looking crowd that wants cheap drinks. Too much competition for me. After consuming two strong scotches in one hour, I feel a little trashed and wanted fresh air.

I left the Motherlode around 9:00pm and head to Rage where I immediately decided I want to dance on that stage of theirs just once. But I wanted to be just a little looser before I did it. So I had a Bailey's and coffee and stood around watching everyone dance until about 10:00pm. Rage switches from "retro" music to standard disco at that time. By now I am feeling very good and got up on stage, dancing my ass off and watching the great looking crowd below. After about 30 to 40 minutes, I notice a cute blond guy watching me and moving toward and under my position. He reaches up with his hands. I jump off the stage and we start dancing. After 20 minutes he asks if we can leave and spend the night together. I agree and ask his name: Greg.

Greg and I leave. As we are walking out, I ask if he has roommates and lives nearby. He says yes and we could go there but he would prefer to go to my place since I have a house. This becomes a very decisive move later. I tell him where I live and he agrees to follow. We drive across the hill back to Burbank (about 15 miles). I have not done anything like this in a long time and need the companionship, something everyone will suddenly soon need.

When we arrive at the house, I, for some reason, decide to park the car outside. Partially this is done because William's car is also parked outside and I am not sure if the dog is outside, meaning in the garage, or is inside. William is already in his room and I assume asleep; the dog is inside and I move her outside because she suddenly becomes a pest with a stranger there. I lock down the house and turn out most lights. By 12:30am on the 17th, we are fast asleep.

At 1:45am, I wake up to the sound of either an explosion or an earthquake. I distinctly remember the noise and what felt like a sonic boom hitting the house, rattling it. The noise is followed by two echoes bouncing off the nearby hills, then another smaller noise. I wait a moment, laying there, thinking "what happened?" I start to get up. Greg asks what's wrong and I tell him I heard something very loud and want to check it out; he says he heard and felt nothing. I get a cigarette and go outside looking for a fire or other problem. Nothing. The street is quiet, the sky clear, the air cool. I check on the dog; she is lying in the potter's shed asleep but looks up at me unconcerned. I return to the living room, turn on the TV and stereo. Nothing on either the radio or TV. No mention that anything had happened. I wait about 25 minutes. I then begin to wonder if I dreamed the whole thing.

Returning to bed, Greg asks me if everything is okay. I reply that I know I heard and felt something and that I was very nervous. He says not to worry. I cannot sleep and am restless. I finally start to sleep again at 4:10am.

I have been through 10 or so earthquakes out here but nothing like this. We live about 10 miles from the epicenter. You wake up first to the primary shock wave as the house rocks substantially; within 2 to 3 seconds the secondary wave hits and all hell breaks loose; it lasts for about 16 seconds. The remainder of the motion is just the earth and the house trying to stop vibrating, about another 30 seconds. The sound(s) is incredible, about 110+ decibels.

At 4:31 am, I woke to the primary wave and was thrown from my bed up against the west wall as the secondary wave hit. Greg grabbed me, pulling me back as the dresser fell onto the bed. We both stayed on the bed holding each other, me yelling and not making any sense, Gregg screaming we would be okay, until the shaking stopped. (In truth, the shaking did not stop for hours.) The movement was incredibly violent, at first thrusting up and down (a new experience for me in an earthquake) before becoming the normal sideways motion. I could hear things breaking throughout the house.

After the initial adrenaline rush and panic, I started to move off the bed when Greg says someone is in the room with us. It is pitch black and no lights. I react very confused until I realize the dog is in bed with us and tell him so. And the dog is wet. Then my mind races: how the hell did the dog get inside the house? I get up, realizing that there is no power, run into the clothes dresser that has fallen onto the bed. Naked, I climb over the dresser, reach for my shoes and tell Greg to wait here. I start through the door of the bedroom and yell at William, asking if he is okay. He answers back that he is uninjured. All of this paragraph has taken less than 10 seconds. It is 4:32am.

I start to walk by the dining room patio door and realize that it is open! My first reaction is that the window is broken; there is very cold air coming in. I then see that it has been blown open by the shaking; the screen was busted and that is how the dog got in. I quickly notice that the pool has lost about 6 inches of water and that the water had come up onto the patio and within 2 feet of the door. I close the patio door and see that the window is cracked. I start to realize we are in very big trouble.

I then start to move to the kitchen looking for the flashlight. I know not to walk in there yet without light. I reach around the corner for the normal location of the flashlight and it is not there. I yell at Will and he starts out his door with the flashlight in hand. We both realize the kitchen is trashed. I take the light while he goes out to get another from his car. I return to my bedroom telling Greg "we are in deep shit! This is either the "Big One" or we were very close to the epicenter of something smaller". Greg and I throw clothes on quick and move back out to the dining room. Another 30 seconds has passed.

William has his light from the car and is starting to move through the house when he realizes "I didn't know you had someone home". I turn and introduce him to Greg quickly. The first aftershock hits violently but with more rolling motion. It is 4:33am.

I step outside for a brief moment and yell around at neighbors, seeing flashlights. A few voices return yells saying they are okay. It is so strangely black and quiet except for car alarms going off everywhere.

We re-assure each other we are alright. Greg and I right the dresser so we can get around and put on warmer clothes; it is getting cold in the house very fast. I suggest that he stay in the bedroom for a few minutes while Will and I check the house.

The kitchen is trashed. Several glasses have fallen from the shelves and broken, food has been thrown all over the floor. Sugar has mixed with wine from a broken bottle. The refrigerator has moved 3 feet into the room. The control panel and doors of the oven are dangling. A quick look confirms that there is no fire. Water is still coming from the faucets. William starts outside to check for gas and structural damage.

I go to the bathroom to get the portable radio. Everything has fallen out of the cabinets and into the sinks. It smells very sweet in there. Back in the living room, the radio does not work. We get out fresh batteries. Will has lit a cigarette saying he could not smell anything. We get the radio going: KNX News is off the air, KFWB News is broadcasting emergency information and sounds like they are on emergency power. I light a couple of candles, reopening a window and the patio door for ventilation. Greg has joined us back in the dining room area.

Will goes to check on the garage and comes back saying we were both lucky. A beam, a piece of stored pipe, and another piece of wood had fallen where the cars would have been parked. It does not look like we could have gotten the garage door open either. He then starts telling Greg what I had said the previous afternoon to him and Robert about earthquake weather. Several times, Greg would say "you knew this was going to happen". I brushed it off.

I then tell William what had happened to me at 1:45 this morning; Greg confirms. I decide to go for the portable TV in the office. In the office I discover a truly huge mess. Everything has come off the shelves and onto the floor. My first reaction is to check the synthesizers and computers: they have not moved!! YES! Then I can't find the TV. It has fallen down behind the book shelves and it takes me a few minutes to retrieve it. It won't work.

The aftershocks are continuing, some strong, others just rolling. We are starting to react and walk like we are on a ship at sea.

Back in the dining room, William tells us that when the shock hit, he moved to the center of his bed. His Japanese dressing screens fell over on the bed on him, his new TV had fallen on the floor but looked in one piece, his cameras and crystal were everywhere, some broken. After fiddling with the portable TV and giving it new batteries, we have picture. The scope of the disaster beyond our house begins to emerge.

Bill calls Robert and gets through. Robert is okay having been about 30 miles south. While on the phone, another strong aftershock hits, Robert feels it about 3 seconds later. I then say the epicenter is to the north of us. The TV stations are just beginning to show the fires breaking out in the Northridge area and one downed freeway. Greg wants to leave for home but we talk him into staying until the sun comes up in another 1 1/2 hours so he will have light to drive in and can avoid problems. He agrees but wants to call his roommates first. He gets through easily, learns that his place is trashed but standing, and that they are the only street in the area to have power on. Assured, he curls up on the couch with a blanket to stay warm.

We still do not smell gas or notice any potential fire problems. Our fireplace is still standing. William does notice with the flashlight that our neighbors chimney is gone and that our power line to the house is sinking about 3 feet lower than it should be.

At 5:00am, William's Mom calls. She got through on the first try and is worried. He re-assures her we are fine, trashed, dazed. I then call home and get through on first try. Mom is still in bed and does not understand who it is and sounds confused. She puts Dad on. He is up and had just turned on the TV. I assure him we are alright but that this was the worst we had ever been through, that we had a lot of damage. I agree to call later as we learn more. I then quickly call Mary Kay but can't get through.

We all try to calm down, our adrenaline completely used up. The dog is not helping. Ever since the initial shock she has been whining and walking around scared. She will not sit down or lie down or eat.

I cuddle up with Greg on one couch, Will on the other, all of us watching TV and riding out each little shock. At 5:30, William starts unloading the refrigerator, filling two beach coolers with ice, food, and beer. I decide I need to calm down a little and grab a beer. William joins me. I then decide to try the toilets wanting to take a whiz. Will says he already has twice and that they are working fine.

We settle in and start watching the coverage: Cal Tech is starting to report than epicenter is somewhere in the Northridge area and that it was over 6.5. There are fires burning in that area and in the Studio City and Sherman Oaks areas. Power is out all over the city. The Santa Monica freeway has collapsed at Fairfax. We begin wondering and speculating. This is worse than the '71 Sylmar quake and in the same general area.

As it begins to get light outside, Greg decides to leave. He calls about a half hour later and says he made it home with no problems and that his street is the only area he saw with power. I have not ever heard from him again even though "the earth did move for us". (Sorry!)

William starts cleaning up the kitchen. We decide to wait on everything else until we can get some pictures taken. There is broken glass everywhere and embedded in the carpet. Will has lost most of his better crystal and his grandfather's watch is broken, hit by his TV as it fell.

I find that only a few of my pictures in the bedroom have fallen and none broke. We remove everything still on the walls to keep more from falling; it will be a week before we start putting them back up. At this point I realize the house has not even sustained cosmetic damage to walls or ceilings. We start trying to make other phone calls; success is intermittent and sometimes requires patience. PacBell and others institute emergency procedures allowing calls out but not into the area.

At 7:00am, I pour a Glen Livet scotch on the rocks.

The power comes back on around 7:15. We are startled as the lights come on, and then concerned that if there is a gas leak anywhere, an explosion could result just from the lights being turned off and on. I shut off the furnace until we can check the attic. Sammons Cable is out, not operating. We rig antennas for all the televisions.

Dawn begins to show the extent of the destruction: the freeways down in the north valley area, the fires and destruction in Northridge, Reseda, Granada Hills, Simi Valley, Santa Clarita, Sherman Oaks, and Studio City. Then other areas start to check in: Santa Monica has had major ground failure, some of Hollywood's old building are about to collapse. We will later hear that the historic and restored town of Fillmore, 30 miles north of the epicenter, has sustained major destruction to its entire main street. Outside, smoke now covers the western sky from north to south. The Richter

reading gets put at 6.6, 11 miles under Northridge on a slip thrust fault. The fault seems to be at a shallow angle, rather than your typical vertical angle, accounting for the up and down movement. I suspect we were thrown at least 2 feet up and down several times in those brief seconds before the rocking motion settled in.

I decide that there is no way I am going to go to work today. I call the office around 9:15. Fausto, my boss, answers "earthquake central", asks how we fared. I tell him. He says I am the first to call in, that he can't hold of anyone. I tell him that it was very bad and that the area hit hardest is where most of PPI's employees live. I also let him know that there is no way I am coming in. He replies strangely and in a manner that will come more to light later: that it was just an earthquake, that we should get on with living, and that it was too bad that I did not want to come in. He seems too calm. I remind him that a state of emergency has been declared and that only essential services should show up for work. I ask how the office fared and he says our floor is okay but that Davis*Glick's 3rd floor is trashed. I tell him I will try to get in tomorrow. He replies that "we all must do what we have to do." Fausto lives some 20 miles east, the other side of San Marino and suffered very few problems.

People begin calling sporadically. The word gets out that we are all okay. Andy Artz calls, bothered about being alone. We decide to have a BBQ this afternoon for the three of us. Gary Simms (owner of our house, lives in San Francisco) calls eventually to check on house. He is relieved about us because, as best as he can tell, his rental condo in Sherman Oaks is in ashes.

The ground never seems to stop moving. Equilibrium and inner ear problems begin to affect me. We now begin to experience "phantom quakes", quakes that are not happening but just imagined. The dog will not settle down and whines a lot. Every time she lies down, she is back up to an aftershock.

The power goes off again around 10:30 and comes back on around 2pm.

Andy arrives. We are all getting tired. None of us got much sleep and the adrenaline is not being replenished quickly enough. We dine on chicken, cornish game hen, and venison. The venison is the best -- nice and sweet and tender. Our biggest aftershock, 5.3, hits at 3:33 and is mostly a rolling motion. I check around the house again discovering the chimney moving further away from the house.

The TV is showing more and more problems. It begins to become boring. Cable finally comes back on, broadcasting emergency information on the public access channel. We are under a curfew all over the county. Darkwing Dave calls; his boyfriend's apartment was destroyed and he is now living with Dave.

Andy, Will, and I get high. It relaxes me. Good pot! The boys watch a movie on laser disk and I crash on the couch for an hour. Before dark, I drove around to find an "extra" edition of newspaper. There is general destruction in the neighborhood. Windows are broken, chimneys are down. The local 7-11 is closed; its big sign is about to fall (and does later). Von's supermarket is a disaster and closed. Otto's Deli is the only place open and not many people are there. Otto's smells like vinegar and wine from the cleanup but they have drinks and some food. I notice that people are parking their cars outside on the street tonight.

We take another hit of pot. William goes to bed with the dog in his room. I decide to sleep on the couch with clothes on and the TV on. I manage to sleep 8 hours without waking for a big aftershock during the night.

In the morning I wake still tired and disoriented. Another big aftershock hits and I jump in the shower quickly after it happens, betting that another won't happen in the next 10 minutes. William comes out of his room in a bitch mood. The dog kept him up all night from each aftershock.

One of our concerns yesterday had been that our next door neighbors to the north had not been heard from. Frankly I did not know if they were home or that there might be a gas leak in their house building up to explode. As I left for work this morning, they were leaving for work also. They had left the house within 5 minutes after the quake to head to KZLA radio station and implement emergency procedures. They were not injured but the back family room was trashed badly with a couple of beams in the ceiling coming down. They want to leave keys with us in the event of a future emergency when I told them we were ready to break a window to check their house.

I hear on the radio that the mayor is still asking all to stay home again today. All schools in the L.A. area are closed and will be for a week. The drive to work is easy, most stop lights are out; some areas still have no power. Driving over the Barham/Pass bridge over the L.A. river, I notice it seems to have new bumps on it. (The next day, that bridge will be closed after an aftershock because it began separating.)

I refuse to park underground at the office. Inside, the exterior walls all have cracks and cosmetic/plaster damage. The tape machine tables all moved 4 inches, the equipment racks moved 3 inches; we are talking about thousands of pounds of equipment. The building has moved 1/2 inch south on top of the parking structure and the stairwell is a mess (the elevator is off limits until inspected). All equipment needs re-programming.

Everyone shows up except Connie and Karen. Karen calls in and wants to finish cleaning up (she lost a 125 gallon fish tank). Connie has not been heard from; she lives at ground zero. Fausto begins developing a bad attitude about this whole thing. He 1) will not give anyone a day off for the earthquake; 2) thinks we are all over reacting to the quake; and 3) cannot understand why clients canceled Monday and are canceling today. I have known this man for 17 years and never seen this side of him before.

Several of us basically think he is either a fool (living 20 miles away) or is hiding his own fear of quakes and a cash poor business. He does not seem to want us watching the TV coverage in the machine room even if we have nothing else to do.

We are all a little off center today from the constant motion in the building. Sam Glick confirms his equilibrium problems as I do mine. It is very hard to concentrate. With every aftershock, you grab the desk you are sitting at or move away from windows and equipment. We all feel better after lunch. Our clients are jittery and full of stories. Michael Rabb has not been heard from; his parents are in town from New Hampshire. (I later find out that his apartment was very badly damaged and may be unlivable in the Sherman Oaks area). Since curfews are in effect again, I leave early with Fausto again berating me for worrying.

Driving home I take a circuitous route, looking around the area. Lucky's supermarket is still closed. Mostly I see downed chimneys and decorative brick walls, broken windows, water mains. Stores on Magnolia Blvd in Burbank are all boarded up and closed. The teller machine is working at my bank but the bank is completely trashed inside. The exterior brick facade will eventually come down. Again, Otto's is the only place I can get into to get food.

At home, William has gone to Robert's for the night to get some sleep. I don't blame him. I had planned to clean up the office but the house creaks and groans so much that it is haunting and a little scary – like being a little 6 year old kid again. Instead, I get on the phone to Jerry in San Francisco for over an hour and Bob and Marilyn in Nashville; Bob may not come out for the NAMM convention for two reasons. They are snowed in and with the aftershocks, his constant inner ear problems would act up.

I decide to take a quick shower and head down to West Hollywood, ignoring the curfews. Cafe De'Toille is open but has no running water; it is very quiet but the food tastes good – my first real meal in two days. At Rage, the crowd is only about 1/3 normal for the Miss Carol Show. I move on to Mickey's where the crowd is very small although it picks after the Miss Carol Show lets out. I run into friends and we all trade stories and drinks.

For the drive home, I take Sunset Blvd. It is dark and empty, a rare sight. Even Tower Records is closed (they never close). On the other side of the hill I take the turn down Ventura Blvd from Laurel Canyon. It is completely dark, no power. Art's Deli is burned out. I had already learned that Venture Inn, Oasis, and the Apache were all pretty badly damaged and would not be open until the weekend. It is very spooky on that street until Vineland. I stop and check mail at my post office box.

I do not want to be home alone tonight but have no choice. I did not try to call anyone to come over and was not aggressive at the nightclubs. There were a lot of new faces out, all looking to meet someone to be with tonight. People were scared.

The stress sets in and manifests itself in weird ways. My legs have cramped from dancing, sex, and the quake. I have been fairly calm (for me) through the last two days but the strain is there.

Again, I sleep on the couch with TV and clothes on. Sleep is sporadic and not fulfilling. The dog passes the night outside and is fairly calm until a major aftershock at 6am. The Daily News was printed on only six pages on Tuesday, their printing facilities badly damaged. Today there is a full single section. The LA Times seems okay but it is their regular edition, not the Valley edition.

For every picture of every house you probably saw on television, the experience was basically the same. The closer the epicenter, the worse the experience. The news could only show the veneer of the problems, not all the individual experiences like ours. Many of our friends lost everything including one who lost his life. It will take more than a year for any kind of normalcy to return.

Things from the next few days:

At the office, Fausto and Mike get into an argument about how a person is supposed to react to all this. Fausto berates us all, saying we are wimps and should ignore our feelings and get on with work and life. He really gets on Karen's and my case for not parking underground. Mike basically explodes telling him he is not in our shoes, he is not "us". Mike tells him what I wanted to: my life and my family/house were more important than a job on Monday morning at 4:31am. Fausto walks away pissed and starts bitching about everything in the office. He is either trying to contain his Mexican machismo or he is just as scared as the rest of us and not dealing with it.

I am in the liquor store next door at lunch when a 5.0 shock hits. What a noise! I move outside fast!

I run into Lann Neimeyer, one the owners of Mickey's and the Apache, in the park with his dog. He looks tired and haggard. The nightclubs are closed with Mickey's back wall now being suspect structurally (it later turns out to be okay).

At home I remember to check all my crystal and glasses in bar area. They all survived, including my "This Is Your Life" glasses. William lost several pieces of old and personal crystal. I get the office cleanup started while William goes to the store for essentials. We both relax and smoke some more pot. Tonight it does not help me sleep so no more until I can get back to relaxing naturally.

Connie shows up at office the next day, now the 20th. Her family's house is the only one still structurally sound on their street. All others have or will lose theirs. She seems on edge so I give her a big hug and she comes apart in my arms, sobbing uncontrollably. After recovering, she has plenty of stories about ground zero. I parked today underground for the first time.

On Friday, William went to Torrance to stay with Robert for the weekend. I decide to eat out and drive Ventura Blvd to the 405 freeway before going to West Hollywood. Even though it is night, I can see the area around Colbath (where the Kigers first lived) is burned out. Further down past Van Nuys Blvd., the buildings are trashed. Baxter Northrop Music lost their entire inventory due to the sprinklers coming on for three hours after the shock. Tower Records and another store are trashed and closed, buildings askew. Johnny Rockets (50's hamburgers) is gone. Driving back around on Moorpark, apartment house after apartment house is smashed, broken and condemned. Brick walls crush cars, lights are out, red tags and tape are everywhere. Most of the 2 story older buildings seemed to have survived best. What a strange little area so far from the epicenter to be so devastated.

As the weekend progresses, so does the calm. At the office, stores, nightclubs – everywhere, people talk. It helps. I have one friend who refuses to talk about it; he says he is upset and doesn't want to hear any more about it. He finally agrees that he is scared.

After attending the Gay and Lesbian Expo on Saturday, I drive around the valley. My old area in Encino seems to have been spared any major damage (3 miles south of epicenter). There were the usual surfaces cracks and broken chimneys but I saw only one condemned building. But as I move east, away from the shock point, the damage is vivid. Between Sepulveda on the west and Coldwater Canyon on the east and north of the Ventura Freeway, very little seems damaged. South of the freeway everything is damaged/destroyed until you hit the hills. Some of the destruction I have already described; however, that was at night. To see it in daylight is mind boggling. What made the 300 unit Oakwood Garden apartments on Woodman Avenue move 10 feet north off its garage and foundations, completely destroying it, while across the street another 30 unit building does not even seem to have a crack in any of its walls? A large six story medical office building on Van Nuys Blvd. has its second and third floors pancaked. Nothing surrounding this building was affected. Imagine the deaths if the time had been 5 hours later. Another building totters over the eastbound Van Nuys Blvd exit on the Ventura Freeway, its walls exposed for three stories.

Bernie Laramie eventually calls. He and his family (wife and kid) are staying in a local motel since their condo building in Santa Monica (10 miles south) is yellow tagged. (Red tag means unsafe to enter under any circumstances; will be destroyed. Yellow tag means limited entry; building may survive with remodeling. Green tags mean building is safe to enter; it may still need some cosmetic or minor structural work.) They have moved most of their belongings out temporarily. He

informs me that his parents' house (2 miles from ground zero) survived with only the usual broken chimney, block wall, and trashed interior. Again, the capriciousness.

As time moves on, we all begin to calm down. No one is getting a full night's sleep yet. Now it is more nervousness than fear. William seems to have rebounded better than I; he has a great overall outlook on life and someone close who really loves him and all of that helps. I have calmed down since I started dating someone regularly lately. You do go through the usual thoughts about material possessions. I may try to clean out and throw away or sell things I do not seem to need anymore. I think this is common in a scenario of this kind.

Jokes: "Get your kicks on Route 6.6" (no longer valid since the earthquake has now been upgraded to a 6.8 or 1 1/2 times stronger!). Sign in front of house in Northridge: "For Sale, Some Assembly Required." In Southern California, we have four seasons: fire, flood, earthquake, and drought. All we need now is snow (1949 in Burbank, 7 inches).

According to the Advocate (the national gay magazine), televangelist Pat Robertson took to the airwaves within hours of the quake on his 700 Club program to attribute the act of nature (and all other natural phenomenon – the bitter cold and blizzards, the hurricanes, the Mid West flooding) to God's displeasure with gays and lesbians, pro-choice activists, and "perversity" -- sort of a "the fault is not in our ground but in our souls" argument. What an asshole!

For days, working in the office/recording studio at home, I have gotten use to feeling every little shock, the room and house just barely creaking each time. There is a little clear bottle of tape recorder cleaning fluid that sloshes around whenever there is aftershock of 3.0 or greater. After the first four nights of sleeping on the couch, I returned to my own bed, sleeping with a light left on in the kitchen, shoes and socks close by. I lost about 8 days of work on my new CD album because of cleanup and lack of concentration. The power company has reset our power line; the slack line holding the power lines had broken. Our home owner has a contractor coming to fix the chimney, oven, broken bathroom tiles, etc.

It is now February 9. I no longer leave a light on at night. I have not felt an aftershock all day. That is a first. We have regularly been reminded of what happened; waking up at night to sharp bangs or rolls and having the dog jump into your bed (anything from a 3.5 to a 5.). Grabbing the desk at the office from a roller (again, the same scale range). Just getting ready to take a whiz and the walls rumble. We have gotten adept at taking fast showers and bowel movements, the shower stall and the toilet being two places you do not want to be in an earthquake.

My neighbor on the south, Cecil (85 years old), has not handled the shock well. His house is fine and he parks his car outside every night but he constantly needs to talk and sounds nervous.

It seems that I was not the only person to have premonitions. I have heard both first and second hand stories from people who woke up about the same time I did to noises and movement. There are many instances in the record about rocks along an earthquake fault breaking and shattering before the actual shock. It can happen hours before and make rather loud noises. Could this be what I heard? There was one newspaper report of an Asian woman who woke up, dragged her entire family out of their house and drove to Bakersfield, arriving just as the quake hit. They returned to find their Northridge house completely destroyed.

The worst is still not over. The post office has reported that change of address cards went from 80,000 on file to over 170,000 on file within a week. Mail is stacking up and not being delivered. Schools are now reporting that many students are "missing" from re-opened schools; many seem

just to have moved away; others have just transferred to other schools creating enrollment problems around town. The damage toll has been reduced to the \$20 billion dollar level, still making this the largest and worst earthquake ever suffered in the Los Angeles basin in two centuries. Many people will just walk away from damaged homes and businesses and banks will just foreclose. One local savings and loan speculates they alone are going to lose \$25 million dollars or more. A sign of the times is the piles of broken bricks and mortar in the street in front of houses everywhere; what had once been private is now exposed.

People must now travel greater distances to find malls to shop in since the Valley lost five of its eight shopping areas. This in turn further clogs freeways and side streets. Traffic on Verdugo, our local cross street, has doubled.

It will take a long time to return to more normal conditions. In the meantime, we have to avoid certain freeway areas, replenish earthquake stocks, react every time there is loud truck going by, find new places to shop and eat. The worst part is not knowing when it will all happen again, the unpredictability of it all.

But you know, I like it out here.

Richard Audd, 2/11/94

6/17/94 Update:

William has since moved out and into an apartment with his spouse, Robert, in Long Beach. I now live alone.

I wrote to Art Wolff and family last week that we had prepared correctly for the physical problems of a large quake but that we were totally unprepared for the psychological and emotional effects of the quake.

We had a 5.3 aftershock on a Sunday afternoon about a month ago. I was working in the office/recording studio. The shock was a "banger" followed by about 12 seconds of strong rolling motion. I got up and moved to the hallway to wait it out. It had been so long since a really large aftershock had hit that it rattled my nerves for about 4 hours. This shock sent some bathroom tiles falling around the tub.

We have had other aftershocks at various times during the day and I seem to be getting through them fine now. Before January 17th, a 4.0 quake would have sent me calling and worrying. Now, I hardly notice them. Last Sunday night, after Dean (boyfriend) had left to go home, I had just laid my head on the pillow. KNX News Radio was on and was saying, "This KNX, 1070 in Los Angeles. The time is...", Bang! "...11:...". The guy on the radio never finished. It was 11:00pm and we were hit by a 4.1 aftershock just 3 miles north. It was strong enough and long enough to make me move off the bed and start for the hall.

Our block wall on the north side has been re enforced with concrete and steel rods. It still leans but is no longer loose. Our chimney has been pronounced okay and its hearth will be repaired. The oven has not been fixed yet; I use only the lower broiler for the time being.

My neighbors to the north have stopped talking to me. They want the block walls surrounding all our houses to be torn down and replaced with decorative wooden fences. My owner says no way! I

agree...both for safety sake and privacy. The neighbors seem to want to take it out on me rather than deal with my owner.

Vacant lots around the valley are becoming the norm. William and I went to an electronics outlet store in Sunland to the north about 5 miles. They have items stacked from the floor to ceiling for 15 feet on old tottering shelves. We asked in amazement how they had fared. They told us it took them a month to clean the place up. Some clean up! I would never want to be in there if it all ever happens again.

I had dinner with old friends, Bernie Laramie and Dick Sebast, around May 24th for my birthday. Dick, of course, lives in the Lake Arrowhead area and had little of the entire incident affect him. Bernie and his family are now living in an apartment until all insurance claims can be settled on his condo in Santa Monica. The building can be repaired but it could be another 9 months before they can move back in.

The best story I heard about the quake came from my friend Ray. He had gotten up at 4:15am that morning and was standing in his kitchen looking out a window in his second floor apartment, waiting for his coffee to brew. From the window, he could see up a major street with all its lights and buildings. He says he heard and felt what sounded like all the plumbing in the building wanting to explode. He looked up just in time to see the earthquake's secondary wave move up the street like an ocean wave, moving everything up and down very fast, the power going out behind it. He knew what it was and turned quickly as the wave hit his building. It threw him across the room into a wall only to be showered with glass, plates, and food as he finally hit the floor. Disoriented from all the movement, he tried to stand and walked into another wall and fell to the floor where he stayed until the movement stopped. He had only minor cuts and a nasty bump on the head. He says he will never forget the sight of that wave moving up the street, troughing as it roared toward him, the lights going out behind it. He figures his view of it all only lasted about 3 seconds.

Bambi, my dog, still jumps and whimpers with the larger aftershocks and any loud noise in the neighborhood like a car backfiring.

I continue to find just little things around the house that don't work as well or were broken and haven't been discovered yet.

My new album is completed...about two weeks late.

7/17/94 Six Month Anniversary update in the newspaper this morning:

Quake lasted 7 seconds followed by 20 to 30 seconds of strong motion.

Average slippage on fault: 3.5 feet. Largest area was 11 feet.

2800 buildings considered unsafe, 10,971 seriously damaged, 89,269 others damaged but approved for occupancy.

Oak Mountain north of Chatsworth rose 14.8 inches, moved 6.2 inches north, and 5.5 inches west. (This explains the destruction north of Northridge.)The Valley is now 3 inches narrower.

Unreported was a forecast made in November of last year based on the Global Positioning Satellite System (GPS) that due to detected seismic forces on the ground that at least a 6.4 quake would occur somewhere on the fault system between Ventura county and the north San Fernando Valley in the near future.

The series of quakes that have occurred over the region since Sylmar in 1971 into the current areas from Whittier to Pasadena may be the norm and not the anomaly, that we have gotten off

easy in the last century. Basic reasons are due to the transverse mountain ranges (Santa Monicas, San Gabriels, etc.) at the "bend" below the San Andreas.

An 8.0 quake on the San Andreas Fault will not create as much motion as the Northridge quake did.

Gravity: the amount of measured gravity during the (now official) 6.7 quake helped to determine the areas of greatest destruction. Normal gravity is 1.0. At the epicenter and other badly damaged areas, the gravity went below 1.0, as low as .7. This means that some areas went "weightless" (Sherman Oaks) and sustained the worst damage. Here in Burbank, we were at 1.29 and experienced much less damage because of added weight.

Vertical displacement was as high as 5 feet per second at the epicenter. We weren't dreaming about the bouncing up and down by about 2-3 feet at the height of the movement.

Total damage figure to date: \$20 billion. 57 dead, 9000 injured.

Tuesday night (7/12) from 11:45pm to 12:15pm: three 3.5 to 3.7 magnitude aftershocks. None since.

Update 10/24/94:

Nationwide, geologists recently agreed that the Southern California area should expect at least one 5.0 or greater quake each year. We have been lucky for the past 70 years or so years and that we need to prepare for this inevitability. The area is just too pocketed with undetected faults and probably other additional thrust faults like the one that gave way in January.

12/05/94 UPDATE.

Steel framed buildings are coming under more scrutiny; more and more problems being found with them, hidden structural weaknesses.

It has been very quiet seismically for the past four months. Nothing much has happened. Scientists have been a little worried. All that changed tonight. At 7:36 a 3.5 jolt. I was at office and Fausto swore it was not an earthquake. Sorry but my table moved and hit the wall twice. I go to the car, turn on the radio and, sure enough, the readings are just coming in. Back up in office, we are talking and Fausto refuses to believe it. We don't feel the 3.0 at 7:47 but at 7:48, we know we have had a good one. The 4.5 quake is only 8 miles north and shallow. More unfelt smaller ones follow. Fausto finally admits the quakes.

Discussions of what really happened that day in January now flow forth. The air conditioning's water pipes on the roof had burst, sending water cascading onto the third floor. The roof had a foot of water on it. Fausto was able to get into a hardware store and buy a welding torch to reconnect the pipes. He also tells us that other than himself, Fitz (George) was the only one to come in ("like a trooper") to service an audio client that demanded to do a job that day despite the quake. There is still the hint that the rest of us failed ourselves and the company by not coming in that day.

I relate the story of Ray from that morning (the "wave" moving up the street) and Fausto is mesmerized by the story. This is the first time I have seen him sit still and listen to someone's story.

[N.B. Present day. My use of pot was only occasional and stopped after William moved out. Since then I have partaken only 4 or 5 times in the succeeding 20 years. As for my use of alcohol, I stopped drinking except for going out to dinner. Later, my doctor suggested that I should have one or two ounces every day, preferably with dinner, since I was getting older. I rarely ever exceeded that except when out at a club, restaurant, or at a charity event.]