

REFERENCE CODE: AkAMH

REPOSITORY NAME:

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TITLE: Raymond Willard Sondenaa, Jr. 1964 Earthquake Letter

COLLECTION NUMBER: B2021.003

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Dates: April 1, 1964

Extent: 1 envelope, 6 pages typed letter

Language and Scripts: The collection is in English.

Name of creator(s): Raymond Willard Sodenaa, Jr.

Administrative/Biographical History:

The following biography was provided by Angela Sondenaa on March 8, 2021:

“Raymond Willard Sondenaa, Jr. was born on July 26th, 1944 in Toledo, Oregon to parents Raymond and Viola (Logan) Sondenaa. He was raised in Siletz, Oregon with his two brothers where he graduated high school. He is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians although at the time of the 1964 earthquake, the Siletz Tribe had lost federal recognition after being forced through termination in the 1950s. The Tribe regained federal recognition on November 18, 1977 through Executive Order.

Ray enlisted in the Air Force in 1962 which is how he came to be in Alaska during the 1964 earthquake. He completed his military service by July 1966 after attaining the rank of SSGT E-5. Ray went on to marry and father three children. He became a custom cabinet maker and an elder in the Jehovah’s Witness church. He is now retired and living in Hawaii with his wife, Lynn.”

Scope and Content Description:

This collection is comprised of one six-paged typed letter, and one envelope mailed to “Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Sondenaa” in Siletz, OR from their son, “Ray Sondenaa, Jr.” from Anchorage, Alaska on April 1, 1964.

The letter entails the personal accounts Raymond had during the 1964 earthquake in Alaska. He describes the damage to the city of Anchorage, discussing locations, buildings that were destroyed, issues on Elmendorf Air Force Base, and other destructions across the city.

Arrangement: The letter is in sequential order and contains 6 pages, and one envelope.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS AND USE

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research use.

Physical Access: Original items in good condition.

Technical Access: No special equipment is needed to access the materials.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use:

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Preferred Citation: Raymond Willard Sondenaa, Jr. 1964 Earthquake Letter, Anchorage Museum, B2021.003

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition and Appraisal Information: Letter was donated by Angela Sondenaa, Raymond Willard Sondenaa, Jr.’s niece.

Processing Note

Original items were kept in their original order, and use copies were made for access.

Separated Materials

N/A

SUBJECTS

Downtown Anchorage (Alaska)
Correspondence
Elmendorf Air Force Base
Homer (Alaska)

US Military (Air Force)
1964 Earthquake

Detailed Description of the Collection

001.-.006 – 6-pages typed letter recounting Air Force member, Raymond Willard Sondenaa's experience in Homer, Alaska and Anchorage, Alaska during the 1964 earthquake.

Excerpt Pg. 1-2: “ After things had really begun to bouncing, it was impossible to stand up at all. We were absolutely helpless. To try to walk was a fruitless effort it was as if you were helping the earth throw you around. All we could do was stand in one place and hang on for dear life.

I only got to the porch and hung onto the door knobs all during the quake. Ronnie had made it to the yard and was being thrown from the corner of the house to the porch. Back and forth very forcefully and there was nothing he could do to help himself. Each time he came near the porch where I was, I would grab onto his arm and try to hold him but only to have him torn away from me and hurled back across the yard.”