Commemorating the Katmai-Novarupta Eruption Centennial

Tuesday, 05 June 2012

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/katmai_special_final_mixdown_.mp3{/audio}

Jennifer Canfield/KMXT

One hundred years ago, the largest explosive volcanic eruption of the 20th century happened right here in Alaska. The Katmai-Novarupta explosion was 30 times bigger than the Mt. Saint Helens eruption in 1980 and bigger than all historic eruptions in Alaska combined.

The explosion happened on the Alaska Peninsula, about one hundred miles east of Kodiak city. Ash from the eruption would travel as far as the Mediterranean. The explosion was so loud that it was reportedly heard in Juneau, about 750 miles away. So much volcanic material was released that it destroyed everything in the surrounding 40 square miles. And then there was the ash that landed in Kodiak: So much fell in Kodiak that residents were evacuated onto the U.S. Revenue Cutter Manning, and President William Taft appealed to congress for an emergency appropriation of $100,000 for relief.

The volcano decimated Kodiak's fishing industry, destroyed homes, killed plants and wildlife and upended the lives of people on the archipelago.

Today we'll explore the story of the eruption with help from Katmai expert Judy Fierstein, and Kodiak residents reading historical accounts provided by the Baranov Museum.

Special thanks to Judy Fierstein at the U.S Geological Survey for her assistance and Anjuli Grantham at the Baranov Museum in Kodiak for researching and editing the historical accounts. Interpretations provided by Bailey Bass as Jesse Petellin, Iver Malutin as John Orloff, Coast Guard Lt. Dave Cory as Captain K.W. Perry, Darcy Stielstra as William Erskine, Senator Gary Stevens as President William Taft, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Regional Director Steve Honnold as Bureau of Fisheries agent Fred M. Chamberlain and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge biologist Bill Pyle as Bureau of Fisheries agent Barton Warren Evermann.

Individual Historical Accounts

Bailey Bass as Jesse
Petellin

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/bailey_bass_jesse_petellin_2.21_.mp3{/audio}

Iver Malutin as John Orloff

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/iver_malutin_john_orloff_1.29.mp3{/audio}

Coast Guard Lt. Dave Cory as
Captain K.W. Perry

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/dave_corey_capt._kw_perry_7.32.mp3{/audio}

Darcy Stielstra as William Erskine

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/darcy_stielstra_wj_erksine_1.21.mp3{/audio}

Senator Gary
Stevens as President William Taft

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/sen_stevens_president_taft_0.51.mp3{/audio}

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Regional Director Steve Honnold as Bureau of Fisheries agent Fred M.
Chamberlain

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/steve_honnold_fred_chamberlain_1.42.mp3{/audio}

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge biologist Bill Pyle as
Bureau of Fisheries agent Barton Warren Evermann

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/bill_pyle_barton_warren_everman_bureau_of_fish_1.31.mp3{/audio}

Theresa Pikus Miller as Hildred Davies Erskine

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/theresa_pikus_miller_hildred_davies_erskine_2.45.mp3{/audio}

Kodiak Daily Mirror Editor James Brooks/ San Francisco Chronicle Report

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/james_brooks_san_francisco_chronicle_1.10.mp3{/audio}

Hannah Johnson as Nellie Erskine

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/hannah_johnson_nellie_erskine_5.53.mp3{/audio}