HIGHLIGHTS FROM TWO EYEWITNESS REPORTS
OF TRINIDAD-OFFSHORE, CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE OF NOVEMBER 8, 1980

Donna Leeds, student at Humboldt State University: "I was sound asleep when it happened. Some people got thrown out of bed. I got up and ran to the doorway. By then, it was over. It took me a long time to realize what was happening. I was really scared. Christie was too scared to get out of bed until she heard me open my door. We stayed up for about an hour listening to the news. The radio played an old Carole King song, "I feel the earth move." This was in bad taste, or they didn't know it was coming up on the tape.

"I went back to sleep, and Christie stayed up until 6:30 reading the chapter on earthquakes in her geology book. The aftershocks were frequent, but minor. So far we haven't had any big aftershocks. Reports I've heard from people in the dorms are that people in top bunks fell out. Some say that all the cars in the parking lot were shifted over the lines. I don't know how far.

"The medicine chest here came open and things fell out. A few things fell down in Christie's room. Just things that were close to the edge. And all her pictures were very crooked. Nothing fell down in my room. Some supermarkets had lots of shelf damage, and others hardly any. It depended on the direction of the aisles and flexibility of the shelf units.

"They are still speculating on the location of the epicenter. It's now thought to be off Trinidad, west of Big Lagoon. Yesterday (November 13) we went to the spit at Big Lagoon to see the cracks caused by liquefaction. One area had dropped a couple feet, about 20 feet across and maybe 100 feet long. The overpass that collapsed is about 25 miles south of Big Lagoon."

S. Fanos: "The first indication at Fortuna of an earthquake was at 2:28 a.m. on Saturday, November 8, when I was awakened by a strong rolling motion that almost threw me out of bed and by the clinking of glassware. The motion lasted about 2 seconds, but hanging lamps, etc. continued to swing for about 2 minutes. My pendulum clock stopped at 2:30. I felt another roll and then an even stronger one, which I considered to be aftershock #3. In my part of Fortuna the power remained on, but I was unable to get a news report from an all-night radio station.

"The first news I heard was that the overpass between Fortuna and Eureka (used heavily by lumber trucks and commuters) was down and that a car and a pickup truck had gone over the break. Workers were reported to have arrived on the scene immediately. The nearly nuclear power plant (not in operation) was reported to be safe.

"I drove to Eureka at 9:00 a.m. Traffic from both directions had been diverted to the old road, which was congested because many travelers were unaware of the freeway damage before reaching detour signs, and also because lumber trucks that had been ready to pull out at daybreak were delayed while their loads were rechecked.

"Locals believe the center of the earthquake was in the Trinidad area."
Big Lagoon Spit
Mass movement of soil

Photos:
Donna Leeds