

Tin Hats United



By Anna Von Reitz

It is just over three weeks since the Earthquake that hit my hometown, tiny Big Lake, Alaska. My fingertips are sore as I type, from tiny cuts from shattered glass embedded in throw rugs that I have had rolled up, waiting for thorough cleaning, glass picking, and washing.

It's a nasty and perilous job. Fingernails get nicked, fingertips suffer jabs, but someone has to do it. The only alternative is the throw the rugs out and there have already been enough losses.

Thanks to all of you, we are beginning to get things back in order much more quickly than would have been possible otherwise. I have just received a computer to replace the one we lost in the power surge and a new monitor screen, too. Thank you, Allen and Family! You went the Extra Mile! Other donations have reduced the Misery and Suffering Index to manageable proportions for the members of our Living Law Firm team.

For those who have never been through a real honest-to-God disaster--- recovery is a long process. It takes time. You plod through it, day by day, chiseling away at what has to be done, assessing what is lost, finding what is damaged, and just toughing it out.

Yesterday, I found a can of beans that had rolled behind a shelving unit and discovered that all the blades for my food processor had been bent in an odd collision with a freezer, which also got dented. I can hardly imagine how much force was involved. The blades must have slid under the freezer at the exact moment it was in the air and then the foot of the fully loaded freezer came down and crunch!

Even stainless steel is not immune. I have proof.

But, that's okay. I went to Walmart for something unrelated (extra foam insulation to help a friend recaulk around replacement windows in his home office) and there in the vast pile of dented and damaged goods was a brand new food processor for less than half the original price, complete with the blades. Only the carton and the instruction book were mashed.

That's the way things happen in a disaster. You zig and you zag your way through it. One thing goes up, and another goes down, and we do the Hokey Pokey and we turn it all around---- and three weeks later, I guarantee you, my basement looks WORSE than it did two weeks ago.

It's the same process as house cleaning. You have to tear everything apart before you can put it back together? And as you do this, everything gets more messed up instead of less for a while? We are in that stage of recovery and it will probably take months to get back to being truly organized.

My books, for example, are all back on shelves. That was a major endeavor all by itself. But they are in no particular order anymore, so it's good-luck-hunt-and-peck to find the volume I am looking for, because it might not be in the same bookcase, much less the same shelf.

Now apply that to almost all the paperwork in a Law Office..... thank God my super-competent Executive Officer has his own way of segregating and organizing all the most important and current work, or we would have been up the proverbial creek.

We still face months of reorganizing older files and correspondence and considerable furniture moving and repairs to undertake that will take time and energy, but, with enough thrust even pigs can fly.

It is a real satisfaction to me that our lowly Food Storage Club now has six more families signed up. They are mostly shame-faced neighbors who showed up at my door in search of food, fuel, and water. And blankets. And medicine. And do I have an extra emergency cook stove they could borrow?

We just smiled (maybe a little grimly, remembering how these same people made fun of us) and took care of them. Count that as six more American families wearing Tin Hats and damned proud of it.

Next time the world burps or burns or floods, they, too, will be as ready as they can be to deal with the situation.

It's just too bad that so many people have to actually experience a disaster before they understand how important all the things they take for granted really are. Just stop and think.

What would you and your family do if the lights went off and didn't come back on? Where would you get water? Where would you get food? How would you stay warm?

Trotting down the street to Anna's house might not be an option for you, so best to address these questions before you are standing there going --- "Uh-oh! Now what?"

The Tin Hats came through again. And as usual, the "government" did nothing timely or useful beyond a week of Free Dump fees.

When push comes to shove in a real disaster, it is always the same: what you've got to work with is limited to your own resources and pre-planning, and whatever help you can reach out for from family and friends and other private networks like clubs and churches.

To the extent that most communities in America have a disaster plan, it is limited to how to save public buildings, not individual families. Take note. That means you. And yours.

The "government" isn't going to feed you, supply you with water, or guarantee you any shelter or medical care. In most cases, the "government" isn't even going to be present for days after a disaster. If you live in urban areas, the grasshoppers among us will be looting and rioting on top of everything else. .

The fabric of society quickly breaks down in a disaster. When people get scared and hungry, all sorts of things happen. What happens in a disaster that continues for more than a few days? As one of my more sardonic Tin Hat friends grimly remarked, "In three weeks, it would all be over." Most of the grasshoppers would be dead of starvation, thirst, dysentery, or killed in the mob violence that results from thirst and starvation and uncontrolled sewage.

Most Americans don't know how to dig a latrine.

It's time we all remembered the Basics of life on Earth and planned for our own needs and the needs of our families in case of a disaster. It just makes good common sense--- if there is any of that left outside the Tin Hat Community.

My husband and I and our little group of like-minded friends prepared for a lot of eventualities, but once you get beyond your own little circle it is painfully apparent how many of your neighbors didn't plan and now are in desperate need of help.

We have people here digging out holes for rocket stoves in the dead of winter, minus 14 temperatures. That's the kind of thing that happens in a disaster. And of course, there's no extra money for these emergency needs, either, even if you can find the parts or order them from somewhere.

So we've got guys in garages "making do" and cutting sheet metal with pliers, constructing things the old-fashioned way, thanking God that some of the Old Timers still know how and still have the right tools squirreled away.

But I have to tell you, as I look around, I notice that those who know these practical skills are few and far between, and mostly my age or older.

We've got women baking bread in outdoor ovens in this kind of weather, too. We've got our Sourdough Crocks sitting in the warmest spot in the house, next to the cat, of course. This earthquake has been quite a wake-up call and motivator.

This whole last week as I have been "shoveling" through things, I've been pulling out children's toys and games left over from my own kids umpteen years ago and recycling these treasures to children who won't be having much of a Christmas this year.

It's amazing how much a dog-eared Monopoly set can mean to a family with no TV, no computer, and nothing but a couple oil lamps to read by at night. For them, the technological advances of the last two centuries just about disappeared.

I've also been sharing out my vast collection of children's books and rummaging through the closets for old flannel sheet sets and shirts that don't quite fit and jeans that are too small and all those other things that tend to collect. They are all going out the door to new owners.

A disaster has a way of "tuning people up" --- making them more aware, and more grateful for the little things that too often get taken for granted. It's Christmas Eve. We are still bundling up care packages for those in need.

Your donations to me have spread a circle of light and protection around the researchers and lawyers of The Living Law Firm, and we, in turn, have spread that light out to others, sharing what we have this dark and cold December.

We are very grateful to be warm and fed, to have good water and good friends. It's going to be an odd Christmas, but a good Christmas, too----one that forces us to remember all the things that are most important.

I found enough plates in the wreckage (not all the same pattern, but what the hey?) to serve dinner. There's still one string of Christmas lights blazing away. My husband is stomping the snow off his boots. My son is curled up with his dog in front of the fire. He will get three small presents tomorrow -- things I bought early and squirreled away earlier in the year.

Every spare penny is being parceled out for practical things now -- to keep the work going and the people going. The Tin Hats United have stepped to the plate, and so far, somehow, we are all getting through the earthquake, the holidays, and the winter.

From our house to yours, Merry Christmas and God Bless us all in the coming year! May the needed changes come and may we meet all the challenges together, with courage, with generosity, and with compassion for each other.

See this article and over 1400 others on Anna's website here: www.annavonreitz.com

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