

The Explosion

On August 26 and 27 1883 in Krakatoa, Indonesia there was a volcanic eruption which left a crater five miles wide and over eight hundred feet deep. The noise was purportedly the loudest noise in the history of man. The sound was heard three thousand miles away, and the shock wave traveled around the world seven times. The ejected material from the eruption was about five cubic miles in volume, darkening the sky to as dark as midnight in areas one hundred miles away. The estimated world wide reduction of sunlight to eighty seven percent volume lasted one year. It left a death toll of about thirty six thousand people and created one hundred thirty foot high tsunamis.[1]

As impressive as this explosion was, it paled by comparison to two explosions which took place at my house while I was home on break from college. One such explosion was my freshman year in college when I went on academic probation. The other was my senior year when I got drunk and rolled my Volkswagen. My parents were “less than pleased” at the assumed antics of their only child and demonstrated this displeasure. Like the Krakatoa Explosion, the effects of the “Stocker blowout” were of a longer lasting duration than just an immediate one.

The duration of the effects of any monumental event must be handled as best as possible by the involved parties. People do their best with what they have left. In the case of Krakatoa, a large number of people had nothing left to do their best with. They were quite literally wiped off the face of the earth.

In my case, there was a lot left to do my best with, and, in spite of my parents temptation to “wipe me off the face of the earth” my parents decided that I needed to readjust my priorities in life. However, I could not dwell on the past mistakes; quoting Khayyam:

“The moving finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.”[2]

I was not alone in the lamentation of receiving the fruit of my misdeeds. The Book of Daniel speaks of King Belshazzar of Babylon who, while giving a feast, desecrated the Holy Golden goblets his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple when Israel was besieged by the Babylonians. During the course of the feast, handwriting appeared on the wall of the banquet room. The king’s astrologers and wise men were unable to read the writings, leaving Belshazzar unconsolated in spite of all the political apple polishing they did. Only Daniel could read the ominous and foreboding message written by the hand of God, foretelling the end of his reign.[3]In his case there was no repentance which could save him.

In my case, I was able to salvage my academic career. I left the dent on the roof of my Volkswagen as a reminder about drinking and driving and God’s Care and Concern over all people ...Even stupid ones. Hollywood made a movie about “Krakatoa East of Java” and capitalized on the misfortune of those who lived in the area at the time; and so in the words of the Beatles song “O bla Dee O bla Da”.....Life goes on.

[1] Cornell, James: The Great International Disaster Book, Pocket Books 1976 pp220-221

[2] Khayyam, Omar: The Rubaiyat Garden City Books 1952 pg 66 Quatrain LI

[3] Daniel: 5 : 1-31