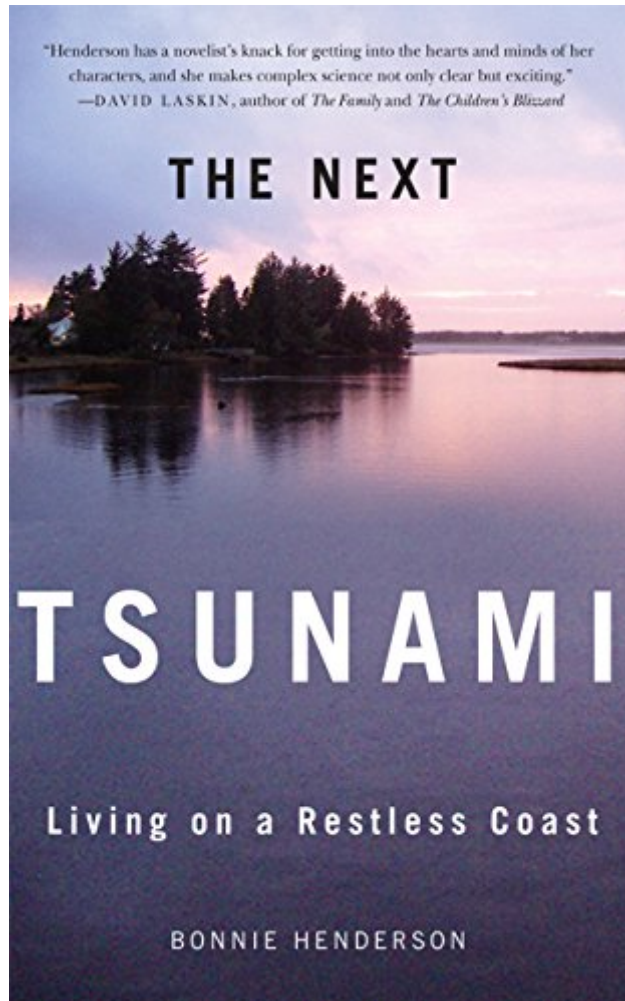


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# The Next Tsunami: Living On A Restless Coast



## Synopsis

On a March evening in 1964, ten-year-old Tom Horning awoke near midnight to find his yard transformed. A tsunami triggered by Alaska's momentous Good Friday earthquake had wreaked havoc in his Seaside, Oregon, neighborhood. It was, as far as anyone knew, the Pacific Northwest coast's first-ever tsunami. More than twenty years passed before geologists discovered that it was neither Seaside's first nor worst tsunami. In fact, massive tsunamis strike the Pacific coast every few hundred years, triggered not by distant temblors but by huge quakes less than one hundred miles off the Northwest coast. Not until the late 1990s would scientists use evidence like tree rings and centuries-old warehouse records from Japan to fix the date, hour, and magnitude of the Pacific Northwest coast's last megathrust earthquake: 9 p.m., January 26, 1700, magnitude 9.0—one of the largest quakes the world has known. When the next one strikes—this year or hundreds of years from now—the tsunami it generates is likely to be the most devastating natural disaster in the history of the United States. In *The Next Tsunami*, Bonnie Henderson shares the stories of scientists like meteorologist Alfred Wegener, who formulated his theory of continental drift while gazing at ice floes calving from Greenland glaciers, and geologist Brian Atwater, who paddled his dented aluminum canoe up coastal streams looking for layers of peat sandwiched among sand and silt. The story begins and ends with Tom Horning, who grew up to become a geologist and return to his family home at the mouth of the river in Seaside—arguably the Northwest community with the most to lose from what scientist Atwater predicts will be an apocalyptic disaster. No one in Seaside understands earthquake science—and the politics and complicated psychology of living in a tsunami zone—better than Horning. Henderson's compelling story of how scientists came to understand the Cascadia Subduction Zone—a fault line capable of producing earthquakes even larger than the 2011 Tohoku quake in Japan—and how ordinary people cope with that knowledge is essential reading for anyone interested in the charged intersection of science, human nature, and public policy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bonnie Henderson's new book, *The Next Tsunami*, reads almost like a novel. She describes the scientific chronology of the development of plate tectonics and continental drift and how it came to be the accepted historical explanation for the proliferation of geological evidence along the Pacific coast. She also describes the potential for the overdue near-coast earthquake and resulting large tsunami that will likely devastate a huge portion of the area. Interwoven in the narrative is the story of Tom Horning, a Seaside geologist, who grew up in the area and developed a love for the coast and a quest for knowledge of earthquakes and tsunamis. She describes the frustration that Horning experiences in his attempts to get the local government to educate the public about the big impending earthquake and tsunami and the government's slowness to mitigate the disastrous effects such an earthquake and tsunami will have on the coastal areas. A very good read. A must have for those who love the coast or those who live there.

I just finished *The Next Tsunami: Living on a Restless Coast*, and I feel enlightened and entertained. The author does a great job of sharing just enough serious science and mixing it well with real stories and the drama of discoveries. The book seems to have perfect pace...just as I thought I might be inundated with scientific detail I was rescued by great stories about the serendipity of human discovery. Henderson avoids the temptation to dramatize with hyperbole, but still delivers the serious story of the inevitable future calamity of a major tsunami along the Northwest Coast of the United States.

Bonnie Henderson brings the science and the actual experience of earthquakes and tsunamis to

life. She weaves together interesting lessons on the science of earthquakes with the biography of a geologist with a strong personal connection to coastal Oregon. Tom Horning experienced the 1964 tsunami in Seaside, Oregon as a 10 year old and to this day is active in trying to save lives in the tsunami zones in and around Seaside. Seeing many events through his eyes makes them all the more real. Tsunami tells the story of scientists and the public learning of the the Cascadia Fault which is located along not far off shore Eureka, California north to British Columbia. I've lived in the is area all my adult life and am old enough to remember which Oregon did not appear to be at risk for earthquakes. Ms. Henderson really brings the geography and the people to life. Her chapters on the accessing the knowledge of the native people in Humboldt County were excellent. Bonnie Henderson is an excellent storyteller. Even though I already knew most of the events around the discovery of the Cascadia Fault, I was caught up in Ms. Henderson's telling of it.

This book is about the scientific enquiries that have revealed a huge geological fault offshore of the Pacific coast line of North America running from northern California to Vancouver Island. The scientific investigations have shown that the fault periodically produces massive Tsunamis, the last of which occurred in January 1700. The author tells the story in the style of a novel, using the reconstructed or imagined conversations and thoughts of scientists and of the residents of the threatened areas. The connecting thread is a geologist named Ted Horning who is a resident of one of the most vulnerable communities. I was already aware of this fault and its history so my main motivation in reading the book was to deepen my understanding of the science involved. In this I was disappointed. I found the novel-like style unhelpful and distracting. Ms Henderson does a good job of presenting the science as far as she takes it but, unfortunately from my standpoint, she does not include a detailed discussion of the geometry and interactions of the complex set of tectonic plates involved nor does she adequately describe the topology of the seabed and coastline. I was hoping to find detailed maps and diagrams illustrating the subduction zones but her description stops short of the level of detail that I was looking for. Consequently, I cannot recommend the book if your interest is primarily scientific. However, you may enjoy it if you are not troubled by the treatment of living people as fictional characters.

The Next Tsunami: Living on A Restless Coast is equal parts biography, mystery, science lesson, and cautionary tale. Bonnie's book is a riveting read about the discovery of plate tectonics, the rediscovery of the reality of major tsunamis on the Pacific Northwest Coast and features an array of scientists who made the discoveries. The science lesson/mystery is thoughtfully interspersed with

the story of Tom Horning, a geologist living in a vulnerable coastal town and his efforts to prepare his hometown for the risks. It will educate you, entertain you, and remind you of the risk of living on A Restless Coast.

This is a very informative book. It covers all the past and current geologic research on subduction zone earthquakes and tsunamis. The book is written in the manner of John McFee's geology series telling the story through the lives of the scientists who have done or are doing earthquake-tsunami research. It is well-written, almost novelistic. There are many useful guides in the book about how to live safely where tsunamis are a fact of life. One key eye opener was the conclusion that warning sirens are ONLY useful for tsunamis created by distant earthquakes (e.g., Alaska or Japan) because such earthquakes produce tsunamis that take hours or days to reach the Pacific NW giving residents ample time to get to higher ground. On the other hand, sirens are NOT very useful for local subduction zone earthquakes (e.g., the Cascadia fault) because such earthquakes produce tsunamis that will reach the coast in 20 minutes; too short a time for sirens to react. If you wait for a siren in a local subduction zone earthquake, you most likely will not be able to get to higher ground; if you feel the earthquake--run to higher ground, don't wait for a siren. You will enjoy spending time with the people who talk to you in this book.

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