

Malcom returns home after months in Afghanistan, only to have his life turned upside-down. He makes his escape to the Caribbean. Before long, the tug of friends and family bring him back to his roots, only to have his life turned topsy-turvy by the very forces of nature...

AFTER-SHOCK: A Voyage of the SOUTHERN CROSS

by H. Frank Foreman

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EQUIPMENT

LAND

Honda PCX150 – SCOOTER
153cc scooter
100mpg/ 2.1gal tank
Highway legal – Max Speed 65mph
286 pounds with full tanks

Honda Rukus – SCOOTER
49cc scooter
114mpg/ 1.3 gal tank
Max speed – 35mph
194 pounds with full tanks

Mountain bike – wally world’s best

SEA

Diesel duck trawler
50’ LOA

CAST & CREW

VALERIE – Val – ex-wife. Pretty, 5’7”, Couldn’t put up with long deployment.

MALCOLM JONES– Mal – main character. 6’1”, sandy hair, not built. Lean. Trying to live ‘fairly’ healthy. Graduated from Annapolis, was in the Navy as Naval Intelligence, ‘combating drugs – basically hanging out around all the seedier bars outside the bases in the far east, paying off bargirls and bartenders. After mustering out, somehow managed to get a license as a Marine Engineer. While doing a brief stint on a boat, found he liked dealing with the engine department better. He also discovered he liked ‘fixing things. Not a ‘ninja’, just well read.

CODY – son @ Colorado State – Senior in Civil engineering

STEPHANIE – Steffi – daughter (Vet School at WSU Pullman). High School Cheerleader, Bubbly personality. 5’7”, Honey Blonde, Blue eyes. Kinda turned ‘cowgirl’ since going to Pullman for vet school.

GEORGE and MARIANNE – Local Store Owners

STEVE and SONNY (Sonora) – Son and Daughter @ store – high school age

SAINT – George’s Dog

LARRY – Trading Post

DANIELLA (Danni) – Marina Owner – Reiley is her dog

SAMANTHA Daniella’s Friend (Sammi)– with KASSIE her Daughter

BILL – Boat Owner before me. Crusty. Went to sea on a boat after being widowed. Something he and his wife had talked about doing ‘someday’. Former investment/securities stockbroker type. ‘Island Bill’ now.

RICK MCCAIN – My co-pilot on the trip upriver. Former combat medic.

ADAM WEST - Mayor of Clarkston

JOE WAYNE - Capt. USN/Ret SeaBee

CATHLEEN TILDEN - Mayor of Lewiston

AARON MERCURY – Bank Manager of LOCAL Bank in Clarkston

FELICIA CORAMOOR – MY Bank Manager in Lewiston

SEAN and SARA BERNSTEIN – Hollywood Couple in the Caribbean. The FLIR’d SOUTHERN CROSS.

CHUCK GRISWALD – Jet Boat Factory Owner

PERRY NEWMAN – Sherriff of Asotin County (Clarkston)

BOB ACER – Deputy on Marine Patrol (Asotin County)

H. Frank Foreman

BUD JOHANNES – Jet Boat Designer, Chucks' VP.

JULIE SMART – News Reporter

NATE – Julie's Cameraman

ANDY MAYBERRY – Sherriff Clark County, WA

FRED OLDMAN – Deputy in charge of Sherriff's Marine Patrol Clark County,
WA

PROLOGUE

The idea for this story originated from an after-action review of a disaster preparedness drill dubbed “Cascadia Rising 2016”. Most of the official data for this scenario can be found on the internet.

One of the participants opined that he would just make his way to the airport and fly out. Yah, sure! Maybe if you were close enough to walk there and the runway was still viable.

My take on it was that I would find a cargo ship that had hot and cold running water, water distillation machinery, and their own power. I would row or swim out and beg them to take me on as a Wiper/Deckhand.

As I thought about it further, I reduced the size of the vessel and started doing research on “seaworthy” boats with a Pacific Northwest tradition. The design I found is uniquely northwest.

I tip my hat to the original designer – George Buehler

This story is a work of FICTION. Any and all resemblance to anyone alive or dead is purely coincidental.

The general scenario of the Cascadia Subduction Zone event is a subject of many different views, of which this is but one. However, being a work of fiction, there are some inaccuracies that made the story “better”.

Most of the equipment used on the SOUTHERN CROSS is real and can be found on the Internet. The “Sail Mail” over Ham Radio, as well as all the other radio references are proven systems.

The river charts and navigational references are from the actual River Charts available online through NOAA.

01-OCT 20xx

QUAKE DAY 0330 – RUMBLINGS

This was the time of year when the crisp mornings followed the first chilly nights of the fall. I could sleep on the boat, snuggled into the covers and not get too hot. I must have been 'swaddled' a lot as a baby.

I was sleeping and having one of those lovely dreams, the ones when you wake, you can't fully grasp the handle on what you were dreaming about, but leaving an aftertaste of something really, really good.

Well, crap! I was awake now and being jostled about in bed. Those damn river pilots need to learn how to read the flipping charts and signs that say GO SLOW when passing a boat basin. I didn't think much about it, just rolled over and tried to go back to my mildly-erotic dream.

Only I couldn't. The rocking kept on for several minutes. I was suddenly restless and kept tossing and turning, after being tossed and turned. A niggling feeling of wrongness started in the back of my head. So, I got up and padded across the cabin to take care of my morning ablutions and start the day. I figured I might as well since I was now wide awake. After coming out of the bathroom – sailors called it a 'head' – but since I had a real honest-to-god bathtub I felt a certain pride when I called it a bathroom to my fellow 'boaters' – I looked at the clock and saw it was 0330hrs – that's 3:30 AM to all the land-lubbers and too flipping early for a retired middle-aged fart like me.

I went to turn on the lights in the galley and got nothing. Damn circuit breaker on the dock must have popped again. Old man Henry, my 'neighbor', in the next slip had probably had too many at the pub again and pushed the emergency disconnect for the dock. Nobody was really sure of his reasoning for this. Even old man Henry could never remember when he sobered up, but it had happened more than once when he came back 'toasted' from an evening out celebrating. I know, something that you wouldn't expect in a yacht basin. But this wasn't one of THOSE, this was 'just a boat' basin. We were an eclectic group of what I would term as 'boaters', trying to escape the mundane in each of our own ways.

So, with 'shore power' out for the morning, I flipped over the 'mains' to the battery power and started up my morning cuppa' java. These new one-cup coffee brewers were simply perfect for a single-handed (solo) sailor like myself.

With coffee in hand, I made my way up to the deck to get a bit of fresh air and saw ... nothing. Of course, at this time of the year all I could see was an early morning fog low along the water. The relative warmth of the river combined with the chill in the air made the fog hug the water like its own blanket. However, where I should have seen the dock along the side of the boat, there was nothing there as well. No amount of fog could hide that....

I was drifting in the river! Some asshole had pulled my shore power connection and cast me off to drift down the river! A very dangerous prank at night. I quickly released the anchor and after letting out about 100 feet of chain I felt the familiar tug and the boat started to swing around to head into the current. How the hell could this have happened? They were supposed to keep the gate access to the boat docks locked from just such pranksters.

After ensuring I had a good bite to my anchor, I locked it in and then stepped into the wheelhouse to figure out where I was. I needed to make sure I hadn't drifted into the main ship channel. Crap, better turn on my navigation lights and start powering up my electronic chart/gps computer.

Once I had them on, I found that I hadn't drifted too far downstream and actually was in a slough [sort of a slack space between an island in the river and the true riverbank]. I would have run aground eventually, not quite as dangerous as getting run over by a tanker or freighter, but still bound to ruin your day.

While looking at the chart, I noted that I wasn't too far from the dock. It should be right over there ... where I saw nothing at all.

Not absolutely nothing mind you, but for a boat dock near a fairly large city it was awfully, awfully dark. No lights. And only a few sounds to break the quiet of the early morning. I turned to look across the river to the other side to see if they had power. Nothing. Usually when we had a power outage one side or the other had power, different companies and different

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states, ya know? There should be something sticking up above the fog. Or at least a glow...

I sat down on a deck chair to listen to the usual morning sounds and it was also much quieter. A few car motors, a few sirens off in the distance, but that was it. Then, all of a sudden, off in the distance I heard what sounded like what we used to hear on the movies as an air-raid siren. Uh-oh?

I went over to turn on the local FM radio to see what might be going on ... Nothing on my usual stations, just static. Hmm. I hit the scan and the radio locked onto a news station that blared out with;

'--and the governors of both Washington and Oregon have declared a state of emergency and advised all residents to shelter in place. Shelter in place is that everyone should stay at home. You are safer there instead of travelling anywhere. Reports of bridges down, collapsed, or on the brink of collapse are all over the area. The 3:25AM earthquake was determined to be in the Cascadia subduction zone 50 miles off the coast of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington. Coastal residents are advised to seek high ground immediately. WE REPEAT SEEK HIGH GROUND IMMEDIATELY. A tidal wave can be expected to hit coastal areas within the hour. Best current estimates are the wave will hit some coast towns in 15 minutes. If you are near the ocean, and the water has receded or is exceptionally low, this is likely a prelude to a high wave hitting the beach. RUN FOR THE HIGH GROUND IMMEDIATELY.

Initial estimates are that the magnitude of the earthquake was in the 9.2 range.

News reports will be aired as we get them. This station is on emergency power and will remain with you as long as we can....

I quickly turned down the sound and reached over and kicked on my little generator. Best to be ready for anything. I also started my short checklist for starting up the main engine. Good old John Deere power. The best that China produced – heh heh. At least it was better than a lot of the other cheap crap coming out of some of the factories over there. It was only 130 HP but was enough to push the boat along at a respectable 7 knots. More

importantly, it virtually sipped the fuel at about 1.2 gallons per hour. That and a full tank of fuel would give me a range of 5,000 miles.

Once I finished my checklist, I started up the main engine and let it idle in neutral to warm up, so that I was ready for any possibility. I was up the Columbia River and about 50 miles from the Pacific Ocean. I wasn't sure what effect any tidal wave might have on my current situation. I was now pretty certain that there were no pranksters to cast me off, must have been the initial earthquake that knocked over the pilings/posts I was tied up to at the marina.

I fired up all my other electronics. I had all the 'normal' stuff a blue water sailor might have. Yeah, I was a gadget guy so I had added a few extras over the usual. I already had my chart plotter/gps on. I turned on the radar, depth sounder, forward looking sonar, FLIR infrared camera display, and vhf radio. I also had the bow thruster in standby.

I noticed that while there was the low-lying fog, when I looked out through the windscreen I was a few feet above the fog so I wasn't too 'blind'. It seemed like I was perched atop a fluffy cloud, at least what I could see in the reflections of my boat lights. Even so, I powered up my FLIR (Forward Looking Infra-red) unit. Basically, new wave night vision. Yah, laugh all you want. They had come down considerably in price to where many smaller boaters could afford/justify the expenditure. After having been nearly run down in the Florida straits by high speed boats roaring past without running lights, I wanted something that would allow me to see better. Most likely drug smugglers. I was telling my tale to someone and ended up getting the unit as a result of a job I had done. It was all integrated, as everything is nowadays - all connected through an Ethernet. Like a web cam... how cool is that?

I switched the video display over to the FLIR infrared cam and panned around. It looked like many boats were adrift and also the dock looked kind of funny, sort of 'not square'. After a bit of looking it dawned on me that the upright pilings were in all different directions, as if some giant had wiggled them around a bit. My mooring lines must have slipped off the bollards I had been tied up to. I used a simple loop around the bollards rather than tie up fast to the cleats. Since it was just me on the boat, it made a lot of sense when undocking.

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As a true gadget guy I was a Ham Radio operator as well, so I had the obligatory UHF/VHF radio for the local repeaters and the HF radio for international calling on the high seas. When I bought the boat from Bill, he had the HF radio set up to send and receive weather information and updates via email. I also had a scanner in a drawer which was handy for monitoring public service as well as finding the local frequencies to contact the marina-customs-immigration, etc when arriving in an island port. It was really handy around the Caribbean.

I turned down most of the radios to concentrate on the river and what might be happening with the current and water level.

Even through there was little light, I could tell that I was starting to swing around on my anchor. The magnetic compass at my left spun lazily around. Normally, the constant river current would hold me downstream of my anchor point, like a kite in the wind. As the boat swung around I checked my water depth and kept an eye on my side/forward scanning sonar. That was all I needed, getting stuck on a sand bar after the water receded. It is a well-known boating fact that if you run aground, you ALWAYS want to do so on the low tide. Then hope like hell that the high tide will be enough to float you off of the sandbar. This surge would be the equivalent of an EXCEPTIONALLY high tide or river flood stage, so I would be out of luck if I landed on a sand bar. By this time, I was pretty sure that I would be on my own for a while. So, there would be no assistance if I were to end up high and dry.

As I swung around, the water depth changed about five feet more than I was expecting. I 'clutched-in' my motor to the propeller and kept it just above 'idle', while keeping the rudder centered to allow the boat to swing naturally on its anchor point. I was hoping to ease off some of the strain that I might be taking from the unknown surge from the tidal wave as it travelled upriver. At least according to my limited reading on the subject, a natural tidal wave is limited to 33 feet due to the atmospheric pressures and weight of salt water. Whatever, as long as I had to deal with a fraction of the original wave this far upriver, I would be happy and relieved.

The main thing I wanted to avoid was any surge that might be coming upriver and if that would carry me and my anchor away and deposit me on a sand bar or in some farmer's bottom land corn or pumpkin patch.

After about 30 minutes of being 'upstream' of my anchor, I began to swing around to the normal downstream side of the anchor. Boy, I sure hoped my anchor held after all the swinging. I paid out a little extra anchor chain just to be safe. The slow hum of the hydraulic anchor winch seemed to be much louder in the quiet pre-dawn. I went back in and checked my chart and I had the room.

As the boat swung back and settled into the anchorage, I had a chance to start 'my list'. I had to figure out what I actually had in food, water, and fuel. I had grown accustomed to keeping a list while sailing in the Caribbean. Every time I hit port, I would have a "provisioning list".

If this earthquake was as big as they had said, it might be sometime before I could resupply.

So, I got out one of my many steno pads and took stock.

Better 'sound' my tanks first. Sounding was another nautical term that was from the method of taking a measurement, or 'sound' of the tank. I wasn't sure where it had come from, but all I needed to do was to drop a sounding tape [basically a measuring tape with a brass weight at the end] in each tank, compare the level readings with a spreadsheet that converted liquid height to gallons based upon the calculations by the tank builders. It was simple if you had a perfectly square tank, but the builders had built in the tank to maximize the capacity, so they were a really odd shape to fit into the shape of the hull.

Fuel – 1000 gallons. Right about $2/3^{\text{rds}}$ of my 1500-gallon capacity. This would take my little boat a little over 4,000 miles. Diesel might get pretty scarce before this was all over.

Gasoline – I had a 5-gallon can of fuel for my little Honda scooter and my outboard engine for the tender. At nearly 100 miles to the gallon for the scooter, I could use it to get around while in port. I had made the purchase after visiting Key West with the boats former owner on our 'shakedown cruise'. The scooter, moped, or bicycle, was the main mode of transportation on the island.

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Propane – while not essential, I had found out in the Caribbean that cooking out with the grill up on deck was much more pleasant than in the ‘galley’ on the stove. Although with the onset of winter, I might rethink that. I had one full bottle and one ‘working’ that looked like it was about half full.

Water – I had a 100-gallon aluminum storage tank. When I checked the level - I only had about 50 gallons. I figured while I had the generator running I had better start making water.

The water maker was a reverse osmosis machine used to make distilled water from sea water. It’s normal output capacity was 400 gallons per day, and as long as I had kept up on the machine’s preventive maintenance, it stayed at a pretty reliable 375 gallons a day output. It worked by using a super-fine filter, capable of filtering out the salt from sea water and a high-pressure pump. The pump would keep the water pressure against the membrane and only distilled water would come through. I had never needed to use it in the river’s fresh water as it was always cheap enough to just top off my tanks from the marina. It worked well enough in sea water so it would be interesting to see if making fresh, drinkable water from the river, rather than the salty ocean would increase my output. My main concern in harbor and river areas was pollutants.

I would run the water maker until I filled up my tank and then I would look around for any clean spare jugs or containers on hand. Another thing to put on my list. If the power was out for any length of time, I knew that good clean potable water would be at a premium.

Once I had my water tank topped up, I would look around for a better, more secluded place to anchor. I could shut off my engine and generator and rely on the solar panels and two windmill generators to keep my batteries charged. I would look for a good spot with wind available. While it worked well in the Caribbean, solar power in the Northwest was pretty much a joke on the many cloudy days.

I found more than a few anchorages that looked promising. Some would be handy for winds, some for fuel [maybe], some for closeness to a store, etc.

Speaking of stores....

Checking my grocery inventory wasn't too bad, but still an eye-opener.

I had a refrigerator with fresh milk and eggs, as well as my diet Pepsi for the days and beer for the evenings. In the Caribbean, it seemed it was rum punch or beer at any time of the day, but that was a pretty big no-no if you were even thinking about pulling away from the dock. Especially in the USA or Canada. I didn't need the impaired reactions anyway. I removed the few beers left in the fridge and made a mental note to stock up on refrigerated items as soon and as much as I could. Eggs, milk, butter, bread.

I checked my freezer and it was a better picture. I had a few steaks, one of those gargantuan packages of hamburger from the box store that I had divided up into single portions. Several loaves of bread. I got in the habit of freezing my bread and only taking out a few of the slices at a time. On longer sea passages, and even just putting around in the Caribbean and Central America, one person just couldn't eat the bread faster than it spoiled. Truthfully, I didn't need bread in my diet either. But it was sure nice to have to dip into a couple over easy eggs in the morning.

I had most of my 'staples' in 5 gallon buckets with the screw-top lids. Flour, sugar, salt, rice, beans, oatmeal, cornmeal, pasta, instant mashed potatoes. Anything that came 'dried' tended to 'absorb' moisture in a boat's pantry before you actually intended in the cookpot, so it was my standard procedure to have all of that stuff in plastic bags, inside buckets with a bag of food grade desiccant under the tight lid.

When I opened my pantry door and looked to the left shelves, I had a lot of canned tuna, chicken, salmon, and corned beef. On the right side of the pantry were plenty of canned vegetables – corn, peas, beets, tomatoes, tomato paste. A few assorted jams and jellies [I was one of those 'old farts' that browsed the clearance bins in the grocery store]. Jars of pickles, sundried tomatoes, and anything that might make a welcome change. I had all the glass in either bubble-wrap/duct tape, or in beer can cozies.

Other items like tea, coffee, drink flavorings I was pretty well off.

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Again, a trip to the Big-Box store netted way more than I could eat in six months, so I just got into the habit of keeping it all in the buckets or buying in cans for longer life. Since one can of tuna would make enough tuna salad for several meals, a 12-pack would last me a very long time.

Also, the ever important, TP [toilet paper] was in good supply. But always an opportunistic buy if it was available. And affordable were widespread.

So, top of my list would be 'freshies' such as vegetables, fruit, milk, eggs. Also, I would be on the lookout for spices, toppings, anything to vary the flavor of some of the meals.

Since I might have the only working freezer in the near future, frozen foods might be a good thing on the list. Plus, with many places powerless, it seemed like a good chance to get it cheap.

My fresh water tank was near to full, so I started the little anchor winch and gave the prop a little ahead thrust and started the winch to take up the slack on the anchor chain as I eased up toward the point where my anchor was dug into the bottom.

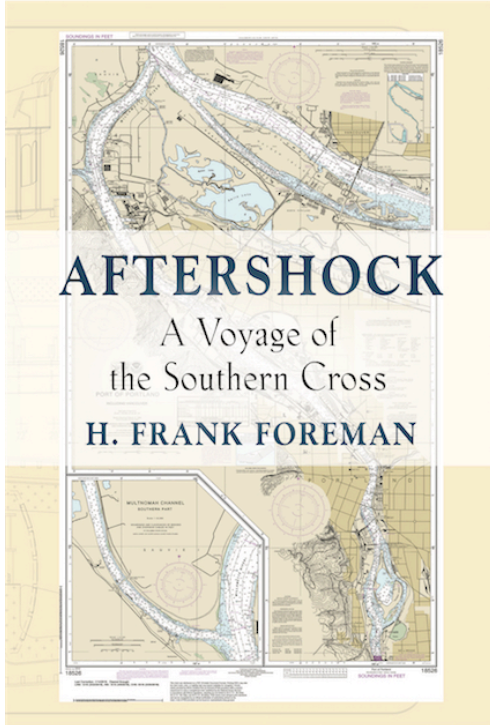
With the anchor up and in its bracket, I started looking around for the dock. It didn't look pretty, most of the boats were holed or pulled underneath the water by the collapsing pier. Perhaps some of the initial rolling I experienced was the steel hull bouncing off the dock? I wonder if more than just the paint was scratched up on my steel hull? I should make a point to check for leaks and dings, inside and out.

Since I only needed 6 feet of water depth I could get in fairly close to the part still standing close in to the bank. If I could do that, I could use my little hoist, put my scooter ashore, and be out and back much quicker than using my bicycle or going on foot.

But maneuvering in and among the trashed boats was going to be a complex and delicate operation. Added to the fact that the security gate was all askew, I re-thought my plan and decided to anchor out in a cove I had spotted on the chart. Once I was secure there, I could take my little "Tender" to the dock. It was a 12ft Boston Whaler with a 10hp engine on it. Real quiet and if the dock was in too bad a shape, I could always just

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beach it. I would throw my mountain bike in the boat and some saddle bags and backpack.



Malcom returns home after months in Afghanistan, only to have his life turned upside-down. He makes his escape to the Caribbean. Before long, the tug of friends and family bring him back to his roots, only to have his life turned topsy-turvy by the very forces of nature...

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