

The Prince George Citizen

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HUNDREDS FEARED TRAPPED

Turkish quake kills at least 500

ERZINCAN, Turkey (CP) — Rescuers searched today for hundreds believed trapped under collapsed buildings in eastern Turkey, devastated by a powerful earthquake that killed at least 500 people, officials said.

The 30-second quake, which measured 6.8 on the Richter scale, struck Friday evening Erzincan, about 550 kilometres east of Ankara.

The tremor demolished high-rise buildings in Erzincan and destroyed houses in 13 nearby provinces. It cracked roads and bridges, set off landslides and avalanches, and destroyed water, power and telephone lines.

"The earthquake tore everything down with a great roaring sound. It shook and then shook again,"

said Necdet Guner, one of about 150 injured people being treated in freezing temperatures on stretchers in the garden of a state hospital.

Turkish television said a total of at least 250 people had been injured.

The Canadian Embassy in Ankara said it believes there are no Canadians among the casualties.

At least three aftershocks shook the city and terrified residents spent the night shivering under blankets in darkened, rubble-strewn streets.

At least 500 bodies were pulled from the rubble at Erzincan, Ahmet Karabilgin, the governor of the eastern province of Sivas, said today.

More people are feared dead.

"According to first reports we estimate a death toll of between 300 to 1,000," senior Turkish minister Omer Barutcu told Anatolian news agency Friday night.

Apartment and office blocks swayed and fell in Erzincan, a city of 175,000 people. A six-storey school, a hospital, two hotels, an orphanage, a police headquarters and parts of a sugar factory were levelled.

Acting provincial governor Fikret Cuhadaroglu said today a quarter of all city buildings had collapsed.

"Erzincan started rocking like a cradle," said Ahmet Elden, 55, whose wife and four children were buried.

Communications with surrounding towns and villages were cut

off and there were few details of damage and casualties.

Rescue teams, some using car headlights, worked through the night to dig out survivors.

The quake hit as many families were eating the evening meal with which Muslims break their daytime fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

Up to 150 people were buried under the ruins of the four-storey Selimoglu Ishani business centre, next to municipality offices, where they had gathered for Ramadan prayers.

Some had been rescued, but most were still trapped more than 12 hours after the quake. "I have friends down there. I have to reach them," said jeweller Sirri Ozdinc as he helped rescuers.

Deaths were reported as far away as Kelkit, 40 kilometres to the north, in Gumushane province. The Anatolian news agency said five people died and six were injured in a village there.

Seventy-five prisoners tried to escape from a military jail in Erzincan today after it was damaged by the quake, Anatolian news agency said. It said they would be transferred to another jail.

In Ankara, Canada's ambassador, Paul Lapointe, said no Canadians were registered in the area of the quake.

"There are no mining operations in the region" where Canadians might work as advisers. "And as the area is an extremely troubled one, Canadian tourists have been warned to avoid it," Lapointe told

The Canadian Press in a telephone interview.

Erzincan's deputy governor, Mehmet Unal, said Swiss teams with trained dogs would join rescue efforts in the next 48 hours. He appealed for food and tents to be sent urgently for survivors afraid to return to their homes.

A relief team and a 200-bed mobile hospital are being rushed to the area the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies announced in Geneva.

U.S. forces based in Turkey to protect the Kurds of northern Iraq sent relief supplies and personnel to Erzincan in a Hercules transport plane and three Blackhawk helicopters.

Smaaslet gets 15-year term

by MARILYN STORIE
Citizen Staff

A Fort Ware man convicted of second-degree murder will spend 15 years in a federal prison before becoming eligible for parole after he was sentenced in B.C. Supreme Court here Friday.

Gerald (Jerry) Smaaslet, 30, was sentenced by Mr. Justice Victor Curtis, who said he agreed with the 15-year recommendation of the jury which convicted Smaaslet Feb. 19. He called their recommendation "a reliable guide to public opinion."

Mr. Justice Curtis agreed with Crown prosecutor Alan Bate, who said the unusual circumstances surrounding the murder of Donna May Charlie, 22, called for a longer sentence. Anyone convicted of second-degree murder must serve a minimum of 10 years and can be sentenced to as many as 25 years in prison before becoming eligible for parole.

Charlie was Smaaslet's girlfriend. Her headless remains were found April 17, 1991 in a shallow grave in an empty lot here near the Sportsmen's Hotel on Queensway.

The cause of the Fort Ware woman's death was not determined at the trial. Curtis said the evidence indicated her head likely came off due to advanced decomposition when the body was moved sometime after her death.

"Mr. Smaaslet went to consider-

able effort to avoid detection," said Curtis. "What is unusual are Smaaslet's efforts to conceal the crime and the frightening threat he made to a witness, a threat that terrified her and almost achieved its purpose."

Bate asked that Smaaslet serve from 15 to 20 years before becoming eligible for parole.

Mr. Justice Curtis said Smaaslet's record of violent offences shows he is "dangerously violent in spite of what good qualities he might have."

Smaaslet was convicted of assault causing bodily harm in 1988 and sentenced to 30 months in jail. The victim was his girlfriend. Bate said the severity of the sentence indicated it "was a very serious matter."

Smaaslet was convicted of assault with a weapon and related charges in 1983 and sentenced to five years in jail.

An expected Charter of Rights and Freedom argument was withdrawn by one of Smaaslet's defence lawyers at the sentence hearing. Randy Walker said he had determined the argument was not pertinent.

He said Smaaslet had a good upbringing and was a good candidate for rehabilitation. He asked for a sentence of about 12 years.

Tip turned down

by Southam News

A Vancouver waitress is being praised for turning down the tip of a lifetime.

"We're just ecstatic," said Bob Naicker, district manager for Denny's of Canada, of employee Maria Ling's honesty in refusing \$11,100 from an elderly customer.

Ling said Friday the 81-year-old man, a regular at the restaurant, tried to give her two rolls of money Feb. 19 as a tip after she had served him at the restaurant chain's Burrard street eatery.

"He got up and he came up to me and he handed me two rolls of money. I thought, 'Oh my God, that's 100-dollar bills.' I said, 'No sir, that's your money,' and he kept pushing it back and telling the manager to, 'Give it to the nice lady.'"

Ling said the man left, but was tracked down on the street. When he was brought back, she said, police were called.

She said the money turned out to be part of his savings. "He's a little mixed up," Ling added.

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"How come the dog gets lean beef and gravy and I get a cheese sandwich?"



VANDALS TRASH HOUSE

Home and life left in ruins

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen Staff

Jamie Bertrand's Prince George home and his new life are both in ruins.

The 33-year-old, who suffers from brain damage, found the devastation caused by vandals when he returned from his 12-year-old daughter's funeral in Vancouver in January.

"I've got nothing left to live for now," he said when he came home as he viewed the destruction.

There were gaping holes in the walls; ripped-out cupboards, wall partitions and closets; broken windows; dangling electric wires and switches; smashed bathroom fixtures and hot water tank; wrecked stove, refrigerator and furnace, and water-soaked carpet.

Stereo equipment, VCR, television, power saw and truck had been stolen and his pet white poodle Sputtie (named for the Soviet satellite Sputnik) was missing.

Doug Bertrand, Jamie's father and half owner of the house, believes Sputtie was slain during the episode.

"All police will tell us is that the dog is dead," Doug said here this week while up from Vancouver to repair the house. Doug does most of the talking for his disabled son.

"It looks to me like they killed the dog with this axe and threw it against the wall," said Doug, pointing out smeared walls and an axe handle with white hairs stuck to it.

The poodle was a family pet for 15 years.

"It's a terrible loss to me," said Jamie, who has struggled to cope with his problems.

In piecing the story together, the Bertrands learned Jamie's upstairs tenant had a party which grew out of control. Neighbors reported the incident to police and charges have been laid against five people, said Doug.

The destruction of his home was just the latest in a series of tragedies for Jamie.

His hard-luck story began in the mid-1980s when he was "zapped by a high voltage of electricity" while employed at Cantree Plywood in New Westminster, which left him disabled and unable to work.

His income was reduced to federal government and International Woodworkers of America pensions.

"After he got sick, his common-law wife left him," said Doug. "She took their two children, who ended up in foster homes. Jamie wasn't allowed to see them."

In January, Jamie learned from a story in a Vancouver newspaper his daughter Michelle was dying from a brain tumor. "They think it was caused from pesticide used in the Surrey area where she lived," explained Doug. Jamie went to see her and was



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

Jamie Bertrand stands in the ruins of his Prince George home which was trashed by vandals.

allowed a 10-minute visit. Three days later she died and Jamie attended her funeral before returning home to find the damage, estimated by the Bertrands at \$30,000.

They purchased the house in Prince George last May for about \$30,000.

"Jamie wanted to make it on his own — like a new start — so we chose Prince George as way for him to get away from his past and because it was less expensive to live here," said Doug.

Jamie got his stolen truck back after paying an impound fee of

\$185, but his personal possessions have been sold to pawn shops.

He's particularly bitter about losing irreplaceable items like antique articles and a record collection which lies shattered and scattered in hundreds of pieces on the staircase and upper floor, where fragments are imbedded in the wall.

Even his waterbed was trashed, with wooden posts split like pieces of stove wood and the mattress slashed and left to soak the main floor.

The home was insured for fire loss, but the company won't pay

these damages because there was no coverage for a tenant, Doug said.

The company returned \$184 as an unearned portion of the annual fees and cancelled the policy.

A Prince George lawyer has been hired to investigate the insurance coverage.

Doug and Jamie have patched the outside holes, replaced windows and bolted the door.

"All we can do is lock it up and see what happens with the insurance."

The Bertrands left Wednesday for Vancouver.