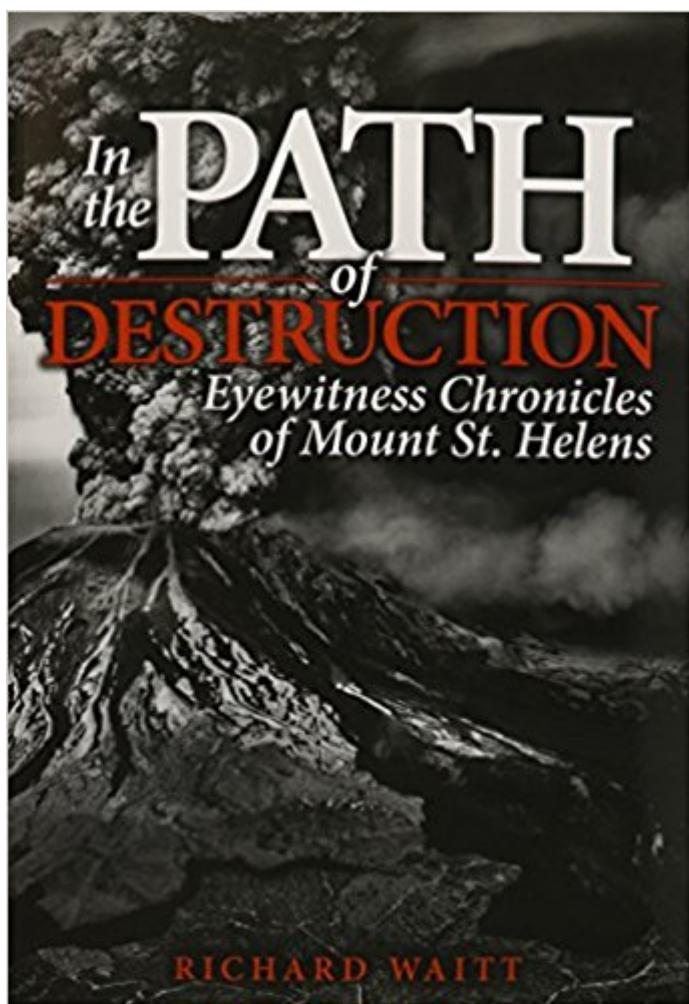


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# In The Path Of Destruction: Eyewitness Chronicles Of Mount St. Helens



## Synopsis

"The air had no oxygen, like being trapped underwater...I was being cremated, the pain unbearable."--Jim Scymanky "I was on my knees, my back to the hot wind. It blew me along, lifting my rear so I was up on my hands...It was hot but I didn't feel burned--until I felt my ears curl."--Mike Hubbard A napping volcano blinked awake in March 1980. Two months later, the mountain roared. Author Richard Waitt was one of the first to arrive following the mountain's early rumblings. A geologist with intimate knowledge of Mount St. Helens, Waitt delivers a detailed and accurate chronicle of events. His eruption story unfolds through unforgettable, riveting narratives--the heart of a masterful chronology that also delivers engrossing science, history, and journalism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A napping volcano blinked awake in March 1980. Two months later, when that mountain roared, Jim Scymanky was logging a slope above Hoffstadt Creek. "Rocks zinged through the woods, bouncing off trees, then the tops of trees snapped off...Suddenly I could see nothing...it got hot right away, then scorching hot and impossible to breathe...I was being cremated, the pain unbearable." Mike Hubbard was further away--sixteen miles northwest, near Green River. "I was on my knees, my back to the hot wind. It blew me along, lifting my rear so I was up on my hands...It was hot but I didn't feel burned--until I felt my ears curl." Steve Malone, at the University of Washington Seismology Laboratory, was inconsolable. "We'd failed. For two months we'd counted and located thousands of earthquakes, looked for changes to anticipate an eruption. Then it just happened. It killed many people...We could hardly work." \*\*\* Author Richard Waitt was part of a U.S. Geological

Survey team conducting volcano research in the Cascades, and was one of the first to arrive following the mountain's early rumblings. His journey collecting eyewitness accounts began with a conversation in a bar the third week after Mount St. Helens erupted. The couple he met barely outraced a searing ash cloud, and Waitt realized their experiences could inform geologic studies. He eventually completed hundreds of interviews--sometimes two and three decades later--often making multiple visits. A meticulous scientist with intimate knowledge of Mount St. Helens, Waitt also tapped legal depositions, personal diaries, geologists' field notes, and more to present a detailed and accurate chronicle of events. "In the Path of Destruction" depicts the eruption through unforgettable, riveting narratives--the heart of a masterful chronology that also delivers engrossing science, history, and journalism.

I was there and this is an accurate and factual record of what happened. It took 30 years for the author to collect, verify and re-verify all these witnesses' statements, for the most part in their own words, and the narrative is written for the non-scientist in a clear and easy-to-read format. It provides a first-hand look at the first modern documented volcanic eruption in the continental United States and is a fascinating read. Remember Harry Truman and Spirit Lake Lodge? He's there, in his own salty words; Governor Dixie Lee Ray's lack of actions before the eruption are analyzed; the local military's reactions to the disaster are discussed; a great deal of the United States' modern disaster response can be seen here in its infancy. Satellite communications came into its own at Mt. St. Helens. Volcanic eruptions were really unpredictable back in 1980. The sense of impending doom came and went with scientists' declarations, but we on the ground knew something would happen fairly soon. How bad, how far-reaching, how many lives impacted...no one knew. We made our best guesses and did what we thought was prudent. And then we waited. Waitt has recorded this tension and suspense so that reading it I was suddenly back over that table planning the extent of the Red Zone and wondering if it was enough. Or too much. The author has taken extraordinary pains to ensure that the book is true and accurate, something that's hard to come by these days. Did I really call that National Guard Sergeant "Sonny"? The event was exciting at the time and Richard Waitt has captured that sense in this book. What an accomplishment.

I have just finished Richard Waitt's great book, *In the Part of Destruction: Eyewitness Chronicles of Mt. St. Helens*. I was there and was very involved in the response of the 304th Combat Rescue Squadron from Portland, OR. I have been waiting a long time to see how Richard could tie everything together. No one else could have written a better book. Buy it now and read it before the

coming 35th anniversary.

Scientifically accurate, compelling account of the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens. This book is an original, not just a recitation of newspaper articles, and a genuine contribution to the literature on the eruption. Dr. Waitt has written a book that will stand the test of time as one of the best on geology and volcano behavior.

It was a Shakespearean tragedy. It began with a single shaking originating from beneath the north flank of Mount St. Helens. The seismic activity grew in intensity for six weeks as the north flank of the volcano crept forward. Then the cataclysmic explosions. Many lives were changed forever. In the Path of Destruction are the stories of those who witnessed the buildup and the cataclysmic event. It is told in their own words. Richard Waitt has done a remarkable job in gathering these interviews, a task that took 30 years to complete. He frames the stories so that the reader can follow the multiple story lines: the loggers, the tourists, the residents, the employees of the National Forest Service and of the Geological Survey. This is the story of the Titanic as told with a volcano: We know the ending. But, until now, few knew the personal stories. Waitt has done a great service to those who are interested in the dynamic Earth and in history. This book is destined to be a classic.

A comprehensive account of the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980. The author interviewed hundreds of people who experienced the eruption in various ways: hikers, campers, rescue personnel, geologists, law enforcement, local politicians, news people, pilots, etc. My only criticism is that after a while, the accounts pretty much sound the same and it becomes very repetitive. As a result, I skipped some pages when it became repetitive. But this is definitely a thorough job of examining all the aspects of this historic eruption and makes you wonder if we are ready for the next big natural catastrophe (like the earthquake predicted for the Cascadia Subduction Zone.)

Worth reading, this account of the Mt St Helens eruption will give you insight into the disaster and people that made it through or not. It is a quick and interesting read. It takes you right through the preamble, the eruption and the aftermath. Those who enjoy adventure and/or nature in fury will like this book.

Really incredibly researched. The personal accounts are riveting. Definitely gives you a feeling of being there prior and during the eruption. One image that still sticks with me is the old Harry

Truman, vowing to stay at his place on Spirit lake--the last time he's seen alive is from a plane as the mountain is erupting, heading in his red truck up the mountain as the mountain is coming down on him. Fascinating book, well written.

An amazing story well told.

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