

Topic: My families experience of the Loma Prieta earthquake.

Abstract: Tuesday October 17th 1989 is a day I will never forget. Loma Prieta earthquake hit Hollister, California. The earthquake devastates my parent and aunt's house inside. My family is worried sick about other family members that were near the epicenter of the earthquake at the time. The earthquake affects many people negatively. In the end my family comes together and things return to normal.

Key Words: October 17th 1989, Loma Prieta Earthquake, family, disaster, 89 World Series, earthquake capitol, San Andreas Fault,

Tuesday October 17th 1989 started out; just like any other normal day in my life, but little did I know that it would be a day that I will never forget. Like any other Tuesday, my mom woke my brother and I up early to get ready for school. We got up, ate breakfast, and headed off to school. I remember the weather being strange that day – cloudy yet sunny, but a warm day for October. I couldn't wait to get out of school because my aunt was going to pick us up from school and take care of us until my mom would pick us up. I really liked going to my aunt's house because she always had treats for us and we got to watch television and play video games - something we didn't do on a daily basis because we didn't own a television. My aunt picked us up and we were having such a fun time. Little did we know that the rest of the day and the days to follow that week would be an experience that none of us would never forget.

My parents arrived to pick us up around four in the afternoon. As usual, they were talking with my aunt and uncle – catching up on stories. I remember my parents talking to my aunt – an animal lover, about how our cat Shoelace had gone missing. My brothers and I had been sitting around the television drinking soda and eating pizza. It was 5:03 in the afternoon and we were just about to leave, but Mother Nature had other plans in store for us. At 5:04 in the afternoon the ground begun to shake ferociously, along with the

house and everything else in site. It was an earthquake of huge proportion! I had experienced many earthquakes growing up in Hollister, California – known as the earthquake capitol of the world at the time – however, this earthquake was unlike any I had ever felt. My parents, aunt and uncle all yelled to us to get in the doorways or under the tables. I could sense in their nervousness and in the panic of their voices that they also had never experienced an earthquake quite as powerful as this. I was seven years old at the time, and like most young kids I would tend to focus on what is important to me. As we were all standing under the doorways I asked my mom, “ But what about my soda?” Afterwards and to this day, my family has a good laugh about it every time the story is told. The earthquake however was no laughing matter. It was recorded lasting about fifteen seconds, but in my memory it seemed like it was fifteen minutes – everything being in slow motion. I remember watching as the paintings and pictures in my aunt’s living room swung back and forth on the walls most of them falling to the floor. Glasses, plates and bowls came flying off shelves and out of cupboards like someone was throwing them. The violent earthquake shook and jolted us back and forth as we braced ourselves with our arms in between the doorways. My heart raced as my adrenaline pumped through my body - waiting for the earthquake to stop. When it finally stopped, I felt as if I was walking on a wobble board, but it was just my nerves and adrenaline. My aunt’s cats were no were to be seen and her dogs where howling and barking endlessly as my parents made sure everyone was okay. Everyone was glad the shaking had stopped, although the damage was done. My aunt’s house looked as if a bomb had gone off with furniture toppled everywhere. Food, dishes, pictures, any and everything that was decorating the house was now covering the floors broken and scattered about. Everyone

was giving his or her perspective on what had just happened – trying to take in the event. As we talked and inspected her house for damage, we all jumped and ran for cover every time there was an aftershock. After things had settled down at my aunt’s house, we decided to head home to make sure our house was still standing.

As we gave hugs and said our good byes, we loaded up into my parent’s car and started to drive home at about 6:00pm. My aunt lived in towards the foothills of Hollister so it took a few minutes to get back to our house in town. As we proceeded home, we passed trees that had fallen over as well as downed telephone poles and wires. People were standing outside of their houses along with their neighbors talking and checking up on each other to make sure they were okay. As we arrived home – all of us were happy to see that our house was standing without any significant exterior damage. I remember my dad turning off the gas to the house before we even went inside to prevent any gas leaks and accidental fires and ensure we weren’t inhaling any toxic gas. As we entered the house the first thing I noticed was the cat food that broke open covering the entire kitchen floor. Much like my aunt’s house – our house was a disaster, especially the kitchen area which seemed as if a party popper full of all our pots, pans, bowl dishes exploded there. All the cupboards were wide open and nothing remained inside of them, the shelves were bare. A few items of furniture had fallen over and a window was broken, but the damage seemed minor considering that the San Andreas Fault ran through the city of Hollister about a quarter mile from where we lived. Then, when I thought it was all over and under control my mom began to stress out again and broke down crying. I remember thinking, why was she crying? What’s wrong?

My mom had remembered that her brother was at game three of the World Series between the Oakland A's and the San Francisco Giants, which was being held in San Francisco. She had no way to find out at that time how he was. Cell phones weren't exactly in existence at the time and a lot of phone lines had fallen during the earthquake, cutting off communication to a lot of areas. We found out later that day that he was okay. I remember hearing my uncle's story about that day in the ballpark days after the event. He told me he was in the upper deck of the stadium watching the teams warm up and take batting practice when the quake began. He said, "The whole stadium was moving back and forth and at first no one was quite sure what was going on." He had told us about how the foul poles were swaying back and forth like they were blades of grass in the wind. People were exiting their seats onto the field frantically to get away the stadium walls in case it collapsed. Since he was sitting towards the top of the stadium he was not able to exit the stadium quickly and had to hope and pray it didn't collapse with him in the stadium. After the quake stopped, they cancelled the game. He said it took him a long time to get home because of so many accidents on the road, chaos, and bridges and overpasses had collapsed. We were just glad to know that he was safe. Although we had gone through a frightful experience, we were safe and still had a home, which wasn't the case for everyone that day. Many lost their homes, businesses, family and loved ones that day.

That night we got all the camping equipment out and barbecued outside. We lived by candlelight, light from flashlights and lanterns due to the effects of the earthquake. After a hectic day it was a relief to hang out with my family and do the things we normally did on a very abnormal day; play cards, board games and pray. A few days later

my cat Shoelace returned and we realized that she had ran away because it sensed the earthquake before it happened. Over the next few days and even for weeks the news showed nothing but destruction and tales of shocking earthquake. Everyone had their story of where they were at 5:04 pm on that historical October day and people wanted to hear it and share their story as well. Still to this day, when I hear something that reminds me of that day, the vivid details that are etched come pouring out and I start to relive that day all over. It has been almost twenty-three years since that day and to this day I can remember it as if it just happened yesterday. Tuesday October 17th 1989 – a day that I will never forget.