

(This letter shares a first-hand Oakland account of the 1906 earthquake. It was written for his brother Alden's granddaughter for a school project. It was retyped from the original copy in the family's private collection.)

424 Water St, Jackson, California 95642
April 15, 1975

Dear Holly

When I came home this afternoon I found your letter and was very glad to hear from you. How are your mother and dad and all the family. Give them all my love. I have built a fire in the fireplace, put my supper on to cook and while it is cooking am going to start answering your letter. I will finish it after supper. I know you have a deadline to meet so am wasting no time.

As to the earthquake of 1906 I remember it very well. I, like many others had some interesting experiences. I will write them down without any attempt at logical sequence or order but just how they come to mind. You can sort them out and use them as you see fit.

The week before the earthquake I had spent my nights sleeping in a treehouse that your grand-dad and I had built. When I came back into the house I decided that sleeping under the stars was my dish. Outside my room was a flat roof with planter boxes around the edge. This was an ideal place so I thought to put my bed. I forgot to say that the week I spent in the tree house was the spring vacation. Starting back to school was a busy time so I did not get to move my bed out on the roof either Monday or Tuesday night.

Wednesday night I came home about ten o'clock from some school doing. It must have been Tuesday night as the earthquake occurred Wednesday morning at 5:30 give or take a few minutes. Anyway I started to move my bed out on the roof. Your grand-dad who was my brother Alden was sleeping in the room next to mine. He woke up and asked me what I was doing. When I told him he said "Don't move it out tonight. Mother went to bed with a sick headache and you might wake her up." So, I left it in the middle of the floor and went to bed.

At 5:30 the next morning I was awakened by my bed rolling on its castors all over the room. As I jumped out of bed not fully realizing what was happening a six-flue brick chimney fell covering the spot on the roof where I had planned to put my bed about two feet or more deep with bricks and mortar. If I had been out there they would have washed me off the bricks with a sponge.

Alden and I (Alden was your grand-dad) ran down the back stairs and out the back door. My dad (that would be your great-grand-dad) was out in the yard as was his custom working in the garden. He later said that he tried to wave us back as another chimney was just starting to fall off the roof onto the back porch. He said we ran out through a shower of bricks and he thought surely we would be killed. I don't remember any bricks falling but when we were safely out and looked back I remember the back porch and steps were covered with bricks and some still falling.

Mother (your great-grandmother) and the girls all went out the front door. The front door jammed and they had trouble opening it and while they were struggling with the door a shower of bricks came down covering the steps about where they would have been. It seemed as though an angel was perched on all of our shoulders that morning as we all came through without a scratch. There were only a couple of neighbors but all were out in their night shirts and pajamas, the women all wore long nightgowns down to their ankles and a few of the men wore pajamas but most of them long nightshirts and that was how every-