

Commandancy of the Alamo
Bejar, Feby. 24, 1836

To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World

Fellow citizens & compatriots

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country VICTORY OR DEATH.

William Barret Travis,

Lt. Col. comdt.

P.S. The Lord is on our side. When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn. We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels and got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves. Travis

Milton Elford was a young man living in Galveston with his mother, father and a young nephew, Dwight. Milton was the only one of his family to survive the storm. He described his experience in a letter to his brothers in North Dakota. We join his story as the rising water and intensity of the storm persuade the family to leave their home for a sturdier brick house across the street:

"We left our house about 4 o'clock thinking we would be safer in a larger house, not dreaming that even that house would be washed away. We went across the street to a fine large house, built on a brick foundation high off the ground. About 5 it grew worse and began to break up the fence, and the wreckage of other houses was coming against us.

We had arranged that if the house showed signs of breaking up, I would take the lead and Pa would come next, with Dwight and Ma next. In this way I could make a safe place to walk, as we would have to depend on floating debris for rafts.

There were about fifteen or sixteen in the house besides ourselves. They were confident the house would stand anything; if not for that we would probably have left on rafts before the house went down. We all gathered in one room; all at once the house went from its foundation and the water came in waist-deep, and we all made a break for the door, but could not get it open. We then smashed out the window and I led the way.

I had only got part way out when the house fell on us. I was hit on the head with something and it knocked me out and into the water head first. I do not know how long I was down, as I must have been stunned. I came up and got hold of some wreckage on the other side of the house. I could see one man on some wreckage to my left and another on my right. I went back to the door that we could not open. It was broke in, and I could go part way in, as one side of the ceiling was not within four or five feet, I think, of water. There was not a thing in sight.

I went back and got on the other side but no one ever came up that I could see. We must all have gone down the same time, but I cannot tell what they did not come up.

I then started to leave by partly running and swimming from one lot of debris to another. The street was full of tops and sides of houses and the air was full of flying boards. I think I gained about a block on the debris in this way, and got in the shelter of some buildings, but they were fast going

down, and I was afraid of getting buried.

Just then, the part I was on started down the street, and I stuck my head and shoulders in an old tool chest that was lying in the debris that I was on. I could hardly hold this down on its side from being blown away, but that is what saved my life again.

When the water went down about 3 a.m., I was about five blocks from where I started. My head was bruised and legs and hands cut a little, which I did not find until Monday and then I could hardly get my hat on.

...As soon as it was light enough, I went back to the location of the house, and not a sign of it could be found and not a sign any house within two blocks, where before there was scarcely a vacant lot.

I then went to the city hall to see the chief of police, to get some help to recover the corpses, thinking, I guess, that I was the only one in that fix.

The fireman and others started before noon to bring in corpses; they brought them in in wagon loads of about a dozen at a time, laid them down in rows to be identified, and the next day they were badly decomposed, and were loaded on boats and taken to sea only to wash back on the beach. They then started to bury them wherever they were found but yesterday (Wednesday) the corpses were ordered burned. Men started removing the debris and burning it, and when they came upon a corpse it is just thrown on the pile."