

Notes and interview for Trenton Brown story

INSTRUCTIONS

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown Press, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information and interviews, write a feature story as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as quotes or in transitions.

BACKGROUND

Leaguetown is located on the gulf coast of Texas. During Hurricane Peter in September, Trenton Brown was unable to evacuate from his grandfather's coastal condominium. While trying to leave, his grandfather fell and lost consciousness. Trenton managed to carry his grandfather up the second floor of the condominium before the flooding started. His grandfather remained unconscious while the eye passed over Leaguetown.

Emergency workers knew Trenton and his grandfather were trapped just before the hurricane hit the town, but they were unable to rescue them because of strong winds and flooding. For the first part of the hurricane, Trenton talked to a 911 dispatcher but lost mobile service about an hour into the storm. Following instructions from the dispatcher, Trenton put a life jacket on himself and his grandfather. As the eye of the hurricane approached Leaguetown, his grandfather's condo began to rock and fall apart. As waves crashed into the home, Trenton tied himself to his grandfather and clung to extra life jackets. For a little more than two hours, the pair was tossed about in the open waters. As the hurricane began to pass, three rescue workers in a boat found the pair floating in the water. Trenton's grandfather was unconscious but was revived later in a makeshift hospital. His grandfather suffered a severe concussion and mild hypothermia.

At 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26, Trenton will receive Leaguetown's Hometown Hero Award at the annual Fall Festival at Gulfview Park. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Monday, Oct. 21.

The city gives the Hometown Hero to one individual each year. Last year's recipient was a local man who saved three children from a burning home. Hometown Heroes receive a plaque, a city resolution declaring them a hero and a \$1,000 check. The mayor and a panel of police officers and firefighters select the Hometown Hero each year.

• TRENTON BROWN, senior

"My parents took me to my grandfather's on Thursday, Sept. 5 to help evacuate to my aunt's house in Houston. We were supposed to leave first thing Friday morning, but we were delayed because my grandfather couldn't find his kitten. He didn't want to leave without her. When we finally found her, the rain was already pretty intense, and we were the only ones left in the condos.

As we attempted to leave, my grandfather slipped, fell on the concrete sidewalk and was knocked out. I wasn't exactly sure what to do. I tried waking him up, but when that didn't work, I dragged him inside. I called my parents, but their mobile phones were down. Then I called 911. The dispatcher told me someone would be here within minutes. No one came. After about 20 minutes, I called back. She told me that the police radioed that they couldn't reach the condos. We would have to wait out the storm. I was scared, but the dispatcher was great. She told me to get my grandfather to the second level if I could and put life jackets on both of us. It was tough carrying Grandpa up the stairs, but he's not a huge man. When I got him upstairs, I found four life jackets. I put one on each of us and called the dispatcher back. She talked with me until I lost service. That's when I started to panic a little. I could hear the condo begin to crumble. The first floor was flooded. I knew it wouldn't be long before the entire condo was gone.

I tied my grandfather to me and began praying. I pulled a mattress on top of us to protect us from the collapsing roof. I don't think I've ever prayed that much in my life. I don't remember the final moments before the condo was sucked into the gulf. It all seems like a blur. I think I may have passed out for a few moments. Once we were in the open water, I actually felt safer. I don't know why, but a calm came across me. We were whipped around by the waves, but I believed we would survive. It took all of my strength to keep my grandfather's head above water, but I managed to do it. When I saw the rescue boat, I started crying. It was the first time I cried. I was so grateful that they risked their lives to come find us.

My grandfather is doing fine now. In fact, after about three days of rest, he was back to his feisty old self. He doesn't remember a thing, and I am glad. I couldn't save his kitten, and I hated telling him that. Last week, I adopted a new calico for his 75th birthday. He named the cat Stormy.

I haven't talked about this experience much. I didn't want people to think I had a big head. I also still have nightmares. It's kind of hard to talk about. I'm a little embarrassed to get this hero award. This is an important award, and I am not sure I deserve it. Other people did more heroic things – like the guy who rescued us. I am honored to receive it. I just think many more people deserve it, too.

• **MARSHALL BROWN, Trenton's grandfather**

"Trenton saved my life. I put his life in jeopardy, and he turned around and saved mine. He's an amazing kid. I don't think anyone is more deserving of the Hometown Hero Award. Of course, Trenton doesn't think he deserves it. He's a humble kid. He didn't even want to talk to the local papers. He only gave a reporter a few sentences for her story. I know it's probably hard for him to talk about the experience, but I also know he doesn't want anyone to think he's bragging. The kid is all heart. All heart.

• **STELLA RUIZ, mayor**

"Bonnie North, the police dispatcher who talked with Trenton during the hurricane, nominated Trenton for the award. Once the committee heard the story, it was an easy selection. It's true. We had a lot of heroes in Leaguetown during the hurricane, but I don't think any of them were as brave as Trenton. An 18-year-old kid went through hell to save his grandfather and himself. It is an incredible story.