I interviewed many family members over their experiences of the Oklahoma City bombing. They all had vivid memories of where they were, what they were doing, and how it affected them. I chose to write this essay about my dad’s experience, because he seemed to be the most affected by the bombing.

My dad, Will Tankersley, said that he remembered the attack. He was a senior in high school and found out walking between classes. Will said his teachers turned the news on the television, and he was struck by how shocking it was to see places in his community look like a warzone. When he went to medical school, many of his teachers had been first responders in the bombing. My dad became a psychiatrist who works with trauma. Will said that he, “continues to see the effects of this trauma expressed in our community’s PTSD experiences.”

When I asked my dad how he thought the bombing had changed the Oklahoma City community, he responded, “I think the experience of the bombing helped unite the city and the state. Everyone chipped in to support the city through the healing. Oklahoma City developed a resiliency that has helped it overcome subsequent disasters like the Moore tornados. Oklahoma City has a higher level of preparedness than other communities that face these kinds of disasters.” Based on what my dad said, I think the Oklahoma City bombing helped everyone unite, to care about each other, and continues to create a bond.

I believe that we can continue to work to improve our community by remembering the events that we have persevered through as a whole. This is important because we need to uplift each other rather than push others down, reminding me of the quote of managing director of
Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Abhishek Shukla, “Strong people don’t put others down, they lift them up.” I think as individuals we can unite to help in times of need. We should always think of helping people who need it and collaborate when problems arise. If a new neighbor needs help moving things into their home, go and offer to help them move their stuff. If there is ailment, seek help creating an opportunity for others to assist. As a society, we should speak out against violence and bullying.

We, as Oklahomans, embraced the horrible tragedy of the Oklahoma City Bombing, creating an environment of healing for our community. Though there are everlasting effects, especially on those who experienced its wrath firsthand, we have used this experience to unite, so we are ready to help in times of need. This unity has created a compassionate society, encouraging the future generations, like mine, to lead a healthy and successful life.