

My hero, my grandpa

A grandpa. My definition of my grandpa was a wise man that gave the best advice, the best storyteller in the universe, the best person to make you cheer up when you are down, and the funniest man alive.

From the beginning of my life, my grandpa was always there for me. From picking me up from school to taking me to practices and coming to watch those dreaded little kid soccer games that always appear to take place when it is raining. He was always there no matter what!

When I was three years old, I had a tragic accident happen. My dad died right in front of me. He got electrocuted by my mom's car he was trying to fix. We were the only ones home, so no one was there to come get me. During that day as I can recall, my grandparents were the first ones to get to me. The part that I remember the most was my grandpa picking me up and just constantly telling me everything was going to be fine.

That's the day my life changed dramatically. My three older brothers and I went from living with both my parents to my mom being a single mother with four little young ones running around the house, not having a clue what was going on. Within the month we had moved out of our "old" house in Indian River and were living with my grandparents in Gaylord.

All of these events made me learn one concept that I can rely on forever. Family. Family is what helped us get through this whole tragic event, and made us kids and my mom come out as strong as possible.

My grandpa was always the first one to come and help me with homework, or to come help me create a project for school. He was the best guy around, he worked full-time as the president of local UAW for years. He helped older folks figure out their insurance stuff, and was always the first one to make a phone call when there was a mistake with the insurance policy. He always helped people, he loved doing it, and there's no doubt in my mind that if he had one last penny, and he could save it for himself or give it to someone else in need, he would give it to someone in need.

As I got older, I started to understand the importance of what my grandpa did and why he volunteered to help older people out. I would go to his office after school and do my homework while he was finishing up his work for the day. Every time I was there, the first thing he offered me was a coke, or a drink in his mini fridge. That was the highlight of my life when I was a little kid, getting to go to grandpa's office, not only do I get to spend more time with him, but the cokes played a little role in that too.

He taught me a lesson one day while I was playing in his office, and the lesson was, "always help the older generation in need because one day you will need help and you will be older." I have never forgotten that since the day he told me that. He taught me right from wrong, and he taught me how to be sneaky. He taught me how to respect others even when there's a difference of opinion, and to never give up.

Fast forward six years. I was nine years old when my mom remarried and we got a new house, in the same town, just a short 15-minute drive away. The day I was packing my things up to go to the new house, I had a melt-down. Not just any type of melt-down; it was the type that only grandpas can calm me down. I didn't want to move; I was happy where I was. Every morning I got to wake up and see my best friend, my grandpa. We would watch the birds from the back window and drink my "small" cup of coffee and then we would sit and talk about our dreams or he would tell me a funny story to make sure my day started off on a good foot. What would I do without waking up to him every day? Who is going

to make me my “small” cup of coffee and watch the birds, and tell me all these crazy/ funny stories that half the time we couldn’t even finish because I was laughing way to hard?

He made a promise to me that day, and that was every morning he would call me, and we would talk about my dreams, and that we would watch the birds, but I would watch different ones and he would describe to me all the ones he saw, and I would do the same to him. It was like being together, but separate. That is exactly what he did too. Every night I would go to bed looking forward to hearing from him in the morning.

The days got easier from being gone from him, but I would always beg my parents to let me go over there and see him almost every day. I explained to them how much I missed his crazy stories and the tractor rides and counting the frogs in the pond: which we never could seem to both get the same number so we would recount until we did. I think from that point forward they knew I wasn’t going to stop begging until I finally got to see him three times a week.

As years went by and I started getting older I noticed some things changing about my grandpa. He would forget to do little things like take out the garbage for my grandma and get the mail. At my age I just simply thought, he had a busy day and just didn’t have the energy to do those things. Then when I turned 16, I went over there almost every day after he got home to talk to him about his day, and ask him what his plans are this week and if he needed help with anything around his house.

As the weeks went on, I noticed a big change; he could not remember where he left his newspaper, he started to not sleep very well, and forgot to call people back. That’s when I asked my mom what was going on, and she said he has Alzheimer’s and its starting to get worse. So, me freaking out about this Alzheimer’s disease that I haven’t heard anything about before, I did research. If there was something, I can do to help save my best friend from this disease I was going too.

Unfortunately, time after time again there was no cure to be found, the doctors are learning more about horrific disease, but at that time there was nothing we could have done. On October 18, 2019 I lost my best friend. This was a hard day for me, and everyone in our family, but I learned a lot about this disease and how to cope with someone who has a brain disorder.

The best lesson I learned from this disease was to be there, be in the present. You only have so much time before the clock runs out, and when it does, you can’t get wasted time back. I learned to remind them what they were going to do, don’t yell or get mad at them for forgetting to do something, they can’t help it. I learned to go with the flow, and keep things simple. Making things complicated is only going to make things worse.

The last thing I learned is to always be grateful for the time you had with that person. I know I will always be. The memoires might fade, but the impact he made on my life will be there forever. Alzheimer’s impacted my life not only because it taught me many important life lessons, but it always showed me that this disease can take someone away from you in a matter of months or years, Some of my goals to raise awareness for this disease would be to make donations to AFA, and to tell my story through social media.