

Madison Corriveau

10th Grade

Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy

English Teacher: Cassandra Hughes

Mother's Telephone Number: 586-918-7168

Student's Email Address: madisoncorriveau@aol.com

"Not Just a Man"

A hero, from a literary stance, is "a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities." Odds are, someone popped in your head when you read that definition. Whether it be a parent, guardian, or even celebrity, everyone has someone who fits *their* idea of a hero. People influence each other every day, but only a few will stick around in your memories, and even fewer will be categorized as a hero.

I've had one consistent hero all of my life, and to be honest, I don't think anyone will ever take his title. He was a strong man, my grandfather was. A blue collar hard worker. He did whatever he needed to do to support his family, and he was a well-rounded American man. He raised his two daughters, ages 6 months and 2 years, singlehandedly, all while working a full-time grueling job to support his family. A few years later, he successfully blended a new family with his own, taking on 2 more daughters and a newly wedded wife. He was a 6'3, broad shouldered, grey haired man who seemed to run the world, and I always believed nothing could ever take him down.

In April of 2006, though, we received devastating, life changing news. When the doctors told my grandfather he had cancer, he accepted. He didn't cry, and he didn't wail out in despair when they gave him a mere six months to live. His heart hung heavy in his chest, yet he simply nodded and left, that was just the kind of man he was; a strong man. But six months proved to be much too short of a time for my grandfather; he just wasn't finished yet. For nine long years, he kept his head high, and not a single person who didn't know him would be able to tell he was sick. He kept a smile on his face, and always put his family before his own needs. Chemo took a toll on him, and he was constantly ill, but anytime we visited, he still held the charm and enthusiasm we all loved him for. Growing up, he maintained a strong relationship with me despite his struggle and our 3.5-hour travel distance between each other. It was his mission to not become bedridden.

9 years later, on March 18th, the cancer spread to my grandfather's brain. I sat at the foot of his bed 5 days later and watched him take his last breath, but his charisma and optimism stayed with him until the very end. Throughout my grandfather's sickness, I was a growing girl. I was only 4 years old when he got sick, so I didn't really know any other side of him, and to me he was just a normal, amazing man.

I stress to you that I would not be the person I am today if it wasn't for him. He taught me to be kind, and to be selfless. He taught me that love is the most valuable thing in this world, and respect is earned. Because of him, I know that good things in life are hard to find, but when you find them, you keep them near and dear to your heart, because they could be taken from you at any moment. He taught me that family is the most important thing, and blood will forever be thicker than water.

Everything I do in my life is for him, and for the joy I get of making him proud. He is my number one inspiration, and he made me realize my worth and potential. Ernest Wohlfel was a lot of things, a friend, a father, a husband, a grandfather, and a great-grandfather. But most importantly, he was my hero, and with the guidance of my hero by my side, I too will succeed.