

Packing the station wagon for another much anticipated trip to international falls, mom and dad would be getting everything ready, while Paul would pick on me, Jessica would be off doing her own thing and Carrie would be trying to be the adult and put all of us in line. The long car ride full of screaming, punching, pinching and pulling, all seemed but a distant memory as soon as the thought of crossing the international Falls border and knowing we are only moments away from seeing grandma. As a little boy I didn't know much except for two things would happen when we reached our destination. One: I would hug grandma and there I would feel safe and know I was home and Two: I would be measured to see how much I have grown since she had seen me last.

After a long day of playing in the back yard and getting into what seemed like dangerous adventures to a 8 years old boy. I would come into the house and those soothing familiar smells of gingersnap cookies and grandma cooking something over the stove would set my mind at easy and wrap me in there welcomed smell. With my black finger nails and my stained and torn clothes, I would be ready to dive into whatever wonderful meal that grandma would be cooking. After being told by all my aunts and uncles to wash my hands numerous times, we would finally be able to sit down and eat. At the table I would tell grandma about the day's events and more than likely exaggerate most things that took place but she would listen with a smile on her face and a laugh at every big turn in the story. Soon the conversation would turn into bedtime and how I needed to take a shower in the scary basement. After a short debate as to why I thought I didn't need a shower I would succumb to grandmas will and take a shower with the promise of her being there. As soon as I would jump in the yelling would start, "Grandma are you there?" "Yes," she would reply at least 4 times through out the process. When I would step out there would be grandma with a big towel waiting to dry me off and put on fresh pajama. As we would walk through the house to go to bed there would be a stop at the dishwasher for a piece of licorice before we would walk up the stair to tuck me into bed. With a hug and a kiss goodnight I would be fast asleep dreaming of the possibilities of the next day's events.

The next morning as I would awake to the smell of eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, and Orange juice, I would jump out of bed and run down the stairs only to see grandma with a big smile and "well hay, brush your teeth and sit up at the table." After breakfast, I would look for my clothes from the day before and find them washed and neatly pressed in the basement. No stain to tuff and no tear unsown, good as new. Parents at Kerry Park I think started to believe that the Murray kids were either image conscious or they had one heck of a grandma, I think probably the latter being that we all ran around with ironed and starched t-shirts.

When she would come to the park to pick us up, we would hold hands on the walk home and tell more stories of what happened and she again would listen as if she really wanted to understand our chaotic stories. Its memories like these that make me appreciate the childhood I had with her love. And as I look back at these memories now knowing what the future has held for us I only wish I would have stopped her before the turn home and asked if we could walk together a little longer, I know she would have looked down at me holding my little hand and would have said yes. "Tell me the story of heaven again." I would have asked.

As I grow older, and most of my heroes and larger than life characters that had proven themselves as nothing more than cartoons, figments of my imagination or just human, one character has remained larger than life and could do no wrong. And now when I see the "house" that grandpa build with his hands and the "home" that grandma made with her love, I can only hope that I will still fell her arms around me and the words I love you told to me as I fall asleep in the comfort of knowing that one day we shall see each other again.