

Grandma

My grandma is in the hospital today. She doesn't know who she is right now.

I wanted to give her memories that might help. The likelihood of her ever reading this is very low, but I need to write it regardless.

Every year, we'd get to go to Disneyland. My grandparents lived in Burbank, so when we went to visit them, they'd take us. I don't remember much about Disneyland. I remember one year being tired on the way home and Grandma sitting in the back seat so I'd have someone to fall asleep on. I also remember that they liked taking me when the Rose Bowl was going on because there were no lines. It felt like Disneyland was just waiting for us to get there.

We used to swim at the pool in their condo complex. One year I fell asleep on one of the chairs by the pool. When I woke up, I'd gotten sunburned on my shoulders, back, legs, and on the bottoms of my feet. Grandma teased me about that for a long time, but when it happened, she put lotion on me several times a day until I felt better. She only teased me a little while she was doing it.

I was raised mostly on classical music. My grandparents every year made us each a tape with music they thought we would like with a variety of music. They were my introduction to the Purple People Eater and the Yellow Polka Dot Bikini. They also introduced me to Alvin and the Chipmunks singing that highly irritating Christmas song, but we don't talk about that.

She let me hang out in the kitchen while she cooked. I always liked that.

Grandma always gave the best hugs.

I never felt like I was a disappointment to her. That meant a lot in a family where I was always measured against my siblings and generally felt like I was found lacking.

I inherited her face. That sounds a little funny, but we have pictures of her, my mom, and me at similar ages, and we look amazingly alike. I wanted to be able to have a fourth picture there, to be able to see her hold her great grandchild, but that isn't looking very likely on several fronts. The loss of possibilities hurts a lot sometimes.

When I brought Xander to meet her for the first time, she asked me if I thought it was all right to leave such a young man alone in the house. She couldn't help teasing about something. She spent quite a while that same evening trying to get us to turn on a light so we wouldn't ruin our eyes and go blind from reading in the dark. Xander made dinner, my mom complimented it, and my grandmother waited a beat and, with perfect comic timing, said, "Just think how much better it would be if he were sighted!"

My grandma encouraged us to do what we love. She didn't care if we made a lot of money. She cared that we were happy, and she worried if we weren't.

She wasn't always perfect. No one is. She lost her temper. She got irritated when they took us to see the circus and we argued on the way back and forgot to say thank you. She was really mad that time, but I have the feeling, considering how awful we were when we argued, that we probably deserved it. She didn't like my dad much, and all of us knew it. Our two sets of grandparents didn't get along at all.

I don't know her as well as I would if I lived nearer the rest of my family, and sometimes that is hard for me. I tried to talk her into doing an interview to tell about her life, but she didn't want to. I get my stubbornness from both sides of the family.

Most of my memories of her are of silliness, snarky comments meant in the kindest way, and really, really good hugs.

She's the only grandparent I have left, and I love her. She gave me a terrible sense of humor and the courage to show someone when I care about them, and she could make me laugh even when life was pretty hard. Come to think of it, my brother inherited that bit.

I don't know what else to say. This is one of those "throwing things at the internet and seeing what sticks" posts, I guess. Does throwing spaghetti at a wall actually work? I always thought you'd end up with spaghetti behind the stove, which would not be good.

Mostly I'm worried about my mom right now, who is dealing with this in person and trying to keep the rest of us updated. Grandma probably isn't too worried about much, even if we're worried about her.

Life continues.