

# *Mortality's Defeat*

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When my mother called early in the morning to say that she'd be working a little later than usual, I knew right away that she was lying. I don't know how I knew for sure, but I did. Instead of confronting her then, however, I let her think that she had fooled me and passed the lie on to my brother as if I believed it without a single doubt.

The night before this particular morning, I had visited my grandfather, who had been sick for the past two years. Looking into his eyes as he lay helplessly in the nursing home bed, I knew instinctively that this would be the last time I saw him. It was obvious that mortality had claimed another victory. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I comforted him and told him that everything was going to be alright. Although, theoretically, he couldn't comprehend what I was saying, I knew that deep down, he understood every word of solace that I murmured to him. He knew, down in his very core, that this was the end of his life on earth, that he'd be starting a new journey that we, his family, couldn't accompany him on just yet.

When I returned from school that afternoon, my mother still wasn't home. The empty garage further proved that I had been right this morning. My father informed my brothers and me that my grandfather had died early that morning. The news didn't surprise me in the least, but it still weighed on my heart.

Over the next few days, the phone rang more than usual, and dear friends visited us to offer us comforting words and help with anything we may have needed. For the next two evenings, I greeted relatives and family friends that I didn't know very well as they came to pay respects to the great man that I had affectionately called my pap over the years. Seeing him

lying in the blue casket, I knew he was finally at peace, but this knowledge did little to ease the pain in my heart as I digested the fact that I would never hear him speak again, never be lovingly teased by him or listen to him tell stories of his youth.

Though my cousin sobbed beside me, I was able to keep my composure during the funeral as the song “I Can Only Imagine” was played, along with “Over the Rainbow.” I smiled when my great uncle spoke at the podium about how he and my grandfather used to go on fishing trips, how if anyone needed anything, he only had to call Bill, and my pap would be there.

When the day ended, we all were exhausted. After visiting the cemetery for a second time, we went home and reflected on the day’s events and my grandfather’s long successful life.

Later the next day, while I was reading the list of names of those who had come to the funeral home to express their condolences, many of whom I didn’t know, a sudden realization hit me. Many people measure the successfulness of a person’s life by financial and social status. However, this is not how a deceased person is remembered. A person’s mark on the world is made eternal by how much he loved and was loved in return.

My grandfather was certainly not rich. Nor was his name well-known for his position in society. The people who came to the funeral home didn’t come because he had much power in life. They came because they loved him dearly, and he loved them in return. Every one of the mass of callers had fond memories of my grandfather to share with the family.

It was during this epiphany that I learned an important lesson in life. The true value of a man is not determined by how much he has in his pocket, nor by how high he is on the social totem pole. Rather, his worth is measured by the love he unselfishly gives away and by the love that is willingly reciprocated. In this respect, my grandfather was genuinely rich. In this respect,

the inheritance split among his children and grandchildren is worth more than a chest of pure gold. And in this respect, he will live forever in our minds and hearts. Truly, in this case, he conquered mortality.