Life Long Wisdom from My Best Friends: My Grandparents

I had the best grandparents in the world. My grandpa was one of my best friends. I have great parents, too, and I'm not taking anything away from them. It's just that my grandparents were extra special in so many ways.

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Grandpa worked for over 30 years as a mechanic at the same garage. Grandma was a professional housewife. They lived in the same home on the Ohio/Indiana border for more than 50 years. Grandpa and Grandma never reached huge fame or amassed a large fortune. However, they were forever happy. Their wealth was in their family and friends and with that treasure, they considered themselves to be the richest folks alive.

There were no strangers in Grandpa's life. If he met somebody he didn't know, 30 minutes later it was like they had been best friends forever. It was a special quality in him; and one that I have always tried to emulated despite being a natural introvert myself. Grandma was the family matriarch telling us to "buck up" when the chips were down and finding the next adventure for us to participate.

They both taught me the meaning of good people and how the biggest satisfaction in the world comes from strong relationships with other people.

Grandpa and Grandma were never too busy for me and my sister. Grandma would pitch wiffle balls in the back yard to me for hours. Grandpa was always getting us "in trouble." Not bad trouble, but good trouble like allowing his fourteen year old grandson to drive his truck around the back yard or the two of us pranking other passengers on a cruise ship pretending to be part of the staff. As my sister and I got older, Grandpa and Grandma were always there in support of us. They never missed one of our music events at school.

I have so many good memories of these great people. Memories that will always be my own treasurers that I will never ever forget. I do my best to remember my grandparent's extraordinary qualities as lessons by example. In fact, if I can be half the person as my parents are and grandparents were, I will have achieved success beyond my own expectations.

> *Whether it be Living Wills, an entire estate plan, Veteran's Benefits or guidance through the maze of Medicaid rules, regulations and changes, it's what we do at the Stinson Law Firm. Come and see us. I can help you with the experience and the empathy you need. And that guy looking over my shoulder smiling? You may not see him like I do, but that's my grandpa.*

Of course, we are all mortal and my grandparents have both moved on to the eternal. For my Grandpa, it was cancer. He fought this battle for years. Through it all, he complained little and wore a smile until the end. In fact, his last days on Earth were spent ensuring that I understood that the time I had with my own two kids before they grew up was extremely short and invaluable. For my Grandma, it was dementia. Her mind slowly slipped away over a period of five years, first with smaller thoughts like remembering to turn off the stove to eventually not remembering me.

With nearly a decade of elder law experience at the time, I had plenty of skills and experience to assist my grandparents with their progressive care needs. I had helped draft their health care advance directive and knew when to advocate for the withholding of artificial nutrition as per my Grandpa's wishes. I also knew how to maximize resources and get help with my grandparent's care- first through the VA and then through Medicaid. However, it was the relationships I had built with my clients and resources that help me the most. The empathy and support of those people I had worked with in the past was invaluable.

It was one thing to prepare my grandpa's health care advance directive, it was quite another to tell the doctor not to administer the nutrition that would keep him alive. It was one thing to secure VA pension benefits to help cover the costs of my Grandma's assisted living room. It was quite another to clean out her and Grandpa's decades of tangible treasurers from their home and three storage buildings (the next time you see me, ask me about Grandma's jars). It was one thing to obtain Medicaid assistance to pay for Grandma's room at the nursing facility, it was another to look her in the eye and tell her that she could no longer remain in her apartment safely. It was the empathy and support of the good people I worked with for years that helped in this situations, kind of like a group therapy session.

Today, I try to pass on those experiences. The empathy and support of my clients was so valuable.

When my Grandpa finally passed on, it was a very sad day. We knew it would happen but were still unprepared emotionally. I had lost a best friend. When my Grandma passed away, similar thoughts abounded. My family lost a treasure. Yet, their wisdom and memories will live on forever.

The examples he set were instrumental on my deciding on a career in elder and estate law. I wanted to be sure that others were taken care of according to their own wishes – and not those of others. It is one's right.

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