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The Bravest Man in My Life

By Vanessa Rosebrook

He always had a way of making my day better by giving a simple smile or hug, it always warmed my heart and brightened my outlook. On April 22, one year ago, I gave a very important man in my life a kiss good-bye, a man who I was proud to call Grandpa. I had never attended a funeral of any of my family members until that day, let alone a military funeral. At the service before the burial, I completely lost all composure.



Sketch by Payton Mariah Wright

They had given me a card for me and my cousin that my grandpa had made out to us a few days previously for graduation. Inside I found a letter that read "Love you, Grandpa Fred," along with a 50 dollar bill, it felt like my breath would be gone forever. The next day I thought I had brought myself back together, and I did fine at the burial except for when they played the song "Taps" and fired the first of three ringing shots, then I lost it again. But to know he is in a better place still looking out for my protection. That makes the tears of sadness truly tears of joy.

My great-grandpa was closer to me than any grand-parent I have. He may have lived over 400 miles away, but he still impacted my life greatly. He would tell me of all his memories from WWII, and nearly all of them would start out with "When I was in the Marines..." During all the stories of him being marred and receiving the Purple Heart so many times, I would wonder "Why would he keep going after being wounded three times?" It was then I realized how much he truly cared for this country and the people in it. He would always tell me of the things he used to do and his outlook on things. Memories seem to be what keep me strong!

Every time he would come down, he and I would cook up new recipes, moments I have always cherished and hold with me, and he would always make me apple spice jelly, the smell would be so sweet it would make my mouth water. We would always go to "Wally-World" for him to buy something new, whether it was needed or not. When I was younger he bought me a bunny with a purple dress, and to this day I still

have it. We would always go do different things with him. One of my favorite memories of being with him is when he took me, my sister, and my mom to Worlds Of Fun in Kansas City, KS. It's the little things that mean the most to me.

He would always have funny stories to tell, and know exactly how to make everyone laugh and be in a good mood. He loved taking pictures with his special camera. He also painted pictures; they were always beautiful and so full of detail. He also enjoyed watching movies, and he always knew the most specific things most people didn't remember about movies. He used to joke in the series *The Pacific* he wanted Leonardo DiCaprio to play him. In his words he would say, "I was a good looking guy, I think I look like Leonardo DiCaprio, I want him to play me." It's memories like these that make all the sorrow disintegrate and turn into happiness.

My grandpa may have been gone for nearly a year now, but there is no way his memories will ever disappear. Because he had so much meaning and impact on my life I chose to get a memorial tattoo with his personal signature. The pain was nothing compared to what he had gone through for me and the rest of our country. I know he is up there in heaven, taking care of what needs to be done for us here on Earth. He was a great man with great respect. It's a shame to have lost him so soon in my life, but God just needed one more angel to help look over us. I know, and he knew he had done all he can on Earth, and by doing so he showed God his greatness and that he had earned his way into heaven.