

GRANDPA'S HOMAGE TO  
A LOST GRANDDAUGHTER'S LOVE.

*O never say that I was false of heart,  
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify.*  
-Shakespeare

Dear Nicole,

When a person's life narrative is controlled by others, that person will always remain the avatar of the narrator's imagination. Most of your life the narrative of your Grandpa's life has been controlled and shared with you by others. So, for years I have pondered how my words could reach you.

Then, it suddenly dawned on me, I can place my thoughts in the archives of this ethereal system of the internet in hopes that some day, you, may be curious about your Grandpa and your eyes will find these memories of a brief moment of love we shared.

Nicole, please understand my intention is only to share with you the love and memories I've carried in my heart all of these years. I'm an old man close to the end of life's road and want you to know how special you were to me, before this road completely runs out.

We were a perfect mutual admiration society, you, were Grandpa's precious little gem that radiated a smile with beams of love and admiration for her Grandpa, and equally, you knew, you were the apple of Grandpa's eye. There was little doubt in your mind Grandpa told the funniest jokes, made the funniest sounds and faces. In your sweet little eyes Grandpa was the world's greatest magician capable of making things disappear and miraculously extract Gummy Worms from your ears and nose, while making the scariest things turn funny. We cruised in a red two seat Cadillac convertible where you were so cute sitting in your car seat looking like a little Hollywood celebrity with your sunglasses and big sun hat. We knew the location of every duck pond, ice cream parlor, critter gathering places and toy stores within a 20 mile radius. We would spend hours in Toys R Us where we played with and tested toys to your exhaustion. Sales clerks wise to our scheme would come up asking if they could be of assistance, I'd tell them we are testing the products and their presence was distracting the chief toy tester. In those days society wasn't as security conscious, so we would go to the private airports where people would let you sit in their airplanes flying them anywhere your imagination could take you. We found great sport climbing into a multitude of fire trucks, police cars, tractors, dump trucks, bulldozers, race cars, boats, ponies and every other form of transportation we could find, or came upon. No park, or playground, was left unexplored. Ducks and squirrels! were much fatter those days, because I made sure bread and critter treats were always in the car trunk and on my yacht. In some areas the ducks knew us on sight which delighted you. You, were so funny the first time a sea gull snatched a slice of bread out of your little hand, with a stunned look on your face like should I cry, run for cover, or continue to scold "BAD BIRD!". With a little coaxing, you were handling those gulls like the most intrepid wild bird feeder.

When we stopped for lunch at Wendy's, or similar places, you would busy yourself organizing the little chairs, so our area was fenced off and free of those pesty little kids. You, were so stone serious going about your business

I couldn't help but laugh. Then, because Grandpa was laughing, you became all the more serious about your quest to secure our safety. Finally, I'd have to tell you "Okay, that's good Captain, now eat your hamburger so we can blow this burg." You'd have every little chair in the place organized as our luncheon barricade; pretty damned funny! Out to the car we'd go where you'd immediately fall asleep, resting up for our next adventure.

Because I was taking care of you during the day, you travelled as my side-kick everywhere I went. One of our especially amusing excursions lingers in the labyrinths of my mind, you accompanied me to the ophthalmologist for an eye examination. The nurse said you could stay with the receptionist while the doctor examined my eyes. Well, I was having none of that saying, "She stays with me, or we'll cancel the examination!". So, into the examination room we went hand in hand. This place was pretty scary with all those strange machines, sounds, smells and lights, while it's universally understood the presence of doctors will cause the most courageous chair barricade builder to be somewhat anxious, you confirmed that with your little hand gripping tighter. This place and circumstance called for wide eyes and total silence, since clearly you didn't want to call attention to yourself. As I sat in the examination chair, with your hand still wielded to mine in a protective bond. I could sense you starting to relax and become more confident realizing you were not the central premise of this examination. As the examination progressed and the doctor put his equipment to my face Captain Courageous surfaced, "Grandpa, he's not going to hurt you, he's going to make you better." Well, this chatter went on assuring me the doctor was my friend, and then the lights went out and the room went dark for the examination. This called for extreme measures, a tighter grip on Grandpa's hand and "Grandpa, don't be afraid, it sure is dark in here, don't be scared Grandpa, it sure is dark, be brave Grandpa, we'll get some ice cream!" Well, the doctor, the nurse and myself simultaneously started to crack up laughing. Of course, you had no idea what we were laughing about, after all this was a very serious situation. As we left the doctor's office, you reassured me how brave I was, and I thanked you for helping me through the ordeal. We got ice cream like you promised.

When we weren't on the road taking care of important stuff, we knew how to have fun at home. I had a pair of big clown shoes I'd wear while we watched and danced to a video "Sweating to the Oldies" with Richard Simmons. You, laughed so hard you'd fall down holding your tummy watching Grandpa dance in those clown shoes. We never saw a dull moment singing, dancing, Crayon art expression, reading time, searching for our little dog Toots' (a little black Skipperkee) missing tail and philosophical discussions on subjects like where does popcorn come from and how do those Gummy Worms keep getting in your ears.

You were so cute and full of energy, I nicknamed you Wild Thing, after a song, I'd sing to you "Wild Thing, you make my heart sing, you are my everything, Wild Thing I think I love you!", and you'd dance around doing your Wild Thing dance. Our little dog Toots' was pretty much of a Wild Thing herself, she saw you as an easy meal ticket, exploiting you for every morsel of food that passed your way. Toots was constantly stealing your grill cheese sandwiches, french fries, cookies, chicken nuggets and every other nugget of food she could get. I'd hear "GRANDPA! TOOTS STOLE MY SANDWICH!", "BAD TOOTS!!", "NO TOOTS!", stomping your feet "STUPID TOOTS!", I think you were sure her name was "No Toots". Even though Toots was constantly predatory toward your goodies, you were very patient with her and enjoyed playing with her, so she wasn't "STUPID TOOTS!" all the time.



These few memories, and many more, of the time we spent together have been pure gold in my memory treasure chest. However, like all things there has to be an end. Nicole, I didn't abandon you, unfortunately, due to circumstances, I had to return to work and our time together was cut considerably. Also, your grandmother and I grew further apart leading to irreconcilable differences and divorce. Your father and aunt Jennifer chose to align themselves with your grandmother, and unfortunately, cloistered themselves in hate toward me. During this difficult period the love I held for you was used as leverage, where individuals said if I didn't comply to certain demands, I would no longer be allowed to see you. There was no way I would then, or now, be extorted and there was no way I would allow you to be dragged into the ugliness, so I had to abandon hope of ever seeing you again. Friends and family said I should sue in family court for visitation rights, but I could only see that as more ugliness.

Nicole, I'm not asking you to take any sides, or pass any judgement, I just want you to know the greatest treasures in life are intangible. Your Grandpa dearly loved, and loves, you. When my eyes finally close forever they will close with the memory of Wild Thing dancing and protecting her Grandpa in a dark scary doctor's office. Wild Thing, I love you!

*I hold it true, whate'er befall;  
I feel it, when I sorrow most;  
Tis better to have loved and lost  
Then never to have loved at all.*

-Tennyson

7 October 2012