

A Full Cup of Memories...

As I sipped a cup of coffee this morning, I'm not sure why, but I thought back to when I was very young and we would go and visit my father's parents -- who we called "Papa Joe" and "Granny Um."

I would walk into their house and the first thing I would see would be Papa Joe sitting there facing the door in the living room of his house. He usually had a good-sized chair, perhaps because he was a good-sized man. He had a big round nose, glasses, and a big round belly. I never considered him to be fat, but he did have a Santa-like belly! His hands were large and thick. He always walked with a sort of limp since one of his legs was slightly crippled. He almost always had the stump of a cigar jutting out the side of his mouth, although I rarely saw him light one up -- he mainly just chewed them.

We had sort of a greeting-ritual that we would do each time I went to his house. Papa Joe would call me over to his chair, and I would stand directly in front of him. He would say, "Let me see how much you have grown since the last time I saw you" (it had probably only been a week, since we only lived a couple of miles away). He then would lean forward in his chair and reach under my armpits with his huge hands and "groan" and "strain" to pick me up. After the third or fourth attempt, he would lift me an inch or two off the floor and say something like, "Gooooood golly! You are getting BIG!" -- much, of course, to my delight.

He would then proceed to count my ribs... I don't think he ever got them all counted, because when the counting process began, it would tickle so much that I would squirm like a worm and flop onto the floor in laughter. Of course, we both knew this was the whole point of the rib counting exercise!

Sometimes as part of the ritual, he would take my little arm and rub his whiskered chin on it -- just for fun! His chin felt like coarse sandpaper -- it tickled and burned -- and as he did so he would say, "Duuuuuush"! Of course, I would squeal and laugh! I thought this was the strangest thing -- having a sandpaper chin! I'm not really sure where the word "duuuuush" came from or what it means exactly -- other than it is probably one of those words that just sounds like what it means... like "bang" or "swoosh."

Oftentimes, as part of our greeting, he would also tell me a story. It always began the same way: "One time there was a little boy who lived waaaaaay out in the country..." I don't really remember any of the actual stories, but I'm sure they were all funny! Papa Joe was known far and wide for his ability to tell a tale or a joke!

I have so many rich memories of my grandparents -- and I was able to know all four of mine! We lived just a few miles away from them, and our lives overlapped by several years, so we were able to visit them often. I know it is rare these days for families to live in such close proximity over a lifetime, so I consider this a true treasure and a blessing -- such rich memories that money can't buy!

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Well, my coffee cup is empty now... but thankfully, I will go about my day with memories that are full!

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