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Personal essay/family story-1000 word

In the early 1940's, a young Hispanic male was sent off to Burma, China from Kelly Air Force Base during World War II. At three years of age he was left in the care of his grandmother. He did not complete high school because he had to work and provide for himself. He completed his G.E.D, however, and by the age of 24 he was assigned to the 69th Depot Repair Squadron of the elite Flying Tigers. Here, the young man was assigned a simple but important task of sewing and designing parachutes for the soldiers who fought in war. The involvement in war at a young age causes one to learn responsibility, determination, and self-discipline. This young soldier was my grandfather, Carlos, and throughout his entire life he carried all that he had learned in the war and passed down that knowledge to his children and his grandchildren.

My grandfather sewed his parachutes with such precision and quality that he created a slogan for the Flying Tigers, "You can count on us; we will always let you down," meaning that the parachutes were sewn with such good quality that it allowed the soldiers to always land safely on the ground. He always had faith in God, and when there was no chapel to pray in, he and his buddies used shrapnel and an old cockpit to build a chapel to worship and pray in for a safe return. He eventually returned safely home to his family and his sweetheart, my grandmother, Ruby, to whom he remained married to for over sixty years.

My grandma was a petite woman and had a beautiful personality that lit up my grandpa's world. In their seventies they encountered a more difficult battle with one of the cruelest diseases, Alzheimer's. For my grandmother, Alzheimer's began

with simple forgetfulness like forgetting how to sign her name. She eventually started to forget who she was and where she was and would wander off when someone wasn't watching her. She soon began to forget how to do day-to-day things such as eat, dress, and use the restroom. My grandpa was by her side throughout the entire ordeal. He made it a point to dress her as she would have dressed herself and would take her for rides in his Chevy Caprice to pick me up from pre-school. He continued to take her on Flying Tiger reunions so they could be with their friends who were truly like a second family to them.

As the disease progressed, he continued to bathe, dress, feed, and take care of her every need. He discovered new ways to facilitate her needs. For example, one Christmas she had come to a point where she could no longer chew, so he learned how to feed her through a tube that would transfer food to her body. He did all of this without a complaint for ten whole years. He was strong for her as she was for battling such a mind consuming disease. We always expected Ruby to go first, so it was a shock when we found out that Carlos had passed away.

My grandma never wanted to be put in a nursing home, so after his death, my aunt moved into the house where my grandmother remained and my mother and my two uncles took the time to care for her as best they could. She endured this disease for more than thirteen years. During the time between my grandfather and grandmother's death, my mother and sister provided for her like my grandfather had done. I witnessed them lift her from her bed and put her in her wheelchair to take her outside. They would walk her to one of her favorite places in the city, Little Flower church. They learned how to administer medicine by crushing the tablets so

she could swallow the medicine easier since she had lost the ability to chew and swallow. Because she could not swallow properly, they had to learn how to feed her through the feeding tube. In order to make her feel comfortable they would change her linens, read to her, and played 1940's music that was the greatest generation of music to my grandparents. Even though I was only a child at the time, I still remember the humility they had towards my grandmother as they struggled to bathe and dress her without a single complaint. Even though the generation that my grandparents lived in viewed women as depending on the man, in the end it was the woman who survived Alzheimer's for thirteen years. She passed away when she was eighty six years old. I was eleven at the time and I remember we were all sad but happy that she was finally in a better place. It was a surreal moment for me because I realized how many lives my grandma and grandpa had touched when all of their friends and our relatives came to pay their respects and honor both of my grandparents at her funeral.

This tale is honest and true and reveals the pain, determination, and unconditional love between a man and his wife. They faced an adventure together and I can only wish that I can one day experience a great story like the one they lived. The beauty of the pain was that his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were able to witness what true love really means. In hearing of his labor of love, I have realized that this type of man doesn't come around often. The type of man that my grandfather was is hard to come across by in this modern day age. He created a strong family foundation with my grandmother that has lasted for generations. This man had character and inner strength and was always willing to

help and serve in anyway needed with a smile and chuckle that would make anyone return the gesture. It is what he learned in war that he continued to carry with him throughout the rest of his life. He has inspired me to fight for a cause so that I can make a difference in someone's life and maybe even a difference in the world.