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Family Discovery Essay

My grandpa is more than a grandpa; to me he’s a dad and a best friend. He has always been there for me when I need him. No matter how bad the situation is, he’s always very supportive and caring. His name is Roberto Bernal. He was born on May 13, 1946 and as he always says, “years do not only give age but rather they give you experience.” My grandpa works in a cemetery and he has a lot of interesting stories to tell me, like the one that has to do with his cancer discovery. When I visit him, I follow him and listen to everything he tells me because I know that by paying attention and listening to him, I’ll learn a lot. What no one knows is a mysterious story that had to do with his cancer discovery. In my eyes my grandpa is more than a hero; I admire his assurance and strength – he always takes the best from even the worse situations. Through this interview and story he thought me to learn how being confident can help me grow up, be a better person and also see positive things from even bad experiences.

When I first asked my grandpa about his family he got a little teary eyed and I was feeling really bad, but he still decided to tell me about his childhood. He used to live in Santa Tierra, Mexico with his seven siblings, both of his parents and his grandma. When he was only four years old his mom passed away due to breast cancer. He stayed with his dad and soon he had a step-mother. As he told me “she was like an angel” because Francisca, his step mom, took care of them and became a real mom to him and his siblings. “But my happiness didn’t last long” my grandpa lamented. At the age of eight his dad passed away because of cancer as well. Soon enough he had to drop out of school, start working and take care and responsibility of his family. “When I turned 15, I started working in the police department” he commented. But his family was in need of more money, so he started a new journey without destination, which took him to Pachuca. One night after work he and other friends decided to go out for dinner and to a restaurant called La Beta. “I saw your grandmother, and I just couldn’t take her out of my mind”, my grandpa shared with a smile. In 1970 he started working at the cemetery and bought a house with my grandma.

My next question of his job at the cemetery was, “were you scared to work there?” I know it was an impulsive question but to my surprise his answer was yes. He revealed, “I never liked to deal with dead bodies when I was a cop, and now my new job required me to be even closer to them, but I had to work and make money to support both of my families.” With time and patience he became very dedicated and started loving his new job; he saw how the dead people were not going to hurt him because they were dead. I really couldn’t control my questions and thoughts on the interview, and even though I was a scared to hear the answer I wanted to know if he had any hidden scary stories to tell me. And that’s when the fun of this conversation began.

I knew that I would be really scared to find out if any crazy stories have happened at the cemetery because it’s so close to home, but at the same time I was curious, so I pretended to be ready for the story. He began, “I was actually never scared by the idea of working with ghosts, until I saw a real one.” A couple of years ago three young friends were driving to a party; a tragic accident killed two of them instantly. Veronica and Christian were engaged, both of them died, Julio was Christian’s brother and he is the survivor. One day while working, my grandpa saw a young man. He remarked, “He looked very young, a young man full of life. He was wearing dark blue jeans and a collared black shirt. He also had brown hair and his skin looked very tan and healthy. He saw me and hid his face, but he asked me where Veronica was buried.” When my grandpa told him where she was and he started walking very fast. My grandpa continued, “I felt a cold breeze and I couldn’t move for few seconds, it was a weird feeling because I actually felt scared.” My grandpa kept working, but when it was time to close the cemetery, he realized that the young man was still in there so he went to go look for him. After searching for him he noticed he wasn’t there, so he decided to call for help. He elaborated, “I told your uncle what he looked like but as soon as he heard me say he was looking for Veronica his mouth was wide open, he took me to the place where we keep record of the dead people and he showed me that the guy who asked for Veronica was dead too.” My grandpa felt the chills on his skin and almost fainted, he finally admitted that he did believe in ghosts and of course he was scared of anything related to that nature.

The next day when he was cleaning, he heard someone crying and when he got closer he saw how the shadow of a girl was disappearing but no girl was there. He started to realize how things with ghosts were getting really bad and he decided to call for help. He recalled, “When I called a ghost hunter, he laughed” but when he actually got to the cemetery with all the equipment he realized how many souls were living and hunting the cemetery. The ghost hunter told my grandpa after the religious mass to go to the doctor because he had heard a ghost say “Roberto is ill, he needs help as soon as possible.” A few days after they had a mass and the priest had prayed for all those souls, my grandpa went to the doctor and he was diagnosed with cancer. He mused, “I didn’t know what I was feeling. I felt glad I found out about my cancer on time but I felt scared to know it was first alerted with cancer by a ghost.” After years of treatment and medicine my grandpa won his battle with cancer. He hinted, “I still get scared every time I’m alone working; I always ask myself what crazy thing I am going to see today. But that’s something nobody knows Nelly, only you know the fear I have when I work there alone.”

After that conversation I felt very glad to have found out a secret from my hero, but was he is still my hero? I mean, I know my grandpa is an amazing dad and jolly man but the image of him being always strong and never scared was now kind of foggy. After couple of days, I realized that we are all humans; we all feel fear and get scared sometimes, even my grandpa. After his surgery that removed his tumor, he still didn’t give up. He lost weight, hair and energy but he persevered and kept the family together. The cancer did get in his way, but he stayed as the strongest member of the family. Seeing him stay strong just made me admire him even more. It also made me realize how positive attitude changes everything. Although he had a bad and scary experience at the cemetery he’s still working there and he still loves his job. I sometimes feared to go visit my grandpa because of the ghost. I feel like they will be following me, but as my grandpa said, “It’s all in your mind.” Now I even feel like I love my grandpa more than before and that we are closer.

Although at some point I felt like my grandpa wasn’t my hero anymore because he was scared of ghost, I still look up to him and admire him. His stories made me realize that he is a true hero, a super human. I feel like there’s no one in this world who would do what my grandpa did for himself and his family. After seen all those dead people’s ghosts and discovering his cancer he stayed strong and kept working at the cemetery. To the rest of my family his life never changed, because they don’t know about the ghosts. However, I know the story, and I know my grandpa can feel scared too. I love him even more and for sure now I want to follow in his steps. I’ll keep the family together by being someone they can count on when they’re having trouble. I learned that confidence makes everything possible and even if I’m scared of something I need to face it and get the best from it because you never know how a discovery can turn out: it might save your life like it did for my grandpa. I won’t ever forget his words, “confia en ti misma y sigue luchando por lo que quieres, bueno o malo siempre te ayuda a crecer.” (Trust yourself and keep fighting for what you want, good or bad always helps you grow.)