

My grandpa's heart

My grandpa would sit me on his lap. The smell of cologne and whiskey was shortly recognized when he hugged me tight. Releasing me we would look into each others in our eyes. His eyes were as blue as the morning sky, but not just any morning sky. It was the blue morning sky after a rainfall, when the sun shined brighter with each waking moment.

Pinching my cheeks and smiling. I would wiggle my way closer towards him even more. Laying my head against his chest I could hear his heart beat. How I would think how his heart remained strong to his family, his fallen soldiers, and to himself. I would look up to see his bristly beard and tired skin, but remained with a smile on his face, while rocking me back and forth in his reclining chair.

Drifting off to sleep I would ask him to tell me a story. My head laid against his chest. I felt the vibrations of a deep chuckle. Closing my eyes he began.

They say that peace can start a revolution. It starts with you, within your heart.

A Vietnam soldier set camp. He looks up and sees an area of black smoke about ten miles away. He knows the enemy is near by. The day grew into night. He and his fellow soldiers lay around a small fire they made from the moss and fallen branches from the surrounding area. Laying on the damp ground. He lies on his back looking up at the curtain of midnight. Wondering when the enemy was going to hit.

With each gust of wind he would watch the fire grow ferociously. He was amazed at how the embers luminated the pitch black sky. Closing his eyes he was suddenly startled by the humming of a soldier lying next to him. Curious he listened to the tune, but couldn't make out the song. He turned to the soldier by him and asked who sang that song. The soldier stopped, turned around to face him, and said in a western accent, "it ain't sung by anybody. I made it up all by myself. It is for my girl back home. I call it lovely peace. Because that's what I need when I'm around her. Is some peace." The soldier laughed and hit the man's shoulder in good humor.

Stunned at how sentimental the rugged soldier was. Another soldier on the other side of the fire was staring straight at the two men lying on the ground. In amazement the soldier stood tall and said, "you know boys that ain't a bad thing." The two soldiers

turned to one another with blank expressions. One of the soldiers looked back at the tall man and with a raised eyebrow said, "what the hell are you talking about." The soldier started shuffling his weight back and forth. He stood up taller and filled his chest with air and courage. The fire luminated his face, with a slight sly and a sturdy voice he announced, "Boys we are calling our journey here Operation Peace."

Looking at one another the two soldiers started to laugh towards each other. The hopeful soldier dropped his head in embarrassment and sat back down. The man with the lost love sympathized, "come on don't take it personally boy." Then he hesitated. He started to pick at his thumbnail trying to remove some of the dirt. Then looking back at the embarrassed soldier and said, "If it makes you fell better will keep this between us... ok?"

The lost lover stood up, coughed, and pronounced, "Operation Peace in action."

I opened my eyes. My head shot up in curiosity. I asked in a tired tone. "Grandpa what is Operation Peace." Stroking the top of my head grandpa looked at me with hopeful eyes and said, "just listen babe." I laid my head back on his chest. The words jumped around in my head. A smile peered on his face. He continued on with the story in a raspy voice.

The soldier closed his eyes. He dreamt of him and his now two new friends defeating the enemy. Walking to the sergeant saying, "Operation Peace completed."

Shortly after, the soldier drifted off to sleep. He had awoken the next morning to ear bleeding sounds of exploding bombs in the distance. He knew the enemy was closer now. His eyes grew instantly. Feeling of anxiety and excitement filled his veins and pumped through his heart. He jumped to his feet ready to put Operation Peace into action.

My grandpa's words started to blend together, and get softer as I fell asleep into the warmth and security of his arms. Where the only thing I heard was the soft beating of his strong heart.

!!!

Name: Ashlyn W
School: vanden high school
Branch: Vacaville Cultural Center