Gone

It was a Thursday night, and I was sitting in my upstairs bonus room with my older sister watching *Friends*. It was about eleven o'clock. My dad's cell phone started ringing, and we heard my mom and dad go to the kitchen. My sister muted the TV and I went closer to the staircase to hear what my dad was saying. I couldn't make out the words, but I heard him sigh deeply. He hung up the phone, and I made my way back to the couch. I sat there quietly afraid that what my gut feeling was telling me was right. After about a minute or so, my parents made their way up the stairs into the room, and sat down before me. Then, my dad said the words I didn't want to hear.

"Well, your grandpa died." I remember sitting frozen on the couch, the whole room silent. I remember I started to cry, and after a couple minutes my parents told us to get some sleep, and they went back downstairs. My sister turned the TV off, and we both went to our rooms.

When I closed my bedroom door behind me, the real tears poured out. I don't really like crying in front of people, even my family. I remember sitting on my bed sobbing for what seemed like forever. After about ten minutes, my sister came into my room and held me as tears streamed down my face. I can't remember exactly what she said to me that night, but I remember that she told me it was going to be okay. She let me cry for as long as I needed to, and then when I finally calmed down (as best as I could anyway), she went back to her room. I turned my lamp off and lay down and tried to find sleep. It wasn't easy though because my eyes were puffy and my nose kept running. Finally, I fell asleep.

I woke up the next morning around ten and wandered around the house trying to find something to do. For some reason we didn't have school that Friday; I was glad we
didn't. I think I spent most of that day on the computer. That night I had to help my friends babysit for a party a family was throwing. Although I really wasn't in the mood to babysit, it was a relief. Being with two of my best friends and little kids cheered me up. The following morning I had basketball practice. At the time, the father of one of my best friends had been in the hospital for quite some time. At practice I noticed that one of my teammates looked sad. I asked her what was wrong, and she said "He's gone." I wasn't what sure she was talking about, but then it finally dawned on me. My friend's father had died. I was yet again left in shock at another death in the world just two days after my grandpa had passed away. My grandpa was 82 when he died, not young by any means, but he had been fairly healthy so his death came as a little bit of a shock. He had had a surgery, but it had been minor compared to his open heart surgeries. At times, it just didn’t seem real.

On Sunday, my dad and I headed up to Cleveland to my dad's brother's house. My mom, brother, and sister had prior engagements on that Sunday so they planned to join us on Monday in Sandusky where the viewing was to be held. We had left in the afternoon, and I was excited to see my cousins because I rarely get to. Three hours is a long trip, and we are all always so busy. We spent Sunday night hanging out with the family. The circumstances of why we were in Cleveland stank, but I was thankful for the time I was getting to spend with my family.

Monday came, and we all headed for Sandusky. The viewing was like any other; people came and went periodically throughout the four hours. I really didn't know that many people so a lot of my cousins and I sat around talking. We reminisced and shared memories of our grandpa, ate, and talked with visitors that our parents introduced us to. Toward the end of the day, familiar faces finally showed up! Four of my parents' best friends and my grandma came. I was glad to see them and appreciated that they drove two hours to visit with us because I know it meant a lot to my parents. Once the visiting hours were over, we had a short prayer service, and then our family retreated to the back room for a bite to eat and to discuss the next day. Before we left to go back to Cleveland, I remember visiting with my grandpa. No one was in the room, so I kneeled in front of him and said a
prayer. As I looked at him, I was filled with sadness and wished I could have had more time with him. After a few minutes, I returned to the back room.

We all headed for bed soon after returning to my cousins’ house in Cleveland; it had been a long day. The next day we knew would be even longer and harder.

The next morning, we headed back to the funeral home before heading to the church. Like any funeral, there were tears shed. For me, there were a few moments that were especially difficult. My older cousin was one of the readers for the mass. She made it through half the reading before getting a little choked up; she made it through, but it made me sad to see her like that even though I knew that’s how we were all feeling. The thing that got to me the most, however, was seeing my dad cry. I had never really seen him cry before, but I looked over at him during one of the songs and saw him covering his face. Although I couldn't see his face, I could tell he was crying hard because of the noise he was making. It hurt to see my dad like that, but it made me feel thankful that I still have my dad.

After the mass, we went to the cemetery where I would actually have to say goodbye to my grandpa. We gathered under a tent and listened to the priest’s words. Eventually it came time for my grandpa to be lowered into the ground. In my opinion, this is the worst part of funerals. It isn’t seeing them in the coffin at the viewing or the mass, but this final moment where even though you can't see or talk to the person, you know it's the last time you will be in the presence of their body. Even though they aren't really in that body anymore, that's forever how you picture them.

Then, after the funeral, all of us went to the Knights of Columbus hall in Sandusky for a meal. We ate, and my little cousins played, and it was almost time to head home. I didn't want to go home because I loved spending time with my cousins, but eventually these sad few days were over and we headed back to Lima.

My grandpa's funeral was over, but it wasn't the last funeral for us that week. On Wednesday, we went to a viewing for the dad of one of my best friends that I was talking about before. Then on Thursday I went to the funeral mass. It was hard to see my friend in the condition she was in, which only added to the sadness toll for the week. When the funeral was over, I was finally done with funerals for the week.
Some people get angry about death and get angry at God. I didn't want to do that so I tried to look at all the positives and be thankful for the wonderful family God had blessed me with. I was thankful for the fifteen years that I had been able to spend with my amazing grandpa because some people don't get any. I was thankful for the time I got to spend with my family over those three days. I was thankful for my little cousins who continued to make us laugh throughout the three days. I was reminded of how thankful I am for my dad and that I still have both of my parents.

Though I don't have my grandpa any longer, I know he is always watching over me. He would always try to get to my games when he was alive, and now I think about how he can watch all of them now in Heaven. He also loved Notre Dame and was proud to have graduated from there. It makes me smile to think that he has a front row seat to every Notre Dame football game of the season now. Lastly, I am glad that he can watch over my grandma, who is still alive, but not in the best health. By looking at the positives, it has only helped me. I miss my grandpa, but he is in a better place now, and for that I am thankful.