2023 Ben Strauss Youth Program

High School

Teen Essay Contest

Grace Warner

A Rose for Gram

Rose, a red flower that symbolizes traits such as beauty, love, courage, and strength. My Grandmother, or as I called her, Grammy, was able to express these characteristics in such simplicities.

Growing up, I always looked forward to sleepovers at my Grammy’s house. With the addition of my older sister tagging along, we couldn’t race to the car fast enough when our mom would ask us if we wanted to sleepover at our Grandparents house. Excitedly arriving, my sister Morgan and I would each take turns spamming the doorbell, each press being filled with eagerness and thrill. Before opening the front door, my Gram intentionally would say loudly, “Are those my babies,” in order for us to hear all the way from outside. Her house had a sweet and comfortable smell, none like any other. After saying goodbye to our mom, Morgan, our Grammy, and I would head upstairs to our Grandparents bedroom. Snuggling in her bed watching movies such as, *Mary Poppins, Mrs. Doubtfire, Wizard of Oz’s*, and so many other classics, the three of us knew that just one thing was missing, ice cream! We’d cover our ears as our Grammy would yell our Pop’s name, “Harold” from the top of the steps. “We need ice cream and pretzels please” she would say as Morgan and I giggled while kicking our feet. AS our Pop would bring up our desserts on wooden trays that contained such detailed carvings, I would have never realized how quickly these simple and cherishable times could be taken away.

The holiday’s were my Grammy’s favorite time of year. Every Easter, she’d buy the biggest bag of candy she could find. She’d begin to throw pieces of candy out the window for all the grandkids to catch and would laugh as they all fought like dogs. She was a real hoot for Christmas as she and my Pop would both put on Santa hats and drag around a huge black trash bag containing all the kids' Christmas presents. She had the ability to make these holidays, along with everyday life, as lively and fun as it could be.

Around the age of seven years old, I soon noticed a change in pace in things. I was seeing my Grandparents less, specifically my Gram. At this point in time, the two words “Cancer” and “Grammy” quickly became associated together. Learning that this meant my Grammy would be sick, I wanted to buy tissues for her as I thought her sickness was only a cold. Alas, no tissue, medicine, or non- existent cure could save my Grammy from what was happening.

Due to Morgan and I no longer seeing our Gram as much, my mom would send her videos of us. Even if it was a car ride to school, taking a walk in the neighborhood, or getting ready for bed, my Grammy didn’t want to miss a second of our lives, as she didn’t know how much of her life was left to live.

In the few visits that I did get with my Grammy, they would be spent in her bedroom. The same room where we used to laugh, cuddle, and watch all of our favorite movies, was now the place of her confinement. To make conversation, my mom would ask me to sing her a song. Sitting on my knees, I’d begin to mumble the jingle, “Choo’n Gum” as I rocked back and forth. My Gram would stare at me with her gentle smile. Despite no words being said between us, in those moments, so much was stated.

I remember feeling scared. I knew my Grammy was going to leave this earth, but I didn’t understand why. She told me, along with every member of my family, that she would never truly be gone, and that would all be thanks to a penny. “Whenever you see a penny on the ground, I’ll be watching over you” she told us. For reference, I tend to see pennies often, and am comforted by the fact that my Gram is forever watching over me.

Before her passing, she had given Morgan and I each a small doll. My sister’s doll was a little girl, and mine was an angel. When pressing the angel’s foot, she would say a prayer. “Angel of God, my Guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here; ever this day, be at my side to light and guard to rule and guide. Amen.” I would say this prayer just as the small angel did. In gaining this angel, I received another one. In just a short time, my new guardian angel became my Grammy.

My Gram, a beautiful flower. She was a rose that symbolized beauty, love, courage, and strength. Many things remind me of her. The pennies I see on the ground as I walk to my bus stop. The stacks of yarn that's placed on a shelf in my teacher’s art room. The rose tattoos that both my sister and mother have. Everything, everywhere, her spirit lives on, and I believe that in some universe, we will relive the blissful times we once had.