



Losing Two Grandfathers

By Hazel
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My encounters with addiction have greatly affected me and my family's life. I believe drugs and alcohol are extremely dangerous because addiction can cause family problems, health issues, and sometimes result in death.

My grandfather died when I was only four years old from a blood clot in his lung. My grandparents had been together for almost 50 years, starting as high school sweethearts, and his death was hard on my family especially my grandmother. I don't remember much about my grandfather, except he was always very kind to me, and many of the members of my community have expressed that he was a giving, hardworking, wonderful man.

One year after my grandfather's death, I met Bob. Bob was my grandmother's friend from high school who had reconnected with her after the death of her husband. My first impression of him, as a five-year-old, was that he was a funny, nice guy who made my grandmother happy. Bob slowly became part of our lives and soon I found out he was my grandmother's first high school sweetheart. Bob and my grandmother were a perfect match, they were both singers and became part of senior theater company. The past few years they have been writing a musical comedy for the company. We all still kept my deceased grandfather in our hearts, but Bob was becoming a part

of the family. I soon began to think of him as one of my grandparents.

I am now ready to enter my senior year of high school and this past summer I have learned something about Bob that I was too young to understand before. Bob is an alcoholic, he has been drinking since he was a teenager. This fact shocked and confused me. I had seen Bob drink a glass of something before, but I now realize, because I had such high opinions of him, I chose to block out his serious problem. His addiction may not seem like a huge issue to some people, but as I talked to my parents, I realized how consequential drinking can be.

My grandmother is a very active person. She competes as a race walker in the Senior Olympics and takes extremely good care of her body, inside and out. This is something she prides herself on and tries to get others to do the same. Doctors have told Bob many times that his drinking is causing his organs to decay and his life to shorten. The major organs that can be destroyed by alcohol consumption include the heart, liver, kidneys, and brain. Bob's addiction was an obstacle for my grandmother in terms of health and wellness for both of them.

Another problem alcohol was causing, was how Bob would act when he was drunk. He would publicly humiliate my family at events and parties,

becoming hostile, loud, and inappropriate after he had just a couple of drinks. He would act the same way when he and my grandmother were alone. I find it disgusting how alcohol can turn a perfectly wonderful person into a monster.

My grandmother continually argues with Bob about his drinking problem and finally, this summer she asked him to choose alcohol or her. He chose alcohol. This decision really shows how addictive alcohol can be if it made Bob choose a simple drink over a woman he had been with for over twelve years and been in love with for over fifty. I think my grandmother did the right thing by making Bob choose because she should not have to live with someone who drags her down and humiliates her. She was also using her influence as his significant other to help him stop. Bob still calls my grandmother every day, pleading with her to take him back, but when she asks him to give up the drink he still refuses. I feel like I have lost another grandfather, but this time, it was because of addiction.

In conclusion, I believe drugs and alcohol should not be used by anyone. I understand this is an unrealistic vision because drugs and alcohol are so ingrained in our culture, but I also know there are ways we can prevent addiction and abuse. Preventing teenage substance use is a step in the right direction because teen substance use can lead to addiction as an adult which has been the case with Bob. Enforcing underage drinking laws, teaching teens that alcohol and drug use is not normal, and raising taxes on alcohol and cigarettes are some ways that communities can lower substance abuse rates. I personally plan to never try alcohol, never try a cigarette, and never try drugs even if people tell me it is okay. I know it is not okay because I have seen the consequences. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Hazel Homer-Wambeam is a recent high school graduate from Wyoming. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.