

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Geewhizicuzz & Wallygoppers



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Matthew 6:25-34
Matthew 7:7-11
Matthew 18:12-14

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Thank you for being such a caring Heavenly Father. Build my faith in You and help me to trust you with every concern. Draw me closer to You today.
In Jesus' Name,
Amen

GRANDPAS

Grandfathers come in all shapes and sizes. Santa Claus Grandpa is a bearded, roly-poly bear-hugger who bursts into belly laughs at a moment's notice. Santa Gramps has an endless supply of tootsie rolls and crayolas. Praying Mantis Grandpa is stick-like skinny with a shock of white hair and a breath that smells of snuff and peppermints. He warns his young uns' in a gravelly voice not to sit on the plastic-covered sofa in the "parlor"—which is "Grandpa-speak" for living room. Every now and then Praying Mantis Grandpa pulls a Werthers out of his vest pocket and presumes he has just made your day. Hippie Grandpa still thinks it is 1960. He sports a leather vest and chaps, a sweat-filled bandana and a bushy beard. Hippie Grandpa roars up the driveway in his Harley with Elvis blaring on his eight-track tape deck. Bathing for Hippie Grandpa is optional, and he often reeks of "oddly sweet" tobacco. It's a rush to ride his bike, but he often forgets your birthday. Colonel Sanders Grandpa usually lives south of the Mason-Dixon line. He comes replete with a drawl, a large glass of sweet tea, a fly-swatter and an endless supply of sweater vests. Grandpa Sanders uses words like "veranda," "chiggers" and "Lamby-pie." He resides in an oversize wooden rocker and offers a pudgy lap perfect for afternoon snoozes.

Then there was Super-Hero Grandpa. On the "Grandpa Scale" from one to ten, Grandpa Boy was an eleven. My Grandpa could beat up Santa Claus, Mantis, Hippie and Sanders with one hand tied behind his back. His name was "Ralph Waldo," so we nick-named him "Boy" for short. Boy had sparkling brown bug-eyes, wispy baby-thin hair and a booming bass voice like James Earl Jones. Batman and Superman were "wusses" compared to my Grandpappy. Boy looked the other way when we bounced on the bed and never made us use our "inside" voices. He picked my hard-to-reach boogers without flinching. Boy popped his false teeth in and out (he called 'em "choppers") just to make us smile.

But Boy was no goofball. A mid-shipman in World War I, he guided a skiff that carried President Woodrow Wilson across the English Channel in the dead of night. Besides being a "gritty sailor," Grandpa Boy tooted one of the original sousaphones in John Phillip Sousa's band. A Sousaphone resembled a spittoon with a mouthpiece and bellowed like a cow in heat. Boy chortled and said Sousa asked him to play because he had the most "hot air" in the band. He used his hot air to bellow the bass part in the church choir as well and taught my sister and me to sing as soon as we could "chirp."

“Boy” and “Moy” (grandparent-names that were pretty silly as nicknames go) were powerhouses. The pair made the Energizer Bunny look lazy. After the war, Boy bought a gas station replete with ice-cold Coke and beef jerky. When pumping petrol and mixing it up with the truckers became too taxing, Boy semi-retired and spent the next thirty years selling real estate and teaching Sunday School. (Moy was still roaring around in her Chevy hawking houses until she was ninety-two, but that’s another story.) Boy taught us bridge and poker. Good Baptists were not supposed to play cards, but Boy’s years in the Navy caused him to bend the rules on occasion. Kathy and I could “royal flush” and “full house” before we finished elementary school. If we were short on milk money or craved an extra ice cream treat, we’d pull out our Bicycle playing cards, shuffle and deal and collect our winnings. Piece of cake. The shmucks who fell prey to our mean “card shark” skills learned to play and pay.

Nobody knew us like Gramps. I’ve been told I started “shaking my booty” to music before I could talk, and Boy assumed my fondness for shimmying and jiggling to the radio meant I had musical talent. He purchased a toy piano and showed me how to plink and plunk the keys with my chubby index fingers. Mom and Dad were annoyed with my endless hammering away, but Boy just smiled and nodded. Somehow he knew I had an undiscovered passion for all things musical.

Gramps had a bum hip from the war, so getting around wasn’t easy. He had a toilet mounted on a wooden platform and armrails installed to make “doing his business” easier. For the grandkids, the potty platform was a magical place. We called it the “throne room,” and the bossiest grandkid (usually me) was dubbed “queen.” I sported a Burger King crown, a plastic ruler scepter, and a bed sheet cape. Keeping my royal robes out of the potty water was quite a challenge. On my “queen” days, I perched on the porcelain throne and banished my little sister Kathy and cousins Paula and Kim to the bathtub dungeon. I was “queen of everything” and Kathy was duke of “not so much.” She was forced to wear Boy’s old suit coat and a mustache made of eyeliner. Kathy, Paula and Kim clomped around in Boy’s size twelve wingtips and begrudgingly bowed and scraped before their queen. After an hour or so I tired of being a tyrant and we retired to the bedchamber to get into more mischief.

One July afternoon, Kathy, Paula (my older cousin), Kim and I heard a tap-tap-tapping in the grassy backyard. To our delight, Boy was hammering away wearing his wife-beater undershirt and building an outdoor playhouse for the four of us. He collected eight old window screens from the garage and was in the process of constructing a magical castle (with added mosquito protection). Once our mansion was finished, we moved right in. Dollies and doiles surrounded us, and we pilfered plastic dinner ware and coffee cups from the kitchen. Winded from his construction project, Grandpa plopped down in a lawn chair to observe the festivities. We served him lukewarm Ovaltine and vanilla wafers. The four of us climbed around our screened cage like a family of spider monkeys until supper time.

My grandfather was a master chef. His cuisine would clog your arteries and pack on the pounds, but I loved every gorgeous bite. Every dish started the same way. He pulled out his cast iron skillet from beneath the stove, grabbed his coffee can full of bacon grease and fried up a storm. Meals were tasteless without bacon grease. We dined on fried chicken, chicken fried steak, fried catfish and fried okra. Even turnip greens were filled with ham hock and bacon grease. Turnip greens made Boy’s way were “larapin’ good.” If Boy wanted to get little sister Kathy’s goat, he’d yell “turnip greens” and shove a spoon toward her lips. She shrieked in horror, ran lickety-split and hid under the bed. Boy laughed so hard his sides hurt.

The *piece de resistance* of backyard picnics was homemade peach ice cream. I have spoken of its gorgeous goodness in other stories, but you have to understand, it was the highlight of my childhood. This delicacy was not sherbet, sorbet or ice milk, Boy’s confection was the real deal. To the canister chock-full of sun-ripened peaches, Grandpa added a quart of heavy cream and a pound of sugar. The ice-cream maker sat in an old aluminum barrel stuffed with newspaper. Boy methodically sprinkled ice and rock salt around the metal canister while we turned the crank. Thirty minutes later the “cream” had firmed up and the dasher was removed. I still salivate when I think of that scrumptious dasher full of peachy goo. Each child got a lick, and then the ice cream maker was iced and packed while we downed dinner. All culinary experiences pale in comparison with “peach ice cream ecstasy”—the brain freeze resulting from rapid consumption of the confection. If Boy had been there when Baskin and Robbins were creating their thirty-one flavors, all thirty would have been superfluous. Peach was enough.

After we consumed our carbs and calories, our taut little bellies slowed us to a delightful stupor. We sat dazed in front of the television watching Mickey Mouse and George Jetson until bedtime. A sleepover at grandparent’s house was the perfect ending to the perfect day. As the orange sun peeked through the pecan tree, Kathy, Kim, Paula and I donned our footie jammies and climbed into Boy’s four-poster bed. We were mesmerized by the fat, furry squirrels who leapt from limb to limb in the gynormous pecan tree that covered the backyard with shade and nuts.

Bedtime stories usually began with the resident fluffy-tailed super hero, Johnny Squirrel. Johnny stuffed his huge cheeks with pecan “bullets” and machine-gunned his enemies into submission. His prey fell to the ground, pelted and pecan-cruste. Johnny would return to his tree-trunk den and radio headquarters. Grandpa Boy didn’t narrate his stories like any old grandpa. He was a ventriloquist. After having Huey, Dewie and Louie tattooed on his right foot, he could wiggle his toes and make their tiny beaks talk. The ducks kept the story line going.

As the shadows beneath the pecan tree grew longer and darker, Boy's adventure tales got scarier. The ominous "Gee-Whizicuss" climbed over the back yard fence ready to skewer an unsuspecting Johnny, and roast him for a bed time snack. Johnny assumed his best "kung fu" pose and soundly defeated his monstrous opponent. "Wallygoppers" were especially dangerous enemies because they could actually climb pecan trees and hang from the branches like the flying monkeys in Wizard of Oz. The tussles between Johnny and Mr. Wallygopper" were intense but short-lived, because our little eyelids were getting heavy. Johnny gave Wally a devastating karate chop, sending him to the grass below. Boy knew we needed a "happily ever after" ending, so Johnny and Wally made a peace treaty as they downed pecan pie with whipped cream.

The four little cousins snuggled and snored on Boy's fuzzy chest until daybreak. By the way, can you imagine what we had for breakfast? Pecan pancakes, of course!

- Read Matthew 6:25-34. Do we need to worry about our needs? Why or why not? What do we learn about the nature of our Heavenly Father from this passage? What are some of your concerns today? Write them here. Spend some time meditating on your loving Heavenly Father. Remember some ways He has taken care of you in the past. Write them here.

- Read Matthew 7:7-11. We are encouraged to pray in faith, to ask God to answer our requests. What do we learn from these verses about God's care and love for His children? How are heavenly and earthly fathers compared? Have you been hesitant to ask God to meet needs in your life? Can you imagine He is just waiting for you to ask so that He can answer? Write a prayer here and be very specific about your prayer requests.

- Read Matthew 18:12-14. This beautiful story is a picture of a lost sheep and a loving shepherd. Who is the sheep in this passage? Who is the shepherd? What do we learn about God's passion for His children from this passage? How does it make you feel to know that God is constantly seeking you to draw you close to Himself?