

THE GREATEST GRANDMOTHER

Hal Ames



Everyone has a grandmother, but some are better than others. How do we come to the conclusion as to whose grandmother is the best? It is up to the grandchild.

In my case, I had the most wonderful grandmother ever. I will let you compare yours to mine, but I think you will have to agree that my grandmother was the greatest to have ever lived.

We called her Abo. Someone told me that my cousin gave her that name. The story is that she hurt her elbow and my cousin, who was little at the time, asked her how her Abo was. Somehow, Abo became our name for her. So, we all called her Abo. It wasn't until I was much older that I learned her real name was Bernice.

My grandmother lived with my grandfather in a big house. We went to visit almost every Sunday. My grandparents lived on the second floor, and my cousins lived on the first floor. We had to go up a long stairway to their door. My brothers, sisters, and I would race to the top of the stairs to be the first one inside. Mom would tell us to slow down, but we were too excited. We all wanted to be the first inside.

It was fun because most of the time my cousins would be there too. So, we were able to play together.

Abo was always so happy to see us. At her house were many toys to play with. I especially liked the tractors and other farm toys. We always looked forward to going to her house.

We would go out for lunch after church and then go to their house to play. It was a

special day. Sunday was my favorite day of the week.

My grandfather, who we called Poppy, was always sitting in his chair waiting for us with a big smile. We called him Poppy because his favorite song to sing to us was ‘Pop Goes the Weasel’. We liked to climb into his lap and give him a big hug. He would sing songs to us and tell us funny stories. He was a very kind man.

While Poppy was entertaining us, Abo would go to the kitchen to fix us a treat. As soon as she called us we would run to the dining room and sit at the table. She would bring us cake and ice cream. It was like a birthday party, only no one was having a birthday. I also liked her cookies.

Poppy would come into the dining room to join us. We would sing funny songs and laugh and laugh. Sometimes our parents would leave us at our grandparent’s house for the whole afternoon.

My grandmother loved pictures. On the walls in the hallway to her bedroom were many pictures of our family. I would ask who they were and she would tell me. I would always forget who they were and she would just tell me again. She smiled as she pointed to all of the people on the wall.

I saw a picture of a very pretty young woman. I asked who it was. She said it was her, a long time ago, but I did not believe her. It did not look anything like her.

“Abo, that doesn’t look like you,” I said to her.

She laughed. She showed me her mother and her father. I never met them. They died before I was born.

On Christmas Eve, my grandmother and grandfather would always come to our house to visit us and they would stay the night with us. On Christmas morning, when we came down to open our gifts, there she was with a big smile on her face. We would show

her the new gift we had just opened, and she would be so happy for us.

After opening the gifts, we would have breakfast together, and then my

cousins would come over to play. They liked the toys we got for Christmas and when it was time for them to go, they did not want to leave. They would give our grandmother a big hug so they could stay longer.

On the day of the big parade, Independence Day, we would sit in front of my grandmother's house on folding chairs along the side of the road. She would bring us treats and cold lemonade to drink. We would wave flags she gave us and cheer when the people went by. Then at night, we would go to the stadium and watch the fireworks in the sky. We would say "OO" and "AAH" at the bright lights in the sky.

Many times when I was sick and had to stay home from school, Abo would come to stay with me. She would take a cool cloth and put it on my forehead to cool me down when I had a fever. She would tell me stories of when she was a little girl. I loved to hear the stories. Sometimes I would fall asleep before she finished, and then I had to ask her to tell me the end of the story when I woke up. She was so gentle.

In the summer, we would go to the beach to play. My grandmother would always make sure my brothers, sisters and I had sunscreen on our faces and backs so we would not get sunburned. She would pack special food for us to eat when it was lunchtime. It made the beach a fun place to be.

When my parents had to travel, my grandmother and grandfather would stay at our house.

One time, I could not find my shoe. I needed that shoe, but I could not find it anywhere. I looked and I looked. Soon I became angry.

Abo set me down on our sofa, and then she sat next to me. She began to ask me questions about where my shoe might be.

She asked me, "Have you seen any fairies?"

I said no.

She asked me, "Have you seen any elves?"

Again, I said no.

Then she said, "See, you didn't see the fairies and the elves. They came to steal

your shoe and you never saw them. They are so clever.”

This made me laugh. Suddenly I remembered I had put my clothes in the laundry. I went to the laundry, and buried in the clothes, was my shoe.

I ran to my grandmother and said, “Abo! I found my shoe! The gremlins put it in the laundry!”

“Gremlins? I forgot all about gremlins,” my grandmother laughed with me. She gave me a big hug and told me she was proud of me.

She always had a way to make me laugh.

On my birthday, my grandparents always came to our house. We would have cake and ice cream. They always brought a special present, and they sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to me. It was not always pretty, but it made me happy.

When I was thirteen, my family moved far away. I thought about them all the time.

It would be five years before I saw my grandparents again. I moved back to my hometown to go to college. When I walked into the house Abo ran to me and gave me a hug that only a grandmother can give.

I stayed for dinner and she asked me all about my life. I missed her so much. We talked for a long time. She wanted to know everything about what I had been doing even though my mother wrote to her all of the time and told her.

Not long afterward, my parents informed me that they were going to move my grandparents close to them. They wanted me to tell them about the move. I asked my parents why they wanted me to be the one to tell them. My mom said because my grandparents trusted me.

The next time I went to dinner with them, I told them about the plan to move them closer to my mom. At first, they said no. They were able to take care of themselves. I had to tell them that it would be better for them to live there. The place they would live was very nice. I had been there and told them all about it.

They finally agreed to make the move. It would not be easy. It was a long

way for them to travel.

The week before they left, my grandmother invited me to the house to help pack.

She said to me, “I know how much you love my table. I’ve seen how you look at it and admire it. I want you to have it.”

The table was an oval table. It had a piece of glass made to fit over the top. Under the glass were seashells she had collected and displayed very proudly.

I did not know what to say. I just stood in shock. I was so surprised.

She smiled, gave me a hug, and said, “I want you to always remember me.”

I hugged her back. It brought a tear to my eye.

The next week I took them to the train station. As the train pulled away I cried. I knew that it might be the last time that I would see my grandparents.

I had a chance to visit them in their new home. They were comfortable, but they missed the old house. I sat and talked to my grandmother in the large room by the dining room. Just like always, she asked me about my life and what I had been doing. She told me she missed me and was happy to see me.

A year later, I got a phone call. Poppy had died. Not long after that, I got another call. Abo had passed away as well. She was so lonely after Poppy died that she did not want to live alone.

I cried when I heard the news. I missed them so much.

That was my grandmother; always full of love and cheerfulness. To me, she was the greatest grandmother who ever lived. I hope you agree.

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. conclusion _____ | a. place where I was born |
| 2. cousin _____ | b. cold drink made from lemons |
| 3. race _____ | c. dirty clothes |
| 4. tractor _____ | d. below the hairline |
| 5. treat _____ | e. children of my aunt and uncle |
| 6. parade _____ | f. competes in running |
| 7. lemonade _____ | g. sweets, special food |
| 8. forehead _____ | h. ending, finish |
| 9. laundry _____ | i. procession |
| 10. hometown _____ | j. farm equipment |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. My grandmother was the greatest. | T / F |
| 2. My grandfather sang songs. | T / F |
| 3. My cousins lived far away. | T / F |
| 4. My grandmother was called Poppy. | T / F |
| 5. We saw them almost every Sunday. | T / F |
| 6. My grandparents took us to see a parade. | T / F |
| 7. We hated to go to our grandparent's house. | T / F |
| 8. We moved far away. | T / F |
| 9. We spent Christmas together. | T / F |
| 10. I never saw them again after we moved away. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. What did we call our grandfather? ____

- a) Pops
- b) Abo
- c) Poppy
- d) Grandpa

2. Where did my grandparents live when I was young? ____

- a) in a big house on the second floor
- b) in a big house on the first floor
- c) with my cousins
- d) in an apartment

3. Why did I return to my hometown? ____

- a) to see my grandparents
- b) to get a new job
- c) to go to school
- d) to be with my girlfriend

4. Who lived in the same big house with my grandparents? ____

- a) my family
- b) my mother's sister
- c) an old lady
- d) a really big dog

COMPREHENSION: (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*

1. On what holiday would my grandparents stay at our house?

2. Who did I say stole my shoe?

3. What kind of drink did my grandmother make for us?

4. Why did we move away?

5. On what day of the week did we visit our grandparents?

6. Who told us not to race up the stairs to our grandparent's door?

7. Who told my grandparents they would have to move?

8. What did my grandmother give me before they moved away?

9. Where did my grandmother put sunscreen on us?

10. What did my grandmother ask me the last time I saw her?