

Why Grandparents Matter

by Linita Mizelli

I loved my grandparents. I was so blessed to have them in my life for so long. My paternal grandmother doted on me. She taught me to sew and she always had time for me. As a little girl I was fascinated by her stories of raising my father, what it was like for her as a child, and how she worked so hard. She was funny and a bit silly at times. When she was in her sixties she tried to do yoga and got her leg stuck behind her head. She passed in 2000. I miss her dearly.

My maternal step-grandfather was a salesman for over fifty years for Dudley hair products. They called him "the bubble gum man" because he often gave out gum to the children. He taught me the value of earning an honest dollar. There was not one neighborhood in this city he did not explore and sell his wares to. No matter how dilapidated a community was, he felt everyone deserved to be treated fairly. He was fearless. He left us in 2004.

My maternal grandmother passed away in 2005. This was the year I had my first child. She became instrumental in my life in my adult years. When she found out I was going to have a child she implored me to watch my diet, to consider breast feeding, and gave me the confidence that I could be a good mother. She gave me recipes for making homemade rolls and taught me to bake an awesome shad fish. She gave me courage to face any and all obstacles. She often talked about the farm she grew up on, the hard cold winters, and the wealthy families in our city that she served as a maid. My heart aches when I think of her.

When I became a mother, I wanted my children to experience their grandparents as I did mine. Grandparents are so special. They are windows into the lives of our own parents. They sometimes have to take up the slack for their children. They are there when parents sometimes cannot be. They are the legends and leave the legacies for us all.