Professor Anne Davidson

English 101

How I Remember Oupa

I only knew my grandfather for 13 years before he hung his hat up for the last time. The

memories that I have of him are treasured like little trinkets kept safe in a box. Although I have

a wealth of them, I always wish that I had a lot more. I called my grandfather Oupa, which is

derived from the German word Opa, and I adored him like no other.

Oupa was born a farmer, destined to follow in his father’s footsteps. He was like a relic

from a bygone era, a reminder of a lifestyle that has long since passed. Oupa was a child of the

Great War, a survivor of the Depression and a newlywed during WW2. These harsh

experiences taught Oupa to be frugal with his money and generous with his heart.

The memories of what Oupa looked like are forever etched in my mind. His features had

been touched by the sun from years of work in the fields. He had a slight stubble on his cheeks

that felt like fine sand paper. He'd been blessed with a full head of hair, cut short at the sides

with streaks of grey that looked like rough paintbrush strokes contrasted against his raven hair.

He combed it from left to right, giving him a Frank Sintara look. His cold steel blue eyes

should have been terrifying, but I could only see a gentle soul in them. My favorite feature,

above all was his clefted chin. It was a dimple deep as a ravine and my young fingers would

find their way to it, and I would ask with wide eyes, “Oupa, what happened to you?” He would

reply every time; “Well, (with a long pause) that was where I was shot in the war!” I knew, of

Course, that it was only a story he had made up to entertain me. He never tired telling me the

story even though I must have asked about a million times over.

Oupa only dressed formally, not like the jeans and t-shirts we wear today. Monday to

Saturday, like clockwork, he would wear his signature attire. It consisted of neat dress pants,

button up collar shirt, and a formal tie. To Oupa, no self-respecting gentleman would dare go

outdoors without wearing a tie! Regardless of the season, he wore a sleeveless V-neck sweater

vest that Ouma (my Grandma) had lovingly knitted for him. The sweater vests were the only

source of color that broke the drab muted shades of greys and browns. Oupa never left home

without his wool fedora. I had the belief that he had he to have had at least one for every day

of the week. They were all different shades of tan, like the color of the dusty fields. A flat

grosgrain ribbon circled the crown and a feather stood at attention on left behind the bow. The

hat was essential to shield his face from the harsh African sun. Sunday had a marked difference;

it was a holy day and only "Sunday best” would do. On Sundays, he was clean shaven, wore his

dress shoes that were shiny as a new penny and he wore a black Fedora. The knitted sweater

vest was exchanged for a waistcoat and dapper tweed jacket.

Dad took over the farm when Oupa passed away. For a while, I thought days of the

gentleman farmer had been lost forever, but I now see my dad as a different kind of gentleman.

Dad might wear a baseball cap, jeans and plaid shirt, but it is not the clothes that define him as a

gentleman, but the values carried in his heart. These values were handed from generation to

generation. I will forever hold memories of the gentleman farmer and how they evolved when I

look at my Dad. It fills me with nostalgia to think of Oupa, both he and Dad were the most

handsome men in the world and I adored them.

