

Grandma's Story

I've always adored Grandma's stories. Ever since I was a little girl she has settled me down beside the fire with a warm blanket and told me her tales. As soon as my little brother, Josh, was old enough to join me on the short trip to Grandma's, he has enjoyed her stories just as much as me. Usually they are fictional, but sometimes she tells us excerpts from her childhood, although she lets us figure that out ourselves. Now I am 12 years old, it is winter of 1986, and I am enthralled by her tales just as much as ever. Josh and I just finished the freezing trek to Grandma's house. As usual, we are warming up by the soothing fire, with hot chocolate and cookies in our hands. As Grandma sits down in her chair, she tells us that today's story is quite important, and starts her tale.

"Once upon a time, there was a little girl with an enormous dream," Grandma starts, "She was determined to make a positive difference in the world. Since she was born on July 1st, 1905, the day Alberta joined the confederation, her parents had always believed she would influence her world for the better. Whenever she met anyone, she would proudly inform them that her grandpa, Lt-Col. James Macleod, had found the new settlement of Calgary while leading the North West Mounted Police, and her dad was one of the "Big Four" that had founded the Calgary Stampede. Since she lived on a ranch, her family had many animals, including horses. Some of her favorite pastimes were riding her horse and skating with her friends."

"She liked horses just like me?" I ask after taking a sip of my drink.

"Yes Dear," Grandma replies with a smile, "She even got to be a stunt rider in a Hollywood movie being filmed right in Calgary!"

"Really?" Josh exclaims with wide eyes, "I wish I could be in a movie."

"Maybe one day you will," Grandma encourages, "With lots of practice and hard work of course. Anyway, a few years later she met the love of life, Melville. He was an auto executive and moved around a lot for his work. He was a great man, the best she'd ever met. When he asked her to marry him in 1930 she happily agreed. Just because she was married doesn't mean her life calmed down, she traveled all over Southeast Asia before settling down in Ceylon."

"Did she ever have any kids, Grandma?" I curiously inquire, while rearranging my blankets.

"As a matter of fact she did," She answers, "A little boy who she loved and cared for her whole life."

"What was his name?" Josh asks with his mouth full of cookie.

"His name," Grandma replies blissfully, "Was Davey. He loved to travel and learn about different parts of the world. Also, he liked horses almost as much as his mother. Unfortunately, when the war broke out they had to stop traveling and move back to Calgary. When her husband was called to fight, she was determined to help as well. Now children, back then it was extremely rare for a woman to fight or help in the war, but her mind was set. Her husband tried to stop her, saying it was not a woman's job, but she persisted, and soon he agreed that she could participate in the Canadian Woman's Army Corps. The CWAC was a collection of woman who wanted to prove they could help in the war effort as well as

men. She gained the position of recruiting officer and loved her job. She knew she was serving her country and volunteered wholeheartedly."

"Wow," I utter, "She was really determined to serve her country despite what others told her."

"Yes, she was extremely stubborn and wouldn't take no for an answer. One day the CWAC got some exciting news. They were now an official militia corps! This surprised the CWAC because they had never dreamed the government would accept them. Now she could serve her country on the front lines! A while later she was called to England to serve during the Blitz. She was so excited to prove to the world what woman could do, she hardly worried about the danger. She served well and, to her surprise and delight, was even promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. She was one of the first female officers in Canada, and commanded the CWAC training base in Kitchener, Ontario."

"Wait Grandma," Josh interrupts, confused, "What happened to Davey, did he stay with her?"

"Of course not!" I crossly retort, "How could she have taken care of him in England?"

"Hush dear," Grandma instructs calmly, "It's nothing to get mad about. As I said before, his mother loved him very much, and didn't want him in danger, so she sent him to her mother, his Grandmother, to safely wait out the war. She missed him every day, but knew it was the right thing to do. She was fulfilling her dream to change the world by inspiring women to do great things. The war ended. She was overjoyed to be reunited with her husband as well as her son, who was safe and sound at his grandmother's house. Although many people would have thought that she would settle down and live the rest of her life peacefully, she wasn't done yet."

"She did even more?" I inquire, impressed, "I think just helping in the war would be enough."

"Well, after she was settled again in Calgary with her family, she began to be involved in the community, and served for two years as an alderman. She also spent her time volunteering for the Canadian Legion, the Red Cross, and the Women's Canadian Club. She had a love for old, historical buildings and did her best to preserve them. Later, she moved with her family back to her country home. There she lived happily with her husband. She won many awards for her service and used them to remember her accomplishments. The Order of the British Emperor, and the Order of Canada were just a few."

"She was an amazing change maker," I murmur, inspired.

"Yes," Grandma utters, "Yes she was."

As Josh and I walk home, I decide that I want to be like the girl in the story. She had done what was nearly unheard of in her time. I want to make a difference too. I make a resolution to serve my community, country, and world as much as I can. From now on, I want to be more involved in my local government, and aim to become mayor someday. In the meantime, I will volunteer my time and energy to building a better Alberta. As I open the door of our house, I suddenly remember a collection of metals and plaques hanging on the wall in Grandma's house. Many had pictures of a woman in a uniform.

"Wow," I whisper, astonished.

http://www.albertachampions.org/champions-mary_dover.htm#.Vw7Aa-T5OtU (April 10, 2016)

<http://changemakerbios.weebly.com/mary-doverby-taryn.html> (April 10, 2016)

http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks/english/war/mary_dover.html (April 10, 2016)

<http://historicalcalgary.wikispaces.com/Mary+Dover> (April 15, 2016)

<http://changemakerbios.weebly.com/mary-dover-by-tobi.html> (April 13, 2016)