

Waving Through A Phone Call

Newspapers haphazardly lean one way and then tumble to the other. A now cool mug of tea sits on top of a stack of magazines and a plate of bread and cheese lay unattended. Quiet music, sometimes Frank Sinatra, other times Johann Strauss, spills into the living room accompanied by the ticks of a clock. Hiding behind a large stack of books, my grandpa and I are discussing the self-proclaimed topic of this afternoon: Van Gogh. Engrossed in the subject, I almost miss my mom poking her head in from the kitchen, a signal my grandpa and I both came to understand. Placing his magnifying glass on the page and gently folding the book over, Ong stands up, knees cracking, and walks us to the door.

We pass by the cup of tea, forgotten at the moment, and the large unread piles of newspapers that keep my grandpa occupied when everyone is at work. Crouching down to put on my shoes, I catch a couple of words my mom says to my grandpa: “careful”, “let your daughters do it,” “it’s getting worse,” and I see my grandpa shrug off the news about the coronavirus with a simple shake of his head.

As we leave, I catch Ong smiling from the mudroom and I wave until the house disappears from my view. I turn back into my seat and excitedly talk to my mom about Van Gogh, expecting us to come back next Saturday to do the same thing over again.

Little did I know, a week later, the long list of unread newspapers, that once sat patiently waiting, shortened to one article a day and the cup of tea always finished half a day later was empty by the hour. The days consist of reading stories with the same headlines and watching the news about the same topic. More importantly, the weekly wave from the window vanished,

exchanged for a ten minute phone call about varying topics from a request for a razor to cut his hair and an unique story about NASA's launch with SpaceX.

During these times, I wonder what would happen if he was in a nursing home; how he would continue with his life at the forefront of catching COVID-19. I look back and feel thankful for all the experiences I had with him before we couldn't see each other. Occasionally, there are times of stress because his pride and restlessness prevail over his common sense, but the lessons he taught me about perseverance, family, and determination keep me going through these times. Even though we are apart, I remember that the world will repair itself and we will continue building on our history. And soon enough, I'll be back, with a cold cup of tea and a fresh book about Van Gogh, and I'll leave with a smile and a wave.