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Author Bio

Sarah is a senior English major, Anthropology minor from Indialantic, Florida. She is a Writing Center tutor and is a member of the English Honors Society— Sigma Tau Delta. She loves to dance and participates in both Dance Ensemble and B.O.M.B. Squad.

Untitled

Sarah Turner

The first insult I ever remember receiving came from my grandfather. His name was Ray, and he was a tall Polish man from Wisconsin. Chest hair would peek out of the top of his polo shirts, and, if he hadn't shaved his face that day, he would greet me with a "whisker rub" and scratch his stubble against my cheek. He had steel-blue eyes and a straightforward nature. Ray had been a colonel in the Air Force and had received many awards for putting himself at risk of death while flying bombers over Southeast Asia during World War II. He never talked about the war really, but after he died, I discovered pictures of him in his uniform with his plane and crew. He's now buried in Arlington National Cemetery with my grandmother, Ruth.

Growing up, I lived only two blocks from my grandparents' house. They had a big, white, one-story house with a pool and orange and banana trees in the backyard. I spent a lot of time at their house throughout my childhood. Without fail, they had cocktails every night before dinner, and my parents were often invited over to join them. I would graze on the snack mixes they put out on the coffee table and play with my grandmother's "pocketbooks" or with a box of worn wooden blocks in the corner of the living room. Once in a while, I would spend the night at their house, and they would always march me to bed in a military fashion, chanting "Hup, two, three, four. Hup, two, three, four." The next day, my grandfather would usually make me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He had a penchant for crunchy peanut butter, which was different from the creamy kind I was used to at home but, because of him, I prefer the chunky kind to this day. He also loved crossword puzzles and would work on them with me, hoping I would grow to love them like he did.

My grandfather wasn't a warm and fuzzy kind of man, though. He wasn't affectionate or emotionally available, really. When I was four, I made the unfortunate but common mistake of cutting my own hair. My mother was out of the room, and somehow I got a hold of a pair of scissors and chopped off the front portion of my hair. To effectively fix this toddler-crafted haircut, thick bangs had to be cut across my forehead. It was not my best look, and even at four I was embarrassed. After visiting the hairdresser, we went over to my grandparents' house. I remember my grandfather was sitting in his big, dark blue reclining armchair, and when he saw me, he immediately said, "Your hair looks ugly." His words stung,

and even now, when I remember that moment, a dull pang reverberates in my chest. But every time I reach for the jar of peanut butter in the fridge or see the crossword puzzle in the newspaper, I am flooded with happy memories and a yearning for my stern, hairy, colonel grandfather.