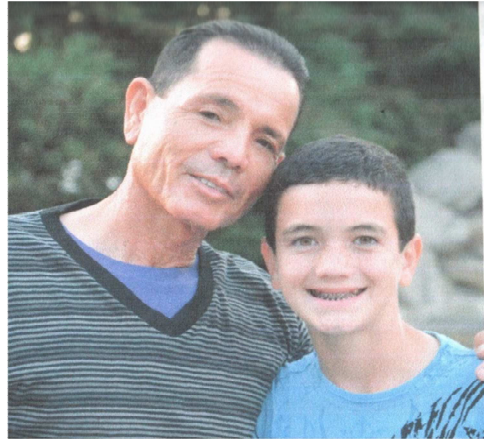


What I Learned From My Grandpa

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“Well the times, thy are a changin.” This Bob Dylan lyric might be true for a lot of things in the world today compared with how things used to be, but it is especially true for my grandpa and the world he grew up in. Wise, spiritual, and enthusiastic are great words to describe my grandpa. Carlos Madrid Holguin was born in Carlsbad, New Mexico, in 1943. He eventually ended up living here in Tulare, California, but the world he lives in today, and the one I’m growing up in, is very different from the one of his childhood days.



My grandpa grew up living throughout the state of New Mexico, wherever his brothers could find work to support the family. Grandpa Carlos’ dad died just before he was born and his mother died when he was 12 years old so they relied upon the work that the brothers could find in cement construction. Without parents for much of his upbringing, Grandpa’s house was nothing more than a trailer to live in at times, and on the bad side of town. The town was separated by race, whites on one side of town and Mexicans and blacks on the other. When they could get into a home at all, it was usually a rundown rental home. Sad to say, cockroaches and rats were just part of the family. Grandpa spent most of his upbringing sleeping on the kitchen floor with some of his brothers and sisters. Their meals consisted mostly of beans, potatoes and chili, and occasionally some rabbits if they could hunt them in a nearby field. A lot of times his only shower was the one he took at school. That’s a lot different from the nice three bedroom, Spanish-style stucco and tile house he lives in today. What this shows me though is that with enough hard work and commitment anyone can make it in the world.

Clothing during my grandpa’s growing up years was sure different than the clothes he or I wear today. Back then, he was known as a Chu-ko. This was a style of dress that came from El Paso, Texas, where young Mexicans wore Stacey, long pointed shoes, with starch-ironed Khaki pants, starch-ironed collared shirts, a cross necklace, and long, greased back hair. He even remembers in junior high one time the officials rounded up all the Mexicans with long, greased back hair and they cut their hair short. I thought that was only something from the movie, Grease, but I guess it was actually true.

Getting an education was tough for my grandpa and so much has changed about schools over the years. When my grandpa was a kid, school was fun up until junior high, but high school was totally different. In high school there was a lot of prejudice from whites to Mexicans and whites to blacks. This caused him to drop out of school in the tenth grade. He also dropped out because of all the fighting going on, but above all, it was just that the school had an unfriendly atmosphere.

After dropping out of school my grandpa went to work in the oil fields. His boss inspired him by say, "You're too smart to be working in the oil fields. You need to go back to school and finish your degree." This motivated him so when he came back to school he went to Artesia, New Mexico, for the eleventh grade and then moved to Tulare, California and went to Tulare Union High School for his senior year.

My grandpa thought that TUHS was much better than the schools in New Mexico. TUHS had a totally different environment. TUHS was extremely sports oriented, which was great for him since he loved to run and be athletic, and it had an enjoyable, family feel to it. In New Mexico, based on your performance in PE testing, students were classified as either Blue, Red or White. Blue were the high performing athletic students, red being the middle performing kids, and white being the low performing students in PE. They had to wear their colors of rank in their shorts every day in PE class.

School discipline is another thing that is totally different now than it was back then. Now we have detention and warnings but back then they literally had physical beatings. Teachers would have big paddles hanging in the front of the classrooms if you were late. They would call you up to the front of the classroom and tell you to bend over a chair and you could choose to get hit one time really hard with the paddle or two times softer. If boys argued during class the teacher would give them boxing gloves and tell them to fight. If you acted up in class you had to go down to the principal's office where you could be spanked. Boy, am I sure glad that I live in the twentieth century.

One of my grandpa's first careers when he got out of high school was interpreting English. He worked and interpreted in clothing stores then became a cement worker with his brothers and eventually formed a cement contracting company. Even at the age of 68 he's still working in that business. We are similar because when he was a little boy he always wanted to be an architect; however, that never became a reality for him. Now that I have scoped out some of the better paying jobs and know a little more of what my strengths are, I've decided that I also want to become an architect. Hopefully I'll fulfill the career that both of us wanted.

In the end, you can clearly see that over time things change dramatically. My grandpa loves living in Tulare and loves being with me to watch my sports. He tells me, "As long as you are always seeking God, it will lead to a better life." He encourages me to stay in school and get an education. I love my grandpa with all my heart and I truly appreciate who he is, especially with the knowledge of where he came from.