**Frustration**

Walking in the hospital, the smell of rubbing alcohol permeated the air and there was a distinct humming coming from a few of the rooms we passed as we made our way to Intensive Care. The stark whiteness of the walls that accompanied the alcohol smell and humming made the rooms less than inviting. We, my dad, my mom, my sister and I slowly walked up to his room and were greeted by all of the other relatives who decided to visit at the same time. A few visitors left to get some lunch which left the rest of us in the room to sit and be with him.

Unable to move, the pent up energy held back by the confines of his hospital bed, the look of frustration on his face was not one that I was accustomed to. The sadness in his eyes was new to me. Since I do not see him very often, sometimes a year may pass, his appearance seemed foreign to me. He looked tired and confused. In the hospital bed, moving as much as the medical contraptions would let him, he smiled at me.

This man is small in stature but very strong... This man is supposed to be here forever... he isn’t supposed to grow older... he shouldn’t have to go to therapy to regain his ability to speak in complete coherent sentences...

“All what the hell’s this guy doing on TV? Where’s my golf?” he shouts at the television.

Here, a small glimpse of the man I grew up with, the man who took me fishing, the man who would dance the jitterbug with me at every wedding, the man who taught me how to make stuffed cabbages, the man who lugged the large cumbersome video camera to all the parties, my cross country meets – commentating “Now here comes Maggie, and you can see she is running.”

Staring at the television, nodding off every few minutes, he looks so small in the bed. He never was a big man, but this bed looks as though it is going to swallow him up. It is hurts me to see him like this. The tubes and wires attached to his body are beginning to agitate him and he continually pulls the pulse oximeter off his finger, only to have my aunt place it back on his finger each time and tell him, “Now dad, you’ve gotta leave that on. OK?”

In a quiet voice he replies, “Yes.”

That’s it, yes. His response is short and not so sweet. Not so sweet because it sounds robotic, just something to say in response to any comment. Aside from his shouting at the television, yes seems to be the only word he can muster.

We stand around for a while longer discussing his condition and what his prognosis may or may not be according to my aunt who is currently taking on her occupational role as nurse and putting aside her role as daughter, for the time being. There is this sense of guilt that I feel realizing that we are talking about him as if he isn’t there, but he is there. And, yes, he may be nodding off and falling asleep occasionally, but he is still there. All I can think now is how hard this must be for him. A man who is physically active, a man who enjoys telling stories is now confined to a hospital bed and can barely put together a sentence.
It was time for us to leave and as much as I wanted to go and be far away from this image, a part of me wanted to stay and sit with him forever. As I leaned over to say goodbye and give him a kiss, he whispered in my ear, “I’m sorry honey. I’m a little messed up right now and I am sorry.” My eyes filled with tears and I kissed him goodbye.

This man is my grandpa… this man shouldn’t have to apologize....