

Topic: My Grandpa's life story

Abstract: My Grandpa was born in Southern California, had a fairly uneventful childhood, then went to San Jose State in the mid 1950's. After graduating he joined the Army, serving at Fort Ord in Monterey. He never went to war and was discharged in the early 1960's. He became a shop teacher and got married in 1961. They had three sons and taught for 30 years. He influenced my Dad and my uncles, which influenced me greatly.

Key Words: Southern California, Army, Fort Ord, Teaching, Family

My Grandpas Interesting Story

My grandpa was born in August 1934 in Eagle Ridge, California. Eagle Ridge is just east of Pasadena, California. The famous Rose Bowl was just blocks from his childhood home. I say was because that house is now gone because a freeway was built through the neighborhood in the sixties. His dad had come from a small town in central Colorado called Pierce. Pierce has the population of a town the size of San Juan Bautista and is about an hour north of Denver. My grandpa's grandpa, or my great-great grandpa, was a doctor in Pierce. In 1915 the family moved to California for better opportunities. My great-grandpa was born in 1909, so he was only six when they made the trek. Obviously in the early days of the 19th century traveling across four states was easier said than done and also took a few weeks if they were lucky. They eventually made it to Southern California a few weeks later. My great grandpa grew up and met my great grandma in the early 30's, during the great depression.

My ancestors were fairly well off being that my great great grandpa was a doctor. They were not the stereotypical poor people who lived in boxes during the depression. They were a safe middle class family. A few years after my great grandparents were

married, they gave birth to my grandpa. My grandpa was an average kid in Southern California at the time. He did well in school, was a hard worker and overall a good kid. He has never told me anything interesting that went on in Eagle Ridge while he was living there. He was, however, interested in tinkering with hot rods and racing them at the local airfields and drag strips. In terms of racing and automobile history his stories are pretty interesting. He raced and spent time with big names in the “hot rodding industry” such as Vic Edelbrock and others. Vic now owns a multi billion-dollar high performance auto part company making every part imaginable to make a car perform better.

My grandpa was still a kid when World War II started, but he still had stories about it. The overall mood of society was obviously very different. Priorities changed from living life to winning the war. Kids older than my grandpa were being drafted and were either fighting or working in factories making planes, jeeps, tanks, ammunition, guns, warships, and all of the rest of the necessary items needed to win the war. Towards the end of the war when the U.S. was mainly fighting Japan, he told me that they had blackouts, had to close up the blinds and in his words “had to hang out all night”. They did this because they were worried about the Japanese making more airborne attacks. In other words, they didn’t want another Pearl Harbor. Towards the beginning of the fifties, after the war was over, my grandpa went to college at San Jose State University. He went to study metalworking but later decided he wanted to be a teacher, teaching vocational type classes. He struggled through school but finally graduated and got his degree and credential.

He was called to join the Army in 1958. At the time Fort Ord in Monterey was still in operation, so that was where his post was. He did all of his training and service at

Fort Ord. My favorite story of his took place in 1958 during his training. He and his fellow trainees decided to head over to the brand new Laguna Seca Raceway to watch the races. My grandpa had always been a bit of a motor head, so obviously he was drawn to the sounds of the cars. Laguna Seca is built close to Fort Ord's property, so a quick trip was easy to make. Before Laguna Seca was built, local races were held on the roads of Pebble Beach. Many racers were killed because of the lack of safety of the course. In my grandpa's words, "Old raggedy cars going at their limits with trees lining the track isn't the smartest idea". The deaths led to Laguna Seca being built. The race my grandpa went to was the first race ever held at the new track. Pete Lovely won the race driving a Ferrari. Lovely recently died, but will always be remembered. I am a huge motor head myself, and wish I could've seen the first race at my favorite place on earth, so knowing that my grandpa was there is almost as good as me being there.

Most of the military-related stories he told me were from training and life at Fort Ord. I spend some time in the area since I race go-karts at the old airfield near Fort Ord's property and go to Laguna Seca often. I find his stories more interesting because I know the areas in which he is talking about. My grandpa often took part in shooting drills. He turned out to have a pretty good aim, which caused the sergeants to take a liking to him. He never went to fight in a war since World War II and The Korean War were over and he was discharged before the Vietnam War started. Anyway, his shooting never was put to good use until about fifty years later. The guys in our family went on a camping trip deep in the sierras. My uncle and his son, my cousin were into target shooting, so we took the guns out into the woods and shot some targets. My grandpa decided he wanted to shoot some rounds, so he used my uncle's .22-caliber rifle. Remember he hasn't shot

anything in fifty years, so we all expected him to be rusty. He ended up shooting all ten of the targets without missing a single one. This doesn't relate to history, but it showed me that he either was just a natural, which of course he was, or the shooting drills were literally drilled into his mind, to the point he picked up right where he left off fifty years earlier. It is hard to tell because I don't know many people who have been through the military, but it seems that it really changes a person. Obviously I didn't know him before I was born, but I think it changed his life immensely.

Now back to the story. My grandpa was discharged from the military in the early sixties. He had his teaching credential, so he became the vocational teacher at Carmel High School in Carmel. He taught Auto shop, wood shop, metal shop, drafting, and jewelry making. Soon after he was discharged he met my Grandma. She had just moved to the bay area from Southern California where she had graduated from USC. They got married soon after and had their first child, my Dad, in 1962. Three years later my uncle was born, then two years later my other uncle. In the late sixties he took up a new hobby. He wanted to coach a sports team, so he decided to try Water Polo. He ended up coaching for thirty years and was highly successful. My dad and uncles all went to Carmel and played for him, all had success. He retired from teaching in 1985, teaching for 23 years. He quit coaching in 1992. His career and hobbies rubbed off on my dad, which rubbed off on me. My dad became the auto shop teacher at San Benito High in 1986 and still does it today. I was lucky to take his class a few years ago and had some good fun. My dad also became the Varsity Water Polo coach while my Uncle was the Junior Varsity coach. I played on the Junior Varsity team for three years and the Varsity team my senior year. I had a really fun time playing even though I wasn't the superstar on the team.

My grandpa still lives in Carmel today. He likes to spend time with his grandchildren, all eight of them. He came to almost all of my games, my brother's games, and all of my little cousin's soccer games. He is still a motor head, so he is always working on his 1931 Ford Model T truck. He recently finished restoring a 1940 Ford pickup. It turned out really nice and is his pride and joy. Every once in a while he takes it to car shows and wins awards. He also serves in the Carmel Rotary. He is one of the main members who contributes a lot of time and puts a huge effort into making a difference for the community. Since he coached for so many years and still has an interest in the sport, he attends most of Carmel's home games and provides support for the coaches. Almost all of the current coaches played for him when they were in high school, so they have the upmost respect for him. There is even a plaque at Carmel's pool in honor of all his years coaching and a thank you for starting the entire program that changed the lives of thousands of students from the area the played Water Polo.

My grandpa wasn't a World War II war hero or a member of congress or has won the Nobel Peace Prize, but he accomplished more than most people do. He is the type of person that has been there and done that, literally. From building a house on his own, building vehicles, toppling trees 80 feet tall at the age of sixty, teaching, coaching, he has done it all. I always had the upmost respect for my Grandpa, but after writing this paper I have even more respect for him. He has so much influence on my life and he has never told me what to do. He has seen the history that nowadays is forgotten and I am glad he tells me the stories about it. In ways I learn more from him telling me about historical events than going and sitting in class and reading a book that some random guy wrote, and for that I thank him.