

**Topic:** The Only Brother to Stay

**Abstract:** My grandfather worked very hard for what he has accomplished. He served over 30 years in the U.S. Army thanks to his determination in everything he did. My grandfather took advantage of the education and career opportunities provided. He set a good example for his children in his way of life. I am who I am today thanks to the sacrifices my grandfather made for himself and his family.

**Key Words:** Successful Career, Hard Work, Determination, Good Work Ethic, Sacrifice, Education, Family, Impoverishment, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Military Life, U.S. Army

### The Only Brother to Stay

My grandfather was born in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. He was the third oldest out of his nine other siblings with seven brothers and three sisters in all. Life was not anywhere close to easy or laid-back for anyone in the family. My grandfather was taught by his father, my great-grandfather, that nothing comes free. He had to work for everything he received and accomplished. Through good work ethic and determination my grandfather was able to get a good education and eventually became a great member of the United States Army. He married a beautiful woman in my grandmother and had four children of their own. The military life turned out to be a great experience for the whole family. My grandfather was able to come from an impoverished home in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to a successful career and life in the United States.

Growing up in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico made my grandfather appreciate everything he had and those around him. If he or his family wanted anything, they had to work for it on their farm. My grandfather's only source of entertainment was a soccer ball and a self-made bat and rocks to hit around. My grandfather and his six other brothers had to get up at five in the morning to feed the cattle and clean the surrounding environment to prevent disease or illness. The oldest sister had to help my great-grandparents pull the vegetables and other foods

products from the field. The two youngest sisters had to make sure the house was clean. All of this was done before they went off to school. Unfortunately for my grandfather and his family, bathing was a rarity due to the lack of funds. This of course made him stand out to those around him. Once school was over my grandfather knew to do his homework, finish the chores which varied through the farm and get to bed to start this cycle all over again. This would be hard work for any child in these circumstances. He would always dream of having nice looking clothes or a nice pair of shoes. All of the clothes in the family were handed down from one to the other. At my grandfather's elementary school, there were always the kids who looked nice and proper. My grandfather felt that they were better than him because they lived a nice life and he had to work for everything he had. He recalls being treated as inferior to them because of the way he looked and dressed. Nonetheless, he felt that his great work ethic truly prepared him for the success he accomplished throughout his career and life.

The economy in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was very poor. As my great-grandparents got into their elderly years, they had to work through physical injuries from the rough conditions they were put in. This was something that hurt my grandfather very much. No matter how hard his parents worked, nothing would ever change. They followed the same routine every day working throughout the morning and afternoon relentlessly. He saw his parents work as hard as they could every day and still barely have enough resources to provide for the family. He swore to himself that he would get a good job that put him in a good position to retire with a comfortable living. My great-grandparents ultimately worked until the day they died. My grandfather was determined to make sure that his parents' sacrifice for their family was not in vain.

To this day, my grandfather still tells me that he had to walk thirteen miles to school every morning. So if my brother or I would complain about anything school related he would repeat that phrase of his childhood. He wanted to make sure that we took advantage of all the education we received here. He would always tell us how he wished he had the education in Puerto Rico that we have here. My grandfather knew that he had to get a good education in order to make a good living for himself. He did not plan on living the life of a farmer just like his parents. He attended the University of Puerto Rico where he planned on becoming a lawyer. During his schooling, he would enter debates where he felt he could express his opinions on certain criteria against other students. This led him to the choice that becoming a lawyer would be the best career opportunity. He would be making a much better salary than the rest of his family and could help them in return. Another activity he enjoyed in school was the Reserves Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. He always looked forward to the end of his last class so he could get dressed into his uniform and attend the program. He was very dedicated to the ROTC program as he was with his school work. This helped him graduate the program in two years, which very few have done. This ultimately led him to his career in the military. The G.I. Bill allowed by him to continue to get his college education despite him knowing he was going to stay in the military. Thanks to the United States Army draft, my grandfather was able to realize his true profession in the military.

When my grandfather was in Puerto Rico, he recognized himself to be categorized socially as a person of low class. He was from a family of farmers who barely had enough food or supplies to last the week. Although most of the communities in Puerto Rico were impoverished, he felt impacted by those who had higher social rankings. Besides from school, he felt that his voice would not be heard. Once he entered the United States Army, he knew this was

different. He was given a certain amount of authority which made him feel relevant and important.

At the age of twenty my grandfather was drafted into the United States Army as a Sergeant. His two older brothers were drafted into the Army before him and returned home at the end of their tours. One of his brothers was in the Korean War and the other was stationed in France. At first, he thought he would serve his two years and return home to Puerto Rico just like his brothers. Fortunately, my grandfather found that the military life was the life for him. After his initial tour, he reenlisted and ultimately stayed in the military for a total of thirty-two years. Throughout his career, he was able to travel all around the world. He reached the highest rank he could at the time as a Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CWO4). Thanks to his position he felt he could have an influence on the people around him. If he felt he needed to give an opinion about an issue, he was free to do so. This was something that he was looking for that he could not do back in Puerto Rico.

When my grandfather was living in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, he had to share a room with his brothers. Each of the brothers had their own bunk beds tightly squeezed into their one room. With clothes and certain possessions scattered throughout the room, it made it that much more crowded and hard to move throughout the room. When he was in the military, he knew this would lead to a better life. When he reenlisted, he was stationed at the military base. His style of living increased tremendously he felt. He did not have to worry about rationing water, food or other supplies. His clothes were provided in his uniform. This gave my grandfather a nice sense of security since he did not have to constantly worry about conserving things in order to save money.

During the thirty-two years my grandfather served in the military, he was able to travel to Germany, France, Vietnam, Korea, Panama Canal Zone, and states all throughout the United States. At the age of twenty-five, my grandpa married his girlfriend of two years, my grandmother. They eventually had four children in all including their oldest son, my dad. My grandfather's military career had a positive effect on my dad as he was the only one of the brothers to participate in the ROTC programs. My grandfather explained to my dad that he needed to be professional in everything he did. If his ROTC instructor told him to be on site by six o'clock, he had to be there at least by five-thirty. If it was not for my dad's grades, my grandfather felt he would have made an excellent member of the United States Army.

My grandfather was able to bring his family wherever he was stationed. He really enjoyed this because he knew how secure the base was. Everyone on the military base knew each other including all the children. The doors would never be locked because everyone trusted one another. Children would be constantly running in and out of the houses playing with each other. The children always had something to do whether it was playing sports or doing activities in the jungle with the parents depending on the location. The children received an excellent education with the school systems. This gave my grandfather great relief in their lifestyle compared to where he was raised and brought up.

Now that my grandfather has been happily retired from the United States Army for over twenty years, he has accomplished his goal. He has come a long way from the impoverished Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. His upbringing has taught his children, including my dad that you need to work hard for what you want. If something is handed to you on a silver platter, then it is probably not worth having. In return, I have heard all the lectures from my dad that he got from my grandfather. I now know that you should take advantage of all the opportunities you are

given. If you take them for granted, like some people do, you end up hurting yourself in the long run. Unfortunately, none of my grandfather's family came to the United States. They felt that they were born in Puerto Rico, so they belong there. Despite the continuous efforts of my grandfather, they have no interest of staying for any extended period of time here. My grandfather wished they saw the possibilities they had when they were younger to come over. My grandfather is simply grateful he made the right choice in joining the United States Army.