

I had planned to write just a short thing to introduce the song, but it got slightly long and I'm sorry, but my mom and Uncle Gregg said I could still read it so I'm going to, don't worry I talk pretty fast.

As long as I can remember, I've bragged about my grandma to anyone within earshot. I wrote poems about her in elementary school and middle school, I brought friends to meet her in high school and college, and everyone I've met since then has heard all kinds of stories about her.

One time a couple years ago I went to a party and the movie *Mamma Mia* was playing on a tv in the background and it made me think of Grandma because she and I had gone to see that in theaters together, so I told that to everyone at this party. These were people that I did *not* know very well, but I went on and on about how cool my grandma was and how she had gotten her master's degree when she was sixty-four and then worked for a million years after that and has been to a bunch of protests and also once knit me a pink pussy hat and was also really funny, and everyone at this party thought I was very strange, but agreed that she sounded like a neat lady. And she was!

My grandma was always so sharp and thoughtful. And she was really brave. I feel like at any given time she could look at her life, and if there were things about it that she wanted to change, she'd just do whatever she needed to do to change them. She made it look easy. It's always seemed to me that she was able to create a life for herself that was completely in alignment with her values, even as those values shifted and evolved. She just kept growing and evolving too. I feel like that's really scary for a lot of people, I know making changes is definitely scary to me, but again, she made it look easy.

The last time I saw her was Thanksgiving. We had coincidentally both just taken astrology classes, so while Doug and my mom were cooking, Grandma and I went over her birth chart and talked about what all the signs and planets meant for her personality. (I thought about including all that information in this speech and decided against it, but I have the chart printed out and with me so if you're curious come find me after.) This last Thanksgiving, Grandma also showed us some of the new paintings she had been doing in her art class and told us stories about all her new friends. There have been so many new people in the last few years that it was hard for me to keep all the names straight. Grandma was so popular, and always made lots of connections. (Quintessential Gemini.) Before I left to go home I invited her to a piano recital I was going to play in before Christmas, and she carefully added the date to the calendar in her iPad, a new and hard-won skill that she was proud to show off.

It's overwhelming to try and remember all the things she taught me. She taught me a lot of my table manners, and how to make a bed. She taught me lots of little things about baking and sewing that I only half remember. She also taught me how to drive! It was in the UNE parking lot; I was not good at it and kept going too fast and scaring both of us. (I did not get better, but I don't think that's her fault.)

But the biggest things I've learned from her are not the things she set out to teach me on purpose, but the things she's shown me over the years: That it's important to pay attention to the world and contribute to your community. That you can always go back to school if you want. That you're always capable of learning a new skill or picking up a new hobby. That it's never too late to make new friends. And that, if you do the work and take care of yourself and exercise and meditate and save your money (or at least stop spending so much of it on dumb things from Amazon Prime), you'll be able to do whatever you want forever. There is no such thing as done, there is no such thing as too old, you can just keep going.

I honestly thought my grandma would outlive us all, which is probably why, during a particularly morbid conversation many years ago, when my grandma asked me if I would sing at her funeral one day I said

something like: “gross,” and I didn’t ask for her ideas about what kind of song she might like me to sing. I believed her to be an immortal being, and I am genuinely surprised to be standing in front of you right now, under these circumstances. I regret not asking her any follow-up questions about her musical request. Here are some songs I considered for today, and the reasons they were disqualified.

1. A Bushel and A Peck - Grandma used to sing this to us when we were little and it reminds me of her, so it was a good choice initially, but also it’s from the musical Guys and Dolls where it is performed in a nightclub by Miss Adelaide and her Hot Box dancers, who are essentially like a burlesque group, so I decided against it.
2. Animal Fair - Another song we used to sing together which is very catchy and makes me laugh, but the lyrics reference a drunk monkey’s possible death-by-elephant, so that seemed like a weird choice for this occasion.
3. Send in the Clowns - I sang this in a play once and I remember my grandma particularly liking that performance. This song has a lot of the appropriate musical qualities that I wanted, but it’s about a middle aged woman realizing that she’s failed in life and love, and my grandmother was an unequivocal success. Also she didn’t mope around feeling sorry for herself all the time like the lady in the song, who is kind of whiner, so Send in the Clowns doesn’t work.

I’ve decided on “I’ll Be Seeing You”, which is a song that I don’t think my grandma and I ever sang together, but it was the kind of song she liked, and also she must have known it because I looked it up and it was a number one hit on the radio in 1944 when she was 11. It’s weird to me that Grandma was 11 in 1944; that seems like such a long time ago and she has always felt so current to me, not old-fashioned or stuck in another era. I think that took effort and curiosity, and I really love that, that she was always curious. That might even be my favorite thing about her. It’s really hard to pick a favorite thing though, because she was really really good, and we were all really lucky to have her. That’s the thing I keep remembering: even though I’m super annoyed that she didn’t live forever like I had planned, I was really lucky to get her for 30 years, and I know that I’ll still have her in my head for many more.