

## my grandfather's war (1) running up the hill

**My grandfather** was a lieutenant colonel in WWII and he got shot like four times and usually he'd just get shot like in the shoulder or something like that and they'd just patch him up and send him back out there. And while he was off fighting the war, **my grandmother** was living on the farm that he grew up on with his mother and their four children. They live in as few rooms as possible so they can heat it and she sleeps in the same room, in the same bed with her mother-in-law. So one night she's just in bed asleep and in the middle of the night she just sits up in the middle of the night and says Thank you Lord.

So my grandfather is over in Germany and he is given the task of clearing this **large wooded hill** which the front of the war had moved on but they had to go through and find all the different bunkers and stuff and they had to find bunkers with Germans in them just waiting to surrender and that kind of thing. And so they said, you know, there isn't any aircraft emplacement on top of this hill but there shouldn't be anyone left so just go there and make sure.

So he and his platoon or whatever casually walk up there and look to see if anyone was there and they spread out pretty far apart and they made their way up to the top and as my grandfather got up to the clearing at the top there was **a guy sitting in the anti-aircraft gun** and he'd aimed it down the hill waiting for them to come up there so as my grandfather came up into the clearing he sees this guy and as he's going for his pistol to pull out of his holster the guy turns the gun on him and shoots...

## my grandfather's war (2) the wound

... and it spins my grandfather around, it hits him and so he spins around and he goes stumbling back down the hill through the woods and he thinks he's been hit in the shoulder and he's not really thinking about that, he's thinking about getting ready for the gun and he gets a couple paces into the woods and he reaches out his right arm to push a branch out of his way and **the shell hit him in the hand** and the shell of an anti-aircraft gun is like three or four inches across and it just took a big chunk out of his hand like from the base of his pinkie all the way around the side of his hand like someone just took a big bite out of it. so his fingers weren't hurt or anything but there was nothing coming between his pinkie and his wrist.

### my grandfather's war (3) thank you lord

So he saw that and he clasped his other hand over it and as he did that he fell and landed face down on his hand. When the guys went down and got the medic and came back up and found him they rolled him over and his hand was **perfectly coagulated** onto the wound so that he wasn't bleeding anymore and it was kind of sealed. It was kind of sealed before he even hit the ground. So instead of pulling it apart there in the field they just wrapped him all up and sent him off to the field hospital.

### my grandfather's war (4) waiting for a plane

So he comes to in a field hospital and they kind of sewed his hand at an angle so his pinkie was, the bottom of his pinkie was pretty much sewed to his wrist. And there's still kind of a hole in the middle. And they patched him up and they sent him **off to a hospital**.

And he sat in the hospital for a couple months and every day that his hand would start to coagulate and create **a scab** they'd come in and they'd kind of rip it open again and then they'd do it again the next day and the next day until it kind of looked right.

So then they send him over to England to catch a plane home. But he gets there and everybody else there is in much worse shape than he is and so he never gets on a plane. And so he's trying to figure out a way to get home and he notices that **the C-130s** that fly out of there every hour or two loaded with the wounded, sometimes they have a flight crew of two and sometimes they have a flight crew of three.

So he goes up to the head office and says, you know, "Hey what's with that **extra seat?**" and they go "It's not really a seat." And he says, "I don't care. Can I get on the plane?" So like, "Ok, the next one, we'll call your name and you just run to the plane and get on it." So he goes out there and he gets on it. He ends up in New York.

### my grandfather's war (5) over the woods

So then in New York, he gets there and he's got no papers or anything. they don't know what to do with him. but he IS a lieutenant colonel so he's got **some sway**. And so finally they get tired of him pestering them for a ride home or whatever and so they just put him on a C-130 bound from New York to Georgia. And his home is in South Carolina.

And so he's the only cargo, it's just him and then the pilot and the copilot. So after a while he's up there **in the cockpit**, hanging out with them and talking about the war and talking about the States and everything.

And so they're hanging out and they're over these woods and my grandfather says, "I know where I am." The pilot's like, "Ah, you're [probably wrong about it]" and he's like "No no no, we're gonna come over these woods and there's gonna be **an intersection** and a [P... 76]. My cousin owns that station.

And they come over the woods and sure enough, there's the [P... 76] and he's like, "You're gonna fly over my house. **give me a parachute.**" And the pilot's like "I'm not giving you my parachute." And the co-pilot's like "I'm not giving you my parachute." And so he starts having this argument on the plane.

## **my grandfather's war (6) in the outhouse**

And so he manages to convince them to, one of them, to give him a parachute and they call down to **the airport** and they're like, "What else is up here?" and they're like "Oh, there's like a crop duster somewhere." "We're getting him down there, we're turning to this angle and we're coming through."

So, a cut to my grandmother. she's **sitting in the outhouse** and so she's sitting there with the door open, it's a hot sunny day, taking care of business and she sees off in the distance and there's a C-130, which isn't rare because they come through there all the time. But this one turns and turns towards the house. And she knows immediately that he's on the plane.

And so she's yanking up her pants and running out into the middle of this cornfield doing jumping jack saying No no no don't jump **don't jump**. Meanwhile, my grandfather's strapping on the parachute, getting ready to jump out of this plane and they're talking to the airport base to tell them what's going to happen and everything. And the guy at the airport base says, "Does this guy have a phone?" and they're like "Yeah", you know, "He does".

He's like, "Why, I could call there and I could hold the radio speaker up to the receiver and they could hear, you know, and communicate and so they **call the house**. My grandmother goes running inside and gets to the phone and the guy says, you know, "This is major so-and-so at whatever airforce base" and before he even gets out why he's calling, she says "tell him not to jump, he'll break his leg."

## my grandfather's war (7) the letter

They can hear this in the cockpit up there so my grandfather's almost got the last strap on him and he just kind of freezes and everybody looks at each other like, "How? How could she know that?" And so they have this **conversation over the radio** and he doesn't jump out of the airplane and he goes on to the airport base and they check him out of the hospital and discharge him and so he gets home.

And like four or five days after he gets home **this letter arrives** and it's stamped London, Paris, Germany, then the frontlines and then Germany, Paris, London, New York, Georgia, and finally his house, and this letter has kind of followed him all over the place, always getting there just after he's left. And when he opens it, it's this letter from my grandmother, like, on the night that she woke up, and it says, "I know you've been shot but you're ok. And they're gonna send you home this time. And you're gonna fly over the house. Don't jump out, you'll break your leg."