

“Continuum”

Elise Gianattasio
Lake Region High School

When he died I believed that everything would stop. The clocks would not tick anymore and people would move as if suspended in water. Letting go of his ashes in the breeze would have been enough, but he held onto my fingers. I saw him land in the water, in the sea of green, and still felt him on my hands. It was as if he had never left. I never cried during his celebration of life, and maybe I was just too afraid of washing him away. I wish I could say that I never cried while writing this. It might have made me appear strong and confident. One cannot wish for these things. Appearing strong and confident is much more trouble than it is worth anyhow. Some things are meant to hit you, square in the chest, knocking the wind out of you. Unfortunately or fortunately, death is one of those things, death is a 1,000 pound weight that hits the front of your car, damaging the way you move and leaving you with a couple bruises. The problem is you live. Death has been romanticized to a fault in which I thought that I might be able to catch my breath, if only for a minute, before moving on back to the present. Reality has never been a friend to me. Instead of slowing down it would seem to speed up, leaving me to run to catch up, short on breath, short on water. Leaving me in rivers down my face, and exhaled through my mouth so that my rhythms would make a tragic waltz. I could have composed a symphony of my mourning, as if music could bring him back to me. It's quite tragic, humans, at the passing of another, only think to cry. I believed that one would have to break my arms to get me out of bed that day. Yet, he died before the sun came up. I was awake, I remember being awake. An hour away, in a bed that wasn't my own, I said aloud, "it is too early to be alive," and it was.

Two days earlier I had perched myself on a chair overlooking the hospital bed. I can't remember much about the room, but I remember his eyes. Staring as if they were trying to drink my soul. Taking everything in as if it would be the last thing he ever saw. Looking at him brought a quiet calm to my mind. I drowned out the crying and looked directly at him, and he looked directly at me. I swear a smile crossed his face looking at mine, and I did my best to smile back at him. Part of us both knew; this would be the last time we would ever lay eyes on each other. I touched his hand. He looked so small, under the lights. He was always the tallest in my life. I still saw the man who taught me to dance under those blankets. And in that moment, I know he saw me as the little girl dancing around at his feet. Some moments, you want to last forever, and I would gladly still be in that room if given the chance. It was not that the moment was perfect, it was real. And maybe the last peace I will ever see. A knowing of the end, but simply watching. Walking out of the room, the last thing I ever heard him say was, "I love you all," and he did.

No, time did not stop when he died, in fact, it went so far as to carry me away. A three hour bus trip to an unknown city, and back again that day. Part of me must have known. I found out from a text message, a friend saying, "I'm so sorry to hear about your grandfather," two hours from home.

My parents were too afraid to tell me.

If time did stop, it was only for a second, and I think I heard his voice:

"I love you all"

"I love you all"

and then, time continued.