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## Swing of Life's Pendulum

Lisa Middendorf  
*St. John Fisher College*

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## Swing of Life's Pendulum

### **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"How many dead people do you know?' I only know of one. I first knew him as alive. I first knew him as my grandfather. I guess I still know him as my grandfather."

### **Cover Page Footnote**

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Lisa Middendorf

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## Swing of Life's Pendulum

*How many dead people do you know—Mary Lavin, "The Living"*

"How many dead people do you know?" I only know of one. I first knew him as alive. I first knew him as my grandfather. I guess I still know him as my grandfather.

The earliest memories I have of the one dead person that I know, I don't really remember. I was a baby, the "Muffet" of "Misty and Muffet;" he would take his teeth out and talk gibberish.

The last memory I have of him taking his teeth rest on the nightstand in the bedroom. He wasn't speaking gibberish. He wasn't speaking gibberish at all. He was rattling. My mom said it was called the death rattle. I still hear it when I visit the room where he died.

There are two noises that I will always connect with grandma and grandpa's house. The death rattle is the strongest, most eerie noise that haunts me. The other is the clocks. The only clocks that grandma owned were the one that tick-tocked, tick-tocked.

There was the one clock behind the guest chair in the living room. It had deer in the backdrop and the tick corresponded with the second hand. There was another on the wall behind grandma and grandpa's recliners. This tick corresponded with the pendulum that was hanging beneath. If you sat just right on the couch, you could watch the pendulum disappear behind grandpa's head, reappear then disappear again, behind grandpa's head.

There were days when I would lay on that couch and not be comfortable until I found that spot.

Two reasons existed for my lying on the couch. The first being I was sick and had to stay home from school. Sometimes I wasn't sick, but I made my mom believe that I was, because I knew that grandma was planning on making cookies that day. Her cookies always had extra chocolate chips in them.

During Christmas season, it seems that I was sick a lot. Of course, during the Christmas season, grandma made a weekly batch of woopie pies. The only way for you to understand woopie pies is to picture them in your head:

Close your eyes, imagine OREO cookies. Now imagine one OREO cookie. Time the size of that one OREO cookie by, like, six, make it homemade. See why I was never healthy during the Christmas season?

The second reason that made me find my dent on the couch was for grandpa's stories. He was in the Korean War and, with the stories he told, I was there too. After a while, I would ask for specific stories. I had my favorites, 4 or 5 that complimented grandma's cookies perfectly.

You see, my grandpa was a hero. He saved lives. One in particular.

They were coming home; their service time was up. Joy could be felt in the rocking of the waves. Grandpa was making his way to the bathroom on the deck. He opened the door to walk in. Simultaneous to his opening the door, a stranger jumped off the toilet and hung from a homemade noose. With his quick reaction, Grandpa grabbed the man by the waist and lifted him up. He called for help, and help came. The man did not die. Mail call that day had produced a "Dear John" letter for him. He had read it and wanted to end his life. He didn't get the chance. My grandpa saved him.

Grandpa is a hero with or without stories. He is the only dead person I really knew as alive.

It took him only a few short hours to die. Up until then he was still living. The death rattle would lift his ribs high and then drop them quickly, loudly. I would sit and watch. Watch and wait. Wait for another rattle to shake his bones.

The time came. His ribs lifted up one last time, the rattling ceased. The dog, a 17-year-old beagle we called "Jefferson," howled and ran to the door.

I would be sick from school that day. Only there would be no stories, only cookies. Grandma would feed me woopie pies and I would listen to the only sound left. Tic, tock, tic, tock.

I sat in my dent on the couch, a cookie in my hand, and watched the entire swing of the pendulum.

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