

Decorah Middle School
Decorah, Iowa

Dear Norma Fox Mazer,

My grandpa, Orville, died in September after a long battle with a stroke. When I read your book, After the Rain, I thought about my memories of my grandpa and how similar they were to Rachel and her grandpa, Izzy. Both were stubborn old men who did not want to show their granddaughters they were getting old. They wanted to always be tough but yet a soft side appeared in them that made you love them.

Your book influenced me. I remember the visits I had with my grandpa. Some of those memories are more alive because of your description of Izzy. My grandpa built bridges in World War II like Izzy did. I don't have a bridge that I can visit and see my grandpa's handprint but I do have memories that bring pictures in my mind of him making the bridges strong enough so tanks could go across them.

My grandpa was sometimes very stubborn and he only did things if he wanted to, but I loved him. In the end, the stroke left him so he couldn't talk but just a few words. When he spoke, he made sure those few words were meaningful. When the end was close, I remember I would come in to visit and he would make a point of trying to say "hello" to me. I could always understand him. That made me love him even more because I knew he cared for me.

Like Rachel, I went on my daily "walks" with my grandpa. My grandpa couldn't walk so I pushed him in his wheelchair. I would also swab his mouth daily with lemon swabs and every time I brought them out he would open his mouth. I knew he was getting weaker but just like Izzy he tried to be strong around me. He was such a stubborn old man.

My grandpa is no longer "alive" but he will stay "alive" in my memories. Your book helped me remember those memories so I can keep my grandpa in my heart. I will always love that stubborn old man- my grandpa!

Sincerely,

Erica Bjelland