

**In Loving Memory of My Grandfather
Ray Rosander
Born: September 28, 1906
Died: November 29, 1995**

I read recently that it is not easy to simply and consistently be oneself. Integrity, the thorough integration of decent values and actions, is an ideal that few people achieve. I think my grandfather came very close.

Ray Rosander, known simply as "Grandpa Ray" to his granddaughters and great grandchildren, was someone who could always be counted on to be himself, a person I learned over the years to deeply love and respect. Loyal to his family and friends, he was honest, generous in spirit and empathetic in nature.

Small in stature, but physically strong and sturdily built, Grandpa Ray was not afraid of hard work. His day began before the sun rose and often ended well after dusk. He was a farmer, proud of his small domain and the ability to provide for his family.

In all the years I knew him, my grandfather never seemed to want for material things. He worked hard and enjoyed the simple pleasures in life. He taught me how one could enjoy a deep spiritual love of life not tied to material things.

Grandpa spent a good deal of time outdoors, and it was evident in his appreciation of the changing seasons and his reverence of nature. He had a keen knowledge of plants and knew the names of many wildflowers. He was well known for his expertise with horses and cattle. Pete and Beck, his beloved mules, plowed his fields long after tractors had come on the scene. His mountain adventures in the Sierra Nevada were well known and a source of inspiration for friends and family. His camera close at hand, family history was lovingly detailed and chronicled for all to enjoy.

Grandpa Ray also had a wonderful sense of humor and a way with small "surprises". As a child I remember him knocking on our kitchen door early on a frosty cold morning. My mother answered the door in her bathrobe, and Grandpa greeted her by placing a large half-frozen "blue belly" lizard on the floor. Our response was to squeal in fright as he laughed heartily in his familiar way.

There were other "found treasures", often things that I proudly toted off to elementary school "show and tell" sessions. A snakeskin spied on his twice daily walks through the pasture; another time, five downy baby quails rescued from the cotton field and carefully carried up to the house nestled in Grandpa's straw hat; tender wild asparagus plucked from the earth and delivered just in time for dinner; and perhaps most memorable to me, a tiny fox terrier puppy tucked inside the pocket of his Levi jacket and given to my sister and me one holiday season.

I spent a good deal of my free time hanging out with Grandpa Ray when I was young. I watched him round up the calves and brand them himself. He ministered to his cows when they had difficult labors. I tagged along when he moved the irrigation pipes across the pasture in the hot summer months. He never seemed bothered by the persistent questions of an overly inquisitive ten year old.

When I became a gawky adolescent of twelve I convinced him to let me drive his pickup, reminding him that there was little trouble I could get into in a great big pasture. I ran into what seemed to be the only large oak tree in the vicinity. He didn't seem to be a bit fazed. "Back up and try again", was his only response. Grandpa was like that, not much ruffled his feathers. Well, a little encouragement goes a long way. I'm still driving and I haven't hit any oak trees since!

I can barely imagine my grandfather without thinking of my grandmother, Ruby, at his side. They created a good life together. A strong marriage of over 61 years based on mutual respect and a deep abiding love.

Through their life on the farm, they extended their love and generosity to include family, friends and neighbors and anyone else that had the good fortune to meet them along the way. Home was a gathering place where one could immediately be greeted with a steaming cup of hot coffee. A meal usually followed, everyone crowding into the tiny kitchen. The table was laden with food grown and produced on the farm. The juicy red ripe tomatoes from Grandpa's garden were one of my favorites.

Lively conversation ensued, and might have included speculation on the weather, the status of the current season's crops and whatever joys or disappointments life offered at the time. No matter how busy, my grandparents welcomed and embraced the people who happened to grace their lives.

I am so immensely grateful for the memory of my grandfather's love and the time I was able to spend with him. His sacrifices have not gone unnoticed, and I hope that I will be able to pass on the values he has taught me to my own children. He gave of his time, love, and counsel. The loss of his physical presence is immeasurable, but I am comforted by the belief that we will be together again in the future.

I can still see him clearly in my mind's eye. His ready smile, a straw cowboy hat with a feather in the brim. Blue chambray shirt, red suspenders, and faded blue denim jeans, a ride in his pickup truck, dog at his side, with a box of oranges to present at Heaven's gate.