

By Marjorie Ingall

When my dad died, Josie was not yet 3. I was eight months pregnant. Maxine would never know Zayde (Yiddish for Grandpa), who loved her so much before she was born that he put her ultrasound on his Web page. I felt sad for Max but bereft for Josie. Forgetting is worse than never knowing.

My father swore Josie, his first grandchild, was the smartest and most adorable child ever to toddle the earth. He insisted that she could sing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," including the little-known verses, flawlessly, at 10 months (sure, if "flawlessly" means "in Martian"). As she grew, he declared that even the most mundane things she did were proof of her genius. At her baby-naming ceremony, when she accidentally peed on him, he proudly showed everyone the wet spot on his pants.

Then he got sick. And sicker. He'd struggled with heart disease his entire life, but then he went into kidney failure, and later he fell. Soon all systems started to misfire. We got the call to come right away. In the car on the way to Rhode Island, I told Josie that Zayde was in the hospital. He was very sick and he might not be awake when we arrived. She didn't believe me. "His eyes will be closed and I'll kiss him and he'll open his eyes and say, 'Oh! It's Josie!'" she said confidently. It didn't happen that way, unfortunately. He died the next night, without ever waking up, as I was putting Josie to bed.

I grieved. I worried that my sadness would hurt the baby I was carrying. I wished this new life could have come a couple of months earlier—or at least a few



Remembering Grandpa

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years later. How could I keep my dad in Josie's memory, and how could I introduce Max to the man she would be named for? My mom showed me.


Two days after Dad's death, she took us to a butterfly garden. Surrounded by the butterflies, Bubbe (Yiddish for Grandma) crouched down and told Josie: "Remember how yesterday Mommy told you that Zayde died, and we can't see him

anymore, and we'll miss him very much? Maybe we can think of him whenever we see a butterfly. Do you see how butterflies look like kisses, flying through the air? Maybe when we see a butterfly, we can think of Zayde blowing us kisses. And we can think of things we did with him." Josie yelled in her usual high-octane way, "Remember when we flew kites? And one looked like a squid?"

So now I remind Josie about Zayde as much as I can. We reminisce about how he took her to the docks to look at the lobsters. We listen to the CD of Chopin's etudes (one of the classical discs he gave us when Josie was born) at bedtime, and we read the silly book that he gave us, *What Can You Do With a Shoe?*

I can't say how much Josie will remember. I can't change the fact that Max won't know her grandfather. But I can tell stories. And in telling them, I've learned that even silly, small moments—those lobsters, the way Dad played the accordion when my brother and I were small and we'd dance around the living room—delight Josie. Like all kids, she loves to hear about that mysterious other time when her mommy was a little girl. I've also learned that my memories of Zayde don't have to be crafted narratives. A book, a song, a random memory—they all add up to a portrait of a person. And sharing these with my kids has helped me heal.

A few months after Dad's death, we held the baby-naming ceremony for Max. The only gifts we asked for were stories about my father. I'm collecting them in a book just for Max, along with pictures of my dad.

And Josie does remember. When she got new party shoes, she chose ones with butterflies on the instep. "For Zayde," she explained. And we plan on getting a butterfly garden in the spring. When the weather turns warm, we'll all go out to the backyard, turn the caterpillars loose, and wait for the butterflies. 

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