

Cassie Grainger
Runner Up
Senior Division

“GIVE IT UP”

Over the past few years, I have truly realized how important allowing yourself to let go is within maintaining the focus and general happiness of life. Thus, forgetting the bad, which is not always easy. Although all people have rough times throughout their lives, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, the only way to get past the bad times which drag us down, is to give them up! Learning to let go. This law of life often includes learning to forgive ourselves and those people causing stress in our lives. We also must realize that no matter how difficult the present is, there is always hope for the future. A simple statement, simple to remember, not always so simple to follow through with.

On March 17th, 1995, I was faced with the most overpowering emotions that my adolescent soul has had to face. My healthy, loving, supportive grandfather passed away due to a heart attack while marching in the St. Patrick's Day parade. I remember walking down the street with friends, laughing and enjoying the consistency of the drum beat that I knew in the distance Grampy was a part of. Yet, as we rounded the corner to catch sight of the marchers in green, the music stifled to a stop and I heard shouting. Above the clamour of voices one voice rose above. The woman's words sounded muffled and strained, yet the message rang clear in my head. I now felt as if the drums were beating inside my own head, as I tried to gain control. My Grampy, dressed from head to toe in green, in support of his completely Irish heritage, had just suffered a heart attack on the most symbolic of days. My only family at the event was my grandmother, kneeling, distraught and grieving at her husband's side. The ambulance had been called. Standing on the street in shock, my confused, grieving heart was hurled into the position which my unstable body and mind were not willing to face. Calling the family to tell them what had happened. Who do I call first? What do I say? Do I do it gently, or just tell them to come? So

many questions, but no time for logic. All logistics of the day were tossed to the wind as the music died. I made it through the funeral, trying to support and being supported by my family. I still question myself as to if I could have called sooner, reaching the right people first. Since that day, I have learned to forgive the doubt I had in myself and to feel pride that my fingers and voice stopped shaking, enabling me to push the buttons. I have let go of the awfulness of the day and learned to realize that Grampy died doing what he loved best on his favourite day of the year. Although we don't mention why, my family sticks a little closer on March 17th and tries to avoid the shamrocks and green beer.

Taking for granted the assumption that good friends will always be here is a reality that I faced going into high school. Along with the transition of new faces and rules of high school, I also had to deal with learning to let go of one of my best friends. Mike lived down my street. As kids we fought and called each other names. Somehow our name calling linked us as friends and as we grew, we seemed to stick together on our quiet village street. Mike always stuck up for me; he tried to make the boys allow me to play street hockey with them. I guess the foot in height they all had on him put our side at a disadvantage. He was there to make me laugh, and always knew what to say when I cried. But when his father's new job meant a new life for Mike in California, it was time for me to say goodbye to my pint-sized hero (or so I thought). Although the difficulty of saying goodbye was heart-sickeningly hard, I tried to keep in mind the poem from the book Illusions,

“Don't be dismayed at goodbyes.

A farewell is necessary before you can meet again.

And meeting again after moments of lifetimes,

is certain for those who are friends.”

Although my heart seems to sink a little each time I pass his house and think of his adorable smile, I have kept the hope to see him again one day. Mike has always held a special place in my heart, and I knew that I could not let my memories of him go. Last year Mike came back to see his old friends, and I had a chance to see him again. I thought the time apart would make us grow apart, yet this was not true at all. I have learned to let go; that is to let go of the sad goodbyes and look forward to the next

happy reunion.

This truly is the law of life which keeps our souls forever safe. Learning to let go of whatever it is in our present which is stopping us from enjoying our future. Even though we must use forgiveness to help us along the way, a much happier, and stronger person will be discovered. A person you will be proud of being, as I have found that pride in myself.