

Reflection Eternal



Paw Paw

This past week has brought on a lot of reflection. Sure, it was Passover and I couldn't help but think that this time last year I was pregnant and now I've got an 8 month old and boy, how time flies. But with Passover comes my grandfather, my mom's father's, yarteitz, the anniversary of his death. Paw Paw passed away on the last day of Passover two years ago. My mom likes to light-heartedly joke that he passed away on the last day of Passover so no one will forget the anniversary of his death. But to live 31 years with grandparents is a blessing so, quite obviously, we would never forget regardless. When Paw Paw was in hospice, I was able to spend some alone time with him. He wasn't conscious and it was near the end but I made a promise to him that my husband and I would name our first born after him, which we did. Siona, the feminine version of Sion or Tzion (Zion, a term synonymous to Jerusalem. Paw Paw's Hebrew name was Yisrael), was born about a year and a half after Paw Paw passed away. My poor Southern family could not quite wrap their accents around the name, Siona. So much so that for about an hour, my brother thought

her name was Fiona (this story will go down in family folklore). Oh how my brother and sister-in-law smiled and nodded and indulged me when they thought her name was Fiona. It was very, "Ohhh, um, how nice" but in their heads I'm pretty sure they were thinking, "What the h*ll!? What's a Southern Jewish baby girl doing with the name Fiona?!".



Paw Paw and my husband embracing on our wedding day



My cousin, Ayelet, walking our grandparents down the aisle at our

wedding

In the mix of Passover and my grandfather's yarzeit is my birthday. Talk about a mixture of emotions. Yowsa. I'm two days away from 33. I can't believe how much time has flown by. I can't believe it's been 20 years since my Bat Mitzvah! I can't believe Siona is closer to 1 than not. It's all so surreal. But anyway, what I really wanted to do for this post is to share the speech I gave at Siona's Simchat Bat. We were blessed to have so many friends and family present to celebrate her birth so I wanted to explain, on the day we celebrated her arrival, my relationship with not only my Paw Paw, but also my father's father. I worry that my kid won't know how lucky she is to come from such a diverse background; that she won't fully realize how her cultural background shaped who I am and how grateful I am for it.



Getting some love from Paw Paw and Grandma

This is the original speech. Please excuse typos. It was written to help with the whole 'public speaking while emotional' thing.

As many of you know, I come from an inter religious

background, it's the only way you could explain a 5'10" Jewish girl named Whitney Dyan Lacefield, now Fisch. As a kid it was a bit hard having one parent who was one religion and the other another but as an adult I've come to truly value the dichotomy that is my background and no one quit emphasizes this than my two grandfathers My Ca Ca, my dad's dad, represents that Southern side of me that I'm so proud of. He was one of the kindest men I've ever met. He was always active, whether tending to his tomatoes or making or building something; you couldn't slow him down. He said thing like "daggumit" and dagnabit when he was upset. When he died my brother inherited his shot guns, like any good Southern grandson would do. He passed in 2005 and if you think a week has gone by since when I haven't thought of him or his wife, my grandma Viv, you'd be very wrong. The other side of me is quite obviously my Jewish side and no one represents this part of me than my Paw Paw, whom Siona is named after. I don't know who my paw paw was as a young man or a father but as a grandfather he was lovely. My paw paw is the reason I fell in love with music and theater. He's the reason my first celebrity crush wasn't some boy found on teen beat magazine but Mandy Patinkin (he'd shown Sunday in the Park with George in 1987 and I was hooked). He's the reason I had any connection or interest in Israel way before I finally went when I was 20. He indulged my love of dining out and cultivated by love of live theater. He loved teasing us grandkids with little jokes and then following up with, "would I kid you"? Most importantly, he loved family. When he got into framing and wallpapered the house in Louisville with beautifully frames pictures of relatives--some lost in the Holocaust, others still with us today, thank Gd, I think each of us grandchildren learned a lesson in informal education. How could you not want to know the stories of all those people posing in the frame? As much as we joke about paw paw's talent for telling and retelling a story, I am most grateful for the familial history I now take with me and will share with Siona one day, Gd willing. I was 31 when my paw paw passed. To get

to spend 31 years with a grandparent is a blessing, to get to spend any time with a grandparent is a blessing. It's an honor to carry on paw paw's spirit within our little family. Thank you.