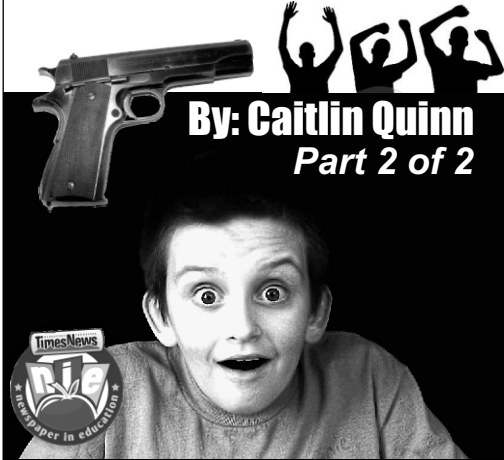


GRANDMA DID WHAT?



By: Caitlin Quinn
Part 2 of 2

“Grandma was wanted for trying to assassinate a politician?” Jason sputtered. “WHO?”

“Okay, jumping ahead. I heard that Ronald Reagan was in town stumping, that's what we used to call politicians when they were on the campaign trail.” A fly buzzed by her head and she swatted it away. “He was running for president in 1980. I loved old westerns and black and white movies, used to watch them on TV late at night when I was growing up. He rode tall in the saddle, as great Grandma Catherine used to say. I loved Reagan, Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne and especially Clayton Moore, better known as 'The Lone Ranger'. Rode a beautiful horse named Silver, always said, 'Hi, Oh, Silver, away!' Reagan was in an old oater, what you guys know as westerns, Law and Order. Loved that movie. I wanted to be Dorothy Malone,” Grandma Mattie said.

“Who?” Jason asked.

“Dorothy Malone, she was a beauty, a Hollywood glamour queen from 1943 until 1992,” great Grandma Catherine said.

When Jason continued to shake his head, Grandma Mattie added, “I know - she was on The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Series on TV? No? Still nothing? You sure know how to hurt a Grandma, make her feel old - and I'm only 48.”

“But, Grandma, 48 is almost half a century!” Jason teased.

“Jason! Manners!” his mom scolded. She was returning from the kitchen with a fresh pitcher of lemonade and a tray of hot-from-the-oven chocolate chip cookies. How did moms always do that? Show up any time you were doing something you shouldn't, he thought. And why did kids always get served last? His mom went over to stand beside of great Grandma Catherine, offering her the first pick of piping hot, gooey chocolate chip cookies. She also refilled her empty glass and his had been empty forever.

“Anyway, I was all excited at the chance of meeting him,” Grandma Mattie continued, still battling the annoying fly, “so I called a friend of mine, grabbed my backpack and the keys to Dad's old Ford pick-up and we headed down to Kingsport.”

“Grandma, you and your friend drove all the way to Kingsport just to see an actor?”

“She sure did, that child, followed wherever the wind took her. Five hours she drove, just headed out of here,” great Grandma Catherine beamed.

“Grandma!” Jason nearly screamed.

“Okay, so, after the break-ins, Mom made me go down past the barn and target practice. I took a couple of the rifles and several of the pistols, just to get used to shooting them. It took me a while, but I got pretty handy with everything but the shotguns. Just can't handle the kick,” Grandma Mattie told him. She took a cookie from the tray, had a bite and then swallowed a sip of the lemonade. “Anyway, I

was shooting this little pistol, a .25 caliber semi-automatic that kept jamming. I got the bullet dislodged for the umpteenth time, dropped the gun in my backpack, meaning to take it to the gunsmith. Course, guns being high on my priority list, I forgot all about it. Carried that thing around with me for a couple of weeks before I remembered I had it.”

“Yeah, but Mom, tell them HOW you remembered you had it,” Anna smiled, offering Jason cookies.

“Thanks, Mom,” he said, holding up his empty glass for her to refill.

“So my friend, Mishel, and I were waiting outside, standing in this enormous line. When we get inside the arena, Mishel notices everyone is being searched and that someone was going through all the ladies' purses. That's when it dawns on me, that crappy .25 is buried at the bottom of my backpack. So, we think we're sneaking out, not being noticed.” Grandma Mattie was smiling, rocking back and forth, lost in the memory.

“Mattie, darling, don't keep these boys waiting.” Catherine nudged her daughter.

“I put the pistol in the truck's glove box and locked the doors. We got back in line, now much longer than before. It was over an hour before we got back inside. Mishel and I were sure they hadn't noticed us leaving, so we weren't one bit worried about getting back in line.”

“But, the Secret Service, they noticed, right, Grandma Mattie?”

“We found out we weren't as sneaky as we thought. Four of these big dudes in dull gray suits and boring black ties got in line around us.”

“Were you scared, Grandma?”

“Scared? Not my daughter. No she and Mishel got the giggles, started flirting with them. Asked them what it was like to be in the Secret Service,” his great grandma told them.

“You didn't, Grandma!”

“Yes, we did. Hey, we were 17, full of ourselves. And these dudes, they weren't bad looking. We basked in it, being surrounded like that, all important we were. We kept telling them we knew they were Secret Service, but they denied it, of course.” Grandma grabbed the newspaper off the table and rolled it up, watching for the fly to make a mistake.

“Did they let you in?” Jason asked.

“Not before we were thoroughly searched. They took us to a separate room for the search, must admit, Mishel and I were a bit scared then - not that we would have owned up to it at the time. There were two Secret Service dudes, a local cop, and the lady security guard in that tiny room. We had no idea what we were getting into. They made us take our jackets off, and she patted us down while the dudes searched our coat pockets. Really not fun,” Grandma Mattie paused, holding the rolled up newspaper in the air, and with one swift motion, squashed the fly.

Everyone jumped at the sudden noise, but Grandma Mattie grinned. “They say timing is everything.”

“But, Grandma, you said the Secret Service took you down. I thought you meant they actually, well, took you down,” Jason told her. He couldn't hide his disappointment. His mom had mentioned the story on the ride up, and she'd made it sound much more exciting than this. He leaned back against the railing and stuffed an entire cookie in his mouth.

“Honey, that was just the line.” Grandma Mattie turned to Anna and held her empty glass out, “would you mind refilling me?”

Jason's mom poured what was left of the lemonade into her mother's glass, “that's all, Mom, do you have any more lemons? I can make some more.”

Great Grandma Catherine rose from her chair, “I'll come with you.”

Anna curled her arm around Catherine's, holding the frail hand in her own. “We'll be right back. Jason, mind your manners while I'm gone. I mean it.”

“He'll be fine, Anna. Now, where was I? Oh, yes, the room. We thought it was over when

they let us leave that stuffy room. But, as soon as we got back into the lobby, the original four dudes joined us. We thought we were hot stuff, strutting around Dobyns-Bennett dome, escorted, no, surrounded by these good-looking young men. We were going to go down to the gymnasium floor, but these dudes, you know, the ones who swore they weren't Secret Service, blocked us.”

“Seriously, Grandma?”

“Seriously, Jason. We laughed and reminded them it was a free country, a slogan from the Vietnam era, and if they weren't Secret Service, we could go wherever we wanted.”

“And,” Jason asked.

“Didn't work. We still didn't get to go downstairs. So, we started looking around for seats in the nose bleed section of the stadium, but these four dudes kept blocking us. There weren't enough seats for all of us to sit close enough together, so we ended up standing at the railing, looking down on the gymnasium floor. The stage was directly across from us,” Grandma Mattie paused, gazing into the distance. “Have you noticed the maple leaves, they're turning such beautiful colors!”

“You're torturing me, Grandma? WHEN did the Secret Service take you down?”

“Okay, we were standing at the railing, talking to these guys, waiting for Reagan to come out. All of a sudden, everyone started cheering and clapping. Reagan stepped onto the stage! I grabbed my small camera out of my shirt pocket, the same camera the guys in the room had examined and given back to me, and aimed it at him.”

Grandma paused; waiting to be sure she had his attention.

“I never saw them move! One second I was standing, trying to take a photo, and the next... WHAM! Let's just say I know exactly how Pittsburg Steelers' quarterback Ben Roethlisberger felt when he got sacked by Howard Green.”

“Grandma, Roethlisberger is 6'5” and 241 pounds - he was hit by Green who is 6'2” and 365 pounds. You're what, 100 pounds and five feet tall,” Jason sputtered. “That's football, and you were taken down by the Secret Service. Totally different.”

“I went down, hard, really hard. I was face down on the concrete, a 22-year-old gray-suit on top of me. One had me pinned to the ground and the other grabbed the camera out of my hand. It happened that fast. I was standing one second, the next, I wasn't - I was on my stomach, a knee in my back, both hands spread out and pinned in front of me and a third guy holding my feet.”

“Wait, just how big were these Secret Service guys?”

“The one who actually took her down was well over six feet and weighed about 240. The other three, they were all over six feet and over 200 pounds,” great Grandma Catherine told him.

“Grandma, that's awesome!” Jason high-fived his grandma. “Wait, how do you know how big they were great Grandma?”

“Late afternoon, I get a phone call. I know Mattie's in trouble before I even answer the phone. They couldn't arrest her, nothing to hold her on. But, they didn't want her driving because of her injured ribs. Her friend was unfamiliar with using a clutch. I had to get my dad to drive me to Kingsport to pick up my wild child.”

“That's not the best part,” Anna added.

“It's not? You're eating pavement with Secret Service on top of you and that's not the best part? Did you get to meet Reagan?”

“No, they weren't that forgiving,” Grandma said.

“So, what's the best part?” Jason asked.

“We kept in contact, me and the agent who took me down. Two years later, we were living in Prague, working for the CIA!”

THE END!

Summer Serials are a project of the Times-News Newspaper-In-Education Program.

For more information, please call

Elaine Riner at 423-245-4954

or e-mail at eriner@timesnews.net