

Storytelling Speech

There are three man-made things on earth that are visible from space; the Pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China, and the garbage dump in Staten Island, NY. Both of my parents grew up in Staten Island but from opposite sides of the dump. My mom grew up in an area called Todt Hill where many of the major Mafia bosses lived with huge gates surrounding their massive mansions, my dad grew up where the mafia's associates lived in their smaller, working class homes.

My grandpa, my mom's dad, was a tough guy and a well known lawyer on the island. When my mom was around 10 years old, my grandpa was hired to be the lawyer that would try to prosecute one of the major mafia bosses on Staten Island. With this role, came a lot of expected danger to my mom and her family. For example, one day they received a letter in their mailbox that read "Tod means dead in German" referring to the fact that they lived on Todt Hill. Additionally, my mom's good friend's dad was shot in the head by the mafia because he didn't agree to look the other way on a business deal. This was a very normal occurrence.

Despite all of that, my grandpa felt no need to alter his or his family's lifestyle and have this case affect him to the extreme. So, unlike the other people involved with this case, my grandpa decided not to have a security guard or take any other safety measures such as having someone turn on his car before he went inside to make sure there wasn't a bomb inside of it.

One time one of the Mafia associates turned state evidence against his boss and on the day that he went to court to testify, there was velveeta cheese thrown all over his lawn symbolizing that he was a rat for turning against his boss.

On the night of Halloween, during the year of my grandpa's case, while my mom and her two older brothers were getting dressed in their costumes to go trick-or-treating in their neighborhood, there was a heavy pounding at their front door.

My grandma slowly opened the door to find three men dressed in black with stalkings covering their faces. One of the men said "Where is Jerry Neuberger, we need to talk to him" in a harsh tone. My grandma, being the protective wife that she was, lied and said "he's not home, can I take a message?" However, before the men could get in an answer, my grandpa came downstairs and said "I'm Jerry Neuberger, what do you want?"

My grandma, unsure of what was going to happen next, rushed to stand by my grandpa's side in hopes that nothing bad was going to happen to either of them. Suddenly, the three men ripped off their masks and to my grandparent's surprise under the black masks were the judge and the two other lawyers involved in the case.

My grandmother, who was extremely startled, did not find this prank to be funny and the masked men would apologize to her for weeks going forward.

The case ended up being dismissed because as per usual in a mafia case the witnesses decided not to come forward out of fear for their lives. However, after the case, my grandfather swore to never give up on bringing justice and continued to prosecute wrongdoers for years after.