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The Three Squeezes

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"The Three Squeezes"

Custom

Informant:

Gena Vee Broderick is my grandmother. She was born during the Great Depression in Orem, Utah. She was nine years old during the attack on Pearl Harbor and she cites that and her awareness of WWII as the root of her intense patriotism. She loved attending school and was extremely bright. After graduating from high school when she was only in 10th grade, she worked in a potato chip factory to save money for BYU tuition. She met and married my grandfather and raised 9 children in Orem, Utah. She worked as an elementary school teacher and decorated wedding cakes to help support the family. She and my grandfather lived in England for a few years before moving back to Utah. Her subtle and exceedingly witty sense of humor never ceases. She finds happiness in spending time with her grandchildren, gardening, and caring for others.

Context:

My grandmother told me this story while I was at her house on the day after Thanksgiving. We were still satiated from the feast, but the aroma from the leftovers were enticing us to go back for a second time. We have a large family due to my grandma having 9 children and each in turn contributing their own. When we sat down in the off-limits living room (no children allowed), we could barely hear over the noise of my family members in the other rooms. Previously, I told her about folklore and asked if she would attempt to think of some stories or experiences to tell me. When she explained this custom, it caused many memories to resurface in myself. I can remember my mom squeezing my hand three times and saying "I, love, you." One word for each squeeze. For me, this custom only took place with my mother.

Text:

I think everybody kind of does it, you just uh, it's just the way of transmitting your love for them in a silent way, it's when you take hold of their hands and you are walking along and you give them three squeezes and it mean I love you, and uh sometimes you are sitting in church and you're just feeling happy and you reach over and give three squeezes, you don't want to talk, but those three squeezes communicate your love to them and that's kind of a standard thing.

Texture:

My grandmother was especially warm and tender while explaining this custom to me. She squeezed my hand three times and we both felt emotional. She was speaking softly and slowly. When she was explaining this custom, it seemed to me that she would do this often when her children were younger, and her husband was still alive. Waves of nostalgia appeared to wash over her as the memories began flooding back.

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