

Good afternoon. Thank you for taking time to be here to honor the memory of and celebrate the life of Jack Hofmann.

For those who don't know me, my name is Benjamin Thompson and I am Jack Hofmann's grandson.

My Grandpa Jack was born, 81 years ago this week. Jack was the second child of Fritz and Agnes who were farmers. It was at an early age that Jack along with his older brother Donald and two younger sisters Wilma and Joyce learned that life's rewards were earned through hard work and honest living.

Some of you gathered here today knew my Grandpa as a husband, a father, a grandfather or an uncle, but many of you also knew him as the guy who could make your car look like new. Jack's fascination with cars was apparent at an early age. Grandpa was once told me that as a young child of five he was so enamored by the family Model T, so anxious to take a ride, that he secretly crawled up on the back bumper of the car and hung on for dear life while his father unwittingly drove him through the countryside and then through town before ever discovering his young son hiding on the rear of the car. Grandpa never told me if Fritz was mad and punished him or if Fritz, who had quite the reputation for having been an adventurous youngster himself, merely decided that he had a "chip off the old block" on his hands. So while most very young children pretend to drive cars, at

the age of five Grandpa Jack found his own unique way to assert his independence and be responsible for what had to be a thrilling ride in, or should I say, on the family car.

His early life on the farm consisted of hard work, but Grandpa Jack and his older brother Donald could find ways to have fun. As the two brothers got older, their parents would leave them for short periods of time to drive into town or go visit relatives. Apparently, during those times alone on the farm, Jack and Donald would bring out the work horses, ride them hard and then scramble to get them safely put away before their father got home.

As an adult, Grandpa had a reputation for his ability to do sign painting and his work was displayed on many of the businesses around Liberty. Though most people knew him for his workmanship, those who knew him well understood that underlying this pragmatic craftsman was a classic artist. Young Jack spent many evenings lying on the floor of the family farm house, listening to the radio and drawing pictures. Though most people were not aware of his abilities in fine arts, drawing a landscape or a portrait just came naturally to this untrained but talented boy. (young artist).

As a young man, Jack was handsome, tall, strong and athletic. Just like many other young men in Indiana, he was a true Hoosier, playing basketball at Brownsville High School. It seems the young team owed at least one victory to Grandpa. As the story goes, it was the last seconds of the game and Grandpa's Brownsville team

was behind by a single point. Somehow he was able to steal the ball away from an opposing player, but not having time to turn around to face the basket, Grandpa sent up a desperation shot backwards and over his head. The ball landed in the basket as the buzzer sounded, and for at least that evening, Jack Hofmann was the hero. Years later, Grandpa joined the Old Timers team. He enjoyed being a member of a basketball team again even though it came with a lot of aches and pains.

Grandpa was a teenager when World War II began. When his older brother Donald went off to serve in the military, Jack was still too young to follow his brother to war. Instead, Fritz and Agnes' younger son contributed by staying behind to assist in the day to day running of the family farm and graduated from Brownsville High School in the spring of 1944. Jack was to go for his physical exam for military service in the fall of 1945. He never had to take the physical. V-J Day, August 15, 1945, the day the U.S. announced the surrender of Japan and the end of World War II was a day that the entire nation and world celebrated. Here in Connersville, people left their homes and crowded into the downtown area to celebrate with friends, family and strangers alike the victory over Japan that finally had put an end to the war. On that August evening Grandpa was riding in a car with a group of young men, all friends thrilled by the wonderful news and determined to be a part of the impromptu parade of cars that circled the four block area of downtown Connersville. The driver of the car spotted a young woman that he

knew on the street and stopped the car to ask her if she and her two friends would like to join them for the celebratory honking of horns and the endless circling of cars through the town's streets. My Grandma Betty Jo Gruell, stepped into the car with her two girlfriends. Grandma claims that she and Grandpa never spoke to one another that night and knowing Grandpa it is easy to believe that he could have spent the evening without saying a word. It was shortly after that evening when Jack spotted Betty with friends and gathered up the courage to ask if she needed a ride home. The couple was married on May 20th 1948 and their 59th wedding anniversary was the day that Grandpa entered the hospital for the last time. Grandma and Grandpa had three children, my mother, Jennifer and my two uncles, Gary and David. Recently, Grandpa shared with my mother that Grandma was the kindest woman he had ever known. It was so like Grandpa to not be demonstrative and to keep to himself. Though I know Grandma knows Grandpa loved her dearly, I do not know if she understands the high regard in which he held her as a human being.

Jack's trade for almost all of his adult life was automotive body repair. He took great pride in his work and was renowned for his ability to restore damaged vehicles to showroom condition. He worked for many years at Liberty's Ford Dealership owned by Happy Brunner and his sons Clarence and Dutch. Later the dealership would change hands and Grandpa decided to move on and do business independently. He set up a body shop of his own just north of Liberty, Indiana. There he built an

outstanding reputation on integrity, service and quality workmanship. When needing to repair their cars, people from miles around would insist on having the work done at Hofmann Body Shop. It was a business that endured for nearly 40 years.

In 1967 Grandpa lost his mother Agnes to cancer. Tragically, only a few months earlier Grandpa's older brother Donald had died in a farming accident. Grandma Betty said it was the first time she had ever seen Grandpa cry. His heart was filled with sorrow for the premature loss of his brother and good friend as well as for Donald's widow Elsie and their six children. Grandma Betty said she thought Grandpa was never the same after that. Unfortunately, loss became all too familiar in the next few years. Great Grandpa Fritz passed on and Grandpa's younger sister Wilma followed her husband Mac in death, both losing their battles with cancer and leaving behind their three children. Today, Grandpa Jack's younger sister Joyce is the only remaining child of Fritz and Agnes. Though her husband Allen has passed on she enjoys the love, care and companionship of her four children and grandchildren. Though the last few years of Grandpa's life was fraught with medical problems and pain, he managed to enjoy the time he spent with Grandma in Wilmington, North Carolina. There they lived in a retirement community and enjoyed the pleasant weather and visits from their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. It was recently that Grandpa told Grandma that he was content in these new surroundings.

However, it is only appropriate that he return to his life long home in Indiana and rest in peace with the loved ones that have gone before him.

My Grandpa, Jack Hofmann was a man of complexity. Though not a man of organized religion, he was a man of deep moral conviction and he lived his entire life according to the Golden Rule. Though quiet with a rather stern demeanor, he had a surprisingly disarming sense of humor that he displayed until the day he died. An extremely intelligent man, Jack was an excellent student but never had the opportunity to attend college. Nevertheless, he had a passion for politics though he never desired to be a politician. His strong mental faculties along with his moral convictions were never lost. Even time, pain and suffering did not alter his strong capacity to think well. And even though he did his best to hide it, Jack Hofmann was a gentle man.

Neither fame nor riches, but how this man touched the lives of family and friends is his true legacy. Jack leaves behind a loving wife, three children, four grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, three great grandchildren and one step-great grandchild. We will miss him every day for the rest of our lives. As Thomas Campbell said, " To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."

Grandpa, may the road you are now traveling be a smooth one. Rest in peace.

OTHER SPEAKERS:

I'd like to invite my Mother Jennifer to say a few words.

JENNIFER SPEAKS:

Thank Mom. And now, Jack's son, my Uncle Gary will speak.

GARY SPEAKS:

The lectern is open for anyone who would like to tell us a story of Jack or say a few words. You may come up here to the front or, if you're more comfortable, just stand and speak.

LET OTHERS SPEAK:

Thank you for that.

On behalf of my Mother the entire Hofmann family, I want to thank you sincerely for your attendance here to honor the life of Jack Hofmann.