

“Oil Change”

By: Arianne Horan

Long before I was born, my dad worked as a manager at a small hotel. Seaside Village was quaint and made up of identical cottages that lined South Yarmouth beach. Every one of my four uncles, two aunts and dad worked there with my Grandpa and Grandma. My dad got the official title of manager at seventeen. He was responsible for checking visitors in and out, while simultaneously keeping the rest of his siblings in check.

To check guests into their cottage, my dad used a pile of papers filled with names color coded with tape. The book was covered in ripped paper and torn masking tape, organized by the owner of Seaside Village, my Grandpa. The first clients my dad helped were a family of four. The father and mother were pale and polite like their two children who waited patiently.

The reception desk took over most of the wall opposite the entrance. The wood was narrow, leaving a big enough space behind it to fit all seven siblings. My dad stood tall over the desk leafing through color-coded pages in search for the attractive family’s last name. Behind the desk, there was a screen door which opened and closed as the wind pleased. Only a few mumbles could be heard at the desk until the door slammed from behind, rattling the broken, metal screen. My Grandpa was one to make a grand entrance. His unapologetically loud voice made up for his lack of height. His hair was thinning and it stood on top of his head pointing in different directions. He slouched and took uneven wobbly strides until he reached the end of the desk. Shocked at the interruption, the guests stared at my Grandpa's sunburnt Irish skin. His voice erupted towards my dad,

“Chris when’s the last time you changed the oil in the GMC?”

“Um, I dunno dad, I’m checking people in right now.”

Without another word, my Grandpa waddled through the screen door slamming it behind him once again, the strong smell of alcohol left in the breeze. The children’s noses crinkled in response to the smell and my dad’s face reddened in acknowledgement. The stunned parents stared at the floor as my dad continued to flip pages, his hands shaking after the unexpected interruption. The family remained patient as my dad pulled off tape searching for their last name. Only a few minutes passed before the screen violently hit the door frame again. This time the family’s jaw dropped in shock at my Grandpa’s disregard for their conversation. Without a word he threw the metal dipstick onto the desk. It crashed against the wood bobbing up and down until it landed in between my dad’s bloodless face and the astonished family. The measuring rod smelled strongly of rusted metal, without a drop of oil on it. My Grandpa screamed various obscenities at my dad, accentuating his anger at the lack of oil in his car. A shocked silence filled the room until another gust of air blew the pages in the book off the desk. The colorful tape weighed down the paper making it fall to the floor. My dad’s eyes darted towards the door, making sure it stayed close before apologizing profusely. The small children held their mouths open wide staring at their parents, while they nodded in response to my dad’s apology. Only a few papers were left on the desk, one of them covered in pen. My dad ducked under the desk shuffling through drawers until finding a set of rusted keys. His unsteady hand dropped them onto the wood in front of the parents, who slowly picked them up, dangling them by the ring before turning towards the entrance.