

Madalyn Spitz
Inspirational Women

My grandma, Janet Spitz, showed up to my house wearing a thin long-sleeved shirt depicting two sumo wrestlers gracefully fighting in front of a swirling blue night scape. The sleeves were mismatched blotches of blue and teal, and orange was splattered about in the form of light. There is a distinct fashion to my grandma, in fact she is all distinct. She has always stood out to me because she is like anyone else I have ever met.

teen voices
emerging

because every girl should be heard



She was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1948. Her father was a carpenter. He built their family's house. Her mother was a homemaker and was active in the church she worshiped in and clubs for the youth. My grandma was the only daughter among three sons, and the second eldest of the bunch. She told me, "I was the only girl, which was nice because that meant I had my own bedroom." As a kid in the 1950s, she would run around in the sewer tubes of the newly constructed neighborhood with her friends. She went to Catholic school, then to public school. In public school, she was "rambunctious," exploiting its lack of discipline (at least, compared to Catholic school). She watched black-and-white Cowboy shows on the huge tube TV.

Throughout her life, my grandma was invested in the arts. She majored in Art History at the University of Michigan and worked with artists, art collectors, nonprofits, museums, opera theaters, and festivals. Her last jobs before retiring were working at the Perkins School for the Blind and at the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center. In all, she was a fundraiser, a manager. She always tried to make people as excited for art as she was herself, and to make art as accessible to the public. I admire this in her and how she has achieved such a high-status job, considering many women didn't hold leader positions at the time. She told me that a big thing to keep in mind is confidence, and that the earlier you get confident in your abilities and potential, the more success you'll have in reaching your goals and dreams.

When we went to the Women's March in January 2017, a protest against Donald Trump's inauguration, my grandma told me, "This is just like the '70s!" Indeed, we often joke about her "hippie phase." But I do respect my grandma's political positions. My grandma is a progressive. She wants women in the government - a lot of women. A dramatic change in power is necessary to bringing in new perspectives. My grandma says that with men, usually white men, being in the government for so long there becomes a very narrow range of experiences. So she wants more diversity in government.

