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My Most Vivid Memory Concerning Water

Sunday dinners at my grandparents' house are always filled with laughter, food, and stories. It's kind of a family tradition. But one Sunday, the conversation turned in a direction I didn't expect-and it ended up changing the way I think about water.

I was talking with my grandparents about college plans and scholarship applications, and I brought up an essay I needed to write for the Duskinske Jamison Scholarship. The topic was "A Vivid Water Memory." Right away, I thought of a few moments from my own life, swimming with the Dickinson Dolphins, fishing at Lake Sakakawea with my family, and spending time in the pool as part of recovery from multiple ACL injuries. Water has played a big part in helping me manage my Type 1 Diabetes, too-keeping active in the water is a huge help. Still, I wasn't sure if any of those memories were meaningful enough for a scholarship essay. As my grandfather, Clifford, began to speak, I realized that my most vivid water memory was unfolding right before me.

He took me back to 1952, to his childhood on a dairy farm near Gladstone, North Dakota. Back then, his family didn't have running water. None. My great-grandmother used to carry five-gallon buckets from a creek almost 700 feet away. She did this every single day, rain, shine, wind, or snow. Water wasn't just something they turned on at the tap; it was something they worked hard for.

Eventually, they moved into what he called the "big house" on the dairy farm, and they drilled a well. It seemed like a big improvement, but the water from that well was full of rust. It stained everything, sinks, tubs, clothes, and even worse, sometimes the well would run dry. My grandparents had to make tough choices every day: save water for the cows, or use it for cooking, cleaning, or bathing after a long day in the fields.

Then everything changed in 1992. My grandparents signed a contract with the Southwest Water Authority and paid \$312.50 for one water meter. It might not sound like much, but to them, it was a huge deal. Four years later, in January 1996, they received their very first water bill-\$16.99. That bill wasn't just paper; it was proof that their life had changed forever. Clean, reliable water was finally part of their daily lives. No more hauling, no more rust, no more constant worry. Something most of us take for granted was finally a reality for them.

As I listened to my grandpa's story, I realized that my own experiences with water, swimming, fishing, or using it for physical therapy, were important, but they were only part of the picture. That Sunday dinner gave me a whole new understanding of what water really means. It's not just something we use. It's something that shapes our lives, our choices, and even our future.

Now, when I think of a water memory, I see more than just myself in the pool or on a boat. I see my great-grandmother walking back and forth with heavy buckets. I see my grandparents making sacrifices so their dairy farm could survive. And I see how one water meter and a simple bill gave them a new way of life.

That story has stuck with me, and it's changed the way I look at my own life. I've learned to appreciate the things I have and to understand that even the most basic things, like clean water, can be life-changing! Their past struggles became my newfound perspective, one I will carry with me far beyond this essay.