

This is an excerpt from a transcript of an interview conducted by the team at [MemoirGhostwriting.com](https://MemoirGhostwriting.com).

This sample is provided with the client's permission. Some names and locations have been changed for confidentiality.

ALEX: **I'm curious how much you knew about your grandparents as you were growing up.**

CLIENT: I didn't know as much as I wanted to know. Yes. My grandparents, they were pretty amazing people, but it took me a little bit of time to realize that. My grandmother was a Russian Jew. And people really didn't understand her, and—not language-wise, but didn't understand what she had been through and didn't understand what her husband had been through. But my grandfather, my mother's father, was probably one of the smartest people I ever knew. He spoke seven languages.

ALEX: **Was he fluent?**

CLIENT: Yes. He would do the *New York Times* crossword puzzle in ink. Never having to go back. And I would go to their apartment, and my grandfather and I would read the dictionary together. And we would sit there, and we would learn ten words. I'd learn ten words. And then afterwards, he would go—my grandfather used to always wear black flannel pants and a white starched shirt buttoned at the collar. And after we read the dictionary, he'd go to the refrigerator, go to the freezer, and take a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, cut it in half, two glasses of milk, and we'd sit down and talk about the words that I learned. That's pretty cool.

ALEX: **That's very specific. How old were you when these experiences took place?**

CLIENT: Eleven, twelve, thirteen.

ALEX: **And this is your grandfather from your mother's side, correct?**

CLIENT: Yes.

ALEX: **So, language is one theme here, among other things. You said he was an amazing, super intelligent person. And it sounds like there was a love of learning and this attitude of “I also want to share this love of learning and language learning with you.”**

CLIENT: One of my cousins, who was into genealogy, went to California and found his records, because he came into the States through Los Angeles with fifty-eight cents in his pocket. He was a smart—you didn’t know how smart he was because he was quiet about it. There is a bravado smartness, and then there’s a quiet smartness, which is really true—he was a true polyglot.

ALEX: **What did he speak, if you remember?**

CLIENT: He spoke Russian, Yiddish, Slavic languages that—I don’t think he spoke any of the Romance languages. Polish. Languages that weren’t that useful day to day in the States.

ALEX: **Do you have any other memories with your grandfather, or even your grandmother?**

CLIENT: You know what? I’m sure there’s more, I certainly don’t have any negative memories. That memory is still really vivid. I mean, we live about a mile away from where they used to live.

ALEX: **Where you live now?**

CLIENT: Yes. And when I drive past there, and I remember, when you went to go visit them . . . my grandmother’s cooking . . . the aroma, you could smell it all down the hall. And she used to make this dish in a pot with chicken, rice, and raisins. And it was glorious. I believe it was as good as I remember it to be, because it doesn’t matter if it wasn’t, right?

ALEX: **Right. And where did they live? You said a mile away, but just for the record . . .**

CLIENT: They lived on Parkview Street, which is up the street, down the block, and to the right. It's only about a mile and a half from here.

ALEX: **Is the house still there? What does it look like?**

CLIENT: It's not a house, it's an apartment building.

ALEX: **An apartment building. And your grandmother's cooking. It's making me hungry just hearing about it. Did any of these dishes have a name?**

CLIENT: I'm sure they did, but I don't remember.

ALEX: **That's okay. And again, when you think back to these memories, how old were you?**

CLIENT: I was eleven, twelve, thirteen, when I think about that. And certainly, afterwards I remember them, but not with the same vividness of those memories.

ALEX: **Those memories stood out to you in particular?**

CLIENT: Yeah.

ALEX: **Were you close to your grandparents before you were about eleven, twelve, thirteen?**

CLIENT: I'm sure I was, but not in the way that I was when I was eleven, twelve, thirteen because before then—when you're seven and eight years old—you don't know there's a lot to be learned from your grandparents. And "What are we doing this weekend, mom?" "Well, we're going to visit the grandparents." "Oh, Mom, we saw them last weekend. Why do we have to do it again?"

But when you get older and you realize that there's something to be learned, it becomes more—look, I was thirteen when that happened. That's sixty years ago, and I still remember my grandfather walking to the refrigerator, opening the freezer, the Reese's

Peanut Butter Cup, him cutting it and us eating it. I haven't thought about that memory for a while, but I still remember it. I still remember getting off the elevator and saying to my grandmother, the cooking. I haven't thought about it, but I thank you for reminding me about it.

ALEX: **This is part of what I love about this work. Do you remember what floor?**

CLIENT: I want to say the third floor, but I could be wrong. I'm pretty sure it was an odd-number floor. Third or fifth.

ALEX: **And what did their apartment look like?**

CLIENT: It was nothing spectacular or memorable about it. For me to tell you what it looked like, I'd probably be making some of it up because I don't really remember.

ALEX: **That's okay. Sometimes certain senses bring up certain memories, like the smell of cooking. I'm curious—what did you learn from your grandparents?**

CLIENT: Humility. From my mother's grandparents, humility. They had really not a whole lot of material things, but here is a person who was as smart as they can be. Was he the smartest person I've known? No, there were obviously smarter people, but he was the smartest person that I knew intimately. Robert Oppenheimer is probably smarter than him, but I never knew him. I don't know why I picked his name, but if I lined up all the people that I knew on a—he'd have to be one of the top two. And he was not—you wouldn't know it.