

Carter's Weird Grandpa

“Why can’t Grandpa just be normal? Why does he have to be so weird?” Carter asked his Grandma.

Grandma laughed. “I’ve wondered that for many years.”

They were sitting on a Florida beach watching Grandpa and some of his friends in the ocean. They were all on waveskis and paddling away from the shore. It was early in the morning, just after sunrise, but the sun was already warm on their faces. Below them, the sand was warming too.

Carter picked up a handful of sand and let it sift through his fingers. It felt silky and cool. “And why do we have to come here so early?” The rest of his family was at Grandma and Grandpa’s house still asleep.

“Because the waves are good in the morning. And there’s less wind. When it’s early like this and the sun is just up, something kind of magical happens. As a big wave approaches Grandpa, the shadow of the wave covers him just before the wave comes. Grandpa loves that. The feeling of that shadow and knowing that the wave is close. It’s exciting.”

“None of my friends even know what a waveski is. I tried to explain it to them, but they just thought it was weird. Why can’t Grandpa work on restoring old cars or something normal like that? That would be totally cool.”

“A lot of people don’t know what a waveski is. Just tell them it’s a lot like surfing but you sit on top of something that looks like a short kayak. See, right now they are paddling out to where the waves are bigger. Just like a surfer does. The only difference is they are sitting on top of the waveski. When the waves come, they will ride the wave just like a surfer, only they paddle to get out to the waves and sometimes to direct the waveski.”

“Nobody’s grandpa does this. I love you and everything, but neither of you acts like grandparents.”

Grandma laughed again. “Well, there are five other guys out there with Grandpa and they are all

grandparents too. What should they be doing instead?"

"I don't know. Grandparent stuff."

"You and your family visit us every summer. We go to the beach, we swim in the pool, we go out to dinner, we bake cookies, we watch movies and eat popcorn. Isn't that grandparent stuff?"

"Yeah. I just mean you don't act like grandparents. You run on the beach every day. For miles! Grandmas don't do that. You're supposed to act, I don't know, normal. Do stuff that old people do."

"Carter, let me tell you a secret. No one is normal. There's no such thing as normal. Every person is unique. No two people are the same. Just like snowflakes. And things change as time goes by. My grandparents stayed at home and watched television. They hardly ever left the house. That was fine for them, but it's not fine for us. We love the beach. We love to be active. That's normal for us. Look! A big wave is coming in!"

Carter looked toward the group of men and searched for his grandfather. Several of them were paddling as the wave approached. All of them were wearing helmets, but only one was wearing a red helmet. His grandpa. Carter spotted the helmet. Grandpa was in front of the rest. He was leaning forward and paddling hard, just ahead of the large incoming wave. Carter was amazed at how hard Grandpa was paddling and how fast he was moving. The wave was building in momentum and size. Carter jumped to his feet and held his breath. This was not good. It almost looked like Grandpa was trying to run away from the wave.

Grandma jumped to her feet too. They both watched in silence.

As the wave approached, Grandpa paddled harder. He was suddenly lifted by the water and stopped paddling. Carter had seen Grandpa on his waveski last summer, but that was when Grandpa was just learning how to use it and the waves had been small. On that day, he mostly just fell over and splashed into the water. It was so boring and seemed silly. But this wave was different. This wave was huge! Especially for Florida. Carter held his breath. Suddenly he was worried. Grandpa was an old guy. He shouldn't be doing this! What if something bad happened?

Carter watched as Grandpa held his paddle beside him and then leaned toward the wave, changing the direction of the waveski. Now, he was riding the wave, sliding parallel with the shore and the wave, moving fast. He dug the left side of his paddle into the wave and was immediately lifted up the side of the wave. He

pulled his paddle out and rode back down the wave. He carved into the water with the paddle and rode up again. Carter was amazed. Grandpa was totally in control.

Carter looked over at Grandma, expecting a worried look on her face. But she wore a huge smile. And, somehow, she looked younger. "Ride it Honey!" she yelled. She laughed. "Look at him go!"

Carter smiled too. He suddenly realized something. His Grandpa wasn't weird at all. He was amazing. Absolutely amazing! Carter watched as the waveski slid up and down along the underside of the wave, Grandpa leaning and carving into the water with his paddle. "Go Grandpa!" Carter yelled, even though he knew Grandpa couldn't hear him. A young couple was walking hand in hand along the beach and looked toward Carter after he yelled. He looked back at them and then pointed into the ocean. "That's my Grandpa riding that wave!" he yelled.

The wave was losing momentum. Still, Grandpa slid easily across the water. It looked like so much fun! Eventually, his waveski started to slow and Grandpa turned toward the shore and paddled a few times toward them. White foam surrounded him as the waveski slowed and then floated. He rested his paddle in front of him and waved to Carter and Grandma. He looked so happy.

Carter waved back. He wasn't sure why, but he had tears in his eyes. He quickly wiped them with the back of his hand and then waved again. He gave a thumbs up. Grandpa did the same before turning and paddling out to catch another wave.

He watched Grandpa paddle for a moment before speaking. "Do you think he could teach me how to do that?"

"Absolutely," Grandma said.

"That would be awesome."

Grandma put her arm around Carter's shoulders. "Yes, it would be," she said with a smile.

