

WE REMEMBER GRAMPA
(Originally published January 1976)

Now that 1976 is here and we soon will be passing that 60th birthday, we often think about our maternal grandfather (the only grandfather we ever knew). He was born in 1857 and in the early Twenties, when he was in his mid-sixties. We thought he was the oldest man in the world.

Grampa was a retired sea captain a "*Capitano di Lungo Corso*," with master's papers for transatlantic crossings, both on sail and steam ships. After leaving the sea, he settled in New Orleans and had his own importing brokerage business. His heart, however, remained with the sea. He was proud of his master's title, and, even after he was knighted (if that's the proper word) by the Government and King of Italy as a Cavalier, he never used the Cav. but still preferred to retain the Capt. before his name.

He was a calm, methodical man of habit, a handsome man, hazel-eyed and fair-skinned, tallish for his day (5' 10"), erect, dignified, gray and balding, but with a neatly trimmed moustache and Van Dyke goatee. As we grew up, one of the things that impressed (and bewildered) us most about him was the unfailing uniformity of his dress.

Grampa always wore the same style shoe, a soft, black leather, slip-on gaiter (size 12) with elastic gore at the side and a pull tab at the heel. He had only white shirts—all of them with detachable, starched, rounded tab collars and worn with gold collar buttons and gold cuff links. In summer he wore a white linen or tan pongee suit, a gray, snap-on cravat and a straw boater with a black band. In winter, he wore a lightweight, woolen sharkskin, dull gray suit, black cravat and a hard black bowler hat. Both in summer and winter there was always a matching suit vest, across the front of which was draped a gold watch chain. In the left vest pocket was his heavy, engraved, snap-cover gold watch and in the right vest pocket always his teakwood and silver snuff box. Away from the house, he was never without his slim, ebony, silver-headed walking cane.

Over the twenty years or so that we knew and lived with him, we can't recall any deviation in his dress routine. The style changes of the Twenties and Thirties came and went, and if he was ever aware of them, we never once heard him comment, approvingly or disapprovingly. Styles and fashion remained outside his consciousness. He knew what he wanted to wear, he had always worn it, he was comfortable in what he wore, and that was the end of it.

Now that we're approaching Grampa's age, we find that we have developed at least some of his traits in regard to dress habits. The garments and colors and styles are

different, of course, but we discern the same stubborn resistance to change. We like the same shirts and ties, the same cuts of coats and pants, the same socks, the same shoes that we've been wearing for the last twenty-five years. We resent any change in styles, and we're annoyed by the "Mod" look. We're comfortable the way we are, and to hell with fashion.

The only traits of Grampa that we have yet to master are his aloofness and equanimity. But maybe that's because he was a widower during his last twenty years and didn't have a mate around to remind him of being an old fogey.

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