Empty Spaces:
A Photographic Memoir on Postmemorial and Transgenerational Effects of Grief and Loss

by
Katelin MacVey

A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College

Spring 2021

Thesis Committee:

Shannon Randol, Thesis Director

Jackie Heigle, Thesis Director

Philip Phillips, Thesis Committee Chair

Empty Spaces:
A Photographic Memoir on Postmemorial and Transgenerational Effects of Grief and Loss

by Katelin MacVey

APPROVED:

_____
Shannon Randol, Thesis Director
Professor, Department of Media Arts

_____
Jackie Heigle, Thesis Director
Professor Emerita, Department of Media Arts

_____
Philip Phillips, Thesis Committee Chair
Associate Dean, University Honors College

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my grandfather, Garry Leo MacVey, whom, in this life, I will never have the chance to meet or get to know. Gone before I was born, all I have of you is what has been passed down through our family and given to me within the remnants of a violent tragedy—a tragedy that still haunts our family today, nearly half a century later. I hope, wherever you are, that you have found peace. And I hope that we both will, one day, maybe in the next life, be able to seize the opportunities taken from us in this life.

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the wonderful support network that has encompassed me from the very beginning. There are many thanks to be given, and many hugs to go around, and there are so many people I would like to thank, but, in all honesty, there simply is not enough room here for it. Classmates, friends, coworkers, strangers—this project has been received in a manner that has surpassed my expectations.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family for their continued blessings and support. From the embryonic stages to the long, heart-felt conversations over my goals with this project, you all have been there for everything. Most of all, I want to thank my mom and my grandma. Your blessings and encouragements have granted me a safe space in which to explore, a place in which I could learn about my family's history—*my* history, *our* history—and begin to evolve as an individual through it. You let me poke and prod into your old wounds, gave me complete and honest answers to some very hard questions, and, ultimately, let me begin to see what kind of person my grandfather was. Because of you, I now have a colorful brush to paint him with.

To Jackie Heigle, my first photography professor and Thesis Director. That small conversation after class in the *History of Photography* changed not only my entire experience with photography, but also exerted a substantial and extended influence over the next two and a half years. All of the meetings we have had, all of the stories we have shared, every piece of counsel and encouragement that you have given me, all of it has helped lead me to the ultimate culmination of this project. Most importantly, you have helped me understand that while this project may officially be over, my story with my grandfather is just beginning.

To Shannon Randol, who was the first to teach me the hands-on, practical side of photography. We had an unusual journey to complete my thesis, I will say. I hope you know that there were many atypical things about this process: the extended timeline, my extreme procrastination, a once-in-a-century pandemic. I hope I have not scared you off against future theses, because you were a solid, dependable presence over these past several months. I always knew you would be there if and when I needed you, no matter how busy you were or what day of the week it was. You helped me to keep my eyes forward and my head on straight, particularly toward the end, when I needed it the most. Your insights and advice helped to ground me within the chaos of my artistic process, giving me a little much-needed room to breathe.

To Jonathan Trundle, for your support, offers of help, and enthusiasm from the sidelines.

To my friends, who badgered me with enthusiastic questions and all but jumped when I asked for help.

To the entire Photography Department and the staff of the McFarland Building, for making this whole project possible in the first place.

Thank you all.

Abstract

This project was born out of a familial tragedy that occurred on November 25, 1979, nearly two decades before I was born. On that day my grandfather, Garry Leo MacVey, passed away during a violent car accident. The goals of this project are two-fold: to pursue the passion of photography that I share with my grandfather, and to use the medium as a vessel in which to build a relationship with him, something that I can never truly have within the bounds of reality. Through the exploration of my grandfather's photographs and the process of piecing together a visual story that combines the past with the present, and leaves room for the future, I have gained an understanding of my grandfather that I may never have been able to achieve in life, had he survived.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

List of Terms

1. **Alternative photographic process**: "The term alternative process refers to any non-traditional or non-commercial photographic printing process" (Wikipedia).
2. **Color transparency**: Otherwise known as a film positive, these are 35 mm color film slides which are made from the original roll of film and are printed using transparency paper. See Section IV: Methodology, Figure 31 for an example.
3. **Contact Printing Process**: "A contact print is a photographic image produced by laying the film, typically a negative, directly against photographic paper and exposing the paper to light. The term "contact print" derives from the process of creating direct contact between the film and paper. The result is a print that is the same size of the film" (guidetofilmphotography.com).
4. **Crypt**: Discussed in Gabriele Schwab's article "Writing against Memory and Forgetting." A crypt is a psychic "tomb" where "unassimilated" trauma sits hidden from the individual. Someone who has a crypt typically does not know that they have one until they have already begun dealing with their trauma. Crypts are capable of being passed down transgenerationally (Schwab, 102-103).
5. **Cyanotype**: "The cyanotype process uses a combination of chemicals and controlled light exposure to produce a rich, cyan-blue tinted negative effect, like architects' blueprints" (TheFreeDictionary).
6. **Gum bichromate**: "Gum bichromate is a 19th-century photographic printing process based on the light sensitivity of dichromates. It is capable of rendering painterly images from photographic negatives. Gum printing is traditionally a multi-layered printing process, but satisfactory results may be obtained from a

single pass. Any color can be used for gum printing, so natural-color photographs are also possible by using this technique in layers" (Wikipedia).

7. **Heimlich**: From Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny," *heimlich* translates into English as "homely" (Freud Museum London).
8. **Lefse**: "[T]hin potato-dough flatbreads [that are] like Scandinavian tortillas . . . [they] can be found on holiday tables throughout the upper Midwest, [and] wherever Norwegian families settled to farm" (cooking.nytimes.com).
9. **Negative**: "[A] . . . photographic image that reproduces the bright portions of the photographed subject as dark and the dark parts as light areas. Negatives are usually formed on a transparent material . . .. Exposure of sensitized paper through the negative, done either by placing the negative and paper in close contact [contact printing] or by projecting the negative image onto the paper [enlargement], reverses these tones and produces a positive photographic print" (Britannica).
10. **Positive**: A positive image is the opposite of a negative image, so the light areas are light, and the dark areas are dark. In other words, a normal image.
11. **Postmemory**: "[T]he response of the second generation to the trauma of the first" (Hirsch).
12. **Render**: (1) "To represent or depict artistically"; (2) "Cause to be or become; make" (Lexico).
13. **Repression**: (1) "The restraint, prevention, or inhibition of a feeling, quality, etc."; (2) The action or process of suppressing a thought or desire in oneself so that it remains unconscious" (Lexico).

14. **Unheimlich:** From Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny," *unheimlich* is the opposite of *heimlich*, ergo: unhomely, uncanny, unfamiliar (Freud Museum London).

Preface

Garry Leo MacVey was born on August 13, 1944. He died on November 25, 1979. Garry is survived by his wife, Bettie MacVey, his two daughters, Nicole MacVey-Bogard and Michelle Weyant, and his four grandchildren: Katelin MacVey, Olivia Bogard, and Hunter and Cooper Weyant.

Introduction: "The Red Truck"

The accident happened on a late November afternoon just outside of Decorah, Iowa, in 1979. A family of four was traveling from Dodge Center, Minnesota, heading back home to Holy Cross, Iowa. It was their weekly trip to see the kids' grandparents—Decorah was the midway point, and the family would often stop to get some food at one of the local supper clubs. The town was known for its Scandinavian population, so they would also stock up on supplies for **Lefse**, a popular Norwegian, potato flatbread, and brown sugar desert, while they were there. On this day, however, the family never made it far past Decorah.

Everything was as usual. The father was driving the family's bright red 1970s Ford truck, his wife in the front seat next to him. The two children, five and two years old, were in the back camper with the family dog, a massive, gentle-as-can-be Doberman named Maggie. The two girls were playing and lounging on the camper's mattress. It hung from the roof of the truck by thick, steel chains and rocked steadily with the motion of the vehicle.

The family had just turned south onto W42, a backroad between Decorah and the main highway. Behind them, attached to the hitch of the truck, was a broad, silver horse trailer stacked full of wood. They were nearing the next intersection, about a mile out. It would take them to the main highway, and from there it would be a straight shot back to Holy Cross.

A sedan was approaching from the opposite lane, swerving slightly from side to side. It straightened out, preparing to pass the red Ford when it suddenly lurched, veering into the right lane. The father jerked the steering wheel, trying to avoid the car, but he could

not, and the Ford flew into a ditch. The front of the truck crumpled in on itself. He lurched forward, his seatbelt catching him at the neck. The thick, rough fabric of the seatbelt cut right through the thin skin of his neck, severing his carotid. His wife was thrown forward, crushed between her seat and the collapsed dash of the truck.

The sedan crashed into the side of the horse trailer, creating an immediate second impact. Airbags deployed, but the force of the collision flung the sedan's passenger through the windshield before she could be saved. She was not wearing a seatbelt.

Inside the camper of the truck, the hanging mattress swung forward toward the windows that separated the front seats from the camper, protecting the two girls from any serious harm. However, the force of the impact popped the camper door open and threw Maggie from the truck. She hit the dirt, rolling, skidding. She was bruised and shaken, but she managed to get up, shake herself off, and start barking, barking, barking.

No one knew how long it was before help arrived, but Maggie never quieted. Then, there were ambulance sirens and the wailing of firetrucks and people shouting. The mother was in and out of consciousness, trapped from the waist down, but she was aware enough to understand what had happened to her husband. "Maggie!" she hollered. "Maggie, stop!" But Maggie kept barking. The Doberman, despite her appearance, did not try to stop the first responders as they arrived at the scene and assessed the survivors. They tried to save the father; both he and his wife were air-evacuated out to nearby hospitals.

He was soon pronounced dead.

Section I: Reflective Essay

The circumstances surrounding the accident are hazy at best: there are vast inconsistencies between what little information is available regarding the cause of the accident and the memories of those who either survived, or were somehow involved in the aftermath. In my retelling of the accident, "The Red Truck," I describe the cause as an erratic driver swerving into the opposite lane, giving rise to the subsequent collisions and two deaths. However, there is the possibility that this perspective is wrong. The thing about memory is that it does not always line up with what we believe to be "the facts." Consider the following.

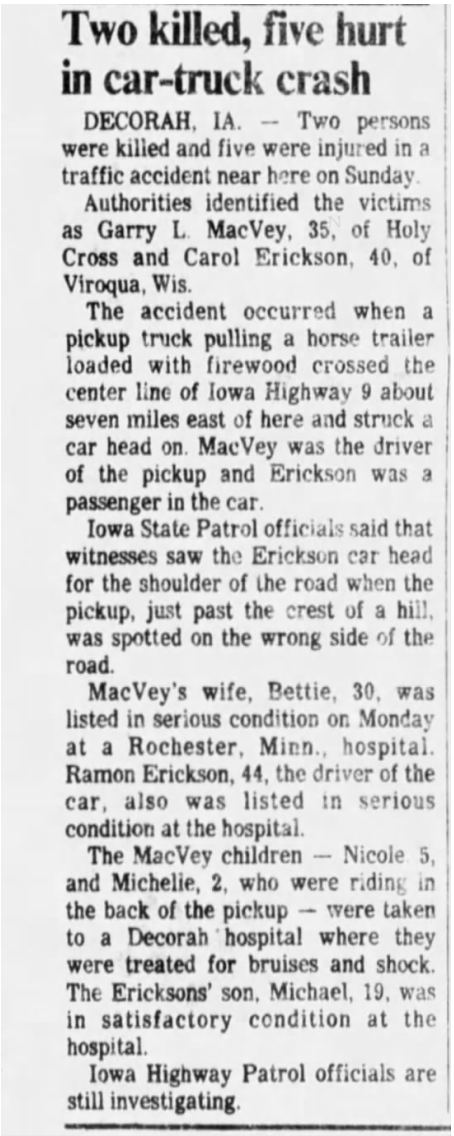
Fact: There was a newspaper article published two days after the accident, on November 27, 1979, in which my grandfather is said to be the responsible party—i.e. the swerving driver.

Memory: My grandmother remembers the police telling her that it was actually the other driver who was at fault, and that alcohol may have been an influential factor in the accident. Her father, my great-grandfather, was also told this by the police; however, he is not alive today to discuss this.

Fact: The same newspaper article states that there was a son, 19, in the backseat of the other car.

Memory: There is no recollection among my family of his presence.

Growing up, my mom and aunt were always told what my grandmother remembers the police telling her: the other driver swerved into their lane, was possibly drunk, and was the direct responsible party for the accident, as well as the deaths of his wife and my grandfather.



Two killed, five hurt in car-truck crash

DECORAH, IA. — Two persons were killed and five were injured in a traffic accident near here on Sunday.

Authorities identified the victims as Garry L. MacVey, 35, of Holy Cross and Carol Erickson, 40, of Viroqua, Wis.

The accident occurred when a pickup truck pulling a horse trailer loaded with firewood crossed the center line of Iowa Highway 9 about seven miles east of here and struck a car head on. MacVey was the driver of the pickup and Erickson was a passenger in the car.

Iowa State Patrol officials said that witnesses saw the Erickson car head for the shoulder of the road when the pickup, just past the crest of a hill, was spotted on the wrong side of the road.

MacVey's wife, Bettie, 30, was listed in serious condition on Monday at a Rochester, Minn., hospital. Ramon Erickson, 44, the driver of the car, also was listed in serious condition at the hospital.

The MacVey children — Nicole 5, and Michelie, 2, who were riding in the back of the pickup — were taken to a Decorah hospital where they were treated for bruises and shock. The Ericksons' son, Michael, 19, was in satisfactory condition at the hospital.

Iowa Highway Patrol officials are still investigating.

Figure 1: Accident Article from November 27, 1979

This accident took place almost two decades before I was born. My mom, Nicole, was five, and my aunt, Michelle, was two when my grandfather—their father—was killed. My mom has few memories of Garry, most of which are fuzzy and not well-recollected. My aunt, however, has absolutely no memory of her father. The things my mother remembers—his voice, the way he would sing to her to help her sleep, his laugh—my aunt has no foundation for. It goes without saying that I was never able to meet my grandfather. He was a ghost, someone I did not really think about until the story of the accident was

brought up by one of my family members. Yet his death, as well as the circumstances surrounding the accident, have greatly impacted my life growing up. It has impacted me in such a way and to such an extent that only within the past two years have I begun to fully understand what it means to be a part of a family that has generational trauma.

Writer and historian Marianne Hirsch has created the concept of the "postmemorial generation." **Postmemory** can be defined as "the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first" (8). Hirsch writes about postmemory in relation to the Holocaust, and the children of Holocaust survivors. This generational link to trauma, she says, is what helps to create the postmemorial generation. For the survivors of trauma, like my mom, my aunt, and my grandma, the link is more chronological in nature, more tangential. There is a "before" and an "after," a situation that is common among Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) patients. This second generation, however, has no direct or immediate experience with the traumatic event—their experience, and resulting traumatic response(s), results from the stories carried on by the first generation. Take me for example: I have no memories of my grandfather. I never have, and I never will, meet him. I have stories, and my family's memories. I have the pictures he took, and artifacts from his life. All of these items give me not a chronological or tangential link to him, but an abstract, post-memorial version of him. An *after memory*, if you will. My memories are created from the memories of others. Froma I. Zeitlin states in her article, "The Vicarious Witness: Belated Memory and Authorial Presence in Recent Holocaust Literature": "…[I]t [postmemory] goes one step further and displaces the crisis of unresolved trauma from a scenario of parents and children and locates it entirely in the second generation itself" (10). Unresolved trauma and

grief are common sources of anxieties, crypts, as well as even further unresolved trauma and grief in the following generation.

I grew up hearing the story of my grandfather's death. At small family gatherings, when it was just my parents, me, my grandma, my aunt, and her husband and children, it seemed that this story always came up. Whether a casual mention of Garry in relation to the topic at hand, or a deeper, more sorrowful comment about his absence from our lives, it seemed that, in some small way, Garry was still with us, even if only in memory. I could sense that at times it was hard for my family—my mom, my aunt, and my grandma—to be together and to simultaneously realize and accept his absence. This feeling became particularly poignant after my mom and I moved to Tennessee, and my aunt moved to Illinois. We were anywhere from a seven to ten hours' drive from our immediate family while I was growing up, so visits were sparse—sometimes as little as one or two times every few years.

My most recent memory of this generational storytelling is from my high school years. I was a freshman at the time, only fourteen. I was at that stage in life where I pretended that I did not care about anything, but inside I felt like I cared about everything too much. Despite the sullen attitude that I showed the world, I knew that this kind of moment, the one where my family gets together and sits down and talks about the painful history that looms over their shoulders, was rare. My family would mention my grandfather, yes, but they would never actually sit down and *talk* about him, his life, his impact, or the impact of his death. That is my recollection, at least. That is why this one day stands out in particular contrast in my memory. We were in my aunt's basement, sitting in a loose circle around the living room area, and in between all of us were model-sized

CAT tractors. They had belonged to Garry—he had liked to collect them. Our purpose there that day (besides seeing family in a long-overdue visit) was to determine who would get which ones. While they were sorted, my mom, Michelle, and Grandma talked about him. Grandma told stories from Mom's and Michelle's childhood, or interesting facts from his life. In all honesty, I do not remember much of the content that was discussed that day. What sticks with me the most after all these years is that on that day, I was able to ask a lot of questions. It was like an experience of finally, *finally* reaching that goal I had been striving after for years. Only, in this case, I was striving for a goal that I did not know I had been grasping at. It was a nonstop cycle, this same story, told on repeat—over and over and over again. There was little variation, but it seemed that I kept forgetting the details. Things like my grandfather's name, or how old my mom was, or how long Garry and Grandma had been married before he died. Did my mom have any memories, and, if so, what were they? The same questions, like they were on a calendar. Based off of my various readings, research, and years in therapy, I have come to understand that the intentional forgetting of details, even if it is not consciously done, can be a clear symptom of trauma. It is an act fueled by the subconscious, and the body's natural instinct to protect itself. This intentional forgetting, or **repression**, is one of the key factors that can lead to the development of an internal **crypt**. And so no matter how hard I tried, it seemed that I could never remember anything about my grandfather. I had a mental and emotional filing cabinet, a place that Zeitlin refers to as a crypt, a place that I could not entirely access at will—not, at least, until I began dealing with this transgenerational trauma.

This crypt was a place where I sectioned off and buried my emotions and the stories of the memories of my grandfather's death. I never reflected much on what it was

like to have grown up in those initial years without a grandfather. My grandma had always provided a more than active role in my life, one so active, in fact, that it more than made up for the missing pieces—both in the form of a grandfather and a reliable father figure. And when my mom married my stepdad in 2006, I at last had both in my life. It was not until my teenage years that I began to think about the impact that Papa, my stepdad's father, has had on me and my life, and in result of that, what my life would have been like if Garry had survived.

Gabriele Schwab, in her essay "Writing against Memory and Forgetting," says that she "look[s] at stories as carriers of transgenerational trauma" (98). Basically, a crypt is a symbol of "failed mourning" (Schwab 99). It is also a potential object to be passed down to the next generation if it is not dealt with properly. Schwab continues:

> [The] basic premise is that, unless it is worked through and integrated, trauma will be passed down on to the next generation. If this happens, the next generation will inherit the psychic substance of the previous generation and display symptoms that do not emerge from individual experience but from a parent's, relative's, or community's psychic conflicts, traumata, or secrets. This process is experienced as if an individual were haunted by the ghosts, that is, the unfinished business, of a previous generation. People tend to bury violent or shameful histories. They create psychic crypts meant to stay sealed off from the self, interior tombs for the ghosts of the past. Crypts engender silence. However, untold or unspeakable secrets, unfelt or denied pain, concealed shame, covered-up crimes or violent histories continue to affect and disrupt the lives of those involved in them and often

> their descendants as well. Silencing these violent and shameful histories casts them outside the continuity of psychic life but, unintegrated and unassimilated, they eat away at this continuity from within. (Schwab, 102-103)

But how does one *properly* mourn? Grief is one of the most personal and individual processes that someone can go through. There is no *roadmap to success* when it comes to grieving, and, often, it is not so much learning how to *go through* the process of grieving as it is learning how to live with the grief that is the issue. Grieving is not something that ever really stops—we, as humans, simply learn how to breathe through the pain and to walk around with heavy weights in our chests. There is no expiration date for grief, and that is both the beauty and the terror of being a part of such an emotionally connected species.

How do you grieve for someone you have never met? What kind of "grief" do you experience when you become aware of the absence of someone that you will never meet? This is a question that I have struggled with since the conception of this project, and perhaps even before that. It is, in fact, possible to grieve for someone that never has and never will play a physical role in my life. I have learned this through my own journey of learning about my grandfather's history and working with his photographs. I do not grieve him as the man he was; I cannot, because that person is someone I am incapable of knowing. I do, however, grieve for the lost possibilities. I grieve for the loss of a potential relationship with my grandfather. I grieve for the pain that my family experiences because of his loss, still decades later. In essence, I mourn for what could have been, perhaps, even, for what should have been.

This project was me giving my grief a voice. Taking what my grandfather and I have in common, I built a foundation upon which I was able to create a fantastical relationship with him. I do not know him as he was, but as he could have been. Only my mom and my grandma have any recollection of who he was, any pre-existing foundation upon which they can base their relationships with him. My aunt, however, like me, has nothing. Too young to remember her father or the accident, but old enough to have been involved in both, her position is strikingly unique among the four of us. The loss of her father would have been, and perhaps still is, much more impactful and noticeable than the permanent absence of a grandfather. It is incredible to think that only three years makes this kind of difference, between one child who has vague, foggy memories of her father, and the other who has nothing but the words of others.

The fact that I am one generation removed from this tragedy is what places me within the postmemorial generation. Up until I was eight years old, I was the only person of this generation. Now, my sister and my two cousins have joined me, but I do believe those first eight years were impactful for me in a way that my sister and cousins have not experienced. Until then, it was me, my mom, and my grandma against the world. My grandma helped raise me, taking care of me when my mom was busy working a full-time job and going to college full-time. Even after Mom and I moved down to Tennessee, Grandma would visit as often as she could. We talked on the phone all the time (she and my mom still talk every few days) and I did not feel as if her presence was diminished in my life. But then I turned eight, and everything changed. I gained a father. I gained a grandfather. I even gained a great-grandfather, until 2017, when I was a sophomore in

college, and he passed away. My first cousin was born, and suddenly I was no longer the only one who would grow up without a grandfather.

Everyone grieves in their own way. We each have our own paths. For my sister and my cousins, those paths are yet to be determined. I do not know what my cousins think or feel on the subject of their dead grandfather. I think that even on their father's side they do not have a grandfather, much like I did until my mom married (she and my biological father never married). How this will ultimately shape their lives and their experiences, only time will tell. For me, I have decided to take the reigns of my future into my own hands and to affect positive change into an area of myself that otherwise would only be filled with sadness and longing.

It has been suggested that severe psychological and physical trauma can change the expression of an individual's genes. These changes, in turn, can be passed down to the next generation (PBS, van der Kolk). Did my family experience such psychological and physical trauma that a singular event could essentially rewrite the expression of their genes? I do not know. What I do know is that this accident, which resulted in the death of my grandfather and almost resulted in the death of my grandma, *has* greatly impacted my family. It has left veritable remnants inside of them that, in some way, shape, or form, has been passed down to their children, their children's children. I have never been in a traumatic car accident. I have never watched someone die. I have never lost a loved one that I was very close with. There is no singular, focal event of trauma that has influenced my life. However, myself and others (my mom, my therapists, my friends) have noticed in me what are called "trauma responses." Exaggerated startle responses, sleeping problems, anxiety, depression, and overall a hyperactive nervous system and hyperactive nervous

responses (i.e. increased vigilance, paranoia, etc.). I am not here to diagnose myself or my family or to say that the accident is the root cause of all my family's or my problems. I am, however, trying to draw attention to possible connections: anxiety and depression, in particular, are common in the postmemorial generation (PBS, van der Kolk).

The only way to resolve trauma is to face it. To see it and hear it. To acknowledge it, and to accept it. This project was my means of facing my generational trauma. I chose to do a photographic memoir not only because of the commonality shared between my grandfather and I, but also because, through this process of looking back into the past, I was able to reconcile with the various aspects of this trauma. By building a figmented relationship with a grandfather I never had, I was able to become okay with not knowing. I was able to put to rest those "what if?" and "why me/us?" questions. The questions surrounding my grandfather's death will likely never be answered, and I have learned to be okay with that. The accident report no longer exists. After almost fifty years, the small county in Iowa destroyed the records before digitizing them became an option, much less mandatory. The accident article shown in Figure 1 is the lone record I was able to find regarding the accident itself. While it is possible for articles to print false information that is later retracted, it is also entirely possible that my grandma's memories are false. In fact, many of them likely are. Trauma warps memory. It can erase it, bury it. It can also imprint every moment in the mind like a series of photographs, unforgettable. My grandma acknowledges that her memory may be wrong. My mom, as well, knows that the foggy memories she has of the accident could also be entirely false, possibly recreated from the story of the accident that has been told over the years.

With all of this said and done, and with the slim to nonexistent possibility of ever getting answers, I eventually concluded that what happened does not matter. It does not matter whether my grandfather was the responsible party that day or if the other driver was at fault. It does not matter whether the other driver had alcohol in his system or not. None of this matters, because it is not the accident itself that is the focus of this project. The accident, as an event, has never directly affected me—the same cannot be said for my grandma, my mom, and my aunt. My grandma almost died. She lost her husband, and she almost lost her ability to walk. My mom and my aunt lost their father, an absence that was stark in the following years of their lives. What I see, what I experience, is the aftermath: I see the scar on my grandma's knee, and I know that it is from her total knee replacement. I see the way she limps when she walks, and the way she refuses help in getting up or climbing stairs, and I know it is because she does not take that ability for granted. She proved everyone wrong then, after the accident, and she will continue to do so now until the day her body gives out beneath her. It is both admirable and infuriating.

I see the way my mom looks at her father's photographs, the way she talks about him, remembers him, like he is a dream she cannot forget, a memory that just brushes against the tips of her fingers when she reaches for it. I see the carefully neutral expression on my aunt's face whenever he comes up in conversation, the way she becomes a passive listener instead of an active participant when Mom and Grandma have a shared memory, or some kind of shared knowledge of him.

And I see myself. I see the way I have longed for a chance to get to know someone who so greatly impacted the role models of my life. The way I wished for life to have turned out differently, more fairly—for myself, but also for my family. For my grandma to

never have lost her husband, whose wedding ring she still wears. For my mom and aunt to have grown up knowing their father, and having him as a positive influence in their lives. For me, to have had a grandfather in those initial years, a positive male influence that maybe, just maybe, would have helped to curb some of those jaded outlooks that I developed in my teenage years, when my relationship with my biological father truly hit rock bottom.

These are merely wishes. Desires that will always be left unfulfilled. And that is okay. I had to face these longings and accept them for what they were, for what they could never be, in order to lay them to rest. To give myself peace. That is the ultimate conclusion of this project: the transition from burning curiosities and bitter longings to acceptance and understanding. My grandfather was a focus of this project, but the underlying root, the inherent cause of it, was me. I knew that I had to find a way to come to terms with my family's history and how it affected me. I had to discover what it meant to me, this accident and its shockwaves that have lasted through the decades since. I had to put to rest, within myself, this generational trauma.

Does this mean that this project is now relegated to a chapter of my life, and bygones will be bygones once I turn the page? No. This is something that will stay with me for as long as I am alive. It was folded into the facets of my childhood, scribbled across the margins of my family and our dynamics, physically and psychologically embedded within the two women who raised me, as well as my aunt. It has become embedded within me as well, and I do not intend to ignore it. I will move on and accept what is, but I will not forget. My mom, during the course of this project, said to me: "Most things in life are temporary, but memories are forever." How these memories remain with us determine how

we define them and, in turn, how they define us. They can continue on not as conscious moments that our neurons have preserved, but as chemical changes within our bodies that affect our very DNA (PBS, van der Kolk), or as physical reactions or repressions that only come to light with the presence of a trigger (van der Kolk); but they can also exist outside of our bodies and outside of time, through photographs. Photographs capture an instance in time and preserve it within a permanent medium. Artists of all kinds seek a way in which they can leave a mark, no matter how small, on this world. My grandfather lives on through the memories of our family, and through his photographs. He lives on through the stories we tell and his pictures we see. This is how I remember my grandfather, a man whom I can never meet. This project is my way of remembering the generational trauma that has afflicted my family. It is my way of bringing peace to myself, and through me, a form of possible resolution to those I love who have yet to find one.

Section II: Family Tree

This section is comprised of my family tree. I have included this so that the reader may reference it at will and use it as a device to keep individual names and dates in order. The most important names and relations to remember are as follows: Garry Leo MacVey (grandfather), Bettie Jean Unger (grandmother), Nicole Amy MacVey (mother), Michelle Marie MacVey (aunt), Katelin Marie MacVey (myself), and Olivia Bogard (sister). Michelle's spouse and children are not listed here, nor are Grandma's four sisters.

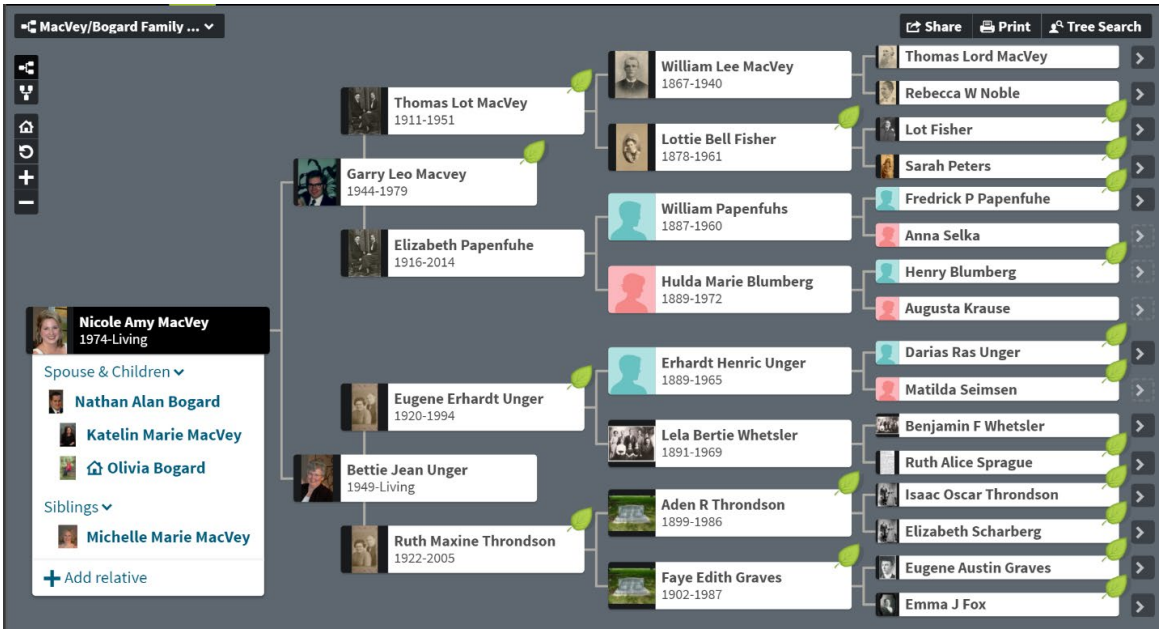


Figure 2: The MacVey Family Tree

Section III: Family, Before and After

This section contains comparative photographs from the 1960s to the 1980s, in which Garry either took or was a part of, and contemporary photographs, from the 2000s up until 2019. The purpose of this section is to highlight the differences between my family during the time that Garry was alive, or in the aftermath of his death, and my family now, over four decades later.

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 3 and Figure 4: Family, Before and After

These images highlight many of the physical differences in my family's life after Garry's death. In Figure 3, Garry is seen holding Nicole, who is just about to turn five, and Bettie with Michelle, who is two. Garry's and Bettie's wedding pictures are seen on display from behind the couch my family sits on. Plants decorate the space, something that reminds me of my own home growing up, because a love of plants and gardening is something my grandma passed down to my mom. This picture was taken in 1979.

Figure 4 was taken several years later, most likely in the mid-1980s. In Figure 3, Garry's presence seems to take up the left side of the frame, particularly with the black suit jacket he wears. It is as if the jacket is absorbing the light around it. However, there is a noticeable space, an absence, in the left side of Figure 4 that makes the right side seem particularly heavy and crowded. It is as if there is a physical gap that was subconsciously left by my family in the place where Garry should have been standing. The lack of plant life is striking to me, as well. The Christmas tree is the only resemblance of this; however, if it ever was a real tree, then it is rapidly dying by the time this picture was taken.

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 5 and Figure 6: Garry's Grave, Front

Figure 5: Michelle and Nicole in the early 1980s. Figure 6: Garry's grave, front, in 2015, at my great-great aunt's funeral. In the left side of the frame, you can see my leg and the edge of my hand as I look through the family graves in Rolfe Cemetery. Photo taken by Nicole MacVey-Bogard.

This was the first and, thus far, only time that I have been able to visit Garry's grave. Rolfe, Iowa is not only a small space within endless acres of cornfields, but it is also a good four-hour drive from my hometown, Dubuque. Dubuque, in turn, is a ten-to-eleven-hour drive from Nashville, Tennessee. Locationally, it is not very accessible (either by location or by convenience), nor is there an airport in any nearby vicinity (Dubuque does not have a very convenient airport, either). The physical barriers to visiting his grave can be likened to the psychological and emotional barriers that often surround an internal crypt.

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 7 and Figure 8: Garry's Grave, Back

This is the backside of Garry's grave, a memento to his service during the Vietnam War. He served as an Army pharmacist aboard a ship, and reached the rank of SP5. This rank no longer exists today, but it is considered the equivalent of a Sergeant.

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 9 and Figure 10: Camping with Family, Then and Now

Figure 9 was taken by Garry in 1965-66. From left to right: Tom MacVey, Robin Unger, an unidentified individual, and Eugene Unger, who was otherwise known as "Grandpa Unger." Figure 10 was taken by me in 2019. From left to right: Nora Kuykendall (cousin), Nicole MacVey, and Olivia Bogard.

Figure 11 (left)
Figure 12 (top)

Figure 11 and Figure 12: Generational Siblings

Figure 11: From left to right, Jerry, Larry, and Garry, early 1950s. Figure 12: Olivia and Katelin, 2014.

Section IV: Generational Twins

The idea of "generational twins" came about a few weeks into my thesis. I was working with my advisor, brainstorming and tossing out ideas, while we were playing around in Photoshop. When I first showed her a picture of my grandfather, she looked between his image and myself for a solid moment before saying, "Wow." We quickly became curious: What would it look like to overlap the image of Garry with one of myself? In short, the result was mind blowing. We looked almost exactly like the same person. From this discovery came the following images, all cropped close to the face in order to encourage the reader to focus solely on the facial features throughout the early lives of Garry and me.

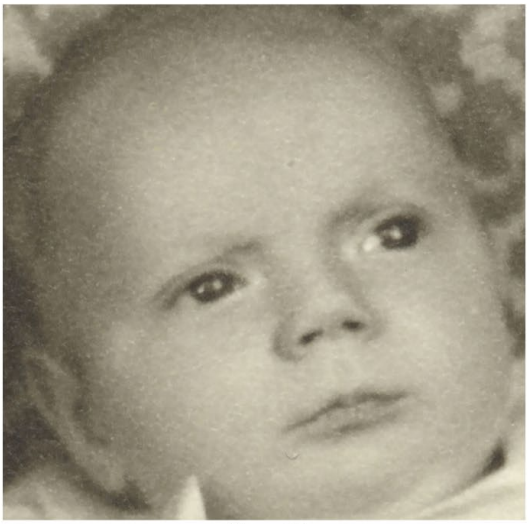


Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 13 and Figure 14: Generational Twins as Infants

Garry, left, 1944-45 and Katelin, right, 1998-99.

Figure 15

Figure 16

Figure 15 and Figure 16: Generational Twins as Children

Garry, left, late 1940s to early 1950s and Katelin, right, mid- to late-2000s.

Figure 17

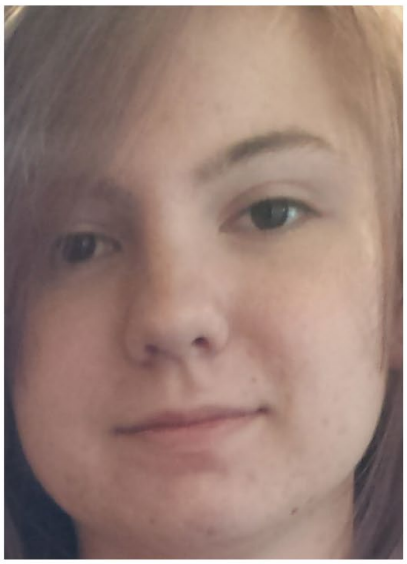


Figure 18

Figure 17 and Figure 18: Generational Twins as Teenagers

Figure 17: Garry as a teenager. Figure 18: Katelin as a teenager.

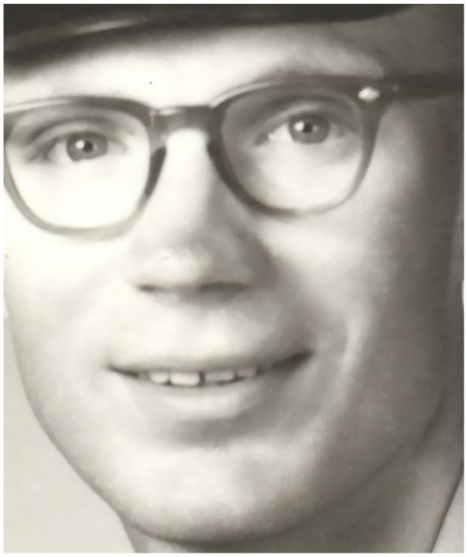


Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 19 and Figure 20: Generational Twins as Adults

Figure 19: Garry, 21. Figure 20: Katelin, 21.

Section V: Kodak Photographic Spots

There are some places that seem to ask to be photographed. Ever since cameras became highly portable and more user-friendly, much of which was brought about by the Kodak brand, people have seemed to migrate to certain locations and take various kinds of photographs of the same subject. Kodak Photographic Spots, now largely rebranded as Nikon Photo Spots, were a way to invite amateur photographers to create beautiful photos of their own. This idea resonates with me because of the amount of photographs I have discovered in which Garry and I both paid attention to and captured within our frames. These images were created nearly half a century apart, and entirely by coincidence, but I think it is rather remarkable that two people from two different generations, who have never met and will never meet, offer strikingly similar perspectives on landmarks standing through time.

Figure 21 (top)
Figure 22 (right)

Figure 21 and Figure 22: 4th Street Elevator, Dubuque, Iowa

Figures 21 and 22 show Dubuque's famous 4th Street Elevator. Figure 21 was likely taken some time in the 1960s-70s, when Garry was most active photographically, and Figure 22 was taken in 2018 during my last visit to Dubuque. For my entire life I have loved this location. It is a must-do every time I go back home to visit Grandma. I am honestly not sure what it is about this place that draws me in. Maybe it is the presence of a relic from a time gone past, so out of place in this newer, faster, more modern century. Or maybe it is the mild adrenaline rush I get whenever I hop on to ride the elevator, because as steep as that hill looks in these pictures, I promise that it is much, much steeper when you are looking down at the cement street and the only thing keeping you from a freefall is a pair of cable cords. Better yet, maybe it is the view that I get when I stand at the top. The whole city sprawls out before me, the Mississippi bright and blue in the distance, one bridge to Illinois on my right and the other to Wisconsin on my left. It truly is an incredible view, but it seems that both Garry and I admired it. This was one of the first pictures I came across after I started digging through his old box of images. This is also one of my favorites, very much for sentimental reasons. To this day, it still amazes me that I unwittingly took so many photographs similar in content, location, and composition to my grandfather's, so many years later.

Figure 23 (top)
Figure 24 (right)

Figure 23 and Figure 24: 4th Street Elevator Balcony, Dubuque, Iowa

This is the balcony view from the 4th Street Elevator. Figure 23 was likely taken around the same time as Figure 21, if not on the same day, in the 1960s-70s. Figure 24 was taken on the same day in 2018 as Figure 23 was, and in it stands myself and my sister, Olivia. If you look hard enough, you just might be able to see our displeasure at being told to pose for a picture together.

Figure 25

Figure 26

Figure 25 and Figure 26: Dubuque Overview, Then and Now

I always think it is interesting to see how cities change over time. I remember visiting a museum in Dubuque in 2018 that had a timeline of photographs of Dubuque from an aerial point of view. The ways the city changed, sometimes in just one or two photographs, was incredible to me. Figures 25 and 26 were taken almost fifty years apart: Figure 25 sometime in the 1960s-70s and Figure 26 in 2018. The longer I look at these photographs, the more changes I see—and, on the contrary, more things that have remained the same. For one, the Mississippi River just below the horizon in both images, and the golden spire of Dubuque's Town Hall are two things that have remained constant, both across my visits growing up and in these two images. However, I do think that Garry's image was taken one or two streets over from where I took mine. In Figure 25, the

Dubuque Library can be seen in the bottom left corner, a multi-story building with Greco-Roman pillars in the front. I know that this building still stands today, and I know that it is not located on 4th Street, where the elevator is.

Figure 27

Figure 28

Figure 27 and Figure 28: Train Bridge over the Mississippi, Then and Now

Dubuque is a waterfront town. It sits just off the Mississippi River and is a geographical junction to Wisconsin and Illinois. Cross the northern bridge, and you are in Wisconsin. Cross the southern bridge, and you will find yourself in Illinois. These train tracks are just up the river from the Illinois crossing, and it is not uncommon to see actual mile-long trains chugging along over the river.

Figure 29

Figure 30

Figure 29 and Figure 30: Lock and Dam on the Mississippi, Then and Now

Figure 29 was most likely taken with Garry's film camera, sometime in the 1960s or 1970s. Figure 30 is the same lock and dam, taken via cell phone in 2018. I took this picture from the ridge at Eagle Park, Dubuque, IA. This park is a spot that I grew up visiting and playing in, and it was a location from which Garry took many of his photographs.

Section VI: Methodology

This project was originally intended to be an exploration and development of my experience with **alternative photographic processes**[1]. The two main goals were: (1) to practice the **cyanotype** and **gum bichromate** printing processes as a hands-on approach, which would include physical manipulation of my grandfather's photographs, and (2) to learn and familiarize myself with these two forms of alternative photographic processes, which are still widely practiced in the contemporary photographic world. Cyanotypes and gum bichromate prints are **contact printing processes**. This means that the size of the **negative** must be the size of the final image. Below, I break down the various steps of the cyanotype and gum bichromate processes.

Step 1: Choosing Images

While Garry never received any formal training in photography, this did not deter him. He took pictures of anything and everything, much like I will often do, and he particularly liked things regarding Dubuque, nature, planes, and flying. My mom has two 11" x 14" boxes that contain rolls of his film and **color transparencies**. The color transparencies, as shown below, are color film slides printed on transparency paper.

[1] The definitions of all bolded terms can be found in the List of Terms on pages xi-xiii.

Figure 31: Color Transparency

I would hold the color transparencies up to a light source, such as the back doors shown in Figure 31, and decide if I wanted to scan the slide into a digital format. In general, I strayed toward images that had family members in them or were composed in places I recognized and/or had photographed myself. I was looking for parallels that I could draw between our lives and photographs, or similarities of any kind.

Step 2: Scanning the Film

I was fortunate enough to have a film scanner at home, an old, red Wolverine SNaP-20MP, pictured below.

Figure 32: Film Scanner and Film Scanner Tray

The scanner was pretty user-friendly. The film scanner tray is located on the table, behind and slightly to the right of the scanner. It is the black rectangular device with the four windows cut into it, which are where the images will sit as they are scanned. The scanner tray slides through a thin, vertical opening in the scanner, and the touchscreen shows one image at a time. To scan the image and download it to a blank SD card, I simply hit the "Convert" button on the right side of the control panel.

Step 3: Scanning Photographs

There are several photographs of Garry and my family that were not stored as color transparencies or rolls of film, but as aged, printed pictures. For these, I used one of the photography department's Epson V750 scanners. Most of the images I scanned in at 1200 pixels per inch (ppi) because of the enlargement I would have to do later on in the process for when I printed my final images. Essentially, the more pixels the image has initially, the fewer extra pixels are needed to "make up" or "fill in" the image during an enlargement.

This produces a sharper and more detailed final image. I chose to scan them in at 1200 ppi based off of some simple calculations. The smallest image I scanned was around a 2x4. I planned to print my final images as 8x10s, so dividing eight by two gives a multiplication factor of four. The standard ppi for a printed image is 300, so 300 times four gave me 1200.

In order to scan the images in, I plugged my photography-dedicated USB drive into the computer and used the VueScan program to operate the scanner. I downloaded the images in .tif format, because TIFFs can be saved in layers and more easily manipulated than JPGs, PNGs, or PDFs can.

Step 3: Organizing Images

Nearly every image I used for this project was either from my grandfather's color transparencies, old family photographs, or from saved Google Photos images. I seemed to be in a constant state of updating or rearranging these images, renaming and resaving them as their roles in my project shifted and morphed. There were many images I had saved that I intended to use, and then never did. I kept all of these images stored on my dedicated photography USB drive, labeled as specifically as possible in various folders. Since something always seemed to be changing with my project, these folders were always changing, too. I would delete old folders, create new ones, and rename others to best fit the vision I had in my head at the time. By the end of my project, there were four main folders I was using, labeled accordingly: Original Scans, Original Dig Pics [Original Digital Pictures], Final Images, and Final Images Edited. The Original Scans folder was where I placed all of the unedited, raw scans of my grandfather's photographs, whether initially in color transparency format or as an old family photograph. They were both scanned, so I included them in the same folder. The Original Dig Pics folder was for all of the photos I

pulled from Google Photos to use, also unedited. The Final Images folder was simply a folder where I placed all of the images I thought I would use for my project so I could cohesively view them and make decisions on what to put where. And, finally, the Final Images Edited folder is where I placed all of my final photographs as I edited them. I did a lot of "save as" in this project so I could keep the integrity of the original images as much as possible.

Step 4: Editing Images

Almost all of my editing was done in Adobe Photoshop. However, certain images (such as the ones in Appendix A) have been marked on using Microsoft Paint 3D. My editing process was simple. I wanted to keep the integrity and aged appearance to the pictures, but I edited over anything that I thought might be distracting to the viewer: age spots, damage to the picture or film, cracks and creases in the photographs, and discolored areas. I also did some minimal additional edits to the coloring, contrast, and brightness of the images. More often than not, I would let Photoshop auto-generate the results (there is an "Auto" button for the brightness/contrast and levels adjustments). In other cases, using the "Auto" option was just a starting point, and then I would make minute adjustments from what Photoshop generated.

Step 5: Turning a Positive Image into a Negative

As contact printing processes, for both cyanotypes and gum bichromate prints I needed to create a digital negative that I could then print out and use to make the final image. In order to do this, I first needed to download a cyanotype curve from the Internet. A curve is essentially a presetting that adjusts the levels and channels of a Photoshop image

so that, when it is printed out and used to make the final image, the final image will have the appropriate levels and appearance once it is made.

As far as turning a positive digital image into a negative, the basic steps are to invert the image and then print it on transparency paper. The process is more involved than that, with additional steps such as applying the cyanotype curve to the image, but those are the two most important events when turning a positive image into a negative.

Step 6: Printing the Negative

As I stated earlier, it is necessary to print the negative image out on transparency paper. This is so the final image will have the appropriate exposure. Using Photoshop, I resized the negatives to fit a 5x7 format, cut the transparency paper accordingly, and then print. I also let the image sit for a few minutes, so as to allow the ink to dry. The transparency paper I used was Pictorico TPU100 OHP Transparency.

Step 7: Mixing the Chemicals

Today it is possible to order pre-mixed chemistry kits for cyanotypes and gum bichromate prints. However, it was more cost efficient for me to order the chemicals separately and to mix them myself. The two chemical components of the cyanotype process are ferric ammonium citrate (Part A) and potassium ferricyanide (Part B). 25 g of Part A is mixed into 100 mL of distilled water and 10 g of Part B is mixed into 100 mL of distilled water. The two solutions are then mixed until fully dissolved and then stored in amber glass bottles. Each bottle is labeled with “A” or “B” and the name of the chemical that is inside. Below are images of when I mixed my chemicals.

Figure 33: Materials for Mixing Chemicals

General safety precautions were taken when I mixed the chemicals. Parts A and B initially came as dry powders, so a filter mask was recommended to avoid breathing in anything potentially irritating. Gloves were also used to prevent any spilled substances from absorbing through the skin. Short-term exposure to cyanotype materials without these basic precautions is not generally considered to be harmful. However, long-term and repeated exposure to these chemicals without basic precautions has been known to lead to deleterious health effects, however uncommon that they may be.

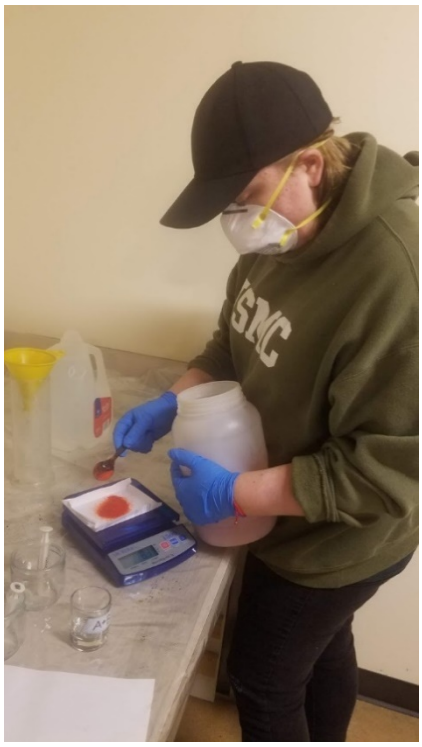


Figure 34: Weighing out the Potassium Ferricyanide

Figure 35: 25 g of Ferric Ammonium Citrate

Once the materials were mixed, they were poured into their respective amber glass containers and stored in a dark, cool, dry place.

Step 8: Creating the Cyanotype

In a negative, the dark areas become light and the light areas become dark. When exposing an image, this works to darken the areas that need the most exposure and to prevent too much exposure on the areas that are lighter in the original image. Cyanotypes are made using UV light, so sunlight was the original method for this technique when it was used in earlier centuries (and still often is). Nowadays, however, it is possible to use a lightbox in place of sunlight. Using a lightbox helps to even out exposure across the whole image, and it also speeds up exposure times. What once may have taken close to thirty minutes now only takes about three to five minutes. A lightbox is exactly what it sounds like: the one housed in the McFarland Building is a plain wooden construct with two fluorescent light strips inside.

Figure 36: The Exposure Process

Figure 36 shows part of the exposure process. Pressed against the glass is the negative. On the right is a cut coffee filter onto which I am exposing the image.

Figure 37: Finished Cyanotype

Once the exposure is complete, the cyanotype must be washed in a lukewarm water bath for 15 minutes before it can be laid out to dry.

Step 9: Adding the Gum Bichromate

The gum bichromate process is more involved and intensive than the cyanotype process. Due to this and the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic, integrating gum bichromate into my project became a difficult task that I ultimately decided against.

The typical (and highly simplified) process (using cyanotype) is to first complete the cyanotype, wash, and dry, and then coat with yellow pigment, wash, and dry, and, finally, coat with the magenta pigment, wash, and dry. However, there are many chemicals involved, one of which is a known carcinogen, that must be mixed and stored in specific conditions that were difficult, if not impossible, to replicate at home.

Final Products

Figure 38: Cyanotype on Coffee Filter

This was the first cyanotype I have ever created. It is an image my grandfather took near the Mississippi in Dubuque, IA. A similar car appears in some of his other images, and so it became a sort of game to "spot the car." I laugh whenever I see this image now, because I produced it backwards. It is a valuable part of the learning process I went through when Ms. Heigle taught me the cyanotype process.

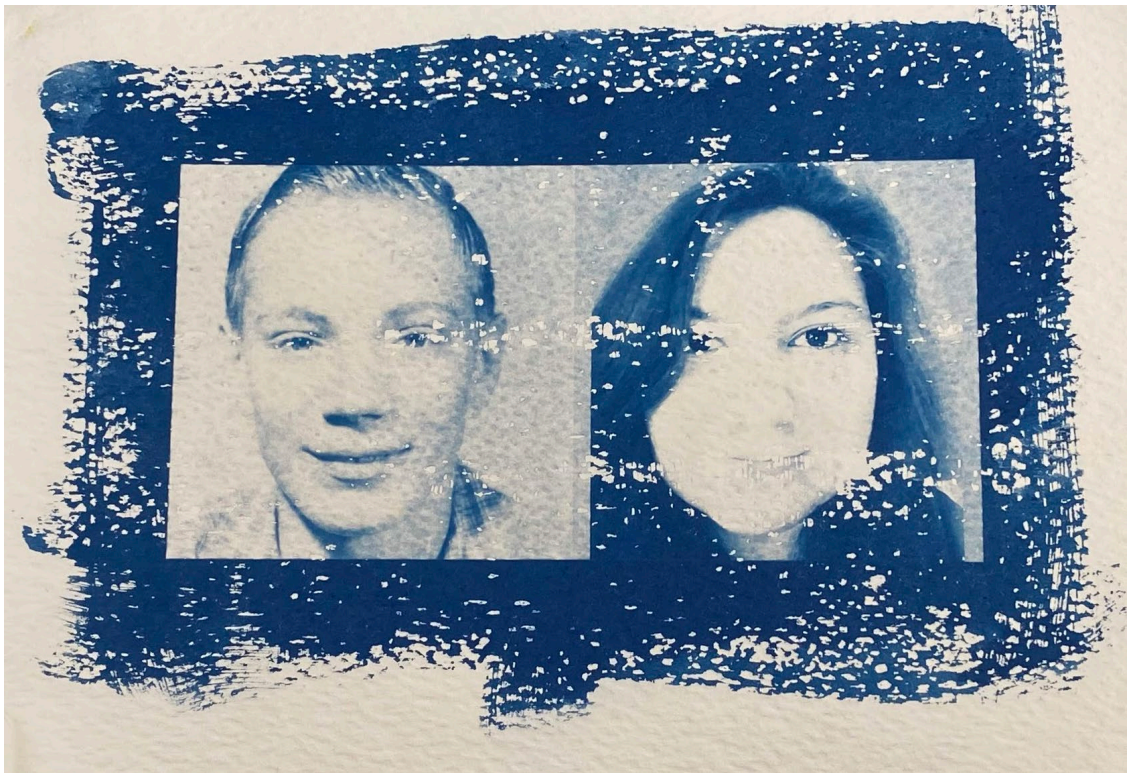


Figure 39: Cyanotype on Cold-Pressed Paper

The original ideas for my project were grand and complex, involving a lot of hands-on, time-consuming tasks. This cyanotype is the result of one of those ideas, in which I tried to recreate a stereoscopic effect. A stereoscope viewer is a device that takes two pictures and merges them together through the use of a median divider. Usually this was a piece of wood that divided the images, so the left eye could not see the right image, and the right eye could not see the left image. The brain is then forced to merge these two images together, creating an almost three-dimensional image. The image alone does not create a stereoscopic effect; I would have needed to fashion a device or somehow acquire a stereoscope viewer in order to finalize the effect.

Figure 40: Yellow Coat, Gum Bichromate, Watercolor Paper

This is the applied yellow layer of the gum bichromate process. You can see a stronger contrast forming in the image, as well as a color change to a more natural tone (although it is clearly not quite there yet).

Figure 41: Magenta Coat, Gum Bichromate, Watercolor Paper

This is the final gum bichromate image, the first and only completed gum bichromate I have made. The image has gained a more natural tone, with deeper shadows and lighter highlights. It almost looks like an old picture, faded from time, use, and sunlight exposure.

Section VII: Final Reflections

The seeds of this project began in 2018, when I took *The History of Photography* with Jackie Heigle. It was my first photography class, and it changed my life. At the time, all I knew was that I liked taking pictures. I liked to look at photographs and felt drawn to them, especially the bold and striking ones or the old and foreign ones, ones that were slowly lapsing from the confines of the modern era. I was drawn in by the sense of ***heimlich*** and ***unheimlich*** that a photograph could produce. In some way, I think I knew that photographs—through the lens in which I was viewing them—were memories. Recordings. They were recollections, permanent records of memories long since faded, or objects that have long been forgotten. A beautiful flower. A striking arrangement of lines and angles. A particular expression on a stranger's face. I feel these instances acutely, for I am strongly aware that they are momentary, fleeting. I may never experience one quite like it again. I have often heard people say that in order to live fully in the moment, then one needs to put down the camera. Perhaps, in a way, this is true. There are different qualities of experience when one looks at the world—especially in the case of novel experiences, such as travel—through a camera lens than if one was not using a camera at all. I do not think either of these experiences are right or wrong, and I tend to follow my instincts. I do try to stay conscious of how often I use my camera in the face of a new experience; at the same time, though, I do not inhibit myself from taking photographs and acting as a recorder of the experience if that is my inclination. It truly does vary and depends largely on the experience. Am I the only one taking pictures? Sometimes, but not always.

For me, this awareness of the impermanence of things is a large reason for why I photograph. It is, of course, not the only reason that I pick up a camera. There are other driving forces in my life and in society which entice me to take pictures, to inhabit the role and responsibilities that come with being a photographer.

I do not know for what reasons my grandfather picked up the camera. I have no idea what went through his head as he framed his images, what he saw in the world that made him want to capture it with a permanent record. What was he recording? What was he trying to communicate, either with himself or with the world at large? These are questions that I will never know the answer to. While he may no longer be here, his photographs live on. They are a vessel through which I can explore his life, and discover certain things through his eyes, perhaps even see something as he did, if only for a moment. The physical manipulation of his photographs is more than mere interest in his pictures, although that exists in abundance. The purpose of the hands-on aspect in which I initially approached this project was a means for me to build a relationship with my grandfather through his photographs.

In my Thesis Proposal, the following Thesis Statement acted as a guide for my project. At the time, I felt that it was general enough to allow for some wiggle room in which, if and when I developed new ideas, I felt free to pursue them. However, it was also specific enough that it gave me some direction to go in, an overarching goal to aim for.

> Feelings of loss and the process of grief can manifest transgenerationally and ultimately present themselves in a postmemorial generation. I belong to a postmemorial generation. This project will explore this concept and will **render** my explorations of history, memory, emotion, art, science, and

literature into a cohesive, creative project consisting of two parts: a written component and a pictorial component. The project will contain photographic art objects that may be supplemented by: mixed media components (audio interviews, digital negatives, alternative photographic prints, etc.), written work (journal entries, poetry, and a constructed retelling of the accident), and quotes cited from various sources (journal articles, books, textbooks, essays, etc.).

In the case of my family, the story of my grandfather's death is the vehicle of transgenerational trauma. As children, we often see the world through simpler means than we do as adults. For me, it was me, my mom, and my grandma. Until I was eight, there was no fatherly or grandfatherly figure in my life, and I never paid much attention to those absences until I saw first-hand for myself how life was completely different with the addition of both role models. As I grew, I wondered what life would be like if Grandma's husband were still alive or if my biological father were a better man. Despite the pain that came with the realization of everything I had lost—that, initially, I did not know I had lost—there was also the realization that my life was already better for the people that were in it. That is part of what makes this project so interesting, that I have the chance to create a bond, a relationship, with someone who left this world decades ago, and that through it I am able to better understand and connect with the family I do have.

Section VIII: Epilogue

Working with the MTSU Photo Program has been an incredible experience. Not only was I enthusiastically encouraged to chase my dreams (no matter how wild they may have been), but I was also given opportunities that I would not have found elsewhere. One such opportunity was the student gallery within the McFarland Building, where graduating photography students are able to display a body of their work that is then available to all students, faculty, and visitors to the building. Shortly after my thesis draft was due, I installed my very own exhibit, which presented the culmination of the literal blood, sweat, and tears I have put into this project. The images within my thesis were now on display for the world to see, and I have heard nothing but positive feedback since the installation. I find it surprisingly difficult to put into words what the ability to have this experience has given me.

I have worked on this project since the Fall semester of 2019. It has been a long and weary road, an emotional rollercoaster that, at times, left me completely drained and unsure of how to move forward. At other times, though, it gave me a vehicle through which I was able to bond with my family. It gave me a reason to talk to the people I do not often talk to, and it gave me a stronger sense of understanding with those who matter the most to me. I titled this project “Empty Spaces,” because those are what we are left with in the wake of tragedy. Voids. Gaping holes, residing in the areas of our lives that used to bring so much love and joy. Empty spaces are what we, the survivors, have to learn how to live with.

I was born with one of my empty spaces already there: the absence of my grandfather. This empty space of mine was influenced and shaped by my family's empty spaces surrounding Garry's death: my grandma's, my mom's, and my aunt's. This is one of the generational manifestations of trauma. It took me until my teenage years to begin to think about this, and it was not until my very early twenties that I was able to piece it all together.

The following images are of my exhibit, which ran from April 12 – April 28, 2021.

Figure 42: Gallery View I

Figure 43: Gallery View II

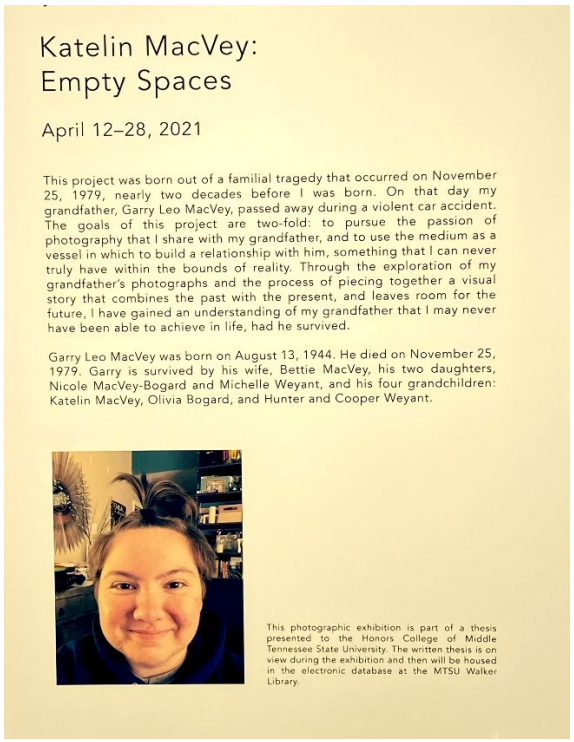


Figure 44: Exhibit Poster

On the night of April 19, 2021, I held a virtual opening reception via Zoom. I've added the QR code below that will link to the MTSU Photo Program Facebook page, where the recording was posted. Since there is a limit of 50 scans for this free QR code, I have also added the direct link to the page where the recording is found.

Figure 45: Zoom Reception Recording QR Code

Link: https://fb.watch/59krphdt9z/

Works Cited

"Army Specialist 5-Stripes Rank Gold On Green Cloth - 1 Pr." Medals of America, www.medalsofamerica.com/u-s-army-specialist-5-stripes-rank-gold-on-green-cloth#:~:text=Specialist%205%2C%20abbreviated%20SPC%2C%20rank%20is%20a%20junior,and%20must%20complete%20a%20leadership%20and%20officer%20course.

"Can Trauma Be Passed to next Generation through DNA?" *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 31 Aug. 2015, www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily-videos/can-trauma-be-passed-to-next-generation-through-dna/#:~:text=New%20research%20suggests%20that%20experiencing%20intense%20psychological%20trauma,the%20gene%20associated%20with%20depression%20and%20anxiety%20disorders.

"Cyanotype." *TheFreeDictionary.Com*, Farlex, 2013, encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/cyanotype.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Negative | Photography." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, www.britannica.com/technology/negative.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5–37, doi:10.1353/yale.2001.0008.

Lexico. "Render | Definition of Render by Lexico." *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, Oxford, 2019, www.lexico.com/en/definition/render.

"REPRESSION: Definition of REPRESSION by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com Also Meaning of REPRESSION." *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, Lexico Dictionaries, www.lexico.com/definition/repression.

Ruers, Jamie. "The Uncanny." *Freud Museum London*, Freud Museum London, 26 Feb. 2020, www.freud.org.uk/2019/09/18/the-uncanny/.

Schwab, Gabriele. "Writing against Memory and Forgetting." *Literature and Medicine*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2006, pp. 95–121, doi:10.1353/lm.2006.0026.

Sifton, Sam. "Lefse Recipe." *NYT Cooking*, NYT Cooking, 2019, cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1016973-lefse.

SMClassicCars. "1973 Ford F250 F 250 Camper Special Ranger XLT Solid Western Truck F100 F150 NR." *Classic Cars for Sale*, SMClassicCars, 2016, smclassiccars.com/ford/359022-1973-ford-f250-f-250-camper-special-ranger-xlt-solid-western-truck-f100-f150-nr.html.

Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score*. Penguin, 2015.

Wikipedia Contributors. "Alternative Process." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 16 May 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_process.

---. "Gum Bichromate." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 4 June 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gum_bichromate.

Zeitlin, Froma I. "The Vicarious Witness: Related Memory and Authorial Presence in Recent Holocaust Literature." *History & Memory*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1998, pp. 5–42, muse.jhu.edu/article/407222.

Appendix A: “The Red Truck”

Figure 46: “The Red Truck”

A 1973 Ford F250 Camper Special Ranger XTL. This is likely not the exact model of the car my family owned, but my mom identifies this car as very similar to the one they were driving while she was young, and on the day of the accident.

Figure 47: Maggie the Doberman

Maggie, the Doberman who survived the family car accident in “The Red Truck.” She was one of Grandma’s most loyal companions.

Appendix B: Generational Twins

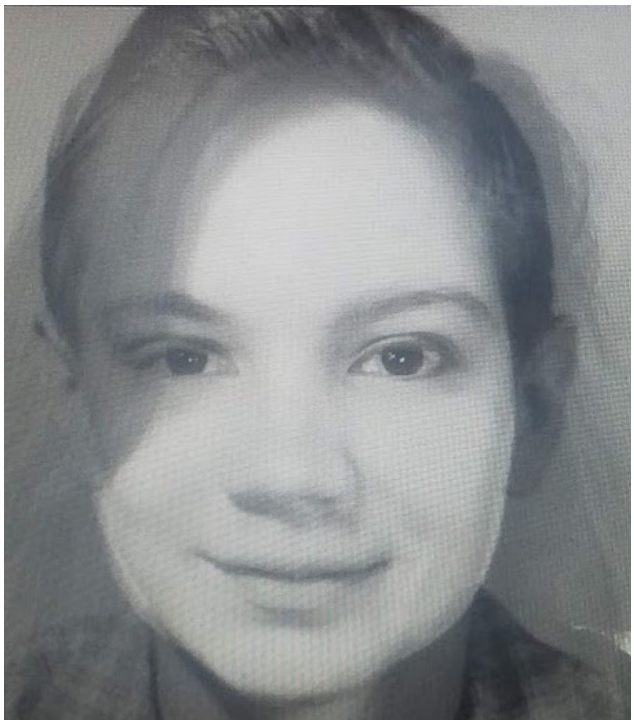


Figure 48: Merged

This is the original image that inspired the concept of generational twins. Except for my wider jawline, my grandfather and I look remarkably similar—almost like twins. Our faces, even our smiles, blend together almost seamlessly. The similarities in our smiles is what really captures me, but the way our eyes line up on our faces is almost eerie. The term generational twins is quite apropos, if you ask me.

Appendix C: Maps

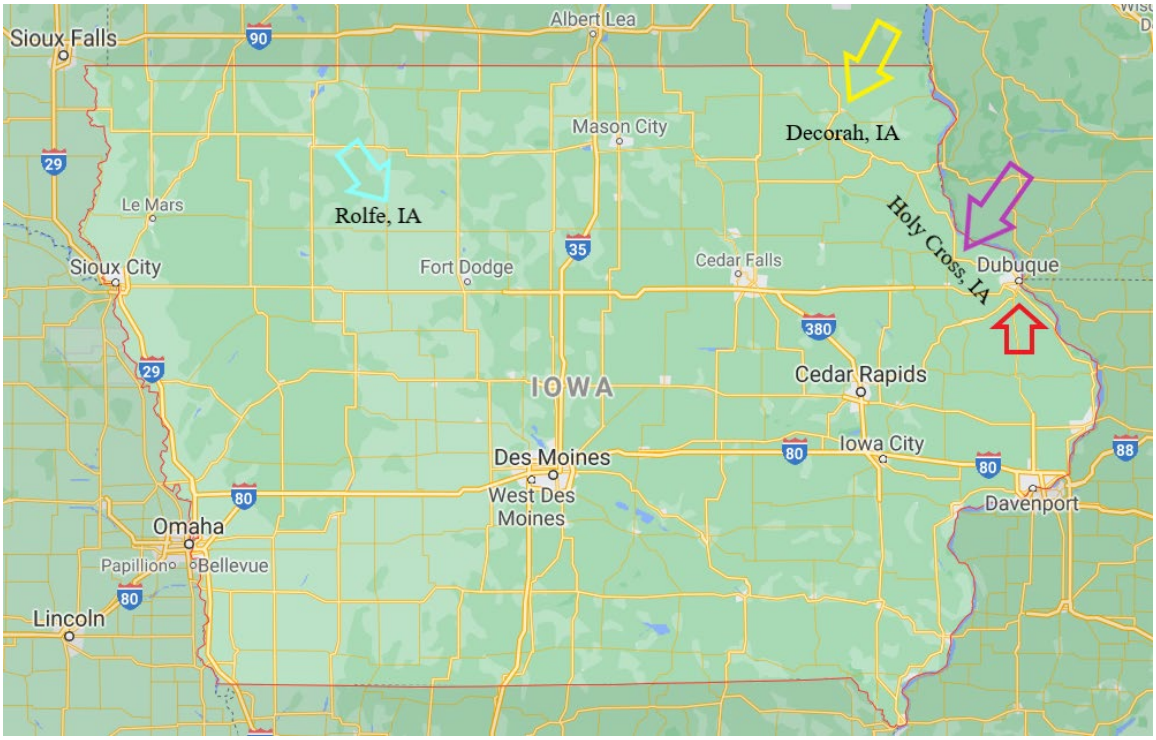


Figure 49: Map of Iowa, Labelled

Highlighted on this map, from left to right, are: Rolfe, Decorah, Holy Cross, and Dubuque.

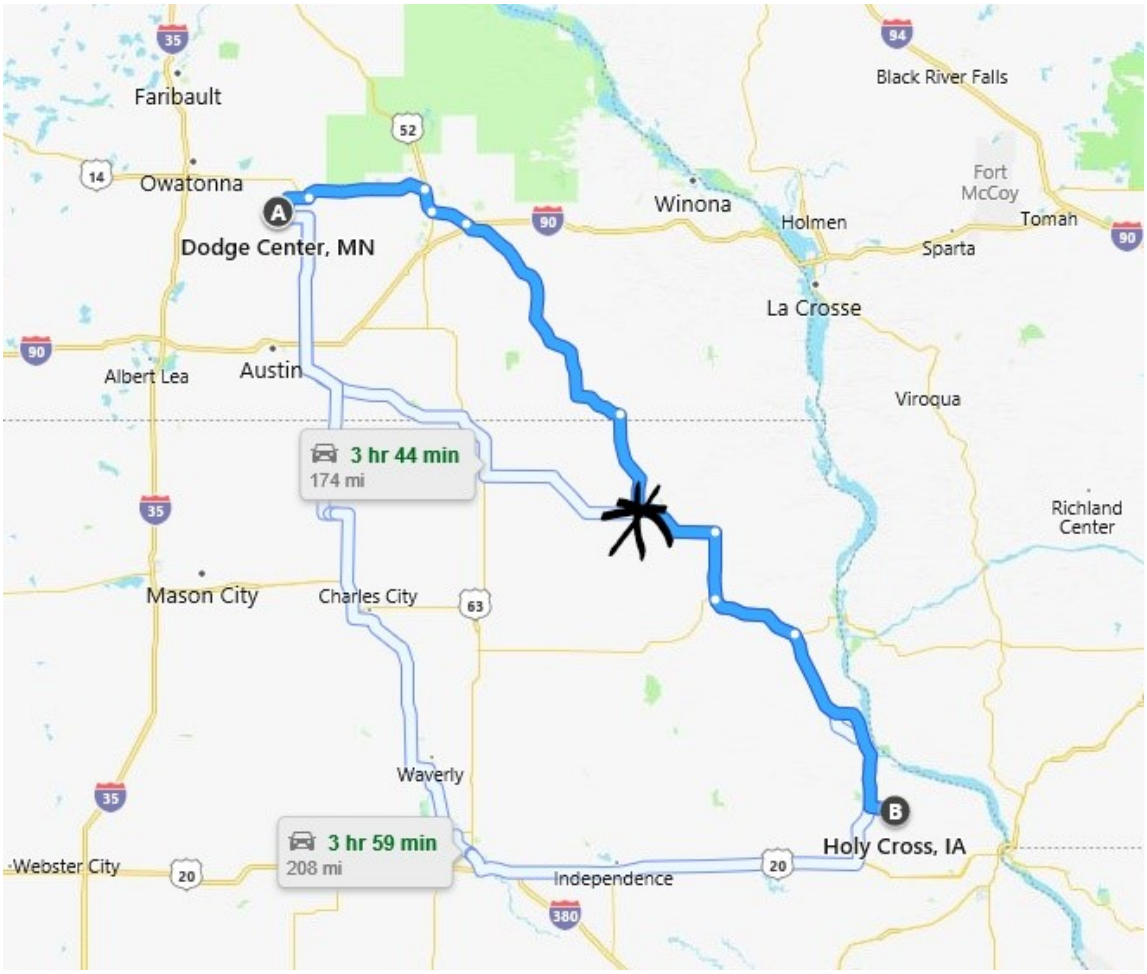


Figure 50: Route from Dodge Center, MN to Holy Cross, IA

This image shows the distance between Dodge Center, Minnesota and Holy Cross, Iowa. The highlighted route is the general route often taken by my family when visiting relatives along the Minnesota border. The black star in the center of the route indicates Decorah, and it gives a general idea of where the accident happened.

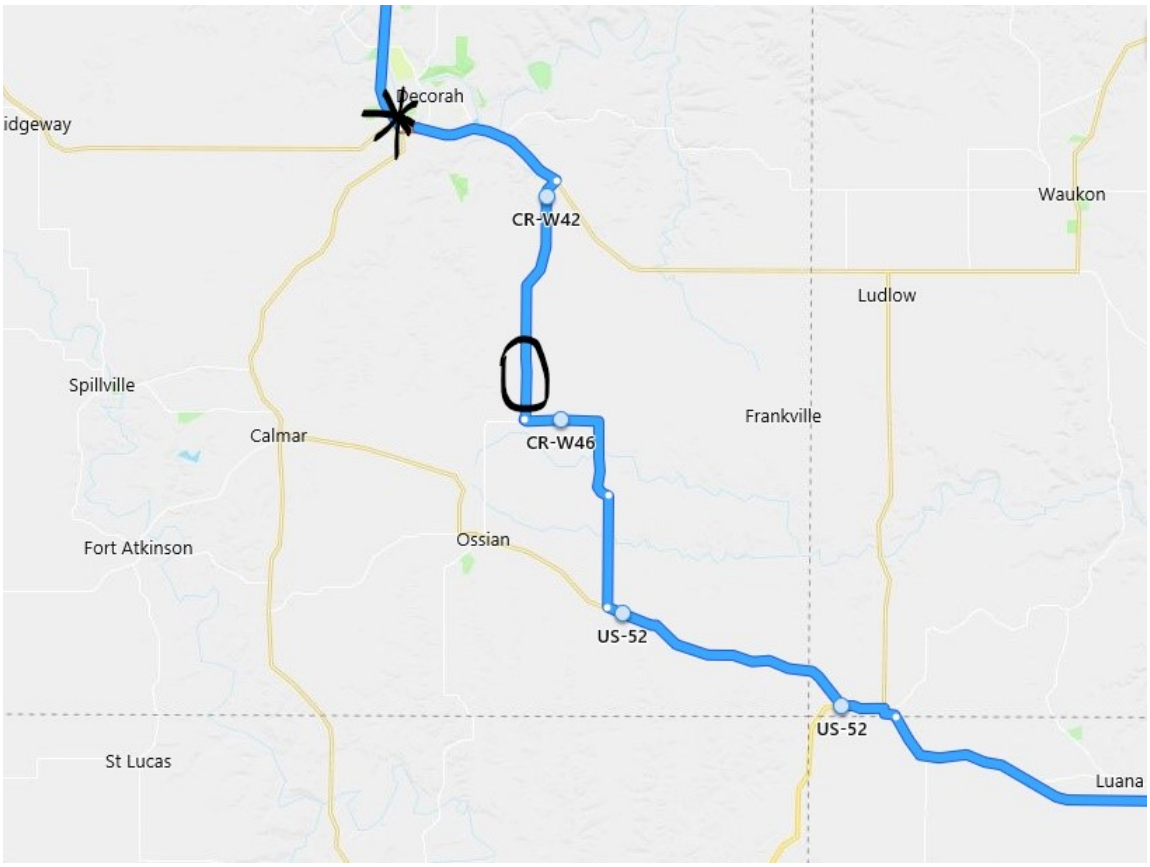


Figure 51: Location of the Accident

This map shows a close-up of the center of the route in Figure 32, as well as the backroads my family took between Decorah and the main highway, US-52, on the day of the accident. It was on one of these backroads, W42, where the accident occurred. You can see the general location circled in black. Once again, Decorah is starred in black on the map.

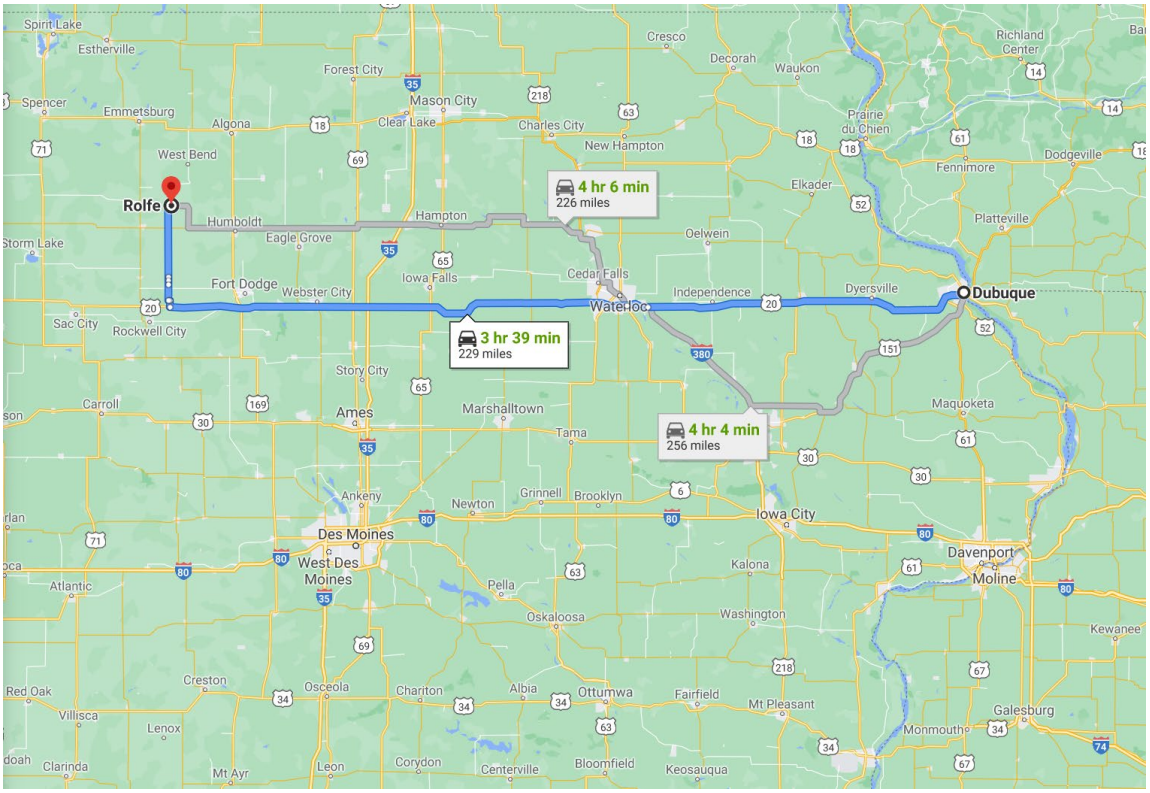


Figure 52: Route from Dubuque, IA to Rolfe, IA

Map showing route from Dubuque, IA to Rolfe, IA. It really is as boring as it looks. Once we left Dubuque, there were nothing but corn fields to the horizon for the next three-to-four hours.

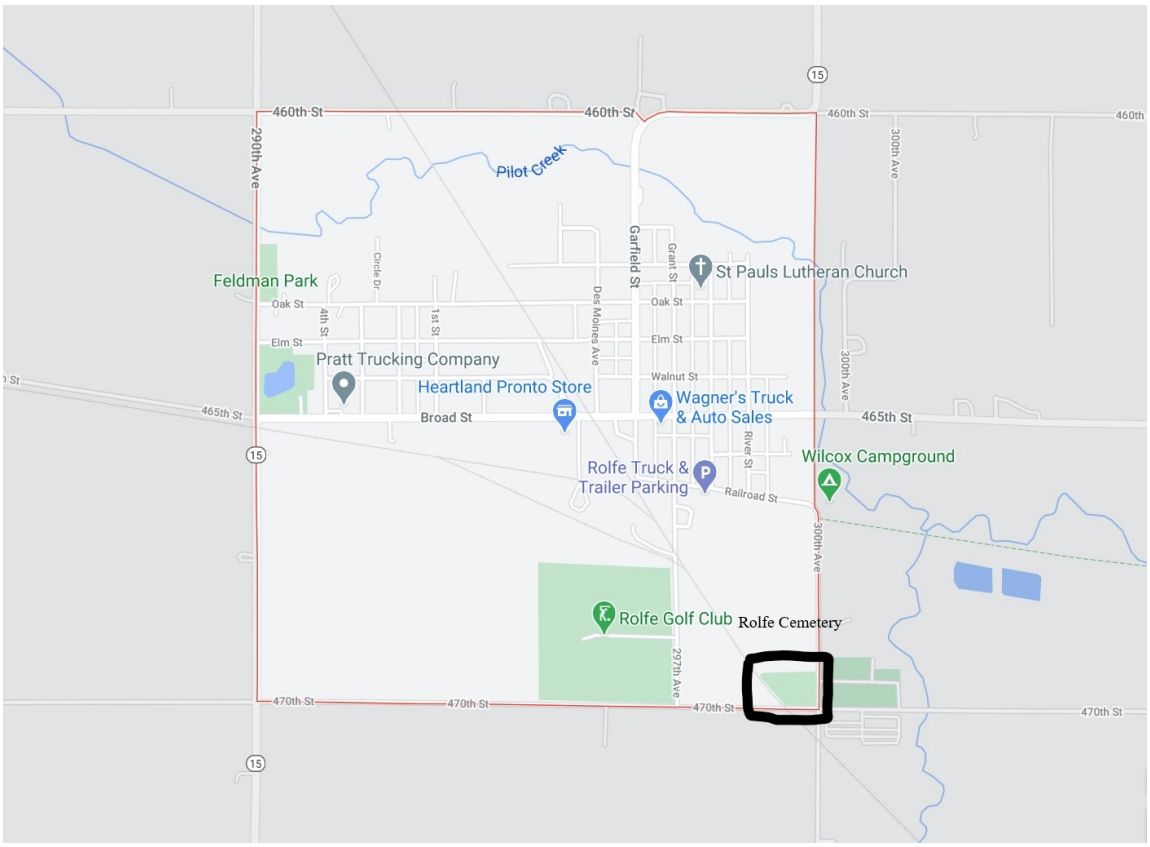


Figure 53: Map of Rolfe, IA

This image shows the entirety of Rolfe, Iowa. As of the 2010 census, the population was 528. Squared off in black is Rolfe's cemetery, where Garry and several other MacVeys are buried.

Appendix D: Garry Leo MacVey

Figure 54: Garry, 21, in Army uniform

This is the image hanging on a wall at home. This is most often how I imagine my grandfather when I think of him.

Figure 55: SP5 Rank Insignia

SP5 stands for Army Specialist-5. It was a rank that was dissolved by the Army in 1985, long after my grandfather retired from the Army. Today, it would be the equivalent of an Army Sergeant.

Figure 56: Doctor's Note

I never could figure out what to do with this image. I fell in love with it the very first time I saw it, despite the fact that it took me a while to figure out what I was seeing. This is an image Garry took aboard the ship he was on during the Vietnam War. He served as a pharmacist, and this is a picture of the very pharmacy he worked in.

As someone who is disabled, I immediately identified with the vast amount of medicine shown here. I call myself a walking pharmacy—people quickly learn to come to me if they need something: ibuprofen, acetaminophen, Tiger Balm, Excedrin, etc. My list of prescription medicines often gets raised eyebrows, even from healthcare staff.

I once wanted to be a doctor. Then, I wanted to be a veterinarian. But before all of that, I wanted to join the military. I cannot, of course, because of my disabilities, but I almost enlisted once, in high school, before my diagnoses came piling in.

Despite the poor lighting and the underexposed nature of the image, something here, something about it, continues to draw me in. This image was one of the most critical forces in forging my relationship with my grandfather. It was like a mirror or window had been cleaned, and I could see the connections and similarities between us that much more clearly. And though I was never able to figure out a way to integrate this image into the body of work for my thesis, I am happy that, at least in this way, I can share an important, personal aspect to my project.