

**2026 Elie Wiesel Competition**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place, Junior Poetry**

Charlotte McClellan, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Old Donation School, Lisa Kilczewski

*Grandma's Book*

Flipping through the pages

As the pictures of the past

illuminate my mind.

Thanksgiving night and Grandma sits me down

with three large binders, filled to the brim

with old photographs from decades ago.

The photos turn into visions of their lives.

Visions of their childhood. Their memories becoming mine too.

As my eyes consume every little detail, it's like I'm there with them.

My dad, uncles, aunts and grandparents when they were young.

They all look the same, just different.

Instead of my dad's salt and pepper hair, it's thicker and curly.

Each photo, each memory I am taken to them.

I'm taken to the dock once full of life and wonder, now rotting and dull.

The dock with acres of land that they played in.

The treehouse hidden deep in the woods,

hidden away from the rest of the world.

The glassy lake staring back at them as the sun lays down for the day.

"Boys! Dinner's ready!" she calls from a distance.

They race each other up the hill,

All three wanted the biggest meatball.

It was too late, Maggie had already gotten it.

She was reading books from the local library,  
the same books that now sit hopelessly  
waiting for someone to open but instead, collecting dust.  
Darby was in her own world, playing with dolls in her bedroom.  
She came skipping down the stairs with her favorite.  
The favorite doll stained from dirt and meals, lays lifelessly on the guest bed.  
The three boys come sprinting up the hill  
All tumbling over each other until she yells, "If y'all don't hush, you're staying outside,"  
They instantly stand up straight, still mumbling at each other.  
After grace, the boys and Darby guzzle down the pasta and meatballs  
Slurping the long noodles and licking their lips  
while Maggie and their parents sit tall and poised.  
Snap! Another picture.  
I'm lost in the book, not just looking at the pictures  
I can see the photos come to life and the stories unravel before my eyes.  
The book is like a time machine, taking me away to a new world.  
The scent of an old book,  
That specific smell whisks me away.  
Away to what they saw and how they lived.  
Another page turn and away I go.  
The treehouse hidden deep in the woods,  
hidden from the rest of the world.  
It was an escape from reality where they could live carefree.  
Even though the picture was old and grainy,  
I could see the individual swipes of red paint that covered their faces.  
It wasn't just the kids, they had their friends there too.  
All standing in front of the tall bright green trees next to the wooden treehouse,

Standing tall and newly built.

It was a sanctuary for their imagination, a place to play.

"I'll race you!" Angus declares as he and the other boys run off through the woods

"Not fair!" Darby shouts, "You got a head start"

The breeze catches their laughs,

And the ground absorbs their feet thumping against the dirt.

Grandma announces to everyone, "Come and pose while there is still light"

Everyone gathers around the wooden monument,

Click! Another picture, another memory made.

It was a different time, much different from now.

Once shining, now dull and faded.

But even now after all the years,

The lake stands still,

The treehouse is buried forgotten in the brush, and

All that's left is the photos that captured every waking moment of their lives.

But still even after all these years,

We carry on the memories, creating even more as we play where they once did.