

In the midst of hardship, one may find themselves hopeless and unable to harbor the strength to persevere. There is often a struggle of searching for a purpose to continue past the inevitability of loss, pain, and adversity. These pains grant us the ability to endure anything that tries to reduce our power. They enable us to build the resilience that is needed for the most severe situations in our lives. However, there are many admirable traits that we must practice when life tests us most. I am honored to have been in the presence of some of the strongest individuals in my life. A person I admire is Phineas Banning, for his spirit is ever-flowing in my community of Wilmington. Another person I greatly admire is my Nana. Though they have undergone their own unique grievances, both Phineas Banning and my Nana fought with inexhaustible strength, resilience, and much more to achieve everything they once believed was on the contrary.

Phineas Banning was a true man of assessing hard work to achieve anything he set his mind to. At a very early point in his life, Banning was already identifiable by his ambition as he walked miles on end from Wilmington, Delaware to work with his two older brothers in Philadelphia (Wikipedia. "Phineas Banning"). Though he originally worked in his brother's law office, Banning's passion was found in the harbor. When Banning was offered the opportunity to travel on a sail to California, Banning quickly took advantage of that open door to achieve his dreams (Kelly, Kate. "Phineas Banning, Father of the L.A. Harbor." *America Comes Alive!*). His determination to accept every opportunity and expertise in the port is a strong factor of his upcoming success.

In 1851, Banning began expanding harbors and docks in San Pedro as illegal exchange sites for mission contraband during the Spanish and Mexican eras. In the late 1850s, Banning and other SoCal investors purchased 640 acres of land adjacent to San Pedro for land expansion, which ultimately became the city of Wilmington. In 1859, the first ocean-going vessel anchored in Los

Angeles-Wilmington harbor and in the 1860s, a small-maritime trade between San Pedro became a reality as ships docked in the deeper parts of the harbor. In comparison to when Banning first landed in California, the Los Angeles-Wilmington area increasingly became abundant in harbor work and shipping (Wikipedia. "Phineas Banning").

In the wake of the Civil War, Banning donated a few plots of land in Wilmington for a military base. His generosity brought Union troops to Wilmington, further enriching Banning. For this, the American government presented Banning with the honorary title of Brigadier General of California (Kelly, Kate. "Phineas Banning, Father of the L.A. Harbor." *America Comes Alive!*). When Banning thought he had done enough for his community, he also organized the construction of SoCal's first railroad called the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad, which would later be sold to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1873. -As senator, Banning established a plan for a small railroad linking Wilmington/San Pedro to the rest of Los Angeles. However, the Southern Pacific Railroad was already launched and needed the railroad connector he worked hard to make reality. As he made decisions in the city's best interest, Banning complied and surrendered his plan (Wikipedia. "Phineas Banning").

My Nana was four years old when she endured the Japanese occupation in Guam from 1941-1944. Though she was young when the Japanese first infiltrated her land, what she remembered experiencing was horrific and something a child should never have to witness. One day, Nana was being looked after by her Uncle Goi while her grandmother ran errands. Though she lived in the capital city of Hagatna at the time, Goi wanted to return back home in Sinajana. While on their journey to Sinajana, she and Goi encountered a Japanese sentry station that required passerby to bow down to the Japanese guards at the checkpoint and show proof of a Japanese ID card. Noticing that no one was guarding the gate, Uncle Goi passed through without

doing either. However, stealthy guards called over the two back to the sentry station. As they approached them, the guards beat Goi until he had black eyes and bruises all over. Nana held back her tears in fear the guards would beat her too, but soon released her screams after the guards finally allowed them to continue their way home. This was the first encounter with the Japanese that traumatized Nana.

Nana and her family lived on a ranch where they raised chicken, hunted wild deer and pigs, and grew vegetables for food. One time, Japanese soldiers invaded their ranch and stole their food sources. Nana's parents allowed the men to take their food, fearing they would harm the children. Nana's father then built a hiding place in the jungle behind their ranch to avoid further invasions; however, the Japanese found a way to infiltrate the hiding place and steal more food during the night. At the wake of the Battle of Guam, Nana heard the bombs falling from war planes and saw them shooting at each other, not understanding that the Americans were at war with the Japanese for her island. One early morning, Nana's Uncle John warned the family to escape their city, in which they trekked through wooded areas, jungles, rivers and hills. At a certain point of her journey, Nana encountered dead Japanese laying in the way of their path, covering her face to avoid seeing and smelling the horrible sights. Finally arriving in Hagatna, American soldiers told Nana, her family, and other fugitives to encamp in a cemetery until further notice. The Americans had arrived in Guam to protect them.

During their stay, Nana heard the explosions of bombs and witnessed both Japanese and American planes get hit and go down. Her family would often hear reports about other family members, such when the Japanese beheaded Uncle John. This news made their dire situation feel much more real than it already did. Those four years that my Nana and her family fell victim to

is difficult to accept, but knowing that my grandmother lived a normal life after the battle ended and raised a beautiful family of five, is an honor to call my own.

Both Banning and Nana were faced with challenges that did not just require them to sacrifice much of themselves, but also called for them to exercise their strongest characteristics. Something in common between the two is that they were at a young age when life revealed itself to them: Banning left his home to pursue his dreams at age 13, and Nana felt the need to survive at age 4. These types of adversity must have forced the two to grow up faster than they ever anticipated, as they never experienced the calmness of childhood. Another similarity that Banning and Nana share is that they both were perseverant individuals. Banning sought to improve the city of Wilmington through means of trade and transportation. His ideas never went unnoticed and always became a reality for the sake of Wilmington, especially when nothing seemed to be in his favor. In spite of being faced with challenges, Banning found a way to work through it, and used it to prosper. As for Nana, she persevered past the terrors she endured by holding onto the importance of family. Though Nana was forced to experience great pain and fear at an early point in her life, she had the ability to continue on as she knew the path ahead of her was uncertain. In the same way as Banning, Nana never doubted herself when faced with hardship, but instead fought hard to overcome it. However, a trait that Banning exercised alone for was his ambition. Banning found his calling in addressing the needs of his community through their transportation needs, and his desire to do so is the reason our community is what it is today. In his multiple achievements, Banning led himself with ambition to invoke change within the Wilmington/Los Angeles area that ultimately addressed the needs of SoCal. A trait that Nana harbored that differed from Banning was her courageousness. Though Banning took countless risks for success, my Nana did not allow the realities of war and violence prevent her

from becoming the woman she is today. Despite the trauma and evil that plagued her island all those years ago, Nana never once faltered in fear.

Phineas Banning and my Nana were two people who have impacted and influenced my character more than I expected. Their endurance with the moving world around them differentiates themselves from the rest of the crowd, as they truly made their mark on the world and made history. Phineas Banning and Nana certainly were faced with different challenges and received different praises, but they both never allowed outside forces to reduce their ability to endure.