

## Joylife Yusuhara : 7. A link to the roots through my grandpa in Croatia

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This summer holiday I went to visit my grandfather in Croatia, a small European country. It was a trip that I did not plan on making. However, my father's enthusiasm for me to accompany him on his visit was too hard for me to turn down. During my time in Croatia I did a lot of things; I visited some common tourist spots, indulged in local cuisine and local wines, explored the nature and mingled with the locals.

I spent a lot of my time also talking to friends and family, learning about my family history and in return telling them about life in Japan. My family and friends were particularly impressed with the pictures and videos of Yusuhara. They found it interesting that Yusuhara and their home town share some similarities such as that they are both located in the mountains, both towns are reliant on farming, both towns are proud of their hunting and fishing and proudly celebrate their own history and tradition.

The main thing that I will remember my trip by however, is the time spent with my grandfather. He is 88 years old and still single headedly produces many varieties of vegetables and wine from the family land. The same land his own father worked on and his grandfather before him. I thought it imperative that I try and spend as much time as possible with him, to hear his



Grandfather's vineyards. They tell a story of my own roots.

stories and learn what I can. My grandfather quickly put me to work as I ended up helping with harvesting and tilling to make room for planting new crops.

This experience opened up within me a new link to the environment and to my own roots. By listening to my grandfather's stories, I learned that my ancestors sustained themselves from the very ground I was now digging and planting crops into. This gave me a profound sense of pride and belonging. Not everybody gets to experience such a thing in their life, so I am very grateful for this. There is something to be said about carrying on one's family tradition, business practice or pastime. My understanding is that this is a familiar concept in the Japanese culture.