

## 2017 CSCGP High School Teen Essay Contest

### **Cancer: The Destroyer of Families**

**By John William Smith V**

Cancer. Possibly the worst thing to have ever come to be on God's green earth. Cancer is caused by a multitude of factors, ranging from smoking, to just simply be around someone that smokes. It can even be hereditary, a common thing in your family. Cancer destroys families, and kills loved ones. Cancer is selfish, but it doesn't have a consciousness, it just kills. My great-grandfather, John William Smith Jr. passed away from cancer in the 80's when my dad was only 16 (He's the 4th, I'm the 5th). My grandfather (John III) who just recently passed away on March 19<sup>th</sup> smoked for his whole life. He never got cancer. He was one of the lucky ones. Just because you don't get cancer from the carcinogens of a cigarette, doesn't mean doing something like that doesn't harm you.

One of the worst days of my life was five years ago, on November 10, 2012. On this date, my Grandmom passed away. She wasn't actually my grandmother, but my grandfathers (who just recently passed away) girlfriend. We still considered them married (they were together for 30 years). We still called her Grandmom Irish. Just like my grandfather, she was an avid smoker, having done it for her whole life. Her and my grandfather owned a restaurant down in Atlantic City, called Irish's Grill Café. She had always wanted her own restaurant, so back in the early 2000's my grandfather and her opened it up. They serviced bus drivers, and us of course. She worked every single day, 365 days out of the year. She never quit, which was shown by her work ethic. Things became worrying when we heard she was diagnosed with Lung Cancer. Due to being diagnosed with cancer, she started Chemo therapy. My grandfather had to driver her to Philadelphia to get the treatment done. She told us she was getting better, relieving us of any anguish about her possibly passing away. During that time, my family and my aunt and uncle helped my grandfather move out of the restaurant. It was becoming too much for him with my grandmother being worse off every day.

It was Friday night, November 9th. I remember my dad telling me, that my grandfather was anxious on the phone; he wanted us to get down to his house quickly. He was scared. For months, my Grandmom had been on Hospice, hooked up to a machine giving her oxygen, and the required nutrients to stay alive. It was keeping her alive. She had always been skinny, but she was literally skin and bones at this point. It was scary. I remember seeing her, and talking to her for the last time that night, not knowing what would happen. I remember telling her one last time that I loved her. That night, I slept on the couch down stairs, and I remember hearing everyone up around 6 AM. I didn't know what was going on, and my younger brothers were telling me to get up. I had just found out my Grandmom had just passed away. I was told my

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grandfather got up in the middle of the night to check on her; at that point, she had already passed away around 3 AM. He yelled over the balcony down stairs to my Dad to get up. He didn't know what to do. All we could do was grieve and pray. We know she loved Jesus, so it was guaranteed she was up in Heaven. That comforted us.

That day my grandfather and her were meant to get married. They meant to do it years earlier, but life got in the way. When things got bad and her condition got worse, my grandfather knew he had to get going with it or else there would be a huge mess. Following her passing, later that day, my grandfather's brothers and sisters came over; my great-aunts and uncles. We grieved over her loss, but knew she was no longer suffering. We knew she was in a better place.

Cancer is evil on this earth. I hate cancer, and so should the rest of humanity. Cancer destroys families, and takes loved ones away. Some young children are only a few years old when they're diagnosed with a terminal illness. Any form of cancer is dangerous, even the most minor forms like Skin cancer. It is nothing to mess with. Remember, the next time you see someone significant in your life, tell them you love them. We should never take life for granted, as it is so short. We never know when our time is, but when it is, we will never be able to talk to that one person again. Live life to the fullest.