



2018 CSCGP High School Teen Essay Contest

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The Man I Wish I Met

Cancer is a devious devil, not the kid people write books about that pulls you in along the story and make you fall in love. Cancer buries itself deep in ones bones long before you can even find out its there. It is a killer, the second most cause of death in America in fact. But unlike a living killer, cancer doesn't stab you or shoot you and kill you instantaneously. It slowly sucks the life and joy out of every part of your body, not just yours but everyone around you who cares for you. Even people who come along after you've died, you're still deeply rooted into their lives even though they've never met you, they've heard story upon story about you. That is one of the worst types of loss, missing a man you've never met. As for me, that man is my grandfather. He had a hard life but yet was still an extraordinarily hard working man who had a undeserved death.

Charles Gruber "Charlie", a name that shifts through my family like a snake, always drifted over, unspoken about. My father has the same name but he will never live up to the life that my grandfather had. Charlie had a difficult life, moving out at thirteen and working on a farm till he hit seventeen. He worked in construction, plumbing and a few odds and ends jobs along the way. He was an extremely strong and caring man. Having 9 siblings his life was always full from the start, but he always seemed to have enough love to go around. His favorite

thing to do was go camping. At the age of 21 he married my grandmother Joan Gruber, five years later they had their first and only child, my father Charles Gruber Jr.

Gallbladder surgery is a decently easy surgery, something that happens on an almost daily basis for doctors. Charlie had his gallbladder removed by laser in 1995, which is less invasive than a regular surgery. Which is normally a good thing but ultimately lead to his demise. If his doctor would have opted for a regular operation instead of the laser they would have found the cancer and may have gotten it before it could kill him, or at least delayed the unavoidable. He had Non-Small Cell Metastatic cancer in his liver and his lung. They found this once he made an appointment for what he thought was pain from the operations. Once doctors performed multiple tests they found that Charlie's liver was so swollen from the cancer that it had swelled to the other side of his body and the cancer had made its way to his lungs. The cancer has become inoperable, spreading to his spine, to which he had ten rounds of radiation to relieve the pain from the cancer attacking his spinal bones. His first chemo treatment was cisplatin with VP16 that ended up putting the cancer in his lungs into remission in his lungs but not his liver. Chemo took about four hours for each round. On September of 1996 Charlie began taking an experimental drug named Taxol because his doctors had run out of options and really, they had run out of hope as well. He was given Taxol two or three times in September, October and December of 1996 and once in January of 1997. This experimental drug was just that, experimental, and once he began taking it his health declined dramatically and it did exactly the opposite of what it was supposed to do. Joan had spoken to his doctors about stopping that administrations of Taxol and they never denied it was making his condition worse, nor did they try to convince her to keep him on it. After the Taxol there was no more treatment done but he fought till the end. He didn't do hospice until a month before his death. He was given morphine

to dull the pain as much as they could, to keep him “comfortable” but how can you be comfortable when you’re dying. But he did have one form of comfort which was a Siberian husky named Nanok, who laid under the hospital bed that he had. When Nanok wasn’t eating, drinking or outside he was right there with Charlie. Two weeks before his death the hospice nurse told my grandmother she should tell him it was okay to pass. Early in the morning of March 23 1997, around three Joan gave Charlie his morphine and told him she loved him like she did every day. But on that particular morning she told him it was okay to go. After that she went to bed and was awoken around five for a unknown reason but she believes that was him taking his last breath. He is now buried in woodland cemetery where his wife will be lied next to him after his passing so they can eternally be together because there's no cancer to rip them apart again in the afterlife.

Cancer takes a toll even bigger than a just one person’s life, it takes the hopes and dreams of the people around it and even for generations after it. Charlie was a hardworking man with a hard life who didn’t deserve his fate. I don’t know what comes after death but I do believe he watches over me, like a guardian angel who probably shakes his head at just about every decision I make. But someday I will meet this man that I’ve always wished I had met.