



2019 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

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Champion

Cancer. It's one of the most feared diseases. You never want to go to the doctor's office for an ordinary checkup and be told that you have one of the worst sicknesses. But about 16 months ago we got the message from my mom mom that my grandfather had stage 4 metastatic cancer. I learned a thing or two throughout this war. One thing is to never give up hope and the second thing is to never doubt elderly people.

You always have that one thing on your mind. At least until something else comes. This was that something else. This was the thing that would change me and my family's life. I would listen to my mom talk about radiation and chemotherapy. I had heard of these things but I didn't completely understand what it meant. I would come home from school and look up metastatic lung cancer and what chemo was. I did research constantly but I never told my parents because I didn't want to worry them more. I realized how terrifying it was. I never knew the specifics of the disease. I knew it could take lives but I always thought radiation and chemotherapy was a cure. I thought that it would take cancer away. I didn't know that it was only a way to help it and couldn't get rid of it in an instant. I learned from my dad that because my grandfather's cancer was in his esophagus between his lungs and his heart the doctors couldn't do surgery. It could potentially kill him. I was terrified! I realized that cancer didn't just affect one person. It affected everyone in that family.

I think the only continuous thing in my life is pain and bad news. I've lost more people I've loved in my 13 years of roaming this earth than you can count. That's probably why I was so determined to do everything I possibly could to try and help. I was 11 years old at that time. I've heard about people having cancer on TV and some of my grandma's friends but never encountered anyone personally having it. I know I was young but I was going to everything I could do to make everything okay. I was determined. Just talking and laughing at my pop-pop's jokes seemed to help him. It

made him happy. Whenever our family got together we would just talk and laugh about the good times and my dad and uncle would talk about when they were kids. For a while, we forgot about everything. My family and I were trying to do everything to beat this battle even if it was just a small thing. We weren't ready to back down from this fight and neither was my pop-pop.

My pop-pop has always been a fighter. He's also always been stubborn as a bull. he would always say that he was fine and everything was okay even though it wasn't always the truth. He never acted any different than before. I remember the first Thanksgiving after he was diagnosed with cancer. He took a roll from the basket and handed it to me and said, "You're on a roll!" I know, it's probably the dumbest thing to remember but it was funny. It just shows how he didn't let cancer bring him down or change his life completely. The chemo made him tired all the time and he fell asleep a lot but then again he always fell asleep anyway. Despite all that he still woke up almost every day at 5 AM and went to the gym. He had to go on a diet though. Only on his birthday did he get something he really liked. That's when he was happiest. It made the rest of us happy too.

This whole time I just looked up to my grandfather. He didn't let anything get in his way. He still went to Vegas every summer and made jokes. He still went to the gym and carried on with his life. I, on the other hand, would be freaking out. I admired him for that. I don't want this to be another sob story because it's not supposed to be. It's a battle story. My pop-pop walked into battle with his head down low and nothing to protect himself. He walked out with his head held high and a smile too.