



**13th Annual Ben Strauss
High School Essay Contest 2026
Honorable Mention**

**Dorothy
Rubinow**

Dear Diary

Dear Diary,

Today is January 10th, 2023. Today, my parents sat Olin and me down. They told us that the doctors found colon cancer cells in my dad's leg, and that's why he's been having so much pain. I'm really scared, but Mom and Dad told us that the doctors would figure it out and that he would be okay. I'm trying to continue to remind myself that if he could beat it before I was born, he can beat it now. But it's hard not to imagine the worst. I can't picture life without him. I called all of my friends to tell them what happened. I'm grateful that I will have them to support me and help me keep my mind off the negatives.

Dear Diary,

It's June 12th, 2023. Today is the last day of school. Thank gosh middle school is over. Worst 3 years of my life. Entering this summer feels bittersweet. The family and I usually go to our Cape Cod house for a week, but we can't this year. We have to stay in town so Dad can continue to get his treatment. Dad grew up going there every summer, and I've been going there



every summer that I can remember, so it feels weird that this summer will be different. Hopefully, next summer we will get to go back. More worry has started to creep in. I think the doctors are still confused about how to treat him, and he doesn't seem to be getting better. Mom and Dad don't talk about it too much; I think they don't want me and Olin to be scared.

Dear Diary,

The date is September 20th, 2024. Dad still isn't better. He can't really move much at this point. I like that we can still watch Survivor together. It feels like our special little bond. This year, I made my school volleyball team. I'm super excited. I hope Dad gets to come see me play, but Mom told me not to get my hopes up since his mobility is so limited. One of my friend's dads is also facing cancer, but today she told me that he's cancer free now. I feel so, so happy for her and her family. But I also feel a deep amount of jealousy. Why can't my dad get better, too, and why isn't the treatment working for him? I feel frustrated; nevertheless, I am trying to stay positive.

Hey diary,

It's Thanksgiving of 2024, but it's hard for me to feel thankful today. We spent today in the hospital instead of with the rest of my family. Dad had a seizure a couple of days ago, and he's not at the point where he can come home yet. I hate the hospital; the smell and the vibes make me anxious. Right before we were going to go home for the night, Mom and Dad sat me and Olin down again. They said that the doctors had told them that at this point it was extremely unlikely that he would get better, that cancer was going to take his life. It's kind of hard to look at him. I feel like he is unrecognizable, and it breaks my heart knowing that soon I won't be able to look at him at all.

Dear God,

I'm not quite sure why I'm writing to you. I've never been religious, and I'm not even sure I believe that you exist. But lots of people have been saying that they have been praying for my Dad and me, so I guess I will try. I am praying for a miracle. I know what the doctors said, but there are medical miracles all the time, so I beg you, please let my family be one of those. I



promise my dad is an amazing person. He is caring, smart, and thoughtful. I know that he deserves to live. He is only 60, and I want to believe that he has so much left in him. I pray that he lives to walk me down the aisle at my wedding and meets his grandkids. Please, god, if you're there, let him hold on.

Dear Diary,

It's February 18th, 2025- my 16th birthday. Mom got me a cheesecake: my favorite. It was just her and me at the dinner table tonight. It felt empty. I know that I am supposed to be happy and excited today, but I can't help but feel hopeless. Will all my future birthdays be this difficult? I hate celebrating without Dad.