



## PAULO FARQUI

### MARILYN YETSO MEMORIAL AWARD RECIPIENT

*Essay Question: "Create a message of hope - in the form of an essay, poem or short story - to a young adult with cancer or impacted by cancer through a parent's diagnosis or death."*

"It is when we are faced with moments of adversity that we really discover our inner-selves." I still remember this quotation vividly; it was the essay topic for my first writing assignment in ninth grade. We were to connect the designated notion to Homer Hickam's riveting memoir, *October Sky*, a bestselling remembrance that described, in memorable detail, a group of boys who overcame enormous obstacles to fulfill their dreams. Although the assigned thesis was based on a heralded literary piece, I realized that I too had been faced with challenged that ultimately defined my persona-or so I believed. In the spring of my eighth grade year, I had just been assigned a very important role in my school's production of *The Music Man*; it was almost unheard of for an eighth grader to be given a prominent character in a musical that was supposed to cast solely ninth graders. While some would not consider this a difficult situation, to a thirteen year old, unaccustomed to being singled out by his peers, it qualified as adversity. However, I was soon to learn a lot more about true adversity and in the process, discover a great deal more about how to handle it.

For much of the previous year, my father had been recurrently complaining about specific pains he had been having in his right leg. Fatigue persistently overcame him; his stamina seemed depleted even on "good days." As a businessman who normally had to fly across half the world for meetings, my father found that he was unable to continue to maintain such a strenuous lifestyle.

After a series of tests, the doctors determined that prostate cancer had spread to my father's left femur. For awhile, I did not know what exactly the situation was until my mother broke the news to me and my sister in the hospital's lobby. As my sister began to cry profusely, I stood there, paralyzed in shock, not willing to admit to myself the numbing information that had just been delivered by my worried mother. My father's doctor informed him that a life expectancy of a few months was in the cards; according to the medical team, my dad had perhaps a year left at the most.

Here we were thousands of miles away from our other family members in Brazil, and because we had moved around so much, we felt as if we did not have any close family friends in the United States as the time. As I heard the harrowing words from my mother, I simply could not imagine life without my "Pai." Nevertheless, despite the anguish and worry, I kept up an optimistic, affable front. In my mind, my faith in God and His will enabled us to carry on somehow. Not long after we were informed of the seriousness of the situation, my father was put on the strongest medicine possible in order to combat the cancer that was spreading inside his weakened body.

In the end, Pai's recovery was truly a miracle. As his doctor has repeatedly told my father, "Edson, you are *my miracle*." It has been almost five years since that stark day in the lobby of the local hospital. Thanksgiving, Father's Day, Christmas, and New Year's Day all mean much more to me now as a result of my father's recovery.

My father's perseverance and grit were emphatically on display in the rehabilitation center, a tenacity that enabled him to will his way to health because of the love he felt for both life and his family. When it was apparent that he had turned the corner of his illness, I decided that I

wanted to do the same thing my father's doctor did to him- make miracles. I had long contemplated becoming a physician; when Pai's doctor gave him a stable bill of health, I realized that I would like to become a doctor who possessed the same skills and bedside manner as the physician who so capably treated my father.

Accordingly, I have been an active junior volunteer at Stamford's Hospital, accumulating more than 100 hours in service. It has been a great way to give back to the medical community, particularly one that gave so much to my father. Two summers ago, I attended the National Youth Leadership Forum on Medicine hosted at Georgetown University and was also fortunate enough to take a course in Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The ten-day forum in Georgetown gave me a behind-the-scenes look on what it is like to be a physician. The one-week course at Cornell, Career Explorations in the Life Sciences, presented me with the opportunity to explore an impressive array of courses related to the realm of medicine and scientific research.

I learned from my father's experience that determination is the key to success. Overcoming adverse situations is something inevitable in my future. However, I am headstrong with my career goals, and I am looking forward to expanding my education at Johns Hopkins University. I hope that this message can serve as an inspiration to young adults whose parents have had to deal with cancer.