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Keep the Memories

“God gave us memories so that we might have roses in December.”

-James M. Barrie

It took me by surprise as I answered the phone with my mother crying telling me that my grandpa had been diagnosed with cancer-colon cancer to be exact. I tried to make words come to my mouth, but what could I possibly say? “Okay mom, is he in the hospital?” That was a day in which I remember, but wish I could forget it.

Yes honey, get your sister ready and we’ll go there as fast as we can.” She sounded strangely calm.

To tell you the truth...I was afraid. To tell you the truth I was terrified, as terrified as a child lost in the woods. My grandpa and I were *peanut butter and jelly* and I’ve never thought of him as *just* my grandpa; he was my friend. *But there was no reason to worry, right?* The ever so lingering thoughts flowed in my head as clouds in the sky.

We arrived at the hospital and chill bumps ran down my spine as I tried to remain calm and think of how I was going to greet my grandpa when I walked into the hospital room. My grandpa, Bruce Allen Hawk, was lying in the hospital bed at SOMC where my grandmother worked as a nurse. As I greeted him with a warm smile he said “Hey you hammerhead!”-I will never, ever forget that phrase that he told me every time I saw him. It was like our way of telling each other “hey”, or “how ya’ doing?” I’m not sure where he got the name hammerhead, but I will surely never forget the years hearing that comforting phrase.

He was able to go home to be with my paca (who was my grandma re-named by my little sister when she was about five). He also had treatments regularly. Those were the days in which I remember the most because those were the days when I would pray very hard that he was able to receive his chemotherapy. You see, he also was a diabetic and sometimes he didn’t have enough white blood cells to receive his treatment, so I prayed he had enough of those in order so he could be on his way to fight his cancer. He was gradually getting worse and I found myself getting worse and feeling more and more helpless; as helpless as a shepherd trying to find his lost sheep.

He’s suffering. I thought to myself. My family is suffering. Most of all, I’m suffering the pain of not being able to do anything about his cancer besides praying my heart out for him. I remember thinking to myself every single day, why doesn’t God just take away his cancer, but I knew that everything happens for a reason and God is in control. He had a plan for my grandpa and I believed in him.

As the years went by, he remained calm about the situation and showed no emotion towards us about the cancer. I can’t imagine the pain he felt or the thoughts running through his head, but he truly loved his family and that’s why I’m sure he didn’t want to burden us. His love towards me and our family was truly one of my fondest memories, as well.

Then it happened...he was enduring his final days of life on earth. My grandmother called us to my grandparent’s house because he had something he wanted to tell all of us. It was like gathering for Christmas or Easter. Only it wasn’t for an event like that, it was us meeting together to listen to our grandpa say what he wanted to tell us. We entered the bedroom, trying not to cry. He stood up from the bed and asked us to gather around him. *Could it be?* A man that hasn’t been a Christian, but was recently

baptized and went to church every Sunday that we felt up to it, going to say a prayer? What happened next changed my perspective on life, forever.

He held all of our hands, bowed his head, and said the most spirit filled, love filled, moving prayer I've ever heard in my whole life. I held his hand after he was finished and he gave me a wink. *Trust me.* I was thinking of my grandpa saying to me in my head. I left the room and went outside looking into the sky asking God for a sign that it's okay, it's going to be okay. Just then I saw a shooting star and I knew, no matter what, he was going to a better place; if not now, soon. Could *you* imagine the emotion that shot my body? It was incredible.

Two mornings later I was dreaming about him as I heard a voice telling me to wake up. It was my dad. His voice sounded like something wasn't right. "Hey Jonny, I've got some bad news buddy..." I already knew, and I'm sure you know, too. *That* memory will never be forgotten or replaced, for it changed my life forever.

My law of life is to keep the memories and hold onto them forever, so that you can reflect on the good times you have spent with loved ones. I still remember all of the good things my grandpa and I did together. Sometimes I might think of the bad things that came along with my grandpa's cancer, but I always think of the good things that came from it. The quote "God gave us memories so that we might have roses in December"-makes sense to me now. It means: Remember the good things that have happened so you will always have that sweet smell of a flower, even when you are faced with cold weather and hard times. You can always reflect on your memories for inspiration, the will to go on, and the happiness of life that is sometimes covered up.

I still remember my favorite phrase by my grandpa, and friend, "Hey you hammerhead!"-Bruce Allen Hawk.