

Hi, my name is Chelsea Tepel. About a year and a half ago my dad died from Metastatic Melanoma. Metastatic Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that spreads throughout the body. I remember the exact day. It was January 20, 2009, the day Barak Obama became inaugurated. While most people remember that day as a big happy event in history, I remember it as the last day I ever saw my dad.

My dad was diagnosed with Stage III Melanoma in 2004. At the time I was only 7 years old so I don't remember much. He was treated though. He had surgery, chemo, and radiation. After that he was fine. He was living his life like any other person by going to work, playing sports with me and my siblings, and just being the great father he always was; until June of 2008 when he started to get sick again and this time it grew to Stage IV and became metastatic. He gradually got worse and worse. He would be good some days and bad other days. Sometimes he would be up for anything and other times he just didn't have enough strength to even get out of bed. He still went to work every day though and he still helped us with whatever we needed. Besides being the perfect father, people also thought of him as a great coach, brother and for my mom an excellent husband.

It was winter break of 2008 and everyone was off from school. My family and I were all sitting around just talking and enjoying family time. That was when my parents told my siblings and me that my dad only had a couple of months to live. Of course we all burst into tears but then we spent the rest of the night just being together. The next couple of weeks we would always be with my dad. We would stay up late holding our hands together and he would tell all of us that he loved us and cared for us. He told my sisters and me that we were so beautiful. He told my brother how handsome he was. He told me that he loved my mom so much. He told us all that we were the best thing that ever happened to him. I didn't understand why he had to die so young at age 55 and honestly I still don't. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why couldn't they find a cure in time? And I especially thought why did this have to happen to me and my family? I still don't understand and I guess I never will. No one really knows how life works; it's full of surprises, good and bad. My dad said he lived a good full life and there's nothing that he regretted. But I still feel that he shouldn't have had to die like this. If there is any good that came out of this it is that my family is now closer than ever. We're so strong together and we're always there for each other and nothing can stop us. Sure we get in fights, as do most families, but we always make up in the end because my dad wouldn't have wanted us fighting.

I have so many memories and stories to share about my dad. I remember every day he would come home from work and I would run up to him and give him the biggest tightest

hug I could. Also, basketball was a big part of his life. He was a coach to all of us. Besides just teaching me basketball, he taught me most of the things I know today. His favorite thing to help me study was for spelling tests, we would sit down and he would help me remember tricks for each word, which I still use today. I also remember his favorite car, his station wagon. Everyone loved that car even though it was beat up and the inside roof was coming off. He always used to blame the orangutans at Great Adventure for doing this and he even tried to fix it by stapling it. Another memory I will always think about is whether it was my mom's birthday, their anniversary, or Mother's day he always got her the same present. The Beautiful perfume set. We always knew he was getting it and she suspected it. But that was what we loved about him, he was always about tradition. One thing that was very special between me and my dad was the way he would spend time with me before I would go to sleep. He made up a game we would play that I will never forget called imaginary Pictionary. We would lie in his bed and we would draw in the air with our fingers but he wasn't the greatest drawer. And then he would tell me the "Three Little Bears", that being the only story he knew. Also he would sing "Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You" by Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. It was his favorite song. Another thing I always liked was that I am the only one in my family that looked just like him. People would say I don't look like my mom or my sisters, and I would tell them that's okay because I look like my daddy. There are tons of stories I could tell but he has a special relationship with everyone in my family. I don't think I could have asked for a better father.

The reason that I am asking for donations for research is because my bat mitzvah is coming up on November 27, 2010, I have to do a mitzvah project. What that means is I need to do a good deed to help someone or to help my community. I immediately thought of melanoma. I hope by helping to raise money for research that eventually someday there will be a cure for melanoma and all types of cancer. No one, not even the worst people, deserve to have cancer. Although I never really knew what my dad was going through, I could tell he was in pain. We didn't want him to think it was his fault although it definitely wasn't. It's a part of life that no one may ever understand. But we need to keep fighting and to try to find a cure. Please help me to raise money, not just for me and my family, but for all the families or people struggling with this disease.

In school we had to write a poem about something close to our hearts. I wrote a poem about my dad.

Why?

Every day he was there

He helped me with my homework

And brushed my long curly hair

The day came

I found out he was sick

I cried and cried

But it couldn't fix

What was done?

He only had a couple months to live

I whined and whined and stayed with him

It wasn't fair, why him?

As days went on

He got more thin

But I still had hope that he could live

My family and I watched him lie

Until the day came that he died

It was hard, definitely not easy

The wind blew in my house

And it was breezy

We didn't care

We were sad

I'll love you forever and always dad.

Now it is 2010 and my bat mitzvah is coming up. I've been thinking about him a lot lately. The thought of him not being there just makes me want to cry. I sometimes think I'm the only girl who won't get to do a father -daughter dance at their bat mitzvah or wedding or for whatever reason. However, I know he will always be in my heart! I hope you will help my cause so that no other daughter has to miss dancing with her dad at her Bat Mitzvah!