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10/29/25

I wish I could say this was my favorite and best year but I would be lying. This doesn't mean I'm any less thankful. I believe that life is something that shouldn't be taken for granted. You never know when your time will come.

Towards the beginning of this year I enjoyed going to work and even asked to work more days. I was thrilled everytime I got to see my favorite manager. We would get our work done with smiles on our faces and laugh at everything. He would give me advice whenever I needed it. I looked at him as not only my favorite manager but as a second dad.

Around May he started to smile less and became sick more frequently. He tried to hide it but I saw through him. He was different. The last day I saw him was strange. You never expect to see someone for the last time. Before he left, he gave me a big smile and a fist bump. The next day, I went to work. The owner pulled me to the side and informed me that my manager was diagnosed with cancer and will be taking a break from working. It broke my heart that he had cancer and that I wouldn't see him for a long time, but I was happy that he had time to rest and take a break from working so hard.

A month or two later, I heard that he was doing a lot better, but all good things come to an end. He started to get worse, constantly going in and out of the hospital. One weekend, towards the end of September was invited to go upstate with a friend of mine. The day before I left, one of my other managers told me, "He was getting worse." I knew what he was trying to tell me, but I didn't want to believe it. I knew I had to go visit him when I came back.

On the car ride upstate, I got the message I dreaded. I wish I could say I didn't expect it, but I did. He was gone, and I never got to say goodbye. It broke my heart. It was my first time experiencing grief, and it was hard. When I saw him in the open casket, I broke. He didn't look like him. They plastered a fake smile on his face, but I knew it wasn't real because every time he smiled, it was a big smile with all his teeth showing. He was sickly, skinny, and pale.

I will forever cherish every moment we had together. I'm thankful that it taught me to never take anyone or anything for granted because everything comes to an end at some point. At work, I put his prayer card and pictures of him to honor him. He was an amazing man, and I'm so honored I met him and was able to call him a friend.

