

High School Essay Honorable Mention

Movie Night: Memoir

By Hannah Stearns, Thomas S. Wootton High School

"I'll drop you guys off and then park, OK?" Mom said as she pulled over and turned on her hazards.

"K," I said and opened the door and slid out. I walked around to the passenger door and opened it. I pulled out Dad's walker and unfolded it. He maneuvered himself out of the car, shaky and uneven.

"Han, will you do me a favor," Mom handed me her phone, "and get the tickets off my phone?" Dad, Mom, Mollie and I were at the movie theater to see *RocketMan*.

"Sure." I began tinkering with her phone, opening the Regal Theater app and signing in. Dad walked, heavy-footed and weak-legged, toward the end of the sidewalk, where the curb dips into a ramp.

I heard him yell, thinly, "Ahh... Ahh."

"No!" The scream erupted out of me so loud as I watched him fall back in what seemed like slow motion. I had never run so fast. My mind disconnected from my body and my legs started moving away from the car and toward his falling body. My entire body felt like it was filling up with water that began pouring out through my eyes. I blinked fast to use my eyelids as windshield wipers in an attempt to see through my tears. I saw his neck stiffen to keep his head from hitting the pavement.

Mom got out of the car, leaving her door open behind her, the way people do after a car accident in the movies.

"Did he hit his head?" she asked while catching her breath from the run.

"No, no, no," I said, reassuring her. "I saw him; he didn't hit his head." My tears began to pick up again. The question of *When would he fall?* and *Is this the beginning of the end?* were now answered, *now* and *yes*. At that moment, he transformed from "Dad" to "Sick Dad."

I helped him up slowly and gently, giving him time to regain his balance. I watched his mannerisms extra carefully to make sure he was not hiding any pain.

"I love you." As the words came out of my mouth, I could feel my heart shattering.

"I love you too," Dad said as we walked into the movie theater together.