

Making the day count

I met John Petrovick at a backyard barbecue in May of last year. Five minutes after we met, he flashed a bright, genuine smile and asked me if I wanted a cheeseburger. Of course I replied with a resounding “yes please!” and promptly devoured it.

I was so intrigued with this cool new person in my life, that I hadn’t even noticed, as a close friend pointed out later, that John had a scar on his head from surgery after having a brain tumor removed. He was just 27 at the time. I remember thinking “Wow, that’s a lot to go through at such a young age. I’m glad he is doing well and happy now though.”

Barely one month later, John was out running and had a seizure. A new tumor had taken residence in his brain.

Right from the start, John had a positive outlook.

This is part of an entry from a blog he wrote in June 2011:

“But what I will say is that I am convinced I will come through this fine and for anyone who has ever had an argument or a conversation with me you know that once I am convinced of something I won’t be talked out of it. I don’t plan on starting now!”

Sadly, despite this great attitude and the tremendous support of family and so many friends, John lost his battle with cancer this Saturday. He died in the early morning hours of April 28, at the age of 28.

My heart broke for his family and for all of his close friends who had loved him and cheered him on throughout.

It’s so hard to imagine that just six months ago, he was running the Baltimore half-marathon, beside his doctor and friends.

Life is unfair and it can be cruel.

As I sat in church this weekend, praying for John’s family and friends, I thought

about what you are supposed to take away from something like this.

Things don't always work out the way we think. I appreciated John's blog because it was so filled with honesty and emotion, about what it has been like to go through chemotherapy, radiation, a clinical trial, severe headaches, losing the ability to walk, then regaining the ability to walk. It spoke about anger and fear, pain and humility - about how he didn't necessarily want to be anyone's hero or inspiration ... he simply wanted to live.

As I watched the 10 beaming children preparing to receive their First Communion at St. Casimir, I thought about the fact that right now, I have what John so desperately wanted and for which he fought so valiantly. I have good health and the chance to live. I don't know why I have this opportunity and someone as wonderful as John had it taken from him.

As I watched Conventual Franciscan Father Dennis Grumsey tell the children what an important day this is for them, and as they renewed their baptismal promises, I found myself making a promise of my own.

I have decided that every single day, I will do one really good thing. I will probably end up doing a lot of crappy things too, but just as valiantly as John tried to live, I will try to do an act of good or kindness each day.

This will be my tribute to John and a reminder to myself of how short our life here on earth is and how important it is to truly live, to truly enjoy it and to truly make the most of it. I'm glad you're free from pain, John. Rest in peace.

To learn more about John Petrovick, visit:

<https://doctorqmd.com/john-petrovick/>

