

## **Father's Day: Remembering my dad's fight for my life**

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My father and I are nothing alike. As my sister explains, he's a "red personality." He's hardworking, strives to be the best and leads with a streak of stubbornness.

I, on the other hand, was diagnosed as being "blue": modest, honest, constantly seeking acceptance and always trying to keep things simple.

So when people ask why I do certain things, like taking a physically demanding job at Amazon as a seasonal associate for instance, I struggle to give a straight answer. Perhaps I want to prove I am physically capable. Or maybe I want to show that I'm just as hardworking and stubborn as my old man. Those answers would suffice, but they never roll off of the tongue quite as easily.

The truth is, my dreams and ambitions come from feeling like I'm living on borrowed time—a short lease that was extended thanks to my father's strong character.

I sometimes hear my dad tell family, friends and guests about the multitude of problems that accompanied the premature birth of his first son.

### **On Father's Day, I remember how he fought for me**

A few days following my birth in a small hospital in Matagalpa, Nicaragua—a town two hours north of the capital, Managua—the doctors told my parents that, if I were to have any chance of making it, I needed an immediate blood transfusion.

Knowing his son was too weak to fight off potential infections, my dad acted fast. He jumped on his Honda motorcycle and sped through town asking everyone he knew if they shared my blood type.

"I was so desperate that I asked friends, family and even strangers," my dad recalls. When his father (my grandfather) got wind of his son's desperate search, he realized he was a match.

Thanks to those two, I lived to fight another day. But in true red personality bravado, my old man's tales of my troubling first days don't end there.

Just a few days after the frantic search for a blood transfusion, another complication arose. I needed to take a particular medicine, and with the neonatologist gone for a weekend vacation, the nurses had no idea what to do.

My father once again refused to take no for an answer. Living in a small town where everyone practically knew everyone, he once again jumped on his bike, this time racing to the doctor's home.

"I know it's your day off, but my son needs you," he told the doctor.

Surprised by my dad's persistence, the doctor acquiesced. "I'll be right there."

Once at the hospital, he told the nurses to call him if I needed any more attention and to do "whatever Luis Sr. needed."

That's my old man stepping up to the plate.

I'm glad I didn't let him down. Had I refused the medicine, there would be very little hope for my survival, but as everyone remembers, I took that thing like a champ.

Looking at his grandson drink the medical serum, my grandfather smiled and said, "Indio que come, no muere." In other words, "He who eats does not die."

The details of my birth change a little every time the stories are retold at birthdays, dinner tables and coffee conversations.

It sometimes sounds like fiction, but one thing is clear: My dad fought, unconditionally, the battles I couldn't.

I'm fortunate. I don't have to look too far for a role model or a hero.

### **Lessons from my father**

I'd like to think that my father's tireless pursuit to make sure I had a fighting chance had something to do with me taking the medicinal serum. Perhaps it was the first lesson I learned from him. Things aren't always easy. Sometimes we have to get on a motorcycle and knock on doors.

Needless to say, I loved that Honda. Years later, when my dad would pick me up from school, he would bring it. Better than any amusement park attraction, the road home going up and down the hills of Matagalpa were like nothing I had ever experienced.

You know the excitement you get when you reach the top of a roller coaster just before the plunge? That's how it felt being on my dad's bike—except it was better. I felt safe. I knew nothing could harm me. I was with my old man. With every hill we ascended and descended, I felt invincible. I wanted to shout, "Move out of the way world! I'm here with my dad."

I took a ride on a jet ski recently. Hauling ass on that thing brought some flashbacks. Looking at the shoreline after a few crazy runs, I smiled. We may have different ways of doing things, but I suspect my father and I are more alike than we think. We don't take no for an answer, and we fight.