

October is the anniversary of PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine, as we launched at the PMA convention in San Francisco in 1985. That was over 20 years ago, and in that first October and every October since, we've tried to set aside this one page to thank those who have made what we have become possible.

We thank, as we should, our staff and our customers; we thank our vendors and, especially our readers, without whom nothing else is possible. We thank our families for supporting us and I've managed, over the years, to get a few plugs in for Mom and Dad.

It was always natural to speak of my father; after all, he introduced me to the produce trade.

This year, I would like to dedicate this page to my father, Michael Prevor, both because in ways many and varied, there would be no PRODUCE BUSINESS without him and because I am indescribably happy that he is sitting now, in the house I grew up in, reading these words.

It almost wasn't so.

I wonder how many reading this page have felt the knot in your gut when you get the phone call that your father has months, not years to live?

He was feeling fine, just a normal checkup, but his white blood cells were low. The blood test was repeated, then a bone marrow biopsy and the news was very bad.

He had myelodysplastic syndrome, a kind of cancer of the bone marrow, and it was moving fast. In less than two months, it would become Acute Myelogenous Leukemia.

My parents were shell-shocked and my father did something I never remember this proud man, this man who had always helped us, ever doing... he asked his children for help.

So my brother Barry, my sister Cheryl and I, along with many other family members and friends, leapt into action. We read everything we could, spoke to everyone we knew and to many perfect strangers and tried to figure out what could be done and where it could be done.

It sounds easy but it isn't, especially when all the sudden your life is lived in the echo of a clock ticking, and you know that every delay, every unreturned phone call, every dead end explored could be fatal.

I don't remember how many thousands of pages we read. I know we spoke to doctors in four countries and countless states.

It was my birthday, and as we had many times before, my parents, wife, closest friends and I were having a celebratory dinner at a restaurant. But this was a little different. For the next morning, we would fly on a private jet provided by an angel, who we call a friend, to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX.

Don't think it is easy to get appointments at these places, certainly not before you die of the illness you're calling about. I found the greatest expert in the world for what we needed, and I wrote him a letter. I told him that over a half century ago, my father danced with my mother at her Sweet Sixteen, and the music was still playing. It had played through births and deaths, through weddings and business launches, and I pleaded: that the music of this life, that this vibrant man, this husband, this father, this grandfather had to continue.

And a secretary called me back. She told me it was the most beautiful letter she had ever read in her entire life, she was going to get the chairman of the

department to call me, and she did.

It was the first of many letters written to advocate for my father, to secure doctors' appointments, to push for better care, to fight against the human norm: the acceptance of mediocrity. At one point, they pulled me into a meeting to tell me they weren't used to my "New York aggressiveness" down in Texas. My family gave me high fives when they heard.

I flew with my parents to Houston and basically lived there until we were able to get all the clearances done, until my father's identical twin brother Sydney could fly in from Puerto Rico and, wracked with pain from arthritis, produce stem cells, lifesaving stem cells, for donation to my father.

My father would be bombarded with chemotherapy to destroy every single cell in his immune system. For a time he would be as vulnerable as a man could be with nothing to protect him against infection; then the transplant would be done.

There were many bumps along the way, a rehospitalization, physical therapy, many drugs, and it takes a full year before you can take your baby immunizations again.

But we now have had four bone marrow biopsies, and all are clean. The genetic study finds no trace of the original problem. Life provides no guarantees, but success was as great as we could have ever hoped for.

I've had many teachers in my life, yet I never learned more from any of them than I did from sharing a dinner table with my father. And through this situation I find myself learning from his example still.

He is 70 years old now, yet he has the most open mind. In the produce business, it is why he was importing and exporting, took his company public, all when these things were mysterious or unheard of.

It is why his children have had his unfailing support on every idea they ever came up with.

And it is that same openness of mind and spirit that led him to accept the idea of traveling halfway across the country to a city he had never been to, because that is where his children said the chance of a cure was greatest.

I was inspired by the steely strength of a man who was prepared to endure what he had to, to be a part of our lives. Many a man would have said stop, no more, when the going got rough.

But when we entered the hospital, my father made my mother a promise: "I'm not going to leave you now." And he saw it through and kept that promise.

I have to thank my wife Debbie for keeping the house together while my attention was in Texas and my friend and partner Ken for keeping the business going when I was otherwise engaged. To the many consulting and speaking engagement clients who accepted my cancellations with kindness, my appreciation. And to those in the industry who passed on names and therapies, my heartfelt thanks.

I thought we would succeed early on, even before we went to Houston. Late after my birthday dinner ended, just a few hours before we were due to depart for Texas, the call came in: My sister and brother-in-law had a new baby — Jacqueline Jade Faerber.

To me it was a message from God, as we prepared to face death down, that the life force was still strong in this family. I knew we were all coming home. And we did.

I have a lot to be thankful for this year.

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

By Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.