



Amelia at the time of her brain tumor diagnosis.

Introduction

When our eight-year-old daughter Amelia was diagnosed with cancer in October 2004, my wife Tricia and I were nearly overwhelmed by fear for the life of our only child. After enduring years of misdiagnoses for her daily nausea and fierce headaches, the proper medical call was finally made on a miserable, overcast October afternoon. The awful challenge was whether she would live long enough for the truth of her brain cancer condition to matter. A malignant, mixed-cell tumor was located in the middle of her brain, and emergency surgery was ordered. She had just hours to live.

Her survival and recovery from the brain surgery was only the beginning of a long battle against cancer and all that goes with it.

Amelia's long journey has been aided by family, friends, nurses, therapists, and lots of doctors.

As a columnist for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, I spent weeks weighing whether or not to write about her experience. I finally decided that no story I would ever cover would be more important than the one that was playing out in front of me. The deadline-driven columns contained in these pages were written for the newspaper in the difficult months that followed her diagnosis.

Today, Amelia is a beautiful thirteen-year-old with a wide circle of family and friends who love and cherish her. She attends Cadwallader Middle School, studies piano, competes in wheelchair sports, and works hard to squeeze the most out of life each day. She loves to cook and play Scrabble with her mom and swim and tend her herb garden with her dad. And she's making the transition to life with a wheelchair

without complaint. Her grace under life's greatest challenges has awed her parents and inspired her community.

There is no greater honor than having her as a daughter.

— John L. Smith