

## **May 24, 1980 - The Mayor looks back on the 30th anniversary of his graduation from RIT**

May 24, 1980. It is a day that almost never happened. It is a day that marked my official launch of my career as a graphic designer. It is day that will always be a benchmark for something deeply more personal that goes beyond achievement.

September 1976. I entered the Rochester Institute of Technology as a 19 year old Freshman. I had won a full tuition scholarship to RIT through Scholastic Art Awards and I was excited to begin my collegiate training to shape my art talent into a marketable skill.

November 1976. My father, Stanley Serafin dies suddenly of congestive heart failure at 47 years old.

December 1976. I am diagnosed with cancer, undergo three major surgeries and face two years of chemotherapy... All occurring while I still maintained my full time student status and schedule at RIT.

Those first three months of my Freshman year I have often thought of as my personal ground zero. But I was raised with a strong faith in God by equally strong parents. Every day, they showed me and brothers by example that nothing was impossible to achieve with perseverance, determination, passion and prayer.

"Serafins are not quitters." That was our family mantra.

So dropping out of RIT never crossed my mind. By staying in school, I knew God provided me with a lifeline to sustain me during my battle with cancer... my artwork. I was able to look beyond the immediacy of my health crisis and focus on the hope that an art career promised.

May 24, 1980. I graduated on time, with highest honors and was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. I was off chemotherapy and getting closer to my first five year anniversary of my diagnosis. I was on my way!

May 24, 2010. There have been nearly six "five year" anniversaries and I have built a career as a graphic designer and portrait artist that still gives me great satisfaction. But I was also being prepared for something else... I was being prepared for public service... to serve as a graphic design instructor, to serve as an example that there is life beyond a cancer diagnosis and finally to serve as the Mayor of Manlius.

Perseverance. Determination. Passion.

Combine that with being raised in the very best village that has the capacity bring out the very best in all of us and you have the cornerstone that shaped my life, helped build my art career and is the very foundation of my service as Mayor.

May 24th. It is day that will always be a benchmark for something deeply more personal that goes beyond achievement... Always.