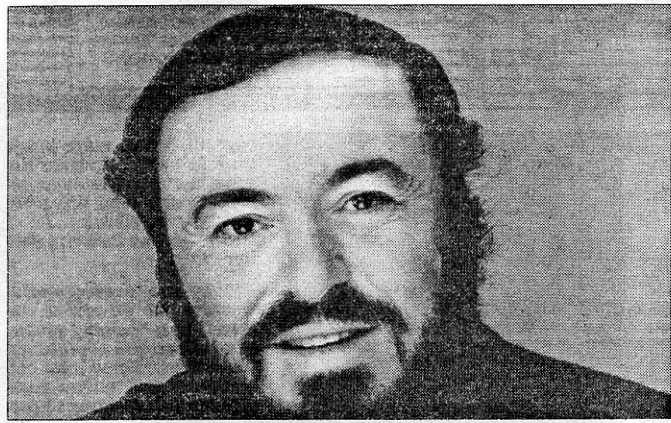


PERSONAL BEST



LUCIANO PAVAROTTI: "I was a brilliant boy."

A PERFECT TENOR

The exuberant 3-year-old, a charmer from birth, climbed into his grandmother's lap one summer day in 1933, humming an Italian nursery rhyme to her. "One day," she told him, "you're going to be great ... you will be ... you'll see. ..."

"Doesn't every grandmother say that?" laughs megastar tenor Luciano Pavarotti, 55, remembering his days growing up in the Po River valley of Modena, Italy, "a place," he smiles, "where I learned to be happy."

As a boy, young Luciano reveled in soccer, buried himself in the family's hefty record collection, and listened to his father, Fernando — a baker by trade — sing in the local church. On Luciano's fourth birthday, a remarkable musical odyssey began.

"Almost immediately, the musical talent began to show itself," he recalls. "I was a brilliant boy, very naive, but brilliant." Vocally brilliant? "No, no. Brilliant in character, in communication with people. I was a bad student, some B's, mostly C's. But I was an excellent boy alto."

His mother dreamed he'd become a banker. "Instead," he laughs, "I taught elementary school in my early 20s, but my father constantly goaded me, said I was wasting my time, singing below my potential."

The young man, at 22, dumped teaching for selling insurance, to give him enough time to develop his vocal talent. "Studying voice, and studying it with Arrigo Pola — that was the turning point of my life," the opera star reckons. "My teacher was a tenor and made

me learn by example. That was luck, because by imitation, I was able to do in two days what would have taken at least two years. When you reach for certain notes the first time, the voice is straggling, and I could not believe that was right, but I was convinced when I heard the results. From Pola, I learned all the technical baggage that I carry with me now. He released the talent."

Released it indeed. In 1961, at age 26, the young tenor won the Concorso Internazionale, a regional competition in Italy, upon which the singer began a formidable European career. Today, nearly 30 years later, he is the highest paid, most visible opera singer in the world, who will be forever known as the person most responsible for popularizing an art form formerly reserved for the elite.

"I've learned it's a mistake to take the safe path in life," says the 6-foot tenor, who admits to a constant struggle to keep his formidable weight under control. He's traveling this month from Covent Garden to Rome to Florence before landing for Christmas in Modena, still home for his wife of 30 years, Adua, and their three daughters. "If I hadn't listened to my father and dropped teaching, I would never be here. Then, my teacher groomed me, but no teacher ever told me I would become famous. Just my grandmother."

She left him with a lesson: "Love people, no matter what your occupation." Sometimes, when I feel strange standing onstage, I ask myself: 'What is little Luciano doing here?' I'm loving people — that's the key."

TURNING POINT



GLENN PLASKIN

Unemployed — and working at it

Dear Dr. Brothers: My son was a successful student, but is now, after two years out of school, still without a good job. It isn't that he isn't highly qualified or that he hasn't had excellent opportunities; but each time, he figures out some way to miss out on the promotion, or the interview for a better job. He's clearly standing in the way of his own success. Why?

— G.W. Dear G.W.: There is often a kind of gamesmanship underlying this type of behavior. Some individuals seem determined to

defeat themselves and may do this by being late for appointments, deliberately dressing inappropriately or going to an interview unprepared.

Steven Berglas, a Harvard clinical psychologist who's studied self-defeating behavior, points out that the advantage of giving yourself a handicap is that you can have the illusion of success without having to risk losing it. Often, people put roadblocks in their way to protect their self-esteem by guaranteeing no blame for failure.



DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

Reactions to chemotherapy vary

Dear Ann: Thank you for printing that letter from the woman in Sarasota who had chemotherapy following a mastectomy. It was a godsend. I recently had a radical mastectomy and learned that I must start chemotherapy. The day your column ran, a friend phoned to make sure I had seen it. It gave me a great deal of encouragement at a time when I really needed it.

— Ann G. Palos Verdes, Calif. Dear Calif.: Thanks for those warm words. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for you. Not everyone was thrilled with that column—Read on:

From Vancouver: I am furious with that woman in Sarasota who had chemotherapy after a radical mastectomy. She made it sound like a day at the county fair. I had a mastectomy 12 years ago and the doctor ordered chemo, the whole load. I was exhausted and depressed, sick as a dog, and I couldn't keep food down. To hear someone say, "Those horrible stories about chemo side effects ain't necessarily so" burned me up.

San Diego: Those comments from your correspondent in Sarasota who said chemotherapy was a "breeze" need clarification. Treatment under some can go on for a year or more, resulting in total hair loss, vomiting and loss of appetite. That debilitating routine is essential, however, when fighting certain types of cancer. After my mastectomy, I was put on a regimen recommended by both the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute. It lasted six months; there was very little hair loss and no nausea or vomiting. I felt quite well the entire time.

Isanti, Minn.: My husband went through 12 chemotherapy treatments and 20 radiation procedures. He went through hell. That letter from the woman in Sarasota made him hopping mad. The side effects were a nightmare, but he is alive today and feeling terrific.

Jacksonville, Fla.: I had a bilateral mastectomy two years ago at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston. (God bless those doctors. They are the greatest.) I was told there would be debilitating side effects and there were. But when you're fighting for your life, you are willing to go through anything. Anyone who has questions about cancer treatment should call 1-800-4-CANCER, and if it's busy, keep trying. This line is provided by the National Cancer Institute.

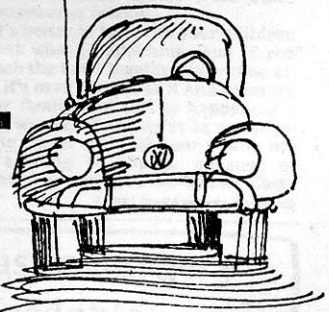
So, dear readers, there you have it, from the best authorities of all — the people who have lived through it. And now I would like to recommend the "Look Good ... Feel Better" program for women who are taking chemotherapy or soon will be. Write the C.T.F.A. Foundation, 1100 Vermont Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, or call 1-800-395-LOOK or your local American Cancer Society office. The free brochure on this program has dozens of excellent suggestions on how to improve your appearance, lift your spirits and hasten your return to a normal life. Every woman knows that looking better helps you to feel better.



ANN LANDERS

For "The Lowdown on Dope," send a self-addressed, long, business-size envelope and a check or money order for \$3.65 to: Lowdown, c/o Ann Landers, P.O. Box 11562, Chicago, Ill. 60611-0562. © 1990 Creators Syndicate

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