

By Dave Bachmann

(Based on a true story)

Danilo hurried through the halls of the school. Ahead of him, his dad was emptying a trash bin. Danilo hoped his dad wouldn't see him. He lowered his head, trying to blend in with the other students. He felt embarrassed that his dad was the school custodian.

"Good morning, son," his dad said as Danilo passed.

Danilo walked faster, pretending not to hear. But the other boys had already noticed.

"Hey, Danilo," a boy called out. "There's your dad, the school sweeper! Maybe he needs your help."

"Don't be mean to Danilo," another boy chimed in. "Mr. Santos can do so much more than sweep. See, he can empty the trash too!"

The boys all laughed.

Danilo couldn't wait to go to middle school next year. Maybe the teasing would stop then. He glanced

over his shoulder. His dad worked with a smile on his face. How could he ignore their mean words?

Danilo ran into the auditorium. The school was having an assembly to announce the teacher of the year. His best friends, Nathaniel and Frances, had saved a seat for him.

Danilo's Dad



How could his dad ignore their mean words?

"Who do you think the teachers chose?" Nathaniel asked.

"I hope it's Miss Ocampo," Frances said.

"She's really good," Nathaniel said. "But I like Mr. Torres most. Who do you want to win, Danilo?"

Danilo thought about his teachers. "I like all my teachers. It would be hard to pick just one."

The principal stood up. The assembly was starting!

"It's time to announce the teacher of the year," the principal said. "This year, we have many wonderful teachers. But in the end, our choice was a little different." He held up the plaque. "Our teacher of the year is Mr. Santos, our school custodian!"

Danilo couldn't believe it! His dad, the teacher of the year? But he wasn't even a teacher!

Danilo's dad walked up to front of the room. Everyone clapped and cheered for him. The principal shook his hand. Then he said, "Some of you probably don't think that Mr. Santos is a teacher. But he teaches us every day by his example. Each morning, he arrives at school before anyone else. After school, he is often the last to leave. Any job is honorable if you work hard and work cheerfully. This is what Angelo Santos has taught us. That is why Angelo Santos is the teacher of the year."

Danilo thought of his dad emptying the trash bins. He knew how hard his dad worked. And he didn't let what others said bother him. Maybe he could help Danilo learn how to do that.

After the assembly ended, Danilo stood up. "You go on without me," he told his friends.

Danilo walked to the front of the auditorium. People were standing all around his dad, shaking his hand and patting him on the back. Each of them thanked him for his example. Danilo waited at the edge of the crowd until everyone had left.

His dad looked up from his plaque and smiled.

"Who would have thought it was possible?" his father asked. "Me, custodian of the school."

"I'm so proud of you, Dad." Danilo rushed forward and hugged his father. His father. The teacher of the year. ●

This story took place in the Philippines.

