

Strength

The Miracle Man

Vincent Gilio

Vincent Gilio's family calls him the "Miracle Man." Looking at his life story, it's hard to argue.

In World War II, he survived a series of near-death experiences. In civilian life, he was hit by a truck. He has survived bladder cancer, and now at 80 is facing acute leukemia.

"Reflecting back, I've always wondered why I was here, what my purpose was. We all come into this life with a purpose," Vincent says, as his wife Andrea, daughter Sissy and grandchildren Jessica and Dayna listen intently. "If you live long enough, that purpose will reveal itself to you. I am not here for myself, but for others. My strength is to protect and care for my family and those I love.

"My destiny has been to live, and I am thankful my doctors recognized that this old man is not ready to go," he smiles. "Dr. Wu knew I could make it, despite my age, despite the odds; she has been fantastic!" His wife, Andrea, nods in agreement.

"If I had to describe my husband and his will to live, I would say he's like an Eveready™ battery, he just keeps on going and going and going!" she says. "I have only love and admiration for his will and strength. We all learn from our Miracle Man."

"He's known by many and loved by all," says his daughter Sissy, and the whole family agrees.



by Lihong Wu, MD

What I remember most about Mr. Gilio are the hours of quiet struggle, the nights that he and his wife Andrea spent together in the isolation rooms, using their will and strength to help the medicine beat back the illness.

Mr. Gilio was very ill when I first met him. He had acute myelogenous leukemia (AML). In general, such a diagnosis carries a very grave prognosis for an 80-year-old man.

But the AML is treatable and without aggressive treatments, the patient's chances of surviving beyond a few weeks are very slim.

My instinct told me Mr. Gilio could make it. And I knew that Andrea, his wife, could provide strength and support.

After induction chemotherapy, Mr. Gilio's bone marrow biopsy results showed that he was in complete remission. When I gave the results to Andy, she started crying with happiness. I started crying, too. She didn't stop for a half an hour. Neither did I.

Tough Decisions

Dr. Lugliani said, "This Italian man, is 80, has a big family and he is my friend. He has acute leukemia and needs to decide if he'll take chemotherapy; can you help?"

"So I went to talk to him at around 9 o'clock at night," explains Dr. Tchekmedyan. "He was a big man, he looked strong despite his age, and he had intense bright eyes and an engaging smile. His handgrip was strong. I was in no hurry and I needed to get to know him, so I sat down and we talked about growing up in Brooklyn, his dad, his many travels, the war, his wife, his family.

Then he said, "Doctor, what is the treatment like?" "Its like getting hit by a truck!" I replied. "Doctor," he said "I was hit by a truck! It was in 1978 and I almost died! But here I am!"

We knew right away that we had the answer, and I told him I knew of no one who could take better care of him than Dr. Wu.



Jessica, Sissy, Dayna



Vincent and Wife Andrea