



It's Always Something

Gilda Radner

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It's Always Something Gilda Radner

Here is the moving story of Gilda Radner's life and her battle with cancer--told with all the inimitable spunk and irreverence that made her America's favorite late-night comedienne. The inspiring story of a courageous, funny woman who is fighting for her life--and winning.

It's Always Something Details

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From Reader Review It's Always Something for online ebook

Georgette says

What a courageous, brave, funny woman Gilda Radner was. This story is touching, funny, and completely breaks your heart. The new edition, which goes on to explain that not longer after writing this, she passed, will make you cry. One of the first books I can remember crying over. Years later, when I go back to re-read a story of a smart, funny, brave woman, I always read this.

Vivian Valvano says

We're going to discuss this in my LIT group in October. I loved Gilda Radner as a comedienne, and I was heartsick during her battle with cancer, and I greatly admired her honesty and openness in revealing that she had ovarian cancer. Such announcements were not common in the mid 1980s (she was diagnosed, after seemingly interminable tests and misdiagnoses, in 1986. Sadly, as I understand it, ovarian cancer is still often misdiagnosed, then diagnosed after women have suffered greatly, physically and emotionally). Somehow, however, I never read Radner's book. It is a brutally honest account of her experience with the deadly disease, and she holds back nothing in terms of anger, emotion, desperation along with her valiant attempts to not give up in fighting the disease/seeking a cure or extended remission. She also tells a bit of her background life story and, very poignantly, the story of her love for and marriage to Gene Wilder. I respect the honesty that I see emanating from her book more than anything. I hate to even say that she was not a very good writer per se, especially since she was writing this under the most horrendous of conditions. She literally saw the first hardcover copy shortly before her death in 1989. Radner was extremely gifted, bright, and admirable, and she certainly didn't have to be a good writer outside of comedic writing (which isn't even to say that she doesn't manage quite a few humorous touches in her book). I don't even like the term "like" and it's degrees to describe reactions to a book like this. But it was valuable to read this. I am sadder than ever, knowing so many details now, that she had to go through so much, and that many women still go through hideous experiences with ovarian cancer. I am relieved that she had her wonderful, loving husband and friends and support system to help her, but it still sucks that cancer diagnosis and treatment had to be so awful and barbaric by the end of the twentieth century. Wilder, of course, eventually sponsored the excellent Gilda's Place, emanating from the Wellness Community that Radner had become part of in CA and that meant so much to her. Gilda's Place has a NYC location in the Village and does tremendous work with cancer patients and survivors, and their locations are also nationwide. Radner deserves to be remembered with great respect. RIP, gifted and brave woman, Gilda Radner.

Kathy says

A funny lady tells the story of her not-so-funny battle with ovarian cancer, which she ultimately lost. I borrowed this book from one of my Middle School colleagues.

Suzanne says

Over Christmas my family and I were watching old Saturday Night Live Episodes and we found ourselves looking for Gilda Radner's characters specifically. She was such a funny, special lady and her personas of Emily Latelle, Lisa Lupner and Roseanne Roseannadanna were so hilarious we still imitate them today.

I remember seeing this book in stores when it came out. I can't remember if it came out posthumously (she died in 1989) - and it very likely did, but for some reason I was interested in it, but failed to pick it up at the time. *It's Always Something* is Gilda Radner's chronicle of her experience of living with and treating ovarian cancer. You'd expect a comedienne to publish a funny book, and Radner did try to inject humor into this work, but cancer is seriously unfunny, and this book is more about the everyday challenge of coming to grips with the reality of living with a disease you have little control over.

At the time this book came out, my mother's best friend was also diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Much of Radner's struggles were a mirror of what Marilyn went through. And like Radner, Marilyn also lost her battle and died within a few years of her diagnosis. Fast forward to today. I was in my 20's when this book came out. I hadn't yet experienced death and illness first hand, so in some ways I am glad I waited to read this. I think I would have missed the greater messages Radner imparted.

The first is that we are all faced with our mortality. It doesn't matter if you have cancer or not. We are going to die, but we just don't know when. Having a terminal illness merely forces us to look at that fact. Second, in spite of living with illness and going through treatments that are often unpleasant, you can still have a full and joyful life. The trick in getting through life - whether you have cancer or not, is to appreciate the good things in it and not dwell on what you don't have.

Six years ago my best friend died of leukemia. She only lived 14 months from her diagnosis, but her treatment gave her that time. Her form of leukemia, AML, is fast moving and aggressive, and she would have only had a few weeks at most without chemotherapy. She taught me what Gilda expresses in her book - that you can experience joy and suffering at the same time. They aren't mutually exclusive. Another point my friend Roberta taught me, is that knowing of your impending death can actually be a blessing. It forces you to reconcile, to love and to heal the relationships in your life. Nothing gets left hanging. Your loved ones make sure you know they love you and vice versa.

Some people might read this book and find it sad, knowing that there was no cure for Gilda Radner. But in reality, this book is uplifting. It is about real life - about obstacles and pain and suffering, but also about love and joy. 3 1/2 stars.

Debbie Turner says

I read this book as slowly as I could, relishing each and every word. Gilda was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer right after my step-daughter. Gilda was given a very low chance of making it: 20% , I think. My step-daughter was given a 10% chance of survival. When Gilda passed away, I was heartbroken. I couldn't read this book. My step-daughter, without all of Gilda's money and resources, lived 25 years with her Ovarian Cancer. Reading Gilda's book was a trip down memory lane. She did an excellent job of telling us what her life was like as a result of the cancer diagnosis. I loved Gilda. Well done, my friend. You can add author to your list of accomplishments. I miss you being on this earth.....just as I miss my step-daughter.

Barbara Rice says

When I first read this I was hoping to get some eternal truths or revelation of wisdom from it, or at the very least some juicy gossip. That didn't happen and I was vaguely disappointed.

But over time I've come to appreciate it for the less-is-more version of truth: there aren't always tidy endings. Sick people aren't always noble and uncomplaining. Desperation sometimes makes us do things that keep us busy and make us believe we're going to get well. Sometimes Zen moments are what sustain us:

Buddha told a parable in sutra:

A man traveling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him.

Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!

Krista says

I read this right before reading Gene Wilder's autobiography. Seems like they had different views of their relationship. Quick read, interesting.

Mosh says

Objectively, this was not a brilliantly written book. Radner does a lot of telling instead of showing; I did this, then I did that...

But that's understandable. And despite that, this book moved me more than any I can think of. I suffered every setback and celebrated every gain. This book, while it is her story, is also the story of anyone who has endured the horrors of disease and the importance of fighting every single step of the way. To take a day off is to lose. And Gilda would not let that happen. This book is 269 pages of fighting and half a page written by Gene Wilder after the fight was over. That's the breakdown I want for my life.

Diane says

Sweet, funny, lovely Gilda Radner. Her memoir is charming and bittersweet, which is just what I would have expected from the beloved Saturday Night Live performer who died too young from ovarian cancer.

I first read this book back in the early 1990s, but when Gilda's husband, the wonderful Gene Wilder, died last

year, I decided to reread it as a tribute to both of them. But this time, I found the audiobook and listened to Gilda narrate it. Such warmth! Gilda talks about her love for Gene and how she got her start in show business, but most of the book is about her experiences dealing with cancer. I think anyone who has struggled with the disease or who had a loved one diagnosed with cancer would find this book helpful. Also highly recommended for anyone who loved Gilda or Gene.

Favorite Quote

"I had wanted to wrap this book up in a neat little package about a girl who is a comedienne from Detroit, becomes famous in New York, with all the world coming her way, gets this horrible disease of cancer, is brave and fights it, learning all the skills she needs to get through it, and then, miraculously, things are neatly tied up and she gets well ... I wanted a perfect ending, so I sat down to write the book with the ending in place before there even was an ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end. Like my life, this book has ambiguity. Like my life, this book is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity."

Steven Kent says

Few books have ever touched me as deeply as this one did.

For those of you too young to remember her, Gilda Radner was a comedian on Saturday Night Live. She played, among other things, Rosanne Rosanna Danna, the grossout queen of the SNL News scene. Oh she was funny!

When she first found out she was diagnosed with cancer, Gilda set out to write a book about how she beat the disease. The book starts out on such a positive note as this lovely, strong, courageous, and hilarious woman faces the roller coaster.

But things go wrong. The cancer does not go away. Soon she comes to realize that she is not writing a book about beating cancer, she is writing a memoir of her death for those who may find themselves following her. Gilda was courageous to the end.

Even writing this review I feel myself getting a little misty-eyed.

The end of the book is not penned by Gilda, but by her husband--the legendary comedian Gene Wilder. He loved her to the very end. Read this book and you will know he loves her still.

Jackie says

I read this when I was at home, pregnant and supposed to lay in bed for the last 6 weeks of the pregnancy. It was a page turner for me.

I laughed so much with this book and then cried like a baby at the end. I loved Radner's comedic writing in

this because it felt like she was talking to me about all the crazy little things that would cross her mind as she tried to work through her experience with Cancer. She tried so many things to learn and understand her disease and made fun of herself as she struggled through her physical and emotional pain. I appreciated so much that she wrote about her intimate conversations with her husband Gene Wilder as they went through this together and how this experience changed their lives and the lives of their friends and family.

I learned a lot about Cancer and for whatever reason at that time in my life, I was forever altered because what seemed to me like one of the scariest things to ever experience, she turned into a great healing journey that she chose to share with anyone who wanted to read it. She died before she could finish the book, but Gene Wilder finished her last chapter for her. I cried.

Irma Vanta says

My mantra, my compelling reason ... Gilda Radner's story was a bonus. Thank you Joanna Bull for this invention ... "I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next."

Gilda as expected was not as brilliant as compared to most established and prolific novelists. But her spontaneity, honesty and sincerity brings you to the exact threshold of pain, angst, mortality, her clinginess to hope, positivism, life, love, fame, and how quick she melts down when face to face with reality. Her ovarian cancer metastasized, and most likely she will die from it, really really soon. Afraid to leave the life she adores and just not about ready to be given up and everything in it --- and maybe, the lack of memory of it, in her life beyond, and lives left behind without her. To this day, cancer remains to massacre the human spirit. And Gene Wilder, the love of her life, re-married, two years after her passing. Life goes on ...

I was 19 years old, when Gilda Radner, 42 years, slipped into a coma and never woke up. She had cancer, fought it fiercely, but eventually lost it.

I still write my pages. Impatient with an ending, a story I don't even know how to begin again. This Sunday, I will be 43.

Lavonne says

I found that I was reading this book on two levels. If you read it as a journal of someone who has cancer and is sifting through feelings arising from that, it is hopeful at times and disparaging at others. At that level, it is completely, brutally honest in its portrayal of a cancer victim.

If you read it from the point of view of someone who professes throughout to want to be a professional writer, it certainly lacks something. She goes on and on about how funny she is in certain situations and yet, we are almost never let in on the jokes. She tends to ramble and switch directions in a lot of places, which again is okay if you are reading it as a journal.

At a personal level, I found that I'm not sure I would actually like Gilda as a friend. She was definitely obsessive-compulsive, and probably bi-polar as well, and that was before she had cancer. I wondered what

her next obsession would have been, if she had actually gotten pregnant and carried a baby to term. It may be that I only saw parts of myself I didn't like in Gilda's character. I do believe, however, that Gene Wilder is a saint, as is my husband on occasion.

Leigh says

As a lot of celebrity books do, this one reveals more about the author's life than she may have intended. Her determination to beat a terminal condition is admirable and her courage never flagged. But it also shows glimpses of her husband's (Gene Wilder) struggle, his exhaustion and gives some idea of what it must be like for the family of cancer sufferers. Medically out of date but a fascinating glimpse into a complex situation. UPDATE: I wrote this review and since then, my husband has been diagnosed with advanced colon cancer. I went back and re-read the book. It's discouraging how different her experiences were with the more middle class majority of cancer patients. Since my husband's diagnosis, I've struggled with endless paperwork, legal issues and terrifying onslaughts of bills. When I got to the part where her husband brings her a very expensive bracelet, and then she goes home from the hospital with round the clock private nurses, I gave up and tossed the book out. I think Gilda's story is an inspiration to many with cancer, but most folks will not have her experiences because their background is so different from that of a successful Hollywood celebrity.

Una Tiers says

After reading the Gene Wilder book, I re-read the Gilda Radner one. They had completely different descriptions of their relationship. The author uses quips of her dry humor but also talks about memory loss and then goes on to describe things that happened. Kind of a sad read.

Pamela(AllHoney) says

Gilda Radner tells about her battle with Ovarian cancer.

I loved Gilda in her many characters of SNL and enjoyed her in a few movies. I loved her sense of humor. I was saddened when she died and when I found a paperback book called "It's Always Something" I got it. Of course, I got it years ago and only now read it. It was a hard book to read, finding out about the pain and suffering she went through.

Nick Popadich says

I couldn't put this book down even though I know Gilda's life ended. Just like for all of us though, it is about the journey. So how is your life better off if you read this book? Well, for me, it showed me that anything can be funny. Even cancer. In fact, people going through cancer need it to be funny sometimes. They need to strip away the power that the fear of death can bring. They need to remember how they have made it through before and they can make it through again. They need to be active in their own fight. When my dad was dying of cancer, I tried to keep everything normal. I didn't want to spook him, even though we both knew that time was short. I just wanted to get the most out of the time we had left. What I might have overlooked

though, was the need for patients and their families to talk about their hopes and fears. So much of what helped Gilda was going to discussion groups at the Wellness Center. We need more of that: patients, families, counselors, nurses, and doctors talking about what it is like to live with cancer. Please read this book to get an inside look at the ups and downs of what cancer can do to a person as strong and as wacky as Gilda. And don't be afraid to live in the "delicious ambiguity" that is our short time on this third rock from the sun.

Kate says

Not only was she one of the funniest people on earth when she was with us, she was also extremely wise.

Lynx says

One of the most heartbreaking but strong books I've ever read. What an emotional roller coaster. Gilda was an amazing woman!

Emily says

Hmm. So many people love this book. I had been meaning to read it for years. And when I finally did, I was disappointed. I loved Gilda's comedy on SNL and knew the gist of her story. I tried to get into it, but found myself skimming some pages because this book was sorely lacking something. More depth? Less neediness? I wanted to learn more about her formative years, more about her life before cancer, and much less about her co-dependency issues. (I have been under the impression that Gene had a very different view of their relationship.) Plus, it just isn't very well-written. I expected better word flow from someone with her comedic wit. I don't mean to downplay her courageous and heartbreaking battle with cancer or her foundation legacy. I know she stated that it's hard to be funny writing a book about cancer because cancer is the most un-funny thing. And I get that. I wasn't expecting much humor, but at least a better book, and while I appreciate that she told her story, it just left me saying "meh". Maybe I'll re-read again someday.
