

DIVERSIONS

Gilda Radner tells her story in TV movie

BY KEELY KALESKI WYGONIK
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Growing up in Detroit, comedienne Gilda Radner often heard her father say - "It's always something."

She made his favorite saying the title of her book, a story about living with and fighting ovarian cancer.

You can learn more about Radner by watching *It's Always Something: The Gilda Radner Story*, airing 9 p.m. Monday, April 29 on WXYZ-Channel 7.

Based on her best-selling autobiography, the TV movie features Jamie Gertz (Kimmy Bishop on *Ally McBeal*) in the title role.

The story begins in Gilda's childhood where she talks about being the chubby girl who loved to perform and make people laugh. A man, not the desire to hone her skills as a comedienne, was the reason she left the University of Michigan before graduating and moved to Toronto.

"My homemaking fantasy and my romance lasted about a year and four months," she writes. "I learned to cook and helped him with his art shows, but I submitted my performing ego and became very depressed. I went to

night school at the University of Toronto and University of Wisconsin correspondence school to finish my degree."

She was alone, but loved Canada and decided to stay. One night, she and a girlfriend went to a small theater to see a musical, she felt at home, and "fell in love with the guy taking tickets." In 1972 Radner joined the Actor's Equity union for stage performers after landing a role in a professional production of *Godspell*. She began to establish herself as a comedienne and was cast in the Toronto company of *Second City* along with Dan Aykroyd.

Eventually she left and joined the *Not Ready for Prime Time Players* on *Saturday Night Live*. Monday's movie shows the role Radner played in helping make *Saturday Night Live* a cultural phenomenon. Radner's book, and the movie, explain how she developed some her favorite characters including Lina Looper and Roseanne Rosannadanna.

Always looking for love, Radner had numerous relationships and a brief marriage to musician G.E. Smith before Gene Wilder stole her heart. They met on the set of the movie *Hanky Panky* and romance led to marriage in

the south of France.

They both wanted to have a family, but it was not to be. On Oct. 21, 1986 she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Uplifting and funny

It's Always Something is not a depressing story, it's funny and uplifting. With Wilder's unflinching support, Radner battled cancer, trying everything from traditional treatments to a macro biotic diet. Longtime girlfriends Pam and Judy, family members, including her brother Michael, who still lives in the area, also encouraged and supported Radner throughout her illness. Joanna Bull, assistant director of the Wellness Community in California, who counsels cancer patients and has a form of leukemia, quickly won Radner over and helped her learn how to relax and live with cancer.

The Wellness Community offers support to cancer patients, much like Gilda's Club of Metro Detroit in Royal Oak. Radner finished her book three weeks before she died at the age of 42. Her legacy lives on at the club, founded in 1991. It's a network of centers across the country where people living with cancer, their family and friends, come

together for emotional and social support.

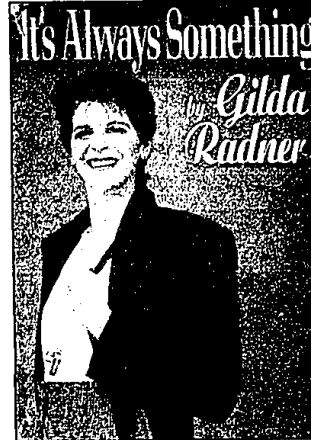
It's a place that feels like home, where there's always someone to hug you, comfort you, share their story, and assure you that you're not alone in this life and death battle.

Members of Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, the local Gilda's Club affiliate, are thrilled about Monday's TV movie premiere.

"This is a great opportunity to let people in the Detroit area know about our free program of social and emotional support for anyone touched by cancer," said Lisa Grele Barrie, Development and Communications Director.

The film will feature a scrolling on-screen message at its conclusion that will tell viewers about the Gilda's Club movement. In addition, a made-for-TV special about Radner's life will air right before the movie at 8 p.m.

For more information about Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, and Gilda's Big Night Out IV, a benefit featuring comedienne Wendy Liebman on Thursday, May 16 at Southfield Centre for the Arts, call (248) 577-0900 or visit the Web site www.gildasclubdetroit.org



Autobiography: Gilda Radner talks about her life and battle with cancer in "It's Always Something." A movie, based on the book, will air on Channel 7 at 9 p.m. on Monday, April 29.

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CRAFT CALENDAR

Send items for consideration in the *Arts & Crafts Calendar* to Keely Kaleski Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. To fax (734) 591-7279 or (248) 644-1314. E-mail kwygoni@home.com.net. Please copy and paste info into an e-mail or send as a text file.

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by 10 areas available for \$35. Call Patti Page (248) 738-9275.

CRAFTERS/ARTISTS SOUGHT

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This exhibition is also supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

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