

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

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There is a certain magnetism about Linda and Jim Mazzetti. People want to be near them. Hoping that some of their overflowing joy will infect them. Their apparent happiness seems endless since neither is seldom minus genuine smiles. Little do onlookers know of their struggles, their anxiety, tests of will power, their deep-seated sorrows. Linda says she "couldn't have done anything without him." Jim is convinced they "got a decent set of cards so we had to play them." They make little effort to hide their affection for each other. Nor the coincidences that brought them together almost 40 years ago. Both were teachers in the Bolingbrook, Illinois school district.

"We were in the teachers' lounge," says Linda. "I showed him pictures I took during spring break while in Florida." Jim chimes in with "and I was in Florida at the same time...only a few miles apart." He chortles..."and, not only that but we were living in the same apartment complex."

Nonetheless, they did find a mutual interest - tennis. Yet, they vowed "we would not get involved." But, toward the end of that year, Jim and Linda were married (Nov. 19, 1972) at St. Ambrose Catholic church. Like many young couples, they yearned for offspring. Their prayers were answered four years later (Sept. 19, 1976) when a son was born. Jim, Jr. was a "beautiful baby," weighing over nine pounds. The couple soon learned their baby was born with hydrocephalus. In layman's terms: water on the brain. Their faith and prayers encompassed them as they faced the challenges that lay ahead.

Within hours, the infant was transported to the Rockford, IL hospital, 50-miles away, so a surgeon could insert a shunt. This device was to drain the fluid from the brain. This was the first of two shunts and another specialist. I felt like I was on a roller coaster," states Jim, who was keeping track of Linda who was still in the Bolingbrook Hospital. The two endured through the endless nights and days. Feeding the ailing baby one teaspoon every 20 minutes round the clock. Family members helped. At first, the baby had seizures. Gradually he improved.

There were the follow-up visits with doctors. Countless appointments with a myriad of specialists. Oftentimes, careers spill over into everyday life. So it was with Jim and Linda. Each found their teaching techniques applicable to their own situation. "When I would switch on a light, I would say to him, 'Light on,'" notes Jim. And, the same when it came to Linda adds, "So, he was talking before he was one year old." But he was slow in other areas. Slow in walking...18 months old...although, he was doing some climbing."

Admittedly, "It was really tough," says Jim. The list of must-see specialists continued. Both continued to work to keep pace with mounting indebtedness. Meantime, Jim became founder of "Know Problems of Hydrocephalus" (1979) to dialogue with others "living the same nightmare." (KPH later became NHF.)

Little Jim became J.D. (for James David) since there were already two Jim's in the family. At age 4, J.D. was enrolled in their school's age 3-5 program. Still, the little boy was "lagging in motor skills." This led to a full body cast. Others with less integrity would have despaired.

"Sure, it was tough," says Jim. "But we had to rise to the occasion and muddle through." Their youngster kept progressing in both health and learning. He could do math and other subjects, although he had trouble with penmanship. He excelled when introduced to the computer. He had a laptop all through high school. "We never told him he couldn't succeed," says Linda. The youth graduated from Minooka HS (1995); University of Wisconsin with a BS and MS degrees from the University of Illinois. He is presently employed by the state of Wisconsin as a rehabilitation counselor. He lives in his own home in Rome, Wisconsin.

Jim retired in 2002 and Linda in 2003. They are seasonal residents here.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Mazzetti coping mechanism: faith and prayer. Jim believes in St. Jude, saint of the impossible. Linda is an advocate of the Blessed Mother.