

Alzheimer's Association Listenline

Richard Lui - Transcript

Glynn Washington: Richard Lui is a journalist, a weekend anchor MSNBC and he grew up going down to Chinatown, listened to his dad preach.

Richard Lui: Cause my father was a pastor, is a pastor and the church that he had gone to as a teenager was in Chinatown as well. It's where he was born. He was born in Chinatown, San Francisco.

Glynn: and his dad was not the type to leave his job at the door every holiday. He was the one who gathered the family around the table for his invocation.

Richard: All of us would get together for our Thanksgiving, it'd be 90 people, 90 to a hundred people getting together in a house. It's a tradition for decades that my dad would stand up there with his yellow lined paper, piece of paper, sometimes, sometimes note cards, sometimes nothing, and dad loved to give these long, long, long, long prayers and would go okay here we go.

Glynn: Then one Thanksgiving, the family waited and waited for the speech that never came.

Richard: It was one of his sisters, his youngest sister, and she pulled me aside and said, your dads for getting our names. They had such a strong bond from so early, being so close.

How could he be forgetting his siblings' names?

Glynn: This was such a strong indication that something was wrong, that Richard's brother and sisters agreed they needed to talk to their dad about going to a doctor to get checked out.

Richard: But it did take us a little bit of prodding for that first, Hey, let's work on this together. That's basically what you're asking, "Hey, let's work on this together cause I care about you".

Glynn: When they went to the neurologist, they got the diagnosis. He was in the beginning stages of Alzheimer's. Since the family caught it early, they started a conversation about how to deal with it.

Richard: I mean, I knew that was going to be tough on my mom.

I knew it was going to be tough on my siblings. So I began the steps of discussing, well, not discussing it, thinking, you know, what should I do? What can I do? And so as it progressed. I knew personally that I wanted to see how

I could help my father, nor my mother. Never ever, ever, ever asked that anybody would come back to help.

But we all knew we had to do it. We all went. We all knew we wanted to do it.

Glynn: As the kids each took turns taking care of Richard dad, everyone discovered that Alzheimer's can really tax a family in unexpected ways. Forgetting names. Dates, places is just one of the symptoms. There are so many more.

Like when his dad started doing the same thing, he always did over and over.

Richard: and then he started to repeat. He would want to, you know, the, the signs of showering 20 times in a day, uh, nonstop eating. You didn't remember you ate, so you keep on eating. He, the guy was a skinny felon. He just blew up cause you know, he loved donuts and he loved his subway sandwiches.

So that was his, he'd get up in the morning, go down the subway, and go to the donut shop and come home. He'd eat the entire donut, the entire subway, and maybe even might make another trip that day because he didn't remember. He went to subway sandwich. He didn't remember that. He already bought the donut.

Glynn: Ordinary interactions and tasks started to become complicated and were now triggering real world consequences.

Richard: Well, he, there are many different calls he would get, and he'd send that in that dollar, he'd give him the credit card number. He gave him the, the checking account, and then he drove through the garage and it was closed.

Yep. It was closed. And he went straight through the garage. And then the back of the garage after which he went up the stairs, front stairs to let my mom know, and then he was coming back down, and he fell down the stairs. So we had a moment. That was, I think one of the, the milestones for us.

Glynn: As the disease progressed, the planning of the family had done earlier, helped them support their father, whether seeking out new resources, talking openly or taking their dad to his doctor's appointments.

Richard: Finding out that my father had Alzheimer's. You know. Today was seven years ago. Now, I guess, um, means that we probably found out earlier rather than later for most cases or many cases. And that allowed us to grow into the new positions that we were about to take on full time. And that is to care for my father.

As a team, as a family, that takes time and we are still learning still today, but because we did find out early enough, we were able to grow up, if you will, and work together.

Glynn: These moments brought up tough questions and the family would talk, argue, and hash it out. They didn't always come to a complete agreement.

They would always keep the conversation going,

Richard: right? We may have fought, um, we may have said some ugly things and some nice things, but we're so much richer for it that it's this idea of a gift despite the difficulty. And I do believe that's part of what he indirectly might be teaching us without.

Right? It's sort of, here you go from my dad. This is what you can now do with the way you express yourself to make it better for other people

Glynn: That's Richard Lui from MCNBC weekend anchor on how his family came together to care for their father with Alzheimer's. Giving an early diagnosis can provide much needed insight, relief, and support for you and your loved ones. Start the conversation today. Hear more stories. We now return you to the Alzheimer's Association Listenline menu.