



Francis M. responding well to therapy

by RICARDO F. LO
Philstar.com

MANILA—Barely three weeks after her father, Francis Magalona, was diagnosed with leukemia, Maxene Magalona happily announced that he is responding well to the treatment even if there's a "No Visitors Allowed" sign at the door of his room at the Medical City in Pasig City.

"His doctors are surprised at how well my dad is responding to the treatment," said Maxene who's graduating to an "adult" role in GMA's new *sine novela*, *Una Kang Naging Akin* (the "television" of the Viva movie directed by Laurice Guillen, and starring Sharon Cuneta, Gabby Concepcion and Dawn Zulueta), which requires her to kiss Wendell Ramos, her and Angelika dela Cruz's leading man.

"It's a good sign daw," added Maxene. "Now, we're just waiting for his doctor's order for him to be discharged."

Showing me Francis' photo in her cell-phone, Maxene said, "Look, *di ba* he looks

very healthy? *Para siyang walang sakit*. He even looks younger. He's restless, active *na* active as usual, and my mom (Pia Arroyo) keeps on reminding him to stop moving *kasi baka matanggal 'yung* dextrose tube *na nakakabit sa kanya*. *Malikot siya* and he's *palabiro* as usual."

Maxene recalled that when Francis suffered from fatigue, she and the rest of the family dismissed it as "normal" because they knew what a workaholic Francis used to be.

"When we learned that he has leukemia, I felt as if the whole world caved in on me. *Isa-isa kaming tinawagan ni Daddy*. I was shocked. 'Are you serious?' I asked him. When he heard me crying, he said, 'Stop crying. What we need now is the help of our friends. I pretended to stop crying but after he hung up, I cried and cried again.'"

The Magalonas don't regret having announced early on that Francis was ill.

"We didn't have a choice," said Maxene. "My dad needed blood very badly, so we had to make an appeal. We were overwhelmed by the response. Many came to donate blood. *Tita* Rose (Rosa Rosal) and Sen. Richard Gordon, who are both with the Red Cross, are such a big help to our family. We can never thank them enough, and those who continue to help and pray for my dad's recovery."

While her dad is bedridden, Maxene assured him that she'd be the one who will work and help in whatever way she can in his medical expenses.

As in the case of Lorna and Rudy, Francis' illness has brought the Magalonas even closer.

"The fact that we have a strong faith in God helps a lot in giving us strength and keeping our morale up," said Maxene. "My dad has read The Bible four times over. He has an unwavering faith in Jesus." →

Marvin right on target

by MARIDOL RAÑO-A-BISMARCK
Philstar.com

MARVIN Agustin has always aimed for the stars. When he played a disturbed character in *Kutob*, he shut himself from the world and won the Best Actor trophy in the 2005 Metro Manila filmfest soon after.

Now, he would like to add one more feather to his well-decorated cap. This time, he wants to be known as a professional archer. And not just any archer, mind you. He wants to compete in the 2012 Olympics.

You read it right. Marvin is going for broke (as if he hasn't done that time and again, and succeeded), this time as an athlete. So hooked is he on his new-found hobby he takes his bow and arrow first thing in the morning, strides over to his 18-meter range at home, aims and shoots for all he's worth.

He spends all of an hour in his favorite sport and is ready to start the day soon after.

The result, he says, is amazing. Marvin swears he can focus more on those demanding roles and memorize his lines faster.

"Archery boosts my analytical abilities," Marvin gushes. "It requires more than just aiming and shooting. You consider many factors, like wind direction. And it doesn't have any height nor age requirement."

Archery, like swimming and golf, allows you to move at your own pace. It doesn't require you to be part of a team and adjust to your fellow athletes the way other kinds of sports do. You only have to deal with yourself.

For someone with a busy schedule like Marvin's, moving at his own pace is important. He doesn't have the luxury of waiting for others to show up before a game or a simple match begins. He is off to the TV set faster than his would-be opponent can say "Hi!" Then, he's on his way to yet another taping.

The dizzying pace is just fine with Marvin, who vows, "I would like to be an actor forever."

The idea is far from an impossible dream, with Marvin shuttling thrice a week between the sets of GMA 7's *Dear Friend* with Jolina Magdangal and *Gaano Kadalang ang Minsan*, where he takes his archery equipment with

him to practice on during those long taping breaks.

Marvin's twins, Sebastian and Santiago, have seen their dad act on TV so often, the latter once announced, "I want to enter the TV set!"

The boy, who turned three last Aug. 16 with his fraternal twin, is so active and naughty, like those his age, Marvin must sometimes put his foot down. He makes Santiago and Sebastian face the wall and do time out when they overstep the line.

But Marvin doesn't have to resort to this kind of punishment all the time. Sometimes, all it takes is a warning look from him to make the boys toe the line.

Marvin doesn't enjoy it, but he knows he has to be a dad first. There's plenty of time to be friend when they grow up.

"At first, I wanted to be a cool dad," he reveals. "But nobody will discipline the boys except their mom (Tet Dy) and me."

Like children of estranged couples, Santiago and Sebastian shuttle between their dad and mom's homes as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

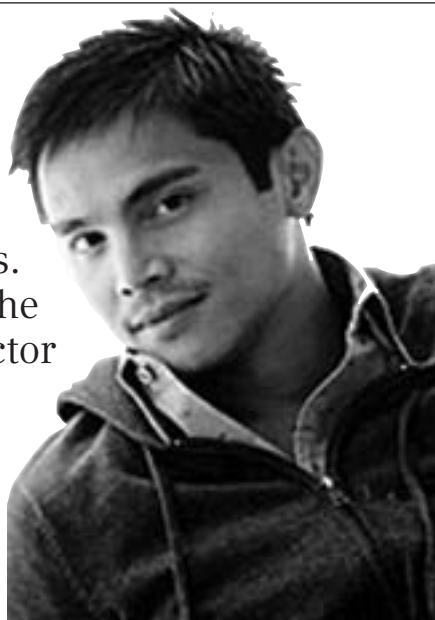
The twins stay with Marvin in his White Plains mansion on weekends; with their mom on weekdays.

But even if fatherhood fits Marvin to a T, the GMA Artist Center talent thinks the same thing can't be said where marriage is concerned. At least not yet.

"Marriage is not a matter of when," Marvin points out. "It's a matter of who. It will come when I'm already settled. As it is, I'm enjoying my freedom so much."

Does that freedom mean being at liberty to date Katrina Halili and Diana Zubiri?

Marvin suddenly turns evasive. He finally replies, "Katrina is a friend. We check on each other now and then. As for Diana, I think we're being linked simply because we're



working together."

Work—especially taping for teleseryes—is keeping Marvin so busy he is not that hot to do another movie soon. In fact, he has just auditioned for a game show whose title he refuses to divulge. Suffice it to say that other big names have also tried their luck at the hosting job.

But don't count Marvin out of the movie game yet. "I can still do a film if the project is good," Marvin qualifies.

Otherwise, the Calayan endorser would rather focus on TV work and his seven restaurants, the latest of which will rise at Greenbelt soon. This time, it will be an Italian-American restaurant called Marciano, named after undefeated boxer Rocky Marciano, favorite athlete of Marvin's business partner.

As if seven restaurants are not enough, Marvin plans to put up more in the next few years. He enjoys sampling new dishes himself, and has even created one—*Salpiwow*—for his customers.

Like the savvy restaurateur that he has become though, Marvin will make sure he doesn't put up so many branches lest he spread himself too thin and start neglecting them. This, he knows, can send his business spiraling to its doom. Everything he has worked so hard for all these years will go pfft.

There are more lessons in store—as actor, entrepreneur and father—for Marvin. As usual, this fast learner can't wait to turn them into springboards for growth, for himself and his sons. →

DOLLYWOOD

Zoren's surprise birthday gift to Carmina

by DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL
Inquirer.net

MANILA—Most show biz unions are only good until it LUSTS. Carmina Villaroel and Zoren Legazpi are an exception to that.

"Zoren and I can talk about anything under the sun," Mina beamed. "To this day, he makes poems for me on post-it notes which he sticks all over our place. Even when he's busy, he would stop whatever he's doing when I make lambing to him to massage my feet."

Zoren gifted Mina with a gold bracelet when she turned 33 last August. "I was really surprised because he never gave me jewelry. *Naka*-engrave: 81708, PRO 19:14, Love *Tatay*."

Love advice she would give her twins Mavy and Cassy when they're old enough? "*Ay! Kung pwede lang*, Zoren and I don't want our kids to fall in love!"

Mamma Mina! Now she really knows. My! My! She could never let her twins go.

New 'Bad Boy'

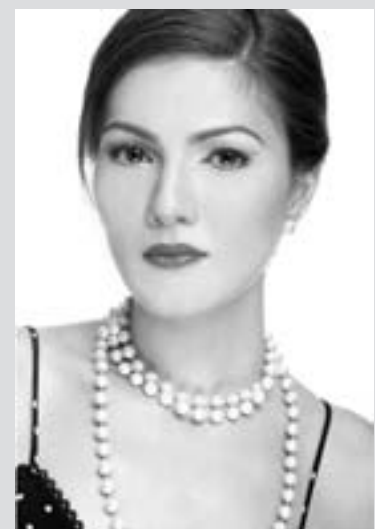
Baron Geisler is picking up where Robin Padilla left off as local cinema's "Bad Boy." Doesn't it bother him that people could no longer draw the line between Baron the person and Baron the personality? "It works for me because my roles are weird and off-beat," he replied. "I'm not bad *naman*, just a tough guy."

This toughie who confesses to be a mama's boy is a misunderstood, underrated actor. But with renewed passion for his craft and sincerity to reach out, pre-conceived notions about him will be erased in due time.

Birthday song

I teased Dingdong Dantes. "You might get offers to record a CD after your cool rendition of *Crazy Lil Thing Called Love* in your birthday concert at Araneta!" He laughed. "No thanks. I'll just stick to acting. *Pag kinarin ko ang* singing it might ruin everything."

Dong is unlike other actors who capitalize on fame to dupe the public that they can carry a tune. Dong never pretends to be something he's not. E! Channel's Sexiest Man would rather let his body do the singing.



Savoring motherhood

Jennylyn Mercado is savoring the joys of motherhood—privately. "I always whisper to my baby that we should be strong for each other," Jen said. "I'll teach him to be God-fearing."

The new single mother doesn't want to talk about her baby's father (Patrick Garcia) anymore. "*Mahirap na kargo ko lahat pero masanay din ako*." Rock a Bye Bye Patrick? →



BACKSTORY

Virtual holiday and staying well

by LEA SALONGA
Inquirer.net

MANILA—My voice (and the rest of me) is getting a three-week break from *Cinderella*. For three weeks, no *chaîné* turns, no waltzing, no running around.

I've been trying to use the time as productively as I can— seeing friends, seeing friends in rehearsal and/or in concert, shopping for my supplies for China (our welcome packet states that on some of the stops, there just might be none of the things we're used to or take for granted, like toilet paper), spending quality and quantity time with my family and just getting some rest. I did have a couple of singing assignments during this little holiday, but for most of my days, I'm just resting. It won't be long before I have to start twirling and turning, and spending many hours on my feet, so I'd better enjoy this mini-hiatus while I can.

However, even though I'm on a bit of a break, I still need to be mindful about taking care of myself. I still avoid people who have a cold as if they have the plague (I remember bumping into Maestro Ryan Cayabyab at the UP College of Music when I was 10 and in my very *suplada* way, telling him not to kiss me because he was sick), take my vitamins everyday, get a full night of sleep and try not to overdo anything that would zap me senseless. Sure, I do have fun, but within reasonable limits, and I still keep some sense of responsibility.

So how do I take care of myself for work, either on active duty or at rest?

Keep warm. A few days ago, I accompanied Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo to one rehearsal day at the Meralco Theater. It's very, very cold in that theater. It's been called a "meat locker" by not just a few of the actors who have trod its boards, and it's not uncommon to spy people wearing winter jackets to keep themselves from getting sick. Knowing what I was getting into, I brought a jacket and a scarf. The moment we walked in, we wrapped ourselves in our coats, and found a few other people similarly cloaked. Smart, very smart.

It's prudent to always keep a scarf or light jacket handy in case you're going into a cold hotel, restaurant or place of work. (Pashminas

are fashionable, anyway, and there are cheap ones on sale.)

Limit the drink. By drink, I mean alcohol. Booze tends to dehydrate me (not to mention inflate my waistline), so I limit my consumption. I will still have the occasional social glass of something at a dinner or a gathering.

However, I will try my darndest to avoid it altogether when I'm working. I've found that even just one beer tips the scale, and not in my favor. It's a promise I made to myself to avoid missing shows and feeling less than optimal.

(For those who wonder about having ice or no ice in a drink: I'll have an iced beverage once in a while but will opt for "room temperature" most of the time, even on hiatus.)

Eat well. No, I haven't been overeating during my little vacation, although I have to admit, the temptation can be great. Sure, I'll allow myself a few bites of dessert, but not to the point of having to pray to God on my knees to get those extra pounds off my waist, thighs, hips and wherever else that tiramisu/pannacotta/banana split may have landed. I try to eat as many greens as I can, even when dining out, and choose healthier entrees. But if my body is craving that delicious crab dish from one of my favorite restaurants, then I have it. I just make up for it the next day.

When I'm working, I do make the effort to eat healthy, taking into account my caloric output when I'm doing a show. Singing, by itself, takes a considerable amount of energy. But it's not an excuse for being overindulgent so I have to be careful.

Laugh out loud, very loud. Okay, I'm a hearty laugher, as many of my theater friends will testify. They will attest to my having a distinct, vociferous, boisterous laugh. I'm proud of it! With almost radar-like accuracy, an actor (who will have no prior knowledge of my attendance) can locate me, just by the sound of my voice at the

delivery of a punch line.

Yes, I love to laugh—not snicker, not giggle. It's great for my spirit as well as my body, and laughing amongst people that I love the most is incredibly healthy. I laugh when my daughter does something particularly funny or when my husband tells a good joke (his laugh is pretty cute, too) or when I'm watching a show and I hear something land ever so perfectly.

Know when to turn it down. I have virtually no indoor voice. My speaking voice can be loud, too, especially when I get excited or nervous. However, something I have to watch out for is screaming, shouting or speaking too loudly.

I have the tendency to do one of these things when I'm not thinking about it. So occasionally (okay, fine, frequently), I have to tell myself to watch my vocal volume when I'm in a restaurant or in casual conversation, so as not to strain my vocal chords.

I've found myself in the position of having absolutely no voice. It's happened quite a few times in my career and it's horrible when it does. Not talking, of course, does the trick to fix things, along with some medication prescribed by my otorhinolaryngologist, or ENT.

I've also gotten myself one of those Magic Slate things, where I can write, erase and write again. It helps me to communicate when I'm on forced vocal rest. I mean, I can't take my laptop everywhere. It can be cumbersome, as much as I love that machine.

Lastly, surround yourself with love. Surround yourself constantly with people you love, respect and admire. Hold them, hug them, laugh and play with them. Life is way too short to be around the toxic or the negative. More often than not, I've found myself in the company of people who, after spending enough time with them, make me go, "Now that was a waste of time... never again!"

Seek the company of people who speak kindly (and even incredibly) of others, who encourage rather than discourage, who boost you rather than push you down. Seek those who will magnify the good in you.

Take care of yourselves, everyone. The world does need you.