

State Sen. William "Bill" Haine, D-Alton, said he had already made up his mind he would not run for re-election when his term is up this November, before he was diagnosed with blood cancer. At age 74, the Vietnam Veteran who earned a Bronze Star for meritorious service said he is ready to spend time with his seven children, 33 grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Haine shared the story of his journey from diagnosis of multiple myeloma including chemotherapy treatment and stem cell replacement at a special celebration of cancer survivorship hosted by OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center this week. The longtime public servant is now in remission.

His message to cancer survivors -- They are part of a great group that has successfully fought 'The Emperor of All Maladies.' The reference is the title of a 2010 Pulitzer Prize winning book by an oncologist who shares his experiences treating patients while also giving a history of cancer treatment.

The long-time public service quoted Pope John Paul II who pointed out suffering is a part of life.

"If you didn't have suffering, you wouldn't have joy or satisfaction and if life was all roses, it would be boring."

Haine is senator for the 56th Senate district, which covers most of Madison County and stretches south to Interstate 64 to include parts of O'Fallon. The Assistant Majority Leader spent 16 years as a state senator and 40 years in elected office.

The tall, distinguished-looking Haine is the Hollywood version of an elder statesman with his white-silver hair. Haine lost his hair from chemotherapy but likes to joke about it.

"I looked like Yule Brenner last year and then I developed into Bruce Willis and now I'm back into an aging Buddy Holly. If the winds blowing, it's Jerry Lee Lewis!"

Haine believes his cancer, diagnosed in 2016, was a result of exposure to Agent Orange during his service in Viet Name. After his blood cancer was detected, Haine always kept a positive outlook and never feared the worst. However, the lifelong Catholic said he prepared for the worst and takes his inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi.

"His reference to death was 'sister death.' He was not afraid of death. We think of death as the Grim Reaper. Not Francis. So, I'm with Francis."

The upbeat lawmaker is still making his way to Springfield for regular meetings and jokes, "I am a survivor of political wars as well as cancer. I don't know what was worse." Haine told other survivors he discovered that he could take more punishment than he thought he could and that he "played the hand he was dealt." He also learned his wife Anna was "a lady of great steel as well as compassion" as his primary caregiver.

The Alton native was at the groundbreaking for OSF Saint Anthony's Cancer Center. Construction is underway on a new, standalone, \$14 million dollar cancer center – the first in the Riverbend area and will address the growing need for outpatient oncology services. Haine says he's looking forward to having such a state-of-the-art facility in place.

"To have such an enterprise being built, it's a statement of confidence in the area. So, I was very pleased and confident that it'll add to the quality of life for many people," he said. He added, "It will be a source of healing for generations. It will bring the best here so I was very pleased to hear about it and I was very pleased to have it come together.

OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Center for Cancer Care has been accredited and it's nationally recognized by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer for providing excellence in cancer care. The center has a strong partnership with the American Cancer Society and recently received the society's Mission Award as a recognition of the alliance with ACS support services and its commitment to serving patients holistically.