

# Man in coma needs miracle for recovery, court is told

By Ray Long

Doctors who examined Sidney Greenspan, who has been comatose since a 1984 stroke, testified Thursday that no one in his condition has ever recovered.

Dr. Audrius Plioplys, a neurologist with Michael Reese Hospital, testified that Greenspan's condition is incurable and irreversible. The doctor said Greenspan would die within a week from dehydration if his feeding tube is removed.

Patrick Murphy, the Cook County public guardian, asked whether Greenspan could ever recover, and Plioplys replied it would take "nothing short of a miracle."

Plioplys contended that Greenspan's occasional grimaces in reaction to pain or other movements in his North Side nursing home are simply reflexes rather than cognitive, or knowledgeable, reactions to a doctor's attempt to stimulate a response.

Dr. Charles Schikman, Greenspan's primary physician and a specialist in internal medicine, testified that the patient is ravaged by Alzheimer's disease, unable to swallow without choking and in a "persistent vegetative state."

Greenspan, 82, of Chicago, went into a coma when he had a stroke six years ago. He has been fed through a tube since May, 1985, when he was rushed to a hospital because he was choking and turning blue, his wife, Belle, said.

The hearing was the result of a ruling by the Illinois Supreme Court that said the case must return to Circuit Court for further proceedings.

Judge Richard Dowdle is trying to determine if evidence clearly establishes whether Greenspan wanted a feeding tube withdrawn if he ever became comatose.

Murphy said a ruling could be made today.

The same day the judge decided to allow the feeding tube to be removed and Mr. Greenspan died within a week. This case received a great deal of media attention and motivated the government of the State of Illinois to introduce legislation about advanced directives. My appearance at this trial was pivotal in having advanced directives legislation introduced and passed in Illinois.