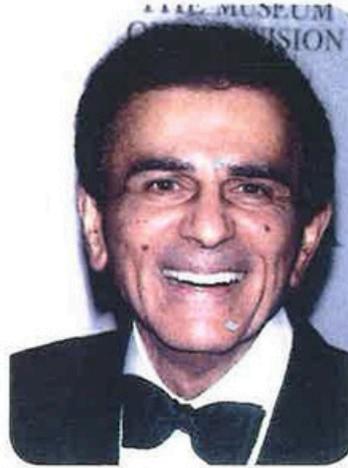


Mental incapacity of late Casey Kasem proves need for communication

Medical directives not enough when planning for future

The legendary voice of American Top 40 and the unforgettable voice of "Shaggy" from Scooby-Doo, Casey Kasem died June 15, 2014. A caustic family psychodrama unfolded in the mainstream media at the time, between his second wife and children from his first marriage.



Kasem died at age 82 of complications related to a disease much like Parkinson's and Al-

zheimer's. Most of us will have fond memories of Kasem's career, but the embittered battle that has played out in public between his family won't be forgotten any time soon. It continues today over the location of his remains.

Kasem did plan ahead. In 2007, he signed a medical directive naming one daughter from his previous marriage, rather than his second wife of 34 years, to make his medical decisions if he could not communicate. Kasem did not take into account the lengths his wife would go to be in charge of his living choices, which are covered by a medical power of attorney.



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When Casey's health deteriorated in 2013, Jean stopped allowing the children to see their father. In October of 2013, the

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children publicly demonstrated in front of the couple's home. On May 7, 2014, Jean spirited Kasem away from California to Seattle, where the legal case over conservatorship was escalating.

Accusations have flown in both directions, from poor care to the daughter's final decision to withdraw life support on June 15. While both sides of this problem could have been kinder, pre-existing hostilities prevented peaceful resolution in this case.

The lesson for all is that just signing a health care directive is not enough to avoid painful situations like the Kasem family has encountered. Everyone needs to scrutinize their family dynamics and choose medical decision-makers who will not only carry out your wishes, but

who will be cognizant about your important relationships in the process.

This also means that you need to discuss your plans with your loved ones. You should have assistance drafting directives that are specific about your wishes, but also have specific provisions for resolving conflicts among your decision-makers or family members.

The Kasem scenario is not exclusive to blended families or second marriages. The mental incapacitation of the elderly in every family has the potential to cause concern or conflict, especially when parents have failed to plan and be clear with family members about their wishes.

It is not enough just to have "standard or fill-in-the-blank legal documents." Counseling, advice and thoughtful consideration of planning for incapacitation should be discussed with your elder law attorney.