



Scales Elder Law Newsletter

"Caring for a loved one shouldn't cost a lifetime of savings."



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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

In the spirit of the Holidays, the focus of this month's article is about making the season a little bit brighter for our loved ones in a nursing home. Despite all of the festivities, this time of year can also be hard for those in long-term care facilities. They may be missing celebrating cherished holiday traditions with loved ones, or this may be the first year that they can no longer spend the holidays in their own home. It can also be hard for family and friends to find time to visit or to know what to give as a gift.

To help friends and family find meaningful ways to share the joys of the holiday season with a loved one in a nursing home, I am pleased to share the following suggestions, kindly provided by Cindy Godfrey, co-owner of Rolling Fields (www.rollingfields.com) in Conneautville, Pennsylvania:

"Sometimes it is hard to decide what holiday gift to get someone who is residing in a nursing home. Usually, the rooms are relatively small, so there is not a lot of space for clothing or "knick knacks." Some practical or useful items might include:

- *Writing paper*
- *Pens*
- *A roll of stamps*
- *An assortment of greeting cards*
- *A live plant*
- *A watering can*

- *A bird feeder (check with the maintenance department for any guidelines)*
- *Bird seed*
- *A blanket or throw*
- *Slippers (check with the home for suggestions on the appropriate type of footwear to prevent falls)*

If you do purchase clothing or blankets, be sure to label these in some way. Many clothing items come in over the Holidays and it is usually a difficult task for the home to get them all labeled accurately.

Remember that Poinsettia plants are poisonous and may not be appropriate for people with severe dementia or in a home where there are animals. Consider a Christmas cactus instead.

The most important gift you can give during the Holidays is yourself. This time of year can be very hard on those who are remembering happier times and the family and friends they have lost over the years. Take time out from your shopping, baking, decorating and hustle and bustle to visit those who can no longer do those things, but probably wish they could. Stop by for just a few hours and make new memories with the people that need you the most."

Many thanks to Cindy for sharing these thoughtful ideas. And we should also not forget to thank the hard-working nursing home staff and caregivers, who do their best to make the Holidays special for the residents.

From all of us to all of you - Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year!

The content herein is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For specific questions you should consult a qualified elder law attorney.

Note: *With the new restrictions in the Deficit Reduction Act, it is more true than ever that "time works against you" when planning for long-term care. It is important that families who have a spouse, parent or other loved one needing long-term nursing care contact a knowledgeable and experienced elder law attorney for advice as soon as possible. While ideally this should be done when there is at least five years before such care will be needed, families need to realize that even with the new restrictions in the DRA, there remain planning opportunities for seniors facing an immediate crisis. Still, every day of delay represents a potential \$220 of irretrievable loss.*

Kemp Scales, CELA,* is an Elder Law Attorney who serves clients throughout western Pennsylvania from his offices in Erie, Titusville, and Pittsburgh. Attorney Scales frequently makes presentations to professional and civic groups, to senior centers, hospitals and long-term care facilities throughout western Pennsylvania. If you would be interested in having attorney Scales speak to your group, please contact us at toll free at (888) 827-2788 or by e-mail at Info@ScalesElderLaw.com.

** Certified as an Elder Law Attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation as authorized by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.*

We are in the planning stages for two speaking engagements at St. Brigid Church, Meadville, Pennsylvania, on April 20, 2009 and June 1, 2009, each beginning at 7:00 p.m. Look for more details in upcoming newsletters.



The Colonel's Corner

From Attorney Scales' 91-year old father, Col. J. Shelton Scales, USMCR-Retired, who lives in a senior retirement community in southern Virginia.

See Me**

What do you see, nurses, what do you see?
What are you thinking, when you look at me --
A crabby old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with far-away eyes,
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply,
When you say in a loud voice -- "I do wish you'd try."

Who seems not to notice the things that you do,
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe,
Who resisting or not, lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill.

Is that what you're thinking, is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse, you're looking at ME...
I'll tell you who I am, as I sit here so still;
As I rise at your bidding, as I eat at your will.

I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters, who love one another,
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet.
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet;
A bride soon at twenty -- my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep;
At twenty-five now I have young of my own,
Who need me to build a secure, happy home;
A woman of thirty, my young now grow fast,
Bound to each other with ties that should last;
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn;
At fifty once more babies play 'round my knee,
Again we know children, my loved one and me.

Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead,
I look at the future, I shudder with dread,
For my young are all rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years and the love that I've known;
I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel --
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool.

The body is crumbled, grace and vigor depart,
There now is a stone where I once had a heart,
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,
And now and again my battered heart swells.

I remember the joys, I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living life over again,
I think of the years, all too few -- gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last --
So open your eyes, nurses, open and see,
Not a crabby old woman, look closer -- see ME!