

Long-Life Planning: An Approach Coming of Age

This year our law practice has completed its 40th year in Sarasota. Over that time frame, we have seen Sarasota grow in size and change in complexion.

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We have also seen that among the older clients we encounter, “older-age” too has changed. Whereas mid to late 80s used to mark the outer limits of the usual age spectrum, now our clients are celebrating mid-90s to over 100.

While for many this truly is a celebration, some are not as fortunate. Advancing age can bring with it challenges- the results of illness, accident, or simply aging. These changes sometimes develop slowly. More often they come on suddenly; for example, a stroke, a bone-fracturing fall, a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease, or the dementias that accompany them. Dramatically, our expectations of how our lives will unfold are replaced with a new reality. Long-life planning is the way to prepare for the unexpected.

I remember when I first started preparing Wills for clients, my amazement with how many would begin the conversation, “This is how I would like to leave my estate *if* I die....” I often added, “You mean *when* you die...” but was met with resistance. Later, when I would discuss concerns about addressing

long-term care needs, I would hear a similar, but even more powerful disbelief and resistance. I learned that people often ignore unpleasant realities to avoid dealing with them: if we don’t discuss the “bad” thing, we can prevent it from happening. The truth, however, is the opposite.

Life is going to happen and how it will evolve for us is unpredictable. The writer E.M. Forester said it best: “We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” Long-life planning is the rational response to this truism. It allows us to confront the possibilities by designing strategies and legal structures to overcome uncertainties such as:

Who will act for us if we are unable to handle our finances?

Who will help guide our medical care if we are unable?

How do we protect ourselves against financial exploitation?

Will we be able to stay at home, or move to a care facility?

How will we pay for this?

These are just a few of the concerns that are addressed and resolvable through comprehensive long-life planning. Isn’t it time?

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Editor’s Note: Article submitted by Advocates in Aging. For more information call 941-365-9900.

**Aging can be a mixed blessing
Sometimes, when you least expect,
something happens... to someone you love
and your life will never be the same.**

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