



Pathfinders in Elder Law



“Her last three and a half years were a particular blessing to me and my family.”

Reflections on Elder Care, Up Close

By **Scott Severns**

Betty Severns
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"For 90 years she graced this earth." So began the announcement for my mom's memorial service.

Her last 3 ½ years were a particular blessing to me and my family. She had moved back to Indianapolis by her choice after 32 years in Florida. She chose to live in an independent living apartment just 10 minutes from our home and my office. We visited together most days and she was here for the births of our two grandsons, the latest last October. She enjoyed remarkably good health until the last 2 months of her life. I miss her.

For thirty (30) years I have heard the stories of hundreds of sons and daughters who, in various ways, looked after an aging parent. I have learned about aging, health and long-term care from classes, seminars and what clients have shared. Yet, nothing could fully prepare me for my experiences of the last 9 months, in which I was deeply involved in the final months of life and attended the deaths of both my father-in-

law and my mother.

On the late evening of December 17th, I received the message that my mother had not come down from her apartment for dinner and when staff checked on her, she seemed "not right." I rushed over to her apartment and a nurse from the adjacent health center met me at the door. She was awake and spoke to us coherently, but with an uncharacteristic flatness of tone. Her blood pressure was high, very high, and we suspected stroke. Off to the emergency room at Clarian North.

stayed with her as doctors and nurses checked her out, held her hand as they poked and prodded and walked down with her for the CT scan, then an MRI. We talked. She breathed deeply and slowly. I was grateful that breathing techniques she and I had practiced together seemed to be helping her through this challenge.

The doctor came in after scan results were in. A large area of her right frontal lobe showed a hemorrhage. They were working to lower her blood pressure but could not be certain that the bleeding had stopped.

The first recommendation was presented: transport to Methodist where neurosurgeons were available. I agreed. In retrospect, that

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may have been the most significant decision that I made, but over the following two months there were many, many questions about care, rehabilitation, tests and treatments that needed my imperfect decisions. Although I felt prepared, supported and reasonably confident in my decisions, the question always lingers in the background, "What if I had...."

To be continued.... 🏠



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