



# LAW OFFICES OF AVIV S. BLIWAS, LLC

MEDICAID PLANNING, ELDER LAW and ESTATE PLANNING

*Protecting Families' Life Savings from Nursing Home Costs*

September 2014 • 1st Edition



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## Diary of a Caregiver

This will be the last in my caregiver series. There is a lot more that could have been said. I could have written one of these every month for years and still had new things to say or felt the need to repeat the old things. But the time always comes to move on.



You may think I was dreading death, as we all do usually at some point. And to some extent I was. But for my mom, I could see her suffering, I saw how much pain she was in. All I wanted to do was be able to take it away from her. I understand now the big controversy with assisted suicide and why people can find it appealing. When the end came for my mom, of course, I was devastated. But I was so happy she wasn't suffering anymore.

I think I had the same feelings for my dad, though he had seemed on the road to recovery when infection struck him down and 2 days later he was dead. But he was suffering also. And he was tired. I could see it.

We never have as long as we want with the people we love. That's a given. Even if my parents had lived to 100 it would have been too short. What's hard for caregivers, is that for a very long time, life has revolved around the person you're caring for. When they're gone, suddenly you feel adrift—without purpose. And when you feel that way, it's easy to fall into depression.

Once nice feature of funerals (and one of their purposes in some cultures), is it gives you a task—there are arrangements to make, people to talk to, paperwork to be done. So consider some sort of funeral—it doesn't have to be religious, maybe it could just be a family and friends gathering. But it helps start the healing process.

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## WHAT'S NEW WITH US

August was sort of same old, same old, around here. No one went on vacation. We didn't have any business trips. It was not quite as busy, letting us work on some ongoing long term projects. Our two part-time summer students who were helping out are back in school so it's just me, Jennette, and Augusta again. But we've got quite a bit on the horizon.

Throughout the fall, there are 3 out of state trainings I may be attending. It could be just one or two of them or it could be all 3. We're getting travel quotes and deciding which are the most important to get to. Augusta and Jennette will both be doing some intensive Medicaid training via webinar in November. All 3 of us recently visited both the Cumberland and Dauphin County Area Agency on Aging offices and met with staff there to get a good idea of all the program options, what the qualifications are, and how to apply. We all learned a lot and feel like we now know about a lot of resources out there available for clients and seniors and their families, in general.

We've been meeting with various businesses lately to upgrade our technology to help us run faster and more efficiently. We're working on getting quotes and proposals and expect some changes to be implemented in the fall. This won't affect any of you, it will just help us do what we do, better. There is the possibility of a move to a bigger office, I've started looking, but we'll let you know if we do that. For now, we're still here.

We hope you all enjoyed your summer and are looking forward to fall!

But when funerals are over, and the extended family leaves town, and everyone is back at work and back to their lives, there you still are. It's like just your clock stopped and everyone else's kept going. And sometimes you think to yourself "Hey, I'm stopped over here, why are you back to your life as if the world hasn't just tilted the way it has for me?" I appreciated most, the people who didn't just drop away after the funeral was over. The ones who kept checking in once a month, for months. Because that's when you need it most. Our lives are busy and we often don't think to check in with someone who has suffered a loss months or years after the loss occurred. But trust me, they still feel it and would probably appreciate it that you thought of them. So try to remember to pick up the phone and say hello. Don't let people isolate themselves after loss—it's way too easy to fall deep into depression when you are isolated.

And life does go on. You feel like you don't want it to, but it does, whether you like it or not. I remember clinging to old friendships, old relationships because those people "knew me when I had parents" or even knew my parents. But to shut out new friendships, new possibilities would be truly self-sabotaging. And so, eventually, I had to let new people in and let old people go. But it took a very long time. I think it wasn't until about 2 years after my father's death that there started to be more good days than bad days. I wasn't fully able to let go of some of their things until just this year. Healing can take time and everyone is different. Just because you think someone should be over it already, doesn't mean there is something wrong with them. So please remember to be supportive and patient. Encourage someone to go to therapy or a support group, it helps.

I'll close this series with one final thought, for anyone experiencing loss or just trying to help or understand someone else going through grief. I was talking to some close friends of my mother's after she died, trying to articulate what I was feeling. No strangers to loss themselves, they said something that summed up exactly what I felt and what I think most people feel, and it was this:

"The hole in your heart never goes away, you just learn to live with it."

# THEATRE CORNER

by Jennette Harrison



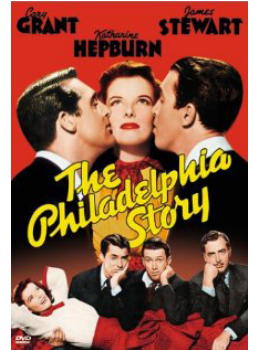
I decided not to audition for Bill W & Dr. Bob at Open Stage of Harrisburg. As I said in last month's newsletter, I don't think I fit any of the characters. I will however audition for A Raisin in the Sun. My audition date is set for September 14th. I am spending the rest of August and early September preparing for the audition. I will have to give a two-minute monologue and read from the script.

I want the part of Beneatha, Walter Younger's little sister. However, in re-reading the play, I realize I am not her physical type. Her body-type is mentioned in conversation between the characters. Unfortunately, my body-type is the exact opposite. So, I could be out of that role solely based on this, which makes me a little sad. But, that's the business.

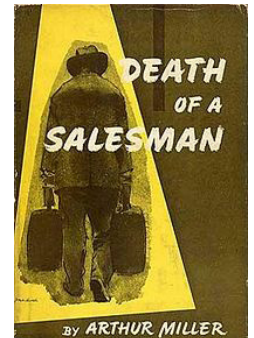
The only other role I could get cast in is that of Ruth Younger, Walter's wife. I'm right in her age range, though I look younger, which is why I thought I could have a chance at the 20-something, Beneatha. Ruth is a major role. I'm not sure I would get cast as her. But, I want to be optimistic, so I plan to prepare as best as I can for this audition. I need to make sure I understand this character in and out. If I'm prepared, I have a good chance at Ruth. I'll keep you all updated. Final casting decisions probably won't be made until mid to late November. Rehearsals start in early December.

### Around Town:

September 5-14 :  
*The Philadelphia Story* at  
**Theatre Harrisburg's  
Krevsky Center**



September 4-20:  
*Death of a Salesman* at  
**Ephrata Performing  
Arts Center**



September 26-October 12:  
*Evita* at **Oyster Mill Playhouse**



October 3-19:  
*Driving Miss Daisy*  
at **Open Stage  
of Harrisburg**



October 10-19:  
*Jesus Christ Superstar*  
**Carlisle Theatre**



## Question of the Month

**Q:** I'm a Veteran (or surviving spouse) and I get my regular pension but I (or my Veteran spouse) do not have a service-connected disability so I'm not qualified to get any further benefits from the VA, right?

**A:** You may be entitled to an additional monthly income benefit, even if you or the Veteran spouse do not have a service-connected disability. Particularly if you're getting some sort of in-home care or if you live in an assisted living, personal care home, or nursing home or your spouse does, there may be some additional benefits available from the VA. They are related to income and assets, but the rules are not necessarily as stringent as you may assume and there are often ways to get a family eligible for those benefits, even if they don't appear to be at first glance. There are also sometimes some service requirements to be eligible (type of discharge, when you served). If you aren't sure and you could use that extra income, stop in and see us—we'll let you know if we think we can get you those benefits.

## Calendar

**September 1** – Labor Day office closed

**September 6-7** – Aviv in Pittsburgh cheering on the Steelers against the Browns

**September 7** – Grandparent's Day

**September 17** – Aviv's best friend Dawn visiting from California

**September 24** – Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown

**September 26-29** – Aviv in Washington DC

**October 22** – Aviv speaking at Cumberland County Senior Expo