

Nursing & Assisted Living Facility Professional

NOW IN OUR 10TH YEAR!

“NEWS AND VIEWS YOU CAN REALLY USE”

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SENT EACH MONTH TO YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE HEALTHCARE HEROES

THE ADELMAN ADVANTAGE by Rebecca Adelman

My Father's Daughter

In Memory Melvyn K. Adelman

April 9, 1934 to November 21, 2020



**“There are far, far better things
ahead than any we leave
behind.” C.S. Lewis.**

The ending of 2020 marks the beginning of 2021. Endings. Beginnings. Suffering and loss. Hope and inspiration. Experiencing and trying to embrace the paradoxes of life have defined this extraordinary year. A never-ending thank you to the healthcare teams and other essential workers who have and continue to sacrifice so much for our communities.

This year also marks the 10th year of The Adelman Advantage and my partnership with Chip Kessler and Extended Care Products. My gratitude to Chip for being the most patient and supportive publisher, editor and friend. Thanks to all of you who read and share the newsletter and provide valuable feedback. I love our community. We look forward to 2021 and beyond and delivering quality information and education resources in the senior living space. Stay tuned for some new features.

This last article for 2020 is in memory of my dad, who left us on November 21, 2020. Only one other time did I pen a personal article in this space; January 2018. I wrote “Love Letters to My Parents”. These imaginary letters to and from my dad were inspired by dad’s journey into the world of dementia. Despite committing my 30-year professional career to senior living and educating on managing expectations and end-of-life care planning to healthcare providers, families, legislators and lawyers, I was not prepared for dad’s last weeks on this good earth. By sharing this story, I hope not only to offer continued healing to myself but also to encourage everyone to reframe a relationship with death.

Every great story has a beginning. This one begins with the transistor radio.

The Transistor Radio

I would lie in bed in the early morning hours waiting for the sound. My dad would awake every weekday morning at 5:00 am and

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be at work at our family business by 6:00 am. Before beginning his shaving routine in the bathroom across from my bedroom in our small home in Michigan, he'd turn on his transistor radio. As soon as I heard the crackle of the radio as he found the morning news and weather station, I'd walk into the bathroom, dad would wrap me in a towel and put me up on the sink area to watch him shave. I memorized every move of his meticulous routine. We wouldn't talk. I would just watch and we'd listen to the radio. He'd warm his face with a wash cloth, put on his shave cream and make a smiley face around his lips for me. He would start his shaving pattern and leave a small square patch on his Adam's Apple. Once he told me this was a dangerous area to shave. I would hold my breath, praying he wouldn't cut himself (and he never did). He'd smile at me and I would breathe a sigh of relief. The foggy mirror, the smell of his menthol shave cream; the face slaps of Clubman Pinault After Shave Lotion, the feel of his fresh shaven face as he kissed me good morning and tucked me back into bed.

The Symphony and Sports

My dad did not need a book on how to raise a daughter. In fact, he could have written the book. The chapters would be called "Independence", "Health", "Religion", "Friendship", "Love", "Music" and "Sports." Once a month for years and years, dad would take me on a "father-daughter" weekend to Detroit. Our dates always included the Detroit Symphony, Jim's Garage across from Cobo Hall for a fancy dinner and a professional sports event. The chilled salad plates and chocolate soufflé. Gathering autographs from every Lion, Tiger, Red Wing and Piston I could meet. While we had fun, my dad would weave in life's lessons. Lessons about ethics, love, giving of yourself, wanderlust, telling the truth, teamwork, how music is good for the

soul, money management, law, healthy living, God. I would never make it through the whole symphony or a game. My dad would carry me off, draped over his shoulder, as I dreamed of our next adventure.

Growing Up

I followed a rather ordinary course with extraordinary drive and ambition thanks to my dad. I became a third generation Wolverine, and then earned my Master's and law degrees all the while traveling around the world. As I pursued life, my dad did the same. Not satisfied at having been placed on a train at the age of reason, the shades drawn and his life's course and destination already determine, he got off the train. His itinerary to death changed and he wanted to feel important and be doing what was important. At the age of 50, he retired and completed his Master's in criminal justice and public policy at our local university. He then became a beloved professor at the same university endowing a scholarship and founding a girl's cross-country team at the university. I used to call dad "Title IX".

Dad began living according to the person he really was and by example, showed me what it meant to find one's reality. Dad was a runner before running was popular and he raced nearly every weekend until he turned 75 years old and he would get lost or confused due to his dementia. In the creative action of running and the intellectual action of teaching, his life gained significance. If I had a penny for the many dreams he delivered to his students, friends and to me....

Only once did we talk about death and dying. When he was 60 and appointed me as his patient advocate. Only 25 years later, would I read that document again and recollect our conversations about him wanting to be allowed to die. That he did not fear

death itself as much as the indignities of deterioration, dependence and hopeless pain. While I drafted his Durable Medical Power of Attorney, I did not truly understand the meaning of the words he selected nor the immense responsibility of accepting the role as his Patient Advocate until more than two decades later.

Growing Old

Despite open-heart surgery and a diagnosis of prostate cancer and dementia, dad and I never had conversations about death and dying after he executed his power of attorney. As my dad grew older and his needs grew greater, I continued to educate professionally at conferences on the perception of death in our society and its influences on risk, lawsuits, patient choice and quality of care. You can review my presentation from 2005 and there you will see my opinions and advice to healthcare providers and regulators about collaborative end-of-life care planning, hospice and palliative care models vs. curative models that incentivize unneeded care and trauma for the dying and increased hospital admissions. I advocate for mitigating risk and managing expectations through conversations on palliative care with an evidence-based perspective from hundreds of depositions of family members and physicians and thousands of hours of interviews with care staff in long-term care defense litigation and claims management.

Professionally, I knew that by reframing the conversation around death and dying, my clients, senior living healthcare providers, could mitigate the risk of claims by managing end-of-life expectations. What I would come to understand only in the final weeks of my dad's life, is that while I had built an awareness about mortality into my professional conversations, I had not built it into my personal life especially with my dad.

Since March, like all residents in assisted living and skilled nursing communities, my dad had

been isolated and I was caring for him from 1000 miles away. His appetite decreased, his muscles atrophied, he became weaker and was falling more often. His dementia progressed rapidly in isolation. I installed communications in his apartment when he moved in January 2018 so I could see and talk to him every day and note changes in his conditions and provide information for interventions. I watched his steady decline over two and half years yet he would bounce back, regain momentum, and restore hope for me that he would live as long as my grandparents who both witnessed 100 years.

Although I would hear him calling out in pain when he moved, talking about his own death to his caregivers, fearing another fall and rejecting care, I never reached out to anyone to discuss my dad's life and death.

He was transported alone to the hospital after his last fall in September. Dad remained alone at the hospital until I was able to have him discharged to his assisted living 72 hours later. With each fall, his condition and quality of life deteriorated. I already had decided to move him to Memphis to be near me at an assisted living so I could care for and be with him and love him into a quality life. While I understood that the transfer would be challenging and he would have to adjust at his age, in his condition, during a pandemic, I saw no alternative other than him dying alone. I made the plans and he arrived to his new assisted living home only miles from me. Our reunion would go viral if I posted it – so heart-warming.

The Beginning of the End

When dad arrived, I immediately knew that what I saw on daily videos and in weekly FaceTime meetings with his caregivers was that he was much more ill than I believed, his dementia more advanced and the quality of his life had greatly diminished. In the

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unfolding of the next two months, I had to learn what living well in the face of death meant for my dad and for me. My dad was not able to have conversations about living and dying and the subjects of death and how it intertwines with life were no longer distant.

I had mistaken my dad being alive with my dad living and not dying. My choices for him were made in the limiting space of medicine and it was only weeks before my dad left that the choices turned toward palliative care – toward “patient and family-centered care that optimizes quality of life by anticipating, preventing and treating suffering.” I have shared with thousands of people that the way to reduce risk in long-term care is to educate families about end-of-life and the choice of a palliative care model throughout the continuum of illness addressing physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs. Making critical decisions in a complex healthcare system that considers dying a medical event is not realistic. It was personal now.

I was able to be with my dad his last weeks and bring his life to a close and provide comfort and care. Every day, I would tell him stories, watch sports, show him pictures and describe the many medals he had won in this race called life.

His final words to me were “We’ve loved each other for a long time. A very long time, darling”.

“Yes we did, dad. “

Life After Death

As Dr. BJ Miller, a palliative care specialist with an incredible near death and resurrection story, says “Life is not a fight against death.” We talk about death as a failure. “He failed treatment” or “He lost the battle”. What if we radically changed the way we prepare for and experience end-of-life? What if the healthcare

system redesigns its policies and financial agendas to be human-centered? What if the instincts of the healthcare system can be changed from aggressive and intensive and invasive to person-centered care?

These are the questions I’ll continue to ask and invite into the conversations about living and dying. I welcome you to do the same. Here is what I now know thanks to the adventures with my dad:

Have the conversations about death and dying now;

Love every moment ferociously; and

In the end, it is love that matters the most.



Rebecca Adelman is an entrepreneur, influencer, thought leader and founder of Adelman Law Firm and Claims Management, a Women’s Business Enterprise National Council

(WBENC) certified Women Business Enterprise (WBE) established in 2001. For nearly 30 years, Rebecca has concentrated her practice in insurance defense and business litigation. The firm’s practice extends through the Tri-States of Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee. Rebecca’s insurance defense practice includes representation of insurance companies and long-term care providers and their insurers, both regionally and nationally. She also provides consulting services and educational programming to healthcare professionals and business associates. She has active practices in the areas of general liability, professional liability, premises, and employment law. She is a listed mediator serving all areas of business and healthcare litigation.

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We're Makin' a List



For the past couple of Decembers, the theme of my column has been gratefulness and hope. Never has there been a time when we need more of both. Globally, we are living in one of the most extraordinary times that

many of us will see in our lifetime. At home and at work, our lives have been, and continue to be, profoundly impacted. As we bring 2020 to a close, I'm feeling little sparks of hope that 2021 will bring connection, renewal, and healing. I invited my husband, Mel, to co-author this month's article. Mel is a geriatrician and sees patients in long term care settings as well as a geriatrics clinic. Here is our wish.

With every challenge comes opportunity.

Sometimes, it's hard to see those openings through the pain and the confusion.

Long-recognized shortfalls have been laid agonizedly bare.

It is not as if we in post-acute and long term care are not aware of them, and, our own ache for improvements across many areas

That older adults and adults with disabilities and illness are no longer pushed aside and devalued

That a crisis shouldn't have to precipitate change.

The reality is that we are in crisis, but a crisis is a turning point, and with that comes hope that things can and will get better.

Our deepest hopes and desires are brewing, pushed forward by these circumstances

Changes are overdue, meaning

That living and working in these settings will no

longer be shunned.

That staff will be respected and honored for doing these hard and sometimes dangerous jobs,

The time is past due for compensation with a living wage, jobs with training, education, and benefits. Jobs with purpose and with a future.

That nursing homes can be understood as the HOME that they are, filled with laughter, quiet moments, care, connection, and purpose, with families, friendships, children, pets, gardens, hobbies, and community, rejoicing with the appreciation that there is much life to be lived in this space!

That we will continue to minimize isolation by maximizing access to technology and coordinate community resources for volunteers, meaningful activities, and entertainment.

That we will strengthen this community of caring people equipped with the resources to excel in the jobs they love, caring for residents in the homes we might someday inhabit ourselves.

With every challenge comes an opportunity.

Let's use this opportunity to make louder our voices insisting that change happens, that discrimination, racism, ageism, and ableism are no longer permitted or condoned.

It is time to rebuild ourselves, to work together to build better homes for the people who need our care, for the caregivers who selflessly give of themselves to do this work.

A crisis is a turning point.

To our friends, colleagues, and people we've never met who share this space with us, know that we will weather this storm together and find calmer waters as we embrace the changes to come.



Kessler's Corner by Chip Kessler

We've Made it Through 2020!

So we've made it through the Year 2020, as it were. In what will go down as the most remarkable year any of us have experienced, through the ups and the downs, the various trials and tribulations within the nursing and assisted living profession (and basically every other profession as well), we've survived!

That's the key, and for this you are to be commended. Sadly, the nursing home industry, in general, took its share of negative media coverage early on. What never wavered however was the dedication of those who work in our nation's caregiving facilities.

For this you have my sincere admiration! Now it's on to 2021 and the hope that as things progress, better times are ahead for all of us. This is my wish for you. Certainly the words "Happy New Year" take on a whole new meaning. They are no longer just empty platitudes. My best to you and my thanks for your support of this newsletter.

With this issue we complete 10 years of bringing you insights and news. Through these demanding times the dedication of my partner in these pages, the wonderful Rebecca Adelman has remained steady and secure. To Rebecca, as

always, my sincere thanks for all of your efforts. As you have come to realize via her articles, Rebecca Adelman is the leading voice in her field. Her understanding of key issues facing nursing and assisted living facility staff is unmatched. Reading her column each month is like getting a seminar into itself!

As well, my thanks to Paige Hector for her fabulous contributions month after month and for your fantastic work! Her keen understanding of those who work in the nursing and assisted living profession is wonderful to behold. We are so fortunate to have her as a regular contributor for several years now.

Finally, my thanks to the behind the scenes hero of this newsletter Lori Wilhoit whose superb graphic and design skills are on display every month.

Certainly in what has been unique times, the ladies I've mentioned have not missed a beat and continue to deliver superior quality to you. Again to Rebecca, Paige and Lori, my sincere thanks and appreciation!

Now, it's on to 2021!

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We are, and always have been, in this wonderful space together, through calm and catastrophe, storms and better days. We will get through this, yes, together.

Let's grasp this opportunity to not just survive but to recover and rebuild in a way that lasts generations to come.

Thank you all for your selflessness, your

compassion, and your enduring belief in our collective ability to make a change in this world we live in.



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