

## From the Editor

Alison McChrystal Barnes

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### Repository Citation

Barnes, Alison McChrystal (1999) "From the Editor," *Marquette Elder's Advisor*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 3.  
Available at: <http://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/elders/vol1/iss1/3>

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# From the Editor

A colleague brought me a page that he had ripped from the *Shepherd Express*, our city's street newspaper catering to the news and marketing interests of anarchists, paraphernalia seekers, and new agers. In the lower right was a quarter page ad by a local legal practitioner offering counsel in the fields of bankruptcy, divorce, and *elder law*. "It means," my colleague said, only half kidding, "that elder law really has arrived." It has arrived because everybody who reads a free weekly devoted to street life and opinions is supposed to have an idea of what elder law is, and anybody (even with a readership heavily skewed to the under-30 crowd) might need such legal assistance.

Not everyone does understand what elder law includes in the same way that they understand a divorce, but elder law issues have in fact become part of the national dialogue for all generations. Older people are no longer cast in terms intended to define all in their generation. The poor elder in need of society's help, the icon of the Great Society programs of the 1960s, is recognized to be the profile of a minority of people with chronological age of 60-plus. The "greedy geezer" of the late 1980s, identified with the repeal of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act, similarly has been recognized to represent only a limited population characterized by the factors of vulnerable financial status and right-leaning politics. No singular image now dominates the popular impression of the old, including the image of age 65 and over as a time of postemployment ease.

Rather, the dimensions of later life are evaluated in terms of the opportunity for choice. A successful retirement brings choices: to work or not, to be thrifty for the long haul or enjoy the assets now, to move once or migrate annually. Preparing for choice requires knowledge and planning that few can achieve without professional help.

It is an exciting time to be grappling with advice for elders. The needs of older populations, with all their diversity, are on worldwide and national agendas. As this column is written, in England Prime Minister Tony Blair's government is considering proposals that residential care should be covered by the National Health Service, leaving retirees to pay only the cost of room and board from their pensions. This is the equivalent of having Medicare pay a substantial amount of assisted living expenses, with the resident paying the cost of housing and meals.

The year 1999 is the International Year of the Older Person, designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992 and endorsed in a presidential speech to that body on January 1, 1998. The U.S. Administration on Aging has undertaken a number of events ([www.aoa.dhhs.gov/pr/interyear](http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/pr/interyear)) to highlight the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly aging society. The motto is "towards a society for all ages," a goal that surely all of us who are aging can support.

In the United States, other advances for seniors lie primarily in the private sector, with the marketing of such amenities as secure and pleasing housing with services, education and recreational opportunities, and management of care and finances through the auspices of elder law and elder law professionals.

The public sector, once the leader in defining care and housing for the aged, is playing catch-up and, of course, being the watchdog for exploitative dealings in the industry of elder services.

All these interests are the purpose for which we publish these pages. *Elder's Advisor* is dedicated to those who serve older clients, providing a forum for presenting and inviting discussion of the broad range of interests and views held by experts in the field. I am tempted to speculate on the range of topics the journal will cover in the first year or two of its existence, but I wouldn't bet very much on the accuracy of my prophecies. The field includes too many issues ripe for rapid evolution, particularly in a strong economy that can afford to change the status quo.

I do foresee recurring columns on retiree and health benefits, property management tools, and ethics. The journal will also deliver the expertise and views of other disciplines, including business management and geriatric psychology, medicine, and

pharmacy. Additionally, the National Academy of Elderlaw Attorneys will use these pages to bring you its legislative goals for 1999. The balance of this premier issue's table of contents must speak for itself.

You, our readers, are not just the audience—this is an interactive endeavor, as you can tell by skimming the names of authors. Please take a moment with this first issue to read the last page regarding specifications for manuscripts and consider what you may have to share with others in the field.

A brief explanation of the structure of the journal is in order. We are an amalgam of the business sector, practicing professionals, and educational institution with regard to both production and marketing. Articles and columns are solicited and received by the members of our student editorial board, under my supervision as editor-in-chief. Our executive editor (Jane Mulcahy, in 1999) assigns each incoming article to a third-year student who confirms citations and coordinates any developments with the author. The final editing and production is managed by Dana Bland, our editor at Panel Publishers in New York. The time needed between receipt of a manuscript and the publication date is about three months.

We also welcome commentary on articles, which will be sent to authors or evaluated here depending on your intention. Knowing elder law practitioners, the "Letters" column could become a pretty lively item.

To each of you who has read so far, my thanks. Please put your thoughts in writing to: [elderlaw@marquette.edu](mailto:elderlaw@marquette.edu) or *Elder's Advisor*, P.O. Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53202; or to me personally at [alison.barnes@marquette.edu](mailto:alison.barnes@marquette.edu).

*Alison McChrystal Barnes*  
March 1999