

Family Changing of the Guard Jeanne Lee

When both of my parents died within 51 days of each other from totally different and sudden causes, my sixth grade teacher's wife told me at mother's funeral, "You are the older generation now." WOW! That was an eye opener and something I would think about later when I could think with a clearer head than the one grieving the loss of both parents in that short timeframe.

Looking back there was a changing of the guard occurring. While hospitalized, mother made some changes to her will that included making me her medical POA and my two brothers the co-executors of her estate.

During those days, there was a changing of the guard in our family. Though I am the oldest, I live in Colorado and they all, with the exception of my younger son in New York, reside in Illinois. Unfortunately, I see them far more infrequently than I'd like and by no means do I consider myself the matriarch. The older part becomes more evident every day when I contemplate the ages of my sons. They cannot possibly be that age! Over the past couple of years there has been a subtle changing of the guard in my family again. My older son is now both my medical and financial Power of Attorney and recently my youngest brother has been admitted to a skilled nursing home and his daughter now holds those same POA's for him.

Although I continue to "do my own thing" and consider myself to be healthy, it was prudent to take care of those decisions before the need arose for someone to make decisions for me and my care based on my preferences and desires expressed in legal documents. Currently, I am still the "guardian" of my retirement in an Active Adult Community where I can choose to come and go, do or not do whatever suits my fancy. Also, I have become a part of the changing of guard for a neighbor for whom I provide some home care so that she can remain in her home for as long as possible now that her health precludes her from doing and managing many things for herself.

Changing of the guard is inevitable in the many facets of our lives from grown children marrying and having their own families to "guard," up through the changing of government officials. No matter what the level, guard means "to watch over in order to protect against damage or harm." Let us be the type of guardian to ourselves and others that we wish to see in those who are our guardians.