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Did lawyer swindle World War II vet?

Planned move to retirement community derailed by family

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August 4, 2010

BY LAUREN FITZPATRICK

A Tinley Park attorney with a sketchy past faces new disciplinary actions, accused of helping rip off an elderly veteran who wanted to move into a retirement village with his friends.

Gary R. Williams, who practices law from 16710 Oak Park Ave., is being investigated on allegations he never told Angelo Biondo he was drawing up a living trust instead of a will, according to formal charges the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission recently made public.

Williams, 67, also let Biondo's son and daughter-in-law, Bernard and Sharon Biondo, of Oak Forest, sell him a dilapidated house in Chicago's Mount Greenwood community owned by Sharon Biondo, when Angelo Biondo intended instead to move to the Smith Village retirement community in Chicago's Beverly home, according to a lawsuit Angelo Biondo filed against Williams, which has since been settled.

Angelo Biondo, a decorated Navy veteran of World War II who served on the USS Salt Lake City, wanted to follow fellow vets to Smith Village, said Kathleen Biondo, another daughter-in-law.

He had let the eldest of his five sons, Bernard, handle his finances, she said.

"My father-in-law doesn't complain about a thing," she said. "He's a good soldier. He doesn't complain and he doesn't ask questions. He trusted his son."

Biondo served as a well-respected commander of American Legion Post 407 in Beverly, said Ken Cramer, who took over the post for Biondo in the 1990s.

"He has contributed to this country through his service in the armed forces, contributed to this country in that he created a business, created jobs for other people and set an example to others," Cramer said.

Biondo, now 85, had intended to sell the home he owned in the 5400 block of Keeler Avenue in Chicago and wanted a will, according to court documents. Sharon Biondo recommended Williams, who'd represented her in a real estate matter.

But Williams created a living trust with Bernard and Sharon in charge instead of a will. They allegedly used the money from the sale of Biondo's home to build a vacation home on land they owned in Wisconsin, according to court papers.

Sharon Biondo also collected \$500 a month in rent from her father-in-law while he lived in the home she owned in the 10500 block of Central Park Avenue, in Mount Greenwood.

Williams, who may continue to practice during the disciplinary process,

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could not be reached at his office. A woman who answered his phone said he would not be in the office for a few days. A message left for his attorney, George Collins, was not returned.

Bernard and Sharon Biondo could not be reached for comment.

James Grogan, a spokesman for the IARDC, said Williams could face disbarment if found guilty of the allegations. Williams has to respond to the allegations before the end of the month.

Williams previously had his law license suspended from 1983 to '86, after he was convicted in federal court of mail fraud. In that case, Williams falsely reported his car stolen from the Orland Square Shopping Center and tried to defraud his car insurance company out of \$10,000, according to court records.

A malpractice lawsuit Biondo filed against Williams was settled in late May, David Novoselsky, Biondo's attorney, said Tuesday. A separate lawsuit the elder Biondo filed against Bernard and Sharon Biondo was settled in June.

Novoselsky wouldn't comment on how the two lawsuits were resolved.

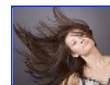
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