

ELDER CARE

A PRO IN YOUR CORNER

By Lauren Young

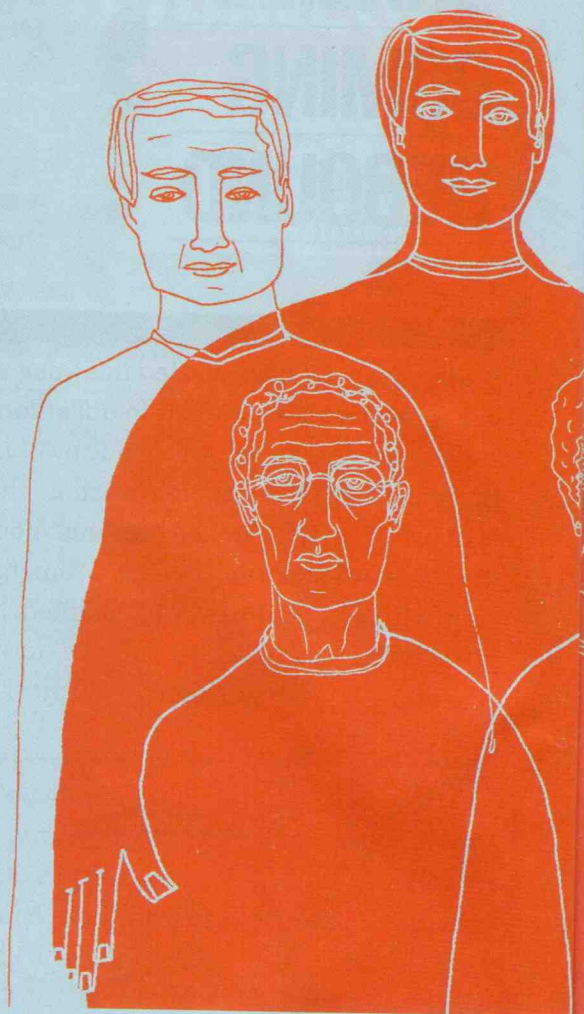
On a Tuesday night in late July, Jon Meyers, 42, got the call every child with an elderly parent dreads. His 84-year-old mother, Ruth, who suffers from dementia, had fallen in her kitchen and was heading to a New Jersey hospital by ambulance. But instead of agonizing over not being able to get there quickly—it's four hours from his home in Washington, D.C., to Point Pleasant, N.J.—Meyers took comfort in the fact that Stephen Mielach, a geriatric care manager, was following the ambulance, ready to take control.

Before 2007, Meyers had never heard of geriatric care managers (also called geriatric case managers). But then his mother developed problems that required hospitalization, and Meyers couldn't keep taking days off from his job as an art director at the Cato Institute, a Washington think tank. On the recommendation of his mother's physician, Meyers, an only child, hired Mielach. He accompanies Meyer's mother on doctor visits, looks after her dog on occasion, and even helped with the paperwork for a reverse mortgage so that she could stay in her home.

The role of a geriatric care manager goes well beyond that of a home health aide. The primary job of home health aides is to admin-

ister medication and provide companionship. By contrast, care managers oversee many things busy or far-flung family members might not be able to stay on top of: vetting nursing homes and assisted living facilities, overseeing home health aides, providing guidance about applying for federal, state, and other benefits. They may also tend to more day-to-day tasks, like making sure that rugs in a parent's home don't slip and that refrigerators are stocked.

An estimated 7 million people care for adult relatives from a distance, according to the National Alliance for Caregiving. On top of the logistical benefits of hiring a care manager, preliminary research indicates that elderly patients who have a geriatric care manager get more thor-

**BUSINESSWEEK.COM**

To see a geriatric care manager discuss her role in assisting families with caregiving, go to www.businessweek.com/go/09/care

WEB RESOURCES

Parentgiving.com

Caregiving Web site offers a directory that lets you search for geriatric care managers by Zip Code.

Caremanager.org

This is the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers' searchable database.

Privatedutyhomecare.org

National Private Duty Assn.'s site also lets you search for case management providers by Zip Code.

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