

Casey Kasem Guardianship Fight

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Casey Kasem, the legendary host of *American Top 40*, died recently at age 82. During the last two years of his life, he was at the center of an intense guardianship battle between his children and his second wife.

1. The Parties

One of Casey's daughters, Kerri Kasem, led the charge against her stepmother, Jean Kasem. Casey married Jean, who was over 20 years younger, in 1980, one year after divorcing Kerri's mother.

2. Party Conflicts

Casey was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2007. By 2013, he had also been diagnosed with dementia, had become bedridden, and was no longer able to speak. At that point, Jean Kasem kept Casey's children from having any contact with their father.

The children conducted a public protest in front of the Kasem home, and later filed for guardianship after Jean continued to deny them access. The main disputes were not financial, but were over visitation rights and over what medical care Casey was to receive, including whether he would receive life support.

3. Guardianship Rulings

The initial guardianship efforts by Kerri and the other children were not successful. However, Jean Kasem suddenly removed Casey from his California nursing home in May of 2014, which led to Kerri being granted temporary guardianship. The court also ordered an investigation into Casey's whereabouts, as Jean was keeping his location secret.

4. Stepchild vs. Stepparent Disputes

Many second-marriage families get into disputes over the proper care of an elderly parent. Spouses often do not get along well with adult children from a prior marriage. The adult children often feel shut out by the stepparent, and can resort to filing a guardianship to gain more legal rights.

Guardianship cases can make a difficult family situation even worse, but can usually be resolved if all parties keep the best interests of the elderly person at the forefront.



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