

ELIZABETH IS RETIRING ON OCTOBER 31, 2025!

My husband, Thomas, was a patient account manager for a small hospital in Southwestern Michigan. He loved his job and was good at it. He promoted a work-at-home project and flexible hours for his staff, long before those ideas became popular. His staff, all women, said that he was the best boss they ever had. Not only did he help them to do their jobs better, but he helped them to become better people. In December, 2012, Tom received the Star of Excellence award for having the best run department in the hospital. Another fellow received the award for having the most improved department. Eight months later, we called the Star of Excellence the Kiss of Death Award because both men were let go due to a merger with a larger hospital in Kalamazoo.

Now that Tom was retired, all of our friends asked when I would retire. Tom began to make plans for all sorts of lovely things that we could do together when I retired. I told them I would know when the time was right, but that time had not yet come.

I, too, loved my job. As a divorce and probate lawyer, I represented people who were grieving from the loss of a loved one due to death or separation. I found that most clients whose loved one had died, had no idea what to do or how to do it. They had to deal not only with their own grief, but also with the grief of other family members, which sometimes resulted in conflict. I was able to encourage them to handle the division of assets in ways that would honor the memory of the one they all loved. My divorce clients were struggling with loss of identity as a spouse, the pain of betrayal when a third party was involved, sometimes fear of abuse, financial insecurity, fear of losing their home and precious time with their children. In addition to document preparation, discovery, negotiating settlements, preparation for and representation at mediations and trials, I enjoyed my role as Counselor at Law as I watched my clients grow in confidence and ability to face a very different future than the one they had planned. I felt I had done well when I could turn their tears into smiles and laughter.

In January, Tom had a hip replacement. I took a couple weeks off work to take care of him. After 52 years of marriage, I felt the bond between us strengthen during this time together. I wondered how many dewy-eyed couples at the altar realize that "... in sickness and in health, until death do us part" means that one or both of them will end up being caregiver for the other at some time in their lives. I found that realization comforting, and thought how wise God was to create marriage so that each of us will have someone who truly loves us, no matter what may befall us.

That is when I knew that the time was right for me to retire. I set a goal of September 25, my birthday, and began to limit my practice to take on no case that would last beyond that date.

During the summer, it became apparent to the staff at Friendship Village and to me, that my 100-year-old mother was not thriving in Independent Living and that she needed 24-hour care. When a room became available in Assisted Living, FV told us that she had to move on 9-4. Mother didn't understand, didn't agree, and, due to her dementia, didn't remember that she had to move. On September 1, Mom became unresponsive due to a UTI and was hospitalized. FV could not assign her a room until she had completed rehab and had been re-evaluated to determine what her new needs would be. We had to move her belongings to a storage facility on 9-4, and then three weeks later to a different room in "Special Care". Tom worked hard with all of the packing and moving and was so supportive. September was a difficult month for all three of us. But thankfully, Mom is now comfortable in her new apartment, is making new friends, and is having fun, new experiences.

Now, after more than 50 years as in the practice of law, as I approach my retirement on October 31, 2025, I am filled with a sense of gratitude to so many people. First, to the people of Allegan, Kalamazoo, and surrounding counties, thank you for trusting me to represent you when you needed legal assistance. To my honorable colleagues, members of the bar with whom I crossed swords for our client's respective best interests, thank you for maintaining cordiality and professionalism. To the Judiciary, thank you for your patience when our cases went longer than anticipated, and for the wisdom in your opinions. To Janice, Carey, and Annette, my faithful secretaries, thank you for your hard work and long hours, for your management of the office (and me), for the fun we had together, for your wisdom in greeting clients, and for being my co-laborer with the Lord to show His love for them. And to Tom, thank you for being my silent partner and my love. I look forward to the future with you.