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## Arthur “Chuck” Oakes III, CAPS

### *Using Cameras and Camcorders in Eldercare*

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We all know about “Nanny Cams” and their use in home to “protect our children and elders”. Although this Writer has genuine reservations about the legality of these devices, they have prevented some real problems for families who have used them. I think there are better tactics. In this essay, I focus on creative applications of camcorders and cameras for various purposes, situations and settings.

I have personal experience in supporting my parents while they continued to reside in their own home, although I did not live with them. Here are some thoughts to consider:

**Security and Surveillance**—Everyone needs to be safe and secure. As a caregiver, you are concerned about your loved one, whether you live with, near or apart. Sure, there are high-tech devices and computer-managed systems from which we can support our family members remotely, great. However, for the many families, such high-tech options are simply too expensive. There are some things we can do.

- If *you hire* private, direct-pay Aides (employment agencies are different) for your homecare needs, you might want to include in any application, agreement or contractual understanding, a phrase such as, *“Please be advised that we reserve the right to use video surveillance systems on these premises”*. It will inform the applicant that you mean business and will protect your property and residents. Such a statement will put them on notice and therefore, if you DO use such a system, they cannot say they were not advised! (Your defense in court should they sue you.) Remember, I never suggested that you need to actually purchase such a system, you don’t! The notice in your agreement is sufficient protection in most cases.
- You could purchase a sign for the front of your house or on a window indicating that your premises are guarded by a surveillance system. If you prefer, a “Beware of Dog” sign also can be very effective!

**For Special Events**—Most families have camcorders today and using them for special events can really maintain connection for one’s loved ones at home. When you go to a HomeShow or

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craft fair, why not take a camera or camcorder along and capture some of the event. When home, plug it into the television or computer, if you have one, and share it with your loved ones. This low cost idea can keep them (loved ones) plugged in!

**Insurance and Probate**—When protecting your property and its belongings, remember to photograph every room and valuable item for purposes of insurance claims, loss, theft or fire damage. It can also help when getting rid of stuff...advertising, appraisals, etc.

**Video Recordings of Family**—All too soon, your aging loved ones will pass and all you will have will be memories. Still and video recordings become treasures after a death. Remember that the event you capture today is the treasure to enjoy tomorrow, especially when filming family members and events. This may seem obvious, but try to photograph and record your family whenever possible. Some of your family may consider your photography a nuisance, they will soon change their tune when they enjoy and savor your efforts years later! Another idea is to have them recite their life stories to the camcorder...so you get not only the details of their life, but also in their voice!! Remember to date everything! I hear countless laments about pictures without details...names, dates, etc.

**Funeral Photography**—I am not referring to casket pictures, although they were common years ago. I *am* suggesting that at a Memorial Service, Funeral or Wake, that you consider videotaping everyone *entering* the event if possible, at the reception, and the entire service, especially when personal stories and testimonials are presented during the service. Use your judgement and be respectful when filming inside churches, etc. Always ask for permission in advance. If a photographic collage is produced, either professionally or personally, copies could be duplicated easily and mailed to loved ones who could not attend the ceremony. After my Mother passed in January, I mailed out a customized CD of a 3-minute collage complete with music to everyone who could not attend, or those who wanted a memento of the service. With the copies I mailed, I included a large-print announcement with pictures inserted, along with a copy of the program from the service and prayer card.

**Old Photographs**—As I go through the old photographs of the family, I scan and save some of the best for my own recollection and to send to family members in other states. In this regard,

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several of my family members, with whom we have not connected in years, have now “reconnected” via technology, photos and emails!

**In closing**, there are many creative ways to utilize technology in the caring for your aging loved ones. Be discrete, sensitive and respectful when applying cameras and other recording equipment.



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