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Homeless Millionaire Alan Fantin Wants His Day in Probate Court

The people in charge of his money say they're looking out for Alan Fantin. So why is he broke and adrift?

By [Alan Prendergast](#)

September 5, 2017



On paper, Alan Fantin has enough money to live like a king. The reality is quite different. **Anthony Camera**

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Too strapped to afford a motel, too bone-weary for the streets, Alan Fantin is crashing with a friend in a shabby apartment house. Wearing a grubby T-shirt and jeans, he walks slowly into the living room, his atrophied left arm held against his chest, his semi-functional left leg

bolstered by a knee brace that he helped design. His battleship-gray pallor suggests only a nodding acquaintance with fresh air and sunlight. On his good leg is a court-ordered ankle monitor.

Nothing about his appearance suggests even a hint of prosperity. But appearances can lie like a White House aide. On paper, at least, Fantin has a net worth that stretches comfortably into seven figures.

It's a fortune that's supposed to provide for his every need, but one he hasn't been able to access directly since it was created thirty years ago, in the wake of a devastating car crash that left him with a severe head injury and partial paralysis. The money belongs to him, but then again it doesn't; it's been doled out in drips and dribbles, by people who act like they're doing him a favor by providing him anything at all. The Tantalus-like situation has been a major frustration of his arduous existence: All that green stuff, yet so little on his plate.

"I'm sitting on about three million dollars," he says. "But right now I've got maybe two dollars in my pocket. I've got no place to go. They've got me so restricted, I couldn't even go to the Lakewood police station without my monitor going off."

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Calamities have swarmed Fantin these past few months. He owns a house in Lakewood, mortgage mostly paid off. But at the moment it's infested with black mold in the walls and squatters in the basement, people who don't pay rent and won't leave, who laugh at the eviction notice posted on their door. Fantin hasn't been allowed near the place since he was arrested last month and charged with assaulting his live-in girlfriend; as part of his [pre-trial monitoring](#), he cannot approach within a one-mile radius of his alleged victim's residence, which used to be his residence.

Fantin is also in a legal battle with the man who controls his funds, a court-appointed conservator named Scott Christian. Since Christian took on the job in early 2015, the two have clashed repeatedly over money matters, ranging from the amount of Fantin's cable bills to his frequent marijuana use, which Christian has described in court documents as a "substance abuse habit." Fantin, who was one of the first patients to obtain a medical marijuana card after Colorado began issuing them in 2001, says that cannabis helps him control the seizures he's experienced since his accident: "When I run out of pot, my seizures are more aggressive and they tend to last longer."

He claims that Christian refused to provide any funds for his lodging after he was banned from his house; directed him to use a public defender in his domestic-violence case rather than hire his own attorney; threatened to cut off his phone if he continued to complain; and has been less and less responsive to Fantin's pleas for help even as his firm's fees for the conservatorship have

steadily increased.

“It’s at the point where he doesn’t want to help me in any way,” Fantin says. “He doesn’t approve of my lifestyle, is what it is. He doesn’t like the fact that I smoke marijuana. He looks down his nose at me for it.”

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“All Alan wants to do is smoke pot and hang out with his dog,” adds Mitchel Sparer, a longtime friend of Fantin’s who is currently providing him with a place to sleep. “Who is this guy to tell him he can’t do that?”

Christian declined to discuss details of Fantin’s conservatorship, citing the confidential nature of the relationship. But in court documents — typically sealed from public view but made available to *Westword* by Fantin — Christian has maintained that he’s acting in his client’s best interests, while laying the blame for Fantin’s difficulties squarely on Fantin himself, referred to as the “protected person” or PP.

“All Alan wants to do is smoke pot and hang out with his dog. Who is this guy to tell him he can’t do that?”

“The conservatorship of Mr. Fantin requires significant time to deal with all of the issues that arise as a result of the PP’s actions,” Christian wrote in his most recent annual report to Adams County Probate Court, “thus driving conservator fees higher than they would need to be otherwise.... The PP will use most of the money provided him by the conservatorship to buy marijuana if not controlled. Thus, the Conservator has had to devise ways to make sure that some of the money provided to the PP is actually spent on food and other necessities.”

Fantin contends that Christian, not being a physician, isn’t in a position to determine whether his marijuana usage is excessive or therapeutic. But the dispute is escalating. Three weeks ago, Christian filed a petition with the court, seeking to have a guardian appointed in Fantin’s case. Under Colorado law, a conservator looks after the client’s financial matters; a guardian is more intensively involved in [managing an incapacitated individual’s living arrangements, daily needs and health care](#). Noting the unwanted tenants in Fantin’s house, the pending domestic-violence case, allegations of methamphetamine use and other issues, Christian stated his belief that a guardian might be able “to control a situation that Mr. Fantin clearly cannot.”

Fantin denies that he needs a guardian. Several years ago he spent tens of thousands of dollars in an unsuccessful bid to end the conservatorship; now he faces the prospect of another court struggle, financed entirely by his own funds, that could lead to him losing even more control over his day-to-day decisions. The lawyer that Christian hired to pursue the guardianship charges \$350 an hour, to be paid out of the protected person’s estate. If the court appoints a guardian — or possibly a guardian ad litem, a kind of advocate for the protected person who could investigate whether a guardian is needed — those additional fees will also be billed to Fantin. And, of course, he’s now compelled to retain a probate attorney of his own to contest the

petition and seek Christian's removal as conservator, in addition to the private attorney he's hired to defend him in the assault case.

"I've got all these people using me as a meal ticket, bleeding me dry," he says. "I want to return to my home and be a normal human being again."

The case offers a rare glimpse behind the closed doors of probate court, where a professional cadre of attorneys, care managers, estate administrators and others are entrusted with guarding the interests and funds of some of society's most vulnerable people. In many instances, they may be doing just that, protecting the elderly, the sick, the mentally or physically disabled from unscrupulous relatives or neighbors — and sometimes protecting them from themselves.

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But Colorado's probate courts have also been the focus of [numerous investigations](#) into high-handed judges, [self-dealing guardians](#) and plundered or wasted assets. Two state audits in the last eleven years have found inadequate screening and monitoring of guardians and conservators, as well as disturbing instances of neglect, theft, fraud and a general lack of accountability. Reform has been painfully slow, and no one knows how many cases end up with the professionals battling each other and their own clients for control, draining the estate they're supposed to manage.

The system is well insulated from outside scrutiny, swathed in layers of confidentiality. The secrecy is supposed to ensure the privacy of protected persons. But who protects them from their protectors?



Mitchel Sparer (left) provided Alan Fantin and his dog, Scooter, a place to sleep after Fantin was banned from his house.

Alan Fantin doesn't remember much about the day his life changed forever. But he does remember taking a pull on a bottle of Southern Comfort, then pushing the red button on the dash of his cousin's muscle car, just to see what would happen.

Fantin was fourteen years old. That day — June 5, 1980 — he and his eighteen-year-old cousin had been joyriding on dusty, unpaved roads around Parker. The car was a 1967 GMC Custom three-door station wagon, modified for badassery. Pushing the red button activated the nitro boost, an injection of nitrous oxide that delivered a dramatic burst of power to the engine.

The wagon skidded sideways on the rutted road, slid off the shoulder and rolled twice. Fantin went head-first through the windshield; he was later told that the motor mounts sheared, catapulting the engine on top of him.

He suffered a skull fracture, swelling on the right side of his brain and paralysis on the left side of his body. He spent three months in a coma. Doctors told his parents that if he did regain consciousness, he'd probably be confined to a wheelchair. "I had to learn how to read, write, talk and walk again," he says.

A Colorado native, Fantin was one of three children of a man who'd started his own construction company at the age of 24. Alan had expected to some day go into the family business, but the crash was the beginning of years of hardship. His father had a heart attack and had to give up the business. His parents divorced. Alan dropped out of school after the ninth grade. A heavy

drinker even before the accident, he continued to hit the bottle until the age of eighteen — when, he says, he gave up alcohol because of his seizure disorder. By that point, he'd become the black sheep of the family and was living on his own, sometimes on the streets.

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Belatedly, he turned to the court system for help. He sued his cousin, the driver of the car, who'd emerged from the crash relatively unscathed. He sued his grandmother, the owner of the car. He sued the liquor store in Parker that had sold the bottle of Southern Comfort to his underage cousin. He sued Douglas County for failing to maintain the roads properly. (Fantin says he'd learned that an inexperienced operator of a road grader had possibly made the ruts on Robin Road much worse.) The liquor store managed to get dismissed from the case, but the county and his relatives' insurance carriers opted to settle rather than go to trial.

The total amount of the settlement came to around \$2.6 million. Invested in annuities, the fund yielded enough income, currently around \$60,000 a year, to pay for Fantin's household expenses, his medications and doctor visits, clothing and vet bills — with a cushion left over for vacations, entertainment and emergencies. (Fantin's mortgage is covered by his monthly Social Security disability check.) The 1989 document that establishes the Alan Dominic Fantin Trust doesn't declare that the principal amount has to remain untouched; in fact, it states that "the preservation of principal is not as important" as providing Fantin with the best medical therapy available. But from the outset, there was concern that Fantin couldn't manage such a sizable sum himself over the course of a lifetime — hence the need for a conservator to administer the funds.

"My older sister spoke up in court and said, 'If you give Alan all this money, he's going to buy a bunch of marijuana and smoke it all,'" Fantin says. "Right there the county stepped in, took my identity and all my finances away from me and gave my checkbook to a conservator."

Fantin's older sister was the first conservator. That arrangement lasted only a few months before she stepped aside in favor of attorney John Berman. Fantin got on well with Berman, who charged him half his usual rate and used the savings to make accelerated mortgage payments for Fantin and to build up a reserve fund for whatever "emergencies" Fantin might have.

"John and I were okay," Fantin says now. "I'd rather have John back than anybody. He always had \$500 available to me at any given time, and I'd go to Maui or somewhere once every year."



Conservator Scott Christian believes a court-appointed guardian might be needed "to control a situation that Mr. Fantin clearly cannot."

Berman was Fantin's conservator for twenty years. For several years, Fantin also had a trusted companion who helped look after his daily needs, from doing laundry and buying groceries to arranging medical appointments and marijuana purchases. Lawny Crews was a lean, quiet martial arts expert who'd met Fantin shortly after moving to Colorado from Washington in the early 1990s. Once, when the two of them were walking through Los Angeles International Airport, a pickpocket helped himself to Fantin's wallet; Crews retrieved the wallet, snapping the perp's forearm in the process.

"Lawny was his best friend, roommate and bodyguard," says Sparer, who met Fantin through Crews. "And he died protecting Alan."

On July 10, 2001, three men tried to force their way into Fantin's home in southwest Denver. Crews and Fantin struggled to keep the door closed; one of the men shot through the door, hitting Crews in the chest. The attackers fled. Crews died at the scene. The police suspected the shooting was the result of a drug deal gone bad; Fantin says the men were gangbangers, out to rob him of "my entertainment system and whatever they could get cash for." [The case remains unsolved.](#)

Crews's death left a void in Fantin's life that wasn't easily filled. But he was determined to prove that he could get by on his own and eventually take charge of his own finances. As he saw it, he'd never been declared incompetent or met the legal definition of an incapacitated person — that is, someone unable to evaluate information or make decisions and communicate them; the conservatorship had more to do with whether he could exercise good judgment in handling money. In 2009 he sought out a neuropsychological evaluation at Denver Health, a process that involved hours of tests.

The results indicated that the accident had left certain aspects of his memory and intellectual processing slowed or impaired. But he delivered "adequate" scores on arithmetic, abstract reasoning, his understanding of financial concepts and his ability to "solve everyday problems in which safety was a concern." "The patient likely has the ability to independently manage his finances appropriately," the neuropsychologist concluded. "I would recommend that he be given increased access to his finances for a trial period and, if no mistakes are made during that time, consider terminating the conservatorship."

Over the next several months Fantin spent more than \$30,000 in professional fees trying to win his freedom. A guardian ad litem evaluated his situation, and Fantin retained another attorney to champion his cause. An accountant was hired to work with Fantin on managing his own money on a trial basis. Berman, the conservator, also hired an attorney to advise *him*.

It's not clear from the court records why the trial failed. Fantin isn't sure about the reasons, but Sparer points out that his friend bounced a few checks during that period. "I think that's what sabotaged his attempts to get his independence," he says.

"All of a sudden my money became his money."

Unable to take charge of his own funds, Fantin replaced Berman with a new conservator. (Berman didn't respond to a request for comment.) He soon had a falling-out with the replacement, an attorney who charged higher fees than Berman and didn't seem as responsive to Fantin's requests. "All of a sudden my money became his money," Fantin says.

The next conservator was another attorney, Jeanette Goodwin. Her fees varied from \$5,000 a year to more than three times that amount, while Fantin's monthly stipend — which had been \$2,500 at the end of Berman's term — was now down to \$2,000 a month. Goodwin didn't respond to a request for comment, but in one court report, she described Fantin as a high-maintenance client who had trouble living within his budget: "Mr. Fantin makes many demands on this office for personal needs that he somehow cannot pay out of his very generous allowance of \$2000 per month. This is partially due to his excessive expenditures on Medical Marijuana, which he frequently buys on credit.... When he then pays this bill off, he is out of money for two weeks. At that time he will call this office constantly and demand that items be purchased for him at that exact minute...it causes his fees to be higher than one would anticipate."

In 2015, Goodwin was replaced by Scott Christian — a professional fiduciary, not an attorney. Fantin says Christian was recommended to him as someone who could save him money. But as with the two previous conservators, the same pattern continued. The fees kept going up, meaning that there was less money available for Fantin — for personal needs, for travel, for purchases that his keepers regarded as "excessive" and wrong.



Caroline Cammack, a former employee of Denver Probate Court, has urged lawmakers to enact legislation that would improve monitoring of conservators and guardians.

Twenty years ago, *Westword* published a series of articles about Letty Milstein, the mother of a Denver socialite, whose living arrangements and funds were [hijacked by a tag team of lawyers and guardians](#) in probate court. Milstein had been declared incapacitated without a chance to defend herself — her attorney was kicked off the case by the presiding judge, Jean Stewart — and was forbidden from seeing her own son. The subsequent dunning from various attorneys, social workers, psychiatrists and other court professionals consumed her estate, valued at \$650,000, in a matter of months, before [an appeals court overturned](#) many of Stewart’s bizarre rulings in the case.

In 2001, the *Rocky Mountain News* ran its own investigation, [“The Probate Pit,”](#) detailing how guardians and caregivers charged their wards outrageous fees for basic services, such as shopping for groceries, or stole outright from them. In some instances, troublesome wards were lured to lunch or a doctor’s appointment and then sent to a locked facility, making it easier for the guardian to sell their homes and other assets. The fees involved were usually rubber-stamped by probate court judges, who rarely questioned what the professionals were doing — or what they were charging.

The articles prompted widespread hand-wringing but little substantive change. A [2006 performance audit](#) of Colorado’s probate courts, conducted for the Office of the State Auditor, found that conservators and guardians were failing to file required reports in more than half of the cases. When reports did exist, dubious or inappropriate expenditures were almost never challenged. The auditors also found that the professionals charged widely varying fees for their services, with instances of some heavy padding; for example, although licensed clinical

social workers typically earned around \$15 to \$27 an hour, one was charging \$158 an hour to perform the same work as a court-appointed guardian.

Court officials vowed to adopt the recommendations of the audit and improve supervision of probate cases. But five years later, [another audit](#) identified the same problems: lack of oversight, failure to file reports, inadequate screening of individuals appointed to manage the estates and affairs of protected persons, and glaring red flags that were ignored, such as a conservator charging \$12,000 for “guardianship fees” before a guardian was ever appointed in the case.

Lawmakers [expressed their unhappiness](#) with the lack of improvement, and the Colorado Judicial Department responded with additional training, background checks and resources. Two years ago, the state court administrator issued an update, noting that the number of cases with missing reports had dropped from 40 percent in 2011 to 5 percent in 2015. The judicial branch also implemented a coding system that indicated that more than 90 percent of the reports filed by conservators and guardians were now being reviewed by court personnel in a timely manner.

Even with the new system, Caroline Cammack doubts that most of those reports are getting the scrutiny they deserve. “I can vouch that no one is really reading these reports,” she says. “When I left, there was nobody who filled that position.”

“I thought everyone would say, ‘Probate court is corrupt’ — and it would get fixed. But nobody has done anything.”

Cammack used to work in Denver’s probate court, assigned by Judge Stewart to review conservator and guardian reports. She was fired in 2009 — after, she says, she persisted in bringing to Stewart’s attention an array of problems, from a guardian billing for reading poetry to his ward to a poorly supervised, HIV-infected, mentally disabled PP who was having unprotected sex. “The judge didn’t like the fact that Caroline was finding all these things,” one ex-employee later stated in a deposition.

Cammack filed a lawsuit over her dismissal that was eventually settled out of court. After sixteen years in probate court, Stewart retired from the bench in 2011, shortly after being retained in the general election — and weeks before another audit was supposed to be released. Cammack took her whistle-blowing to the *Denver Post*, which published [its own series](#) on Denver’s probate court based in part on her revelations.

“I thought everyone would say, ‘Probate court is corrupt’ — and it would get fixed,” Cammack recalls. “But nobody has done anything.”

Cammack also appealed to state lawmakers to get involved in probate reform, but several bills failed to pass. One of them, sponsored by Republican state senator Laura Woods, would have simply [prohibited a guardian or conservator from isolating a protected person](#) from family members and friends — known as [a Peter Falk bill](#) because of a campaign by the late actor’s daughter to enact such legislation nationwide.

“There was nothing controversial about it, except that the bar association doesn’t want anyone telling them what they can and can’t do to their clients,” says Woods, who lost her Colorado Senate seat in last year’s election. “Especially the probate lawyers.”

In her work on probate issues, Woods says she heard many horror stories about ruined estates, good-old-boy networks and incapacitated people hustled into nursing facilities and isolated from loved ones. She cites one case in which the protected person was allowed one pair of new shoes a year while the professionals' fees amounted to many times her living allotment.

"It's unbelievable how much money is stolen out of family estates every year from the probate courts, and the judges are just letting this happen," she says. "We tried to hire lawyers for some of those people we came across. But almost every lawyer would say, 'It's a probate issue, I can't win in that court.' It becomes a very incestuous scenario."

Woods says she contacted the FBI about some of the cases she encountered, which she suspected involved kickbacks to judges. The agency took an interest in one case on the Western Slope involving a protected person who was facing the prospect of having his home sold to pay for the fees his protectors had racked up. Woods counts that inquiry as a victory.

"The word got out that there was somebody looking at what they were doing," she says. "All of a sudden, they backed off."



Police have responded to a dozen calls for service at Fantin's home in eighteen months involving domestic disputes, disturbances, and one complaint about drugs.

Scott Christian worked in banking and real estate for many years before partnering with another professional fiduciary, Frank Baysore, to form [Baysore and Christian Fiduciary Services](#). In an email to *Westword*, Christian stressed that he enjoys helping people as a conservator, even though his efforts to prevent dissipation of assets aren't always appreciated by the protected person.

“This is not a profession one chooses to make ‘the big bucks,’” he explained. “I am proud of the service I provide my clients. This is also a very difficult career in that we often times have to make decisions that are not popular with our clients.... Some might say that Mr. Fantin has been dealt a lousy hand in life. I like Mr. Fantin and am compassionate to his situation. I do my best to help him make the best out of that lousy hand, given the fiduciary principles and constraints within which I must operate.”

Like other conservators before him, Christian has tried to make Fantin adhere to a \$2,000 monthly allowance and expressed disapproval of his marijuana consumption. But he’s taken a more aggressive approach than his predecessors in dealing with what he refers to cryptically as “repercussions from illegal activities,” as well as trying to prevent Fantin from indulging in legal activities that the conservator regards as a waste of money.

One of the cost-cutting steps Christian has taken is to pull the plug on Fantin’s cable-TV service — which, thanks to pay-per-view charges, was running to more than \$300 a month. Many of the pay-per-view titles were X-rated. Declaring in his report to the court that “the conservatorship would not pay for pornography,” Christian canceled the service.

Fantin admits ordering some pay-per-view movies but suggests the porn being piped into his house was being ordered by tenants. He doesn’t miss the service, he says, but he regards the cancellation as an example of Christian micromanaging his life and exceeding his authority. (There’s no court order prohibiting Fantin from sampling the likes of *Lesbian Teen Coeds 2* — or blowing his money on *Suicide Squad*, for that matter.) He’s more irate about the way his weekly allowance is now split into a \$300 deposit on a debit card and a \$200 King Soopers grocery card; the arrangement is supposed to keep him from running out of money too soon in the month, as well as limiting how much money he can spend on pot. “It’s ridiculous,” he says. “It’s not like I would starve if I could spend my money the way I wanted to. How many stoners do you know who forget to buy food?”

Fantin estimates that he spends \$600 to \$700 a month on marijuana. He prefers top-shelf product and smokes a lot of it. The remainder of his monthly allowance, he says, has typically gone to pay for groceries and personal expenses — not just for himself, but for his girlfriend, Devota Quinn, who took on many of the day-to-day housekeeping tasks Lawny Crews used to perform.

There’s not much leeway to increase his allowance, even if Christian was inclined to do it, because the rest of his annual income pays for his health care, utilities, home repairs — and, increasingly, the costs of the conservatorship itself. The fees for professional services charged to Fantin have gone up from an average of \$809 a month in 2014, Goodwin’s last year as conservator, to \$1,647 a month in 2015 and \$2,714 a month in 2016, the latest year for which a report is available. The fees are now consuming more than half of the money provided each year by Fantin’s accident settlement.

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One reason for the increase is Christian’s decision to hire a “care manager” to help arrange Fantin’s doctor appointments and shuttle him to them, at a cost of \$75 an hour; the care manager’s \$10,633 bill for such services accounts for much of the 2016 fee increase. But in his

latest report to the court, Christian also blames Fantin's domestic disputes with Quinn and his problems with the people living in his basement for placing greater demands on his time.

"The PP has on multiple occasions allowed people to move in to the home," the report states. "He does this because they promise him drugs (in lieu of rent).... One of the 'tenants'...was providing methamphetamine to the PP."

Christian reported the alleged meth use to the Lakewood police and met officers at Fantin's home to conduct a welfare check. Quinn let them in, Fantin recalls: "They didn't ask my permission. They just barged in. They were expecting to find evidence of drug use, but they did not. It pissed me off."

Fantin says it was Quinn who invited the "tenants" to live there. Quinn denies this. "He wasn't supposed to rent the basement to druggies," she says. "I don't want him going around blaming me for stuff I'm not doing. I never had any control in that house, who comes in the door and who stays. Alan brings these situations on himself."

Fantin admits that he's used meth on occasion and has a tendency to indulge in what people around him are doing. That's why he badly wants the people in his basement gone, he says: "Having dealers living inside my house, it's hard for me. I take a box full of medication every week. I can't afford to be an all-the-time druggie. It would kill me."

He adds that he has one rent-paying tenant whom he considers a friend. The others were evicted a few months ago, but he says they returned on their own, and the police have been less than helpful in his efforts to get them removed, even though the squatters "have been pushing me around and threatening me." (Sparer confirms that he received phone calls from Fantin for months asking for help removing the squatters. "They are not his friends," he says.) Another eviction notice was served a few weeks ago.

Police records indicate a dozen calls for service at Fantin's home over the past eighteen months, including three disturbance calls, four domestic calls and one complaint about drugs. Quite apart from the squatter issues, the unraveling of Fantin's relationship with Quinn has been a frequent theme. Each one has accused the other of being manipulative and abusive, dishonest and conniving.

"We all have our problems," says Quinn. "I'm still willing to work things out. I care about him a lot. If I wanted to put him in jail, I would have called the cops the first two times he choked me."

In a recent memo to Christian, Fantin's care manager described the couple's relationship as "toxic" and counterproductive. Quinn frequently interfered with Fantin's medical appointments, she reported, and seemed to bully him, as well.

"For a time, Dee being with Alan was looked at as a supportive caregiving role," she wrote. "Break-up after break-up occurs, Dee threatens to leave, leaves, and then returns because she needs Alan's money for support. The relationship appears to have become increasingly abusive and borders on harassment and financial abuse by Dee of an at-risk individual."

"I know what my priorities in life are. I pay my bills, make sure I've got my medicine. I buy food."

Five weeks ago, Quinn and Fantin had an altercation in a convenience store not far from their house. Fantin says Quinn took his debit card and was “standing in front of an ATM, swiping away, taking my money,” when he lost his balance trying to stop her and fell into her. A clerk called 911. Fantin was charged with second-degree assault, a felony. The no-contact order entered in the case made him an exile from his own house — and led to the current showdown with his conservator over whether a guardian should be appointed in the case.

Fantin says that he’s had little contact with Christian over the past few weeks, that his pleas to advance funds so he could obtain food and lodging have been ignored. The conservator now requires that all requests from Fantin be conveyed through their respective attorneys, he says, a move that will further boost costs.

“He’s trying to act like Alan can’t make business decisions,” Sparer complains, “even though he was competent enough to sign a contract with Mr. Christian.”

Fantin intends to not only fight the guardianship, but to challenge Christian’s fees and control of the conservatorship. He’s resigned now to having someone else manage his money, he says, but he wants someone more sympathetic to his needs. If he can’t have his own checkbook, he wants someone looking over the shoulder of the person who does have it.

“I know what my priorities in life are,” he says. “I pay my bills, make sure I’ve got my medicine. I buy food. The rest goes to transportation and recreation.”

Fantin is 51 years old now. He says his doctors tell him that the paralysis is spreading and his heart is weakening, that his next seizure could be his last. He dreams of taking longer vacations and living larger in whatever time he’s got left. He knows that dipping into the principal of his trust would reduce future distributions, but he doesn’t expect to be worrying about his financial health thirty years from now.

“He might as well enjoy himself,” says Sparer. “He has no children, no heirs, and he can’t take it with him. He ought to be able to take the biggest vacation he wants, smoke the best pot, and call taxis when he needs them.”

Fantin smiles at the idea. “If I had more money,” he says, “I would change my lifestyle. But not to the point where it could ruin me.”



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