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INSIDE TRUMPS' BITTER BATTLE Nephew's ailing baby caught in the middle

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Even when it comes to a sick baby in his family, Donald Trump is all business.

The megabuilder and his siblings Robert and Maryanne terminated their nephew's family medical coverage a week after he challenged the will of their father, Fred Trump.

"This was so shocking, so disappointing and so vindictive," said niece Lisa Trump, whose son, William, was born 18 months ago at Mount Sinai Medical Center with a rare neurological disorder that produces violent seizures, brain damage and medical bills topping \$300,000.

The Trump family feud has come to light in recent days as the dispute over Fred Trump's estate is being played out in Queens Surrogate Court. The patriarch left between \$100 million and \$300 million, according to different family estimates.

A separate case over the denial of medical coverage that Fred Trump freely provided to his family for decades was filed in Nassau Supreme Court.

Both lawsuits were filed by Fred Trump 3rd and **Mary Trump**, the children of Donald's late brother, Fred Jr.

They offer a rare window into one of New York's most prominent families, a world where alliances and rivalries are magnified by power, money and the tough-nosed tactics of Donald Trump.

"When [Fred 3rd] sued us, we said, 'Why should we give him medical coverage?'" Donald said in an interview with the Daily News last week.

Asked whether he thought cutting their coverage could appear cold-hearted, given the baby's medical condition, Donald made no apologies.

"I can't help that," he said. "It's cold when someone sues my father. Had he come to see me, things could very possibly have been much different for them."

Now, long-simmering generational resentments have been laid bare, with each side saying the other is motivated by greed.

Fred Trump's oldest son and namesake seemed to always disappoint his fiercely driven and competitive father. Skinny, blond and sensitive, he was a free spirit who did not have the business instincts that his father so admired.

He decided not to pursue the family business, becoming a pilot, and ceded his place as heir apparent to his brother. Donald, six years younger, not only filled his father's shoes but surpassed him to become one of the world's best-known developers.

Fred Jr. smoked and drank heavily, two traits that disgusted his father. In 1970, he married a beautiful flight attendant, and they had two children, Fred 3rd and Mary. But the marriage ended in divorce. Fred 3rd said his dad's career as a TWA pilot was short-lived and that he died of alcoholism at age 42 in 1981.

Fred Jr.'s children, who were teenagers at the time, never got over the tragedy. Even Donald appeared shaken by his brother's death and would speak over the years of the loss, "as well as a certain guilt for having benefited from

seeing his brother's mistakes," author Gwenda Blair observed in the recently published book "The Trumps: Three Generations That Built an Empire."

Fred Jr.'s death would always hover as a painful shadow over the proud and successful Trump clan.

On June 25, 1999, Fred Trump, one of the last of New York City's major postwar builders, died in a Queens hospital at age 93 after suffering from Alzheimer's disease for several years.

Fred 3rd, a 38-year-old real estate broker, told the 650 mourners at Marble Collegiate Church that his grandfather was a generous man who had always shown an underlying responsibility to those in need.

Fred 3rd was glad he had been invited to speak. It was an acknowledgment, he said, to his dead father's memory and to the fact that, no matter what, he and his sister were family.

While Fred delivered his eulogy, his wife, Lisa, sat in one of the front pews, pregnant with their third child.

That night, after returning to their home in Greenwich, Conn., Lisa went into labor.

All seemed well at first. But 48 hours after baby William Trump was born, he turned blue in his mother's arms, his body stiffening and then shaking uncontrollably. It was the first of many devastating seizures to come.

What followed for the next harrowing six weeks of his life were brain scans, spinal taps, blood tests and heart-wrenching visits to three hospitals, including Yale Medical Center. Doctors eventually diagnosed William with infantile spasms, a rare disorder that can lead to cerebral palsy or autism and a lifetime of care.

"We just don't know what William's future holds, what he will be able to do in his life," said Lisa, a full-time mom.

During the baby's three-week stay at Mount Sinai, Robert Trump called to assure his nephew that whatever the child needed would be covered by Precise, the Trump company medical plan. Round-the-clock nurses. Neurologists. Pulmon-ologists. Emergency room visits when William stopped breathing twice in the first eight months of his fragile life.

"We were so relieved when Robert called," Fred remembered.

Robert's call to Fred and Lisa was followed by a July 19 letter from a Trump company lawyer to the family insurance broker, which read:

"Please instruct Precise to pay 100% of all costs relating to baby William's care, notwithstanding any plan limits (percentage, number of visits, or maximum dollar amount); and ... whether or not they are deemed by Precise to be medically necessary."

In retrospect, the last sentence of the letter seemed ominous:

"This directive shall remain in effect until further notice."

On March 23, Fred and Mary filed a legal objection to their grandfather's will in Queens Surrogate Court. They claimed Fred Sr. was suffering from dementia and that the will he signed Sept, 18, 1991, was

"procured by fraud and undue influence" on the part of Donald, Maryanne and Robert Trump.

Although they did inherit money from their father, they are seeking one-fifth of their grandfather's estate - an estimated \$5 million to \$15 million - what they believed would have been their deceased father's share as one of the five Trump children.

But Fred Trump Sr.'s wish, as stated in his final 1991 will and the one he executed in 1984 after Fred Jr. died, was to leave the bulk of his estate in trust for his four living children: Donald, Robert, Mary-anne and Elizabeth.

According to the senior Trump's wishes, Fred 3rd and Mary would be treated like all the other grandchildren. Each was left \$200,000.

But nine years ago, in a memo with the final draft of Fred Sr.'s will, his lawyer noted that Fred 3rd and Mary, in fact, would not be treated equally, because they could not receive their predeceased father's share of the estate.

"Given the size of your estate, this is tantamount to disinheriting them," the lawyer wrote. "You may wish to increase their participation in your estate to avoid ill will in the future."

The elder Trump was given two boxes to check, both of which would have given more money to Fred 3rd and Mary. He checked neither.

When asked about this memo at a deposition taken this year, Donald Trump said he had several conversations with his dad in which the senior Trump told him he was going to leave the bulk of his estate to his four living children.

Donald said he had the impression that his father was disinclined to leave Fred and Mary more because of his father's "tremendous dislike" for their mother, Linda.

"I think he felt if it goes to the two children, it also maybe can go to the mother indirectly. He felt the mother was the cause of some of Fred's difficulty, and Fred had a difficult life," Donald said.

Donald's sister Maryanne Trump Barry, a federal judge in Newark, said in her deposition that she was the one to review the lawyer's memo with her dad.

"I talked about this [with my father] and said: 'What do you want to do?' His words were, 'Forget about it. Forget about it.' He had no intention of treating them as one of his children - none."

On March 30, Donald, Maryanne and Robert Trump retaliated.

Fred Trump 3rd received a certified letter informing him the medical benefits that had always been provided to his family by the Trump organization would end on May 1, 2000.

"I burst out into tears," said Lisa Trump.

Fred said he is determined to fight on principle. A Nassau County judge ruled this month that the Trump family must continue paying the health insurance until the dispute is resolved.

"You have to be tough in this family. I guess I have what my father didn't have. I will stick to my guns. I just think it was wrong," Fred said. "These are not warm and fuzzy people. They never even came to see William in the hospital. Our family puts the 'fun' in dysfunctional."

Mary is equally incensed.

The 35-year-old Long Island graduate student said she, like her brother, can well afford her own medical insurance.

"Given this family, it would be utterly naive to say it has nothing to do with money. But for both me and my brother, it has much more to do with that our father [Fred Jr.] be recognized," she said. "He existed, he lived, he was their oldest son.

"And William is my father's grandson. He is as much a part of that family as anybody else. He desperately needs extra care."

Donald, for his part, said last week that all this feuding and hurt feelings could have been avoided if his nephew Fred had come to talk to him.

"It's sort of disappointing. They sued my father, essentially," said Donald. "I'm not thrilled when someone sues my father.

"Fred shouldn't be hurt," he added. "I have helped Fred over the years. That was the will of my father. He had four children left, and that's who he wanted to leave his estate to."

William Trump is now 18 months old. His seizures have stopped since he received steroid injections. He is able to smile and laugh but cannot sit up, walk or pick up a Cheerio. He spends his days going to physical therapy and doctors' appointments. His 7-year-old sister and 5-year-old brother are his playmates, protectively watching over their baby brother.

One of the ironies in all this, say his parents, is that he bears an uncanny resemblance to his famous uncle.

"He has beautiful curly blond hair and looks quite a bit like Donald," said Lisa.

But the child's plight has only deepened family divisions.

In court papers, Robert Trump referred to the round-the-clock nurses for baby William as "highly paid baby-sitters."

Maryanne Trump Barry referred to Fred and Mary as "absentee grandchildren" who saw their grandparents only on holidays.

Donald, who before had an amiable relationship with his dead brother's children, said in his deposition, "They live like kings and queens. This is not two people left out in the gutter."

"My aunt and uncles should be ashamed of themselves," **Mary Trump** said. "I'm sure they are not."

Graphic: TRIMMING THE TREE

---- **Index References** ----

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