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December 2019

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McDannold Law Focuses On Estate Planning

Special to The Laker / Lutz News

The steady grandfather clock in the lobby at McDannold's beloved grandparents, who died without leaving the clock to any particular beneficiary, making it difficult for family to decide who would inherit the timepiece.

McDannold keeps the clock in his law office because it symbolizes the reasons that motivated him to practice elder law — his love for his grandparents, the inexorable march of time we all face, and the importance of careful estate planning.

When it comes to planning your family's future, McDannold recommends choosing an attorney who specializes in estate planning.

"If you need estate planning, why would you go to someone who mostly does other things? Some with probate — I know the process backward and forward, and am better equipped to do a good job," said McDannold. "I do not forget to include things that might be beneficial later on, or language that would address potential situations in the future."

McDannold does not charge for his initial consultation, which he often sets up over a cup of coffee. This relaxed atmosphere helps him get to know clients personally, so he can best tailor legal plans specific to each client's individual needs and situation.

"My grandparents were really formative in my life, so planning, losing people, dealing with the aftermath, and the whole experience of people passing on and leaving things behind, is something I understand," said McDannold. "I want to help folks through that process, and unfortunately, many people don't know what comes next after someone dies."

Estate planning is especially important when there are dependent children, or guardianship of incapacitated or developmentally disabled adults.

"One of the most substantial things parents can do is to establish who shall be the guardian of their children after they're gone," McDannold said. "If you don't make that choice in advance, then some judge who doesn't know you, your kids, or your family, is going to have to make that decision. Do you want a stranger making that choice?"

For family heirlooms, like his grandparents' clock, McDannold proposes a simple solution.

"In Florida, you can create a separate list of who you want to receive your tangible personal property — things like a clock or a rug or a prized painting," said McDannold. "This list does not have to be created in front of an attorney, and it does not need to be notarized or witnessed. All you need to do is date and sign it, and as long as your will refers to this list, it becomes part of your will. Later on, if change your mind, you can even tear it up and make a new list."

Before becoming an attorney, McDannold had an accomplished 25-year military career, working as a staff engineer on the B-2 Stealth Bomber program and as a flight-test engineer. He was deployed to Iraq for two years as a military advisor to the Iraqi air staff, and completed his military career in Tampa at CENTCOM, MacDill Air Force Base.

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revised 5/21/20