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30 Things I've Learned After 30 Years as an Estate Planner

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I began practicing estate planning in the spring of 1987. I had been out of law school for less than a year, practicing in litigation at a large, prestigious firm in Chicago, meaning that I largely spent my days looking at documents in cases in which one faceless corporation was suing another. As I remember the story (facts do get fuzzy over time), a partner came to me and said that he had a small piece of probate litigation that he didn't want to be bothered with. I think the case revolved around whether life insurance proceeds needed to be paid because there was a suspicion that the decedent had committed suicide. I don't remember the result but I do remember that I was intrigued that the practice of law actually involved living, breathing (or dead!) human beings and human emotion, something I had not encountered as a commercial litigation associate before that. I spoke with a couple of the partners in the firm's Trusts and Estates Group and asked if I could do some work with them and they kindly agreed to take me on. My only encounter with anything having to do with estates up to that time had been one morning session in my Bar-Bri class preparing for the bar exam.

Related People



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