PRESTON ESTATE PLANNING
A PROFESSIONAL LAW CORPORATION

PrestonEstatePlanning.com
12396 World Trade Drive, Ste 301
San Diego, CA 92128
800.698.6918

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Journey Down a River of No Return

The Unspoiled Beauty of Central Idaho

There's more to Idaho than potatoes. Sitting square in the center of the Gem State is one of the largest contiguous areas of protected wilderness in the U.S. While the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area may not roll off the tongue as easy as Yellowstone or Yosemite, this 2 million-acre swath of mountains, gorges, and alpine lakes offers something for outdoor enthusiasts of all stripes.

River of No What, Now?

The name of the wilderness may sound a little ominous at first — who wants to travel down a river of no return? — but in truth, it's a title from times gone by when canoes and small watercraft could travel down the Middle Fork of the Salmon River swiftly but couldn't fight the current going back up. Today, those same rapids make the Middle Fork a wildly popular whitewater rafting destination, with plenty of local and out-of-state enthusiasts making a return journey every summer.

Rafting Isn't for Me. What Else You Got?

If crashing down 300 Class III rapids isn't your speed, the Frank Church Wilderness has plenty of other ways to enjoy the wild mountain country. There are several lodges that were grandfathered in to the wilderness area, most of which are only accessible by jet boat, light aircraft, or good old-fashioned hiking. Some, like the Middle Fork Lodge, offer five-star accommodations, located conveniently close to one of the area's many natural hot springs. Those with the right permits will find the rivers and lakes full of fishing opportunities, and the surrounding pine forests are teeming with game.

Lodges? I Just Want to Get Away From It All.

For those looking for a truly unplugged experience, backpacking to the many campsites scattered throughout the region can be an incredible journey. If you spend a night beside the crystal-clear waters of Langer Lake, hundreds of miles away from any light pollution, you'll find peace, quiet, and a sky bursting with stars. If you've ever wanted to experience a truly untamed part of the United States, Idaho is the hidden gem you've been looking for.

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Piece Of Mind

In order for you to have peace of mind, we are giving you our piece of mind.

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MEET MY TEAM!

John Preston Honors His Employees

Many clients know who I am. I may have met with them, or they may have seen me speak at one of our various workshops and events. Being the face of the company for so many years means many of our clients correlate their successful outcomes with me, but I actually have plenty of backup!

This month, I want to honor my team and introduce our clients to the 25–30 people working at Preston Estate Planning at any given moment. I have not listed their names for privacy reasons, but I appreciate this fantastic team behind me.

1. Receptionist: Better known as the "vice president of first impressions," the receptionist at Preston Estate Planning is the first interaction new and returning clients have with our firm. Our sweet and personable receptionist plays a vital role in setting the tone for our practice. Additionally, one of her more important tasks is to ensure that issues are addressed quickly by directing clients to the correct department or person that can best serve their needs.

2. Scheduling Department: In this busy position, our experts in the scheduling department keep each of the attorneys on the calendar. The attorneys have an average of five appointments every day, and without our scheduling department, our calendars would be in chaos. They schedule phone calls and meetings with our clients and are consistently calling, emailing, or mailing correspondence confirming and/or rescheduling various appointments.

3. Filing Department: With the volume of documents we deal with every day, our filing department has the important task of ensuring each document is in its appropriate place at the time it's needed. Despite our goal to minimize the use of paper, we must deal with a lot of it, and much of it is very sensitive and personal. These documents are cared for, protected, and delivered by this diligent team.

4. Attorneys: The two additional attorneys who join me at Preston Estate Planning are second to none. They are personal, precise, and diligent, and we guarantee that every plan we develop accurately reflects the desires of our clients. There are numerous skills and techniques present in these attorneys that are not found elsewhere.

5. Word Processing Department: Any time we create a document or when documents need to be revised, our word processing department ensures the language is precise and accurate. These experts are more than typists; they are an extremely sharp group of people who have years of experience. Our entire operation relies heavily on the hardworking people in this department.

6. Concierges: When a client has a question or concern, our concierges are available to meet their needs. If a crisis arises, concierges can pull from any department for "all-hands-on-deck" tasks. In addition, they answer a variety of questions without having to wait for an attorney to be available. Lastly, our concierges can step into the scheduling role and set up an appointment with an attorney and a client, if necessary. They spend 90 percent of their time speaking with clients on the phone and responding to their inquiries.

7. Notaries: Our notaries can take something as mundane (though critical) as signing documents and make the experience truly an achievement worth celebrating. These notaries have the responsibility of making sure every "i" is dotted and every "t" is crossed, and they do it very well. Without their tenacity, we would spend a lot of time in court trying to prove that the decedent actually signed the specific document being challenged.

8. Funding Department: When the documents have all been signed, especially the trust, it needs to be funded. This laborious, time-consuming, seemingly never-ending job must be done or the assets go into probate despite how well-drafted and comprehensive the documents are. This department ensures that the client's assets that are supposed to be in the trust *are*, the assets that are not supposed to be in the trust *aren't*, and the ones that should name the trust as the beneficiary *do*. This repetitive process takes a lot of patience and skill.

9. Settlement Department: When a client passes away, the settlement department gets involved to ensure the plans we drafted

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Enjoying the Journey

Roadside Attractions Worth Visiting

The United States can be a weird place, and some landmarks definitely reflect that sentiment. Along almost every highway, bizarre landmarks draw road trippers of all ages. Sometimes tourist traps aren't worth the price of admission, but when you're taking your summer road trip this year and your family needs a place to stop and stretch, these are three roadside attractions worth checking out.

The Lost Sea; Sweetwater, Tennessee
The Lost Sea is the largest underground lake in the U.S. Lying 140 feet beneath the surface, it's a fun escape from the summer heat, since it's 58 degrees year-round. Kids and adults alike can learn about the history and geology of the area on a guided tour through forest above and lake below. And afterward, you can stop by the general store, ice cream parlor, or café.

The Mystery Spot; Santa Cruz, California
Advertising itself as a "gravitational anomaly," this wacky spot in the middle of the redwood forest showcases a series of optical illusions such as balls rolling uphill and a cabin where visitors can lean toward the ground and appear to defy gravity. It might not be aliens, like some believe, but visitors of all ages will get a kick out of the illusions messing with their perception. Plus, the nearby hiking trails through the redwoods offer a free added experience.

Dinosaur Land; White Post, Virginia
It might not be Jurassic Park, but it's still worth a look. Nestled in the greenery of Northern Virginia, this park has over 50 life-size statues of dinosaurs of all kinds. Tours are self-guided, parking is free, and children (or adults) with dinosaur obsessions are sure to smile and point out their favorites. It's certainly something to "rawr" home about.

Whether these spots are your destinations or you're just passing through on your summer road trip, visiting these roadside attractions and others like them will add some fun to your travels.

Educate, Evaluate, and Update

John Preston Shares a Client's Story of Thanks

The standard practice at Preston Estate Planning isn't to charge our clients for every phone call or revision they need to make. Instead, clients can make as many revisions or changes as they see fit at no extra charge within their first 12 months of retaining our firm. After the first 12 months, clients are given an opportunity to place our firm on retainer for a fee that is less than our hourly rate. This is a proactive program that ensures that our client's documents are current and the clients are well-informed.

Every year, two separate letters are mailed to our clients. The first one addresses legal changes, and the second one addresses personal changes. Clients are encouraged to have their questions answered regarding the contents of these letters and to make any necessary changes for no additional charge. In addition, we offer numerous exclusive workshops annually for our clients to learn how their documents work and warn them of any problems that occur when not following the terms of the trust. Again, all this work is done each year for a fee that is less than our hourly rate.

This is unprecedented, but we deem it necessary.

In January 2019, we decided our clients needed more opportunities for engagement. Our annual workshops have grown from one event with hundreds of people to three events with thousands of clients in attendance, which means this setting is no longer intimate enough for us to take personal questions. So, in addition to those workshops, we now host regional Q&A meetings to address the questions our clients want to have answered.

A few weeks ago, we hosted our first two Q&A meetings. We prepared agendas just in case there weren't many questions, but we quickly learned there was no need for these agendas. In the first meeting, we answered questions nonstop for 1 1/2 hours, and in the second meeting, we answered two hours' worth of questions.

After a presentation in Walnut Creek, a woman approached us in tears. She said, "I cannot tell you how comfortable I feel working with your firm. I just love you guys. You take care of our documents, you educate us, and you make sure we are up to date. This program doesn't exist anywhere else. You educate, you evaluate, and you update, and I really appreciate that."

We are not in this profession for the accolades, but this woman's words struck a chord with us. We understand that your families and your situation may change after you initially create an estate plan. We all know that the laws will constantly change. We believe you deserve a system to keep everything current at a price you can afford. Thank you for trusting us with this responsibility.

Preston University

The Devil is in the Details!

You had heard the saying, "The devil is in the details." It is my experience that this is particularly true when planning your estate. We often hear sad stories from our clients about their loved ones who've had a bad experience because something went wrong with their documents. This story broke my heart.

An elderly gentleman hired an estate planning attorney. He only had two simple requests: *"Keep my house out of probate, and keep it in the family."* The house was his only asset, and he wanted to protect it. He was particularly concerned because his only son had been ill lately and he wanted to be sure that if the son didn't survive him, the house would go to his only grandson.

At this gentleman's death, exactly the opposite happened. The house went into probate and the house was distributed to the gentleman's daughter-in-law, leaving nothing to the grandson!

How in the world could this have happened?

Unfortunately, this happens a lot more often than many people realize. The gentleman's trust indicated that the son would receive the house if he survived his father — which he did, but only by 34 days. Since he survived, he became the owner of the house. However, before the son could complete any paperwork, he died. Since he owned the house at his death, it had to go through probate.

What if the son had a will? He did. The house still went into probate! Furthermore, the son's will stated that all his assets (including the house he just received from his father) go to his wife — his second wife, not the mother of the grandson. To make matters worse, the daughter-in-law remarried and added her new husband's name to the title of the property.

We were asked if there was anything we could do. We could not; it was too late. The grandson will never enjoy the only asset his grandfather wanted him to receive.

However, what if the son survived his father by 34 years instead of 34 days? Potentially, the same thing! Is there a lesson to be learned? Yes. If you want the assets to stay out of probate, and go to the intended beneficiary, don't terminate the trust at your death; have it continue for the life of your children. If you are the beneficiary of a trust, have it reviewed before it's too late!

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are implemented properly. The people in this department are working with family members during a highly emotional and sensitive period. This necessitates a high degree of patience and meticulous skill. It is at this point that everything we have done is tested. Our settlement department is highly skilled and proficient at ensuring the documents successfully accomplish the intent of the decedent while protecting the loved ones left behind.

10. Finance Department: Our finance department keeps track of the fees paid to our firm to ensure that every penny is attributable to a specific client and corresponds to the task that client has hired us to perform. In addition, monitoring the overhead is a completely separate and arduous task. Finally, the finance department has the responsibility of providing the necessary hardware and software to each employee, which allow them to perform their tasks.

11. Conductor: This is actually a person, not a department. He oversees all the departments. He is much more than a CFO or director of operations, (although that is his technical title); he is the reason the office runs as smoothly as it does. Each member of our office plays their part in perfect harmony because of the systems the conductor has developed and implemented.

Without this dedicated team, Preston Estate Planning wouldn't be where it is today. I truly appreciate their hard work, diligence, and conscientiousness. I could not be prouder of them. Thanks for making me look good, team!

–John M. Preston

Grilled Beef Ribs

Inspired by Saveur magazine

Ingredients

- 1 5-lb. rack of beef ribs
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

Directions

1. Heat a charcoal, wood-burning, or gas grill to medium-high. Once heated, move heat source to one side or turn off half of the burners to create an indirect heat zone.
2. Season ribs with salt and pepper and char on the hotter side of the grill, turning occasionally, for 12–15 minutes. Once charred, transfer to the other side of grill and cook until the thickest part of the rib reaches 130 F, about 2 1/2–3 hours.
3. Let meat rest for 15 minutes. If desired, serve alongside grilled veggies.