



We help successful families, business owners and real estate owners minimize income and estate tax, better protect assets and transfer your legacy and family values to the next generation.



GORALKA
Law Firm, PC
Preserve, Protect & Enhance
Your Legacy

The Goralka Law Firm Newsletter
4470 Duckhorn Drive, Sacramento, CA 95834
916-440-8036 | info@goralkalawfirm.com

FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Happy Lunar New Year! Welcome the Year of the Snake

by John M. Goralka, Esq.

Embracing Lunar New Year 2025.



As we usher in the Lunar New Year, 2025 marks the Year of the Snake, a time for festivities and traditions that span cultures and generations. Celebrated by millions around the world, the Lunar

IN THIS ISSUE

LEAD ARTICLE:

[Happy Lunar New Year!](#)

ARTICLE:

[Wills Gone Wild: How to Avoid Estate Planning Disasters](#)

ARTICLE:

[Tony Bennett's Daughters Share Thoughts on How to Prevent Inheritance Disputes](#)

ARTICLE:

[Eight Goals to Jump-Start Your Financial Success in 2025](#)

SUCCESS STORIES:

[Saving Our Clients Millions of Dollars](#)

IN THE NEWS:

[Celebrating John Goralka's 30 Years of Legal Specialization](#)

New Year is a vibrant occasion filled with family gatherings, delicious food, and symbolic rituals.

Brief History of the Lunar New Year Tradition

The origins of the Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, date back over 4,000 years to ancient China. Historically, it marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring, a time for renewal and new beginnings. According to legend, the festival originated from the practice of scaring away a mythical beast called Nian, which would come on the first day of the new year to cause havoc. To protect themselves, people would put up red decorations, light fireworks, and make loud noises to ward off Nian.

Over time, the Lunar New Year evolved into a celebration that honors ancestors, reunites families, and symbolizes the hopes for a prosperous year ahead. Each year in the Chinese zodiac is represented by an animal, and 2025 is the Year of the Snake, associated with wisdom, intuition, and transformation.

Key Traditions and Customs

- Family Reunions: One of the most important aspects of the Lunar New Year is reuniting with family. Loved ones gather to...[Read On](#)

- John



CLIENT TESTIMONIAL:
[20 Years: Trust Administration & Estate Planning](#)

RECIPE OF THE MONTH:
[Potato Beer Cheese Soup](#)

[Thoughts of the Day](#)

[Client Testimonials & Online Reviews](#)

[Contact Us](#)

THOUGHTS OF THE DAY

“Kindness has a way of circling back when you least expect it.”

- Steph Curry

“The best way to predict the future is to create it!”

- Peter Drucker

“Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life’s coming attractions.”

- Albert Einstein



Wills Gone Wild: How to Avoid Estate Planning Disasters

by John M. Goralka, Esq. and Adam Shell

These wills gone wild may be extreme examples of poor estate planning, but experts explain how easily a will can go to the dogs.



Did you say my mom mistakenly left \$3.5 million to the veterinarian who took care of her favorite feline? Let me get this straight: You're telling me Dad's brother took a \$500,000 insurance policy meant for me? Dad left his house to his pets' caretaker and his second home next door to his cats?!

These aren't made-up financial horror stories. These are real-life estate planning nightmares recalled by veteran attorneys who have seen it all. No one wants to leave a financial mess for heirs after they're gone.

As these real-life examples illustrate, crazy things can happen if estate planning must-haves like a will or trust are nowhere to be found after you pass. Assets can end up in the strangest places and with dubious heirs if the deceased botched key estate documents.

A will and estate planning are often overlooked aspects of financial planning, but if you want to secure the future of your loved ones, it's crucial that you properly outline in a will (or trust) how you want your assets distributed after you pass. If there's no will, disputes will no doubt arise among family members and heirs, often causing....

[LEARN MORE](#)

Tony Bennett's Daughters Share Thoughts on How to Prevent Inheritance Disputes

by John M. Goralka, Esq.

Many families, especially high-net-worth ones, can benefit from Johanna and Antonia Bennett's experience encountering estate disagreements.



Tony Bennett will be forever remembered for his passionate performances in which he truly gave his all. Despite belonging to the rock 'n' roll era, he chose instead to focus on elegant, classic vocals such as those by Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole. Sinatra believed Bennett was the best singer in the world.

Bennett died in July 2023 at the age of 96. He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2016. Tony was survived by his wife, Susan Crow, and his children D'Andrea, Daegal, Johanna and Antonia.

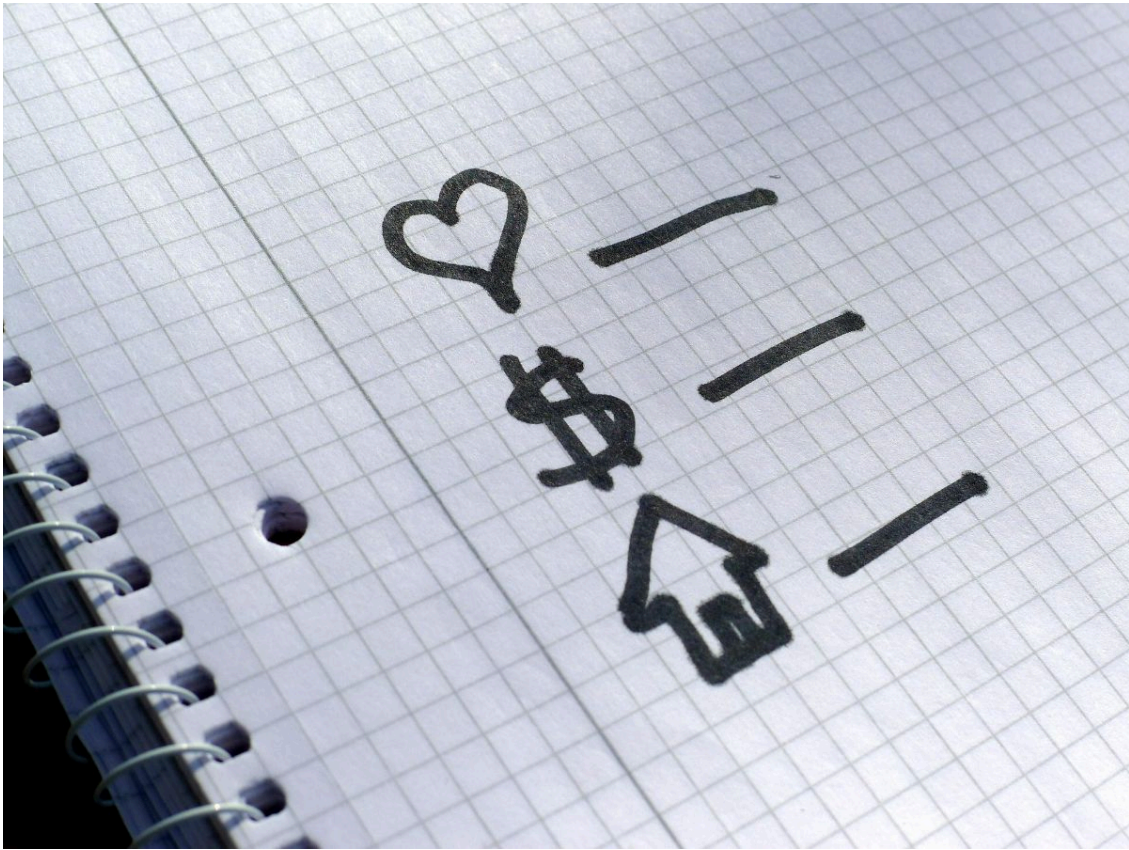
The estate is currently in litigation between some of the beneficiaries and the trustee. This article was inspired by a recent conversation with Antonia and Johanna Bennett. Its purpose is not to address the specifics of the litigation, but rather, the effects of the litigation on the family and to offer steps that other families enduring the death of a parent can take to avoid litigation over the estate and the emotional anguish that it causes.

[READ MORE](#)

Eight Goals to Jump-Start Your Financial Success in 2025

by John M. Goralka, Esq. and The Kiplinger Advisor Collective

To achieve your financial goals this year, you'll need to start with a clear vision and plan.



Ask anyone what they want to achieve when setting goals at the beginning of a year, and at least one of those goals is likely to be related to money. Whether it's as simple as saving more or spending less, or as complex as researching new investment opportunities or delving into real estate, setting financial goals at the start of the year is a smart way to start or improve your current financial journey.

If you haven't yet settled on what you'd like to achieve with your money in 2025, consider the following eight goals recommended by the financial experts of Kiplinger Advisor Collective. We discuss the goals we think more people should set for 2025, and how doing so might impact their future success.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Success Stories: Saving Our Clients Millions of Dollars

by John M. Goralka, Esq.

With our extensive knowledge in Business, Tax, and Estate Planning, we deliver unique solutions tailored to our clients' needs.



Transformational Wealth: How a Step-Up in Basis Helped Our Clients Retire Without High Tax Costs

Our clients holding income-producing real estate valued at approximately \$12 million received a step-up in income tax basis upon the death of their mother.

During their mother's lifetime, the real property was transferred to an Upstream Basis Trust. This trust is designed to provide a basis step-up by including the property in the mother's estate for estate tax purposes. A basis step-up means that the properties can now be sold with virtually no capital gains tax. For properties that are not sold, the depreciable basis is increased to the fair market value as of the date of death, resulting in higher depreciation deductions and an increased return on investment.

The clients were actively involved in managing these properties. This allows them to retire from property management activities without incurring high tax costs upon the sale of the properties. This is a transformational change for these clients, as they can now improve their daily enjoyment of life. Previously, they did not see a way to retire without facing significant tax costs, which could have been one-third or more of the property value in California and federal income tax on the sale proceeds.

Strategic Restructuring Saves Family Construction Business: Reducing Insurance Costs and Tax Liability for Our Clients

We assisted a 3rd generation family construction business when they unexpectedly received an extraordinarily insurance bill that was so high, with an extremely high deductible in the event of loss, that the policy was essentially a highly expensive form of self-insurance that put their personal assets at risk. They were unable to find an insurance company to work with because their gross income was too high. Note that the cost of the insurance was in large part tied to the gross income received each year.

At the last minute, with only a few months before the policy expired (because that was when the clients came to us with the hope of avoiding dissolution of the highly profitable business), we were able to split the company into seven different businesses. The Clients, a husband and a wife were both licensed contractors and intimately involved in the business operations. A contractor can have three separate entities tied to his or her license.

We set up a separate company to handle purchasing the supplies, so we were able to remove the cost of the supplies from the annual gross income from any of the contracting companies. In addition to the business structure, they needed to work with their customers to implement the change and to have new contracts and agreements for each of the entities' business operations. This new structure enabled them to continue business operations with a reasonable insurance cost.

The new structure was very helpful years later when the business was sold. We were able to minimize tax by using a combination of asset purchase and stock purchase sales with the different entities.

[READ MORE SUCCESS STORIES](#)

In the News: Celebrating John Goralka's 30 Years of Legal Specialization!
by Staff

Thank you John for your continued efforts and for being a leader in the practice of law.

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

THE CALIFORNIA BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION
EXPRESSES ITS GRATITUDE TO

John Michael Goralka

FOR YOUR VALUABLE PARTICIPATION AS A
TAXATION LAW CERTIFIED SPECIALIST AND

30 YEARS

OF PARTICIPATION IN THE
LEGAL SPECIALIZATION PROGRAM



Michael D. Lee

MICHAEL D. LEE
2024-2025 CHAIR
CALIFORNIA BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION
DECEMBER 18, 2024



The State Bar of California

DIVISION OF REGULATION

180 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94105

legalspec@calbar.ca.gov

415-538-2120

January 8, 2025

John Michael Goralka - 137653
4470 Duckhorn Dr
Sacramento, CA 95834-2589

Dear John Michael Goralka,

The California Board of Legal Specialization and State Bar Legal Specialization Unit would like to congratulate on your continued professional advancement and commitment to public protection. As of 2024, you have faithfully devoted **30 years** to the Legal Specialization Program, we would like to recognize you in this milestone achievement. To commemorate this accomplishment, please see the included anniversary award certificate and lapel pin.

The California Board of Legal Specialization extends its gratitude to you as you play a vital role in helping us accomplish our mission to protect the public. Congratulations again on your anniversary milestone and we hope you continue to participate in the program.

Thank you for your continued efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael D. Lee".

Michael D. Lee
2024-2025 Chair, California Board of Legal Specialization

The Goralka Law Firm is thrilled to announce and celebrate a significant milestone in the illustrious career of our esteemed company President and Lead Attorney, John Goralka. As of 2024, John has faithfully devoted 30 years to the California State Bar Legal Specialization Program, a testament to his unwavering commitment to professional excellence and public protection.

The [California Board of Legal Specialization](#) and the State Bar Legal Specialization Unit have recognized John's outstanding contributions and dedication by awarding him an anniversary award certificate and a commemorative lapel pin. This honor highlights John's role in helping the organization achieve its mission to safeguard the public through exemplary legal services.

John's journey as a legal specialist has been marked by his relentless pursuit of excellence, his passion for the law, and his dedication to his clients. His expertise and leadership have positively impacted the legal community, and his

commitment to continuous learning and professional growth is truly inspiring.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to John on this remarkable achievement. His dedication to the Legal Specialization Program has not only elevated the standards of legal practice but also ensured that clients receive the highest level of legal representation.

We are proud to announce this milestone and look forward to many more years of your exceptional contributions to the legal field.

Client Testimonial: 20 Years: Trust Administration & Estate Planning

by John M. Goralka, Esq.

WATCH THIS VIDEO



This couple boasts over 20 years of multi-generational experience working with the Goralka Law Firm for their estate planning needs. They share insights on their journey, from acting as Power of Attorney for his parents' estate plan to serving as trustee and successor trustee. Additionally, our client explains the process of setting up his own trust. Both generations have relied on the expertise of John Goralka and the Goralka Law Firm. The clients also mention attending our seminars, which have played a significant role in their estate planning journey. We are currently updating our seminar offerings and schedule, and will announce the return of these valuable sessions in future newsletters.

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

"I received notice of an impending tax audit, and it was a stressful experience, but The Goralka Law Firm ensured our rights were protected throughout the process. John represented us and we felt protected from the IRS."

- Koumou K.

"Goralka Law Firm has made themselves an integral part of the success of our business since 2017. John's expertise, guidance, and accessibility have allowed us to continue running at full speed while staying highly organized. We have used John when we bought our business, planned the structure, did tax planning and more."

- Dan L.

"John and his team have been such an enormous help to our family-owned businesses. John is always willing to help and answer any questions we may have about such a wide variety of things, sales tax, deductions, loan questions, etc. He was able to help our family get out of the mess that our previous attorney had, unfortunately, put us in. Our family will continue to use John at Goralka Law Firm for as long as he will have us! Highly recommended."

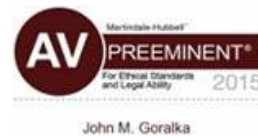
- Thomas S.

[READ MORE CLIENT TESTIMONIALS](#)



We are deeply grateful to all our clients for their continued business and referrals over the years. Your reviews remind us why we do what we do, reaffirming that we are not just preparing legal documents, but building lasting relationships and making a meaningful impact on families and their loved ones for generations to come.

Could you kindly take a moment to leave us some feedback and a review online at one (or more) of the following websites? Your input is invaluable to us. Thank you!



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Potato Beer Cheese Soup

This satisfying potato soup has a velvety texture that's not too thick or too thin. The subtle flavors of beer and cheese balance each other nicely, creating a soup that's sure to warm you head to toe.

Total Time: 55 minutes

- Prep Time: 25 minutes
- Cook Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 8 (2 quarts)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs. potatoes (about 6 medium), peeled and cubed
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cups water
- 1 ½ cups 2% milk
- 1 cup beer or chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 chicken bouillon cubes
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. ground mustard
- ½ tsp. white pepper
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- Optional: Salad croutons, crumbled cooked bacon, minced chives and coarsely ground pepper



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the potatoes, onion and water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat; cover and cook for 15-20 minutes or until tender.
3. Remove from the heat; cool slightly (do not drain).
4. In a blender, cover and process the mixture in batches until smooth.
5. Return all to the pan and heat through.
6. Stir in the milk, beer, Worcestershire sauce, bouillon, salt, mustard and white pepper; heat through.
7. Stir in cheese just until melted.
8. If desired, top with croutons, bacon, chives and/or pepper.

Enjoy! 😊

CONTACT US

THE GORALKA LAW FIRM, APC
4470 Duckhorn Drive
Sacramento, CA 95834

Phone: (916) 440-8036



NOTE: The client testimonials featured in this newsletter and on our website are from actual clients of The Goralka Law Firm, P.C. Their full names have been redacted to protect their privacy. These client testimonials do not guarantee your particular results.

Copyright © 2025 Goralka Law Firm, APC, All rights reserved.