

Thornhill lawyers write cautionary tale in new book

Family 'betrayal, greed' can be avoided: Kotzer

Simone Joseph – Thornhill Liberal

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If one of your new year's resolutions is to make a will, or update one that is many years old, a new book might motivate you to fulfill that resolution.

It's the latest book written by Thornhill lawyer and author Les Kotzer.

He tells a story about how he spotted a young man outside his father's old hardware store in Toronto in 2012.

He remembered seeing this man at his dad's store when the man was just a boy.

Kotzer was eager to catch up.

"How is your father? How is your brother?" Kotzer asked.

The man's father had been an avid do-it-yourselfer who took great pride in his home.

Unfortunately, the father had died the year before, the man said. And his brother? "I don't speak to that son of a ----", the man said. "We are fighting each other over the house."

Kotzer realized that the son saw the house — his father's castle, which the father had cherished and fussed over his entire life — as merely an asset.

A Thornhill resident, Kotzer is a wills and estate lawyer at Thornhill-based company Fish & Associates, where he works with fellow author and lawyer, Barry Fish.

The two lawyers decided to release a tell-all book about what happens behind the scenes in the world of wills and estates.

"I wanted people to see the betrayal, the greed," Kotzer said, as well as the kindness and the humorous moments.

Their third and latest book is called *The Wills Lawyers: Their stories of Money, Inheritance, Greed, Family and Betrayal*.

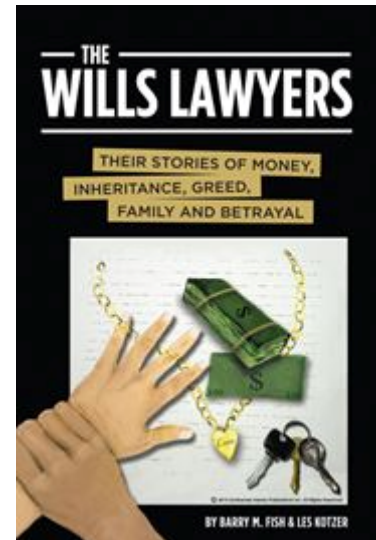
Kotzer and Fish have seen the personal toll, the costs of will-related family fallout and betrayal.

"There are lessons of proper planning," Kotzer said.

"The book will hopefully educate you by helping prevent will mistakes others made. Don't think you are immune to this, because it can happen to you."

He tells the story of the daughter who is in her 50s and gets a call that her mother is very sick. The doctor needs her to make a decision about whether to keep her mother alive, suffering in between doses of morphine, or whether to let her go.

The daughter had no guidance on this matter, because the woman did not have a living will. The daughter thinks back to when she was age 7 and the family dog, Katie, had run out onto the road and was hit by a car. The daughter remembers crying, begging her mother to save Katie. But her mother told her: "If you love something, you don't let it suffer".



After remembering this scene from her childhood, the woman decided her mother would have wanted an end to her suffering.

The moral of this story?

“Don’t put this pressure on your children. Don’t make them search in their memory bank,” Kotzer said, emphasizing the importance of having a living will.

You can get a digital version of the book by going to Thewillslawyers.com or you can call his office at 905-881-1500.