

My Attorney, My Friend

NEW YORK, NY - December 7, 2000-"My attorney, my friend." Not a phrase you hear much around attorneys, except in the case of elder law attorneys, who deal with some of the toughest areas of one's personal life-money and terminal illness.

Says Bernard A. Krooks, a prominent attorney who specializes in estate and health care planning for the elderly:

"A good elder law attorney cannot help but form a bond with the client. Clients who have to decide things like which of their children will inherit an engagement ring are dealing with gut-wrenching emotion. When someone is signing a legal document stating they do not want to be put on life support, they truly are facing a life or death decision. You get to know the client really well, and you want things to work out for them.

"That's why it is so difficult when things don't happen as planned. When a client faces a lawsuit, like with the right of spousal refusal issue in New York City, or doesn't get the right care at a nursing facility, I take it personally, as though I was a family member."

"The way lawyers are viewed today, it may be unique, but my clients are my friends, and I am theirs."

Mr. Krooks is Chair of the New York State Bar Association's Elder Law Section and Vice President and Fellow of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA).