

## PROFILE...

# STEPHEN SPANO MAKES EDUCATION PERSONAL

By Don Tritschler

Stephen Spano's course is personal. Its title, "What you Need to Do Now to Be Safe and Prosper," speaks directly to us as seniors who want to make the best of our final years and our legacy. His law office focuses on estate planning and laws that protect elders.

Spano has convincing credentials. He is Board Certified as an Elder Law Attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation and is an adjunct professor in the post-doctoral Estate Planning and the Elder Law LL.M. Program at Western New England University School of Law. He regularly attends conferences to train others in his specialty.

He made our class personal not only by inviting questions about our concerns, but he brought many personal experiences as examples from his practice. Spano does this especially well because his mind works so quickly—everything seems ready to him for recall. Of course he doesn't divulge confidences, but he describes what he knows vividly. His mind is active, precise, and he has an amazing memory for cases, even the numbers of the paragraphs in law that apply to those cases.

Sometimes that active mind wanders off the subject of the day. On a day we were to learn about writing wills and establishing trusts to protect our estates, he related



*Stephen Spano*

fascinating descriptions of mistakes lawyers can make. Yet there it was, up on our PowerPoint screen—the topics covering wills and trusts. Instead, Spano described errors made “on behalf” of clients who had come to him after discovering their own lawyers' mistakes. He described the difficulties of correcting such errors and of having to tell some of those people that they wouldn't be able to win a malpractice suit.

Those cases were fascinating, and oh yes, he did finally dig into the subject of the day. He used cogent examples to show us how wills need to be protected since they are exposed to unexpected claims when they go to Probate Court. He spoke of the protection of one's legacy by a revocable trust.

As a raconteur, Spano also sees himself clearly. When we found ourselves laughing at one of his stories, it was sometimes about himself. All nine professionals in his law firm are women. He spoke specifically about each of them and what each brings to the firm. One indication of their value to him is his practice of sending them, at the firm's expense, to conferences to enhance their knowledge (and give them some time off from the office routine). He identified the one who has just become a partner and will lead the firm when he and his wife Francine Dawicki, his professional partner, retire. As the only man on staff, he says he works well with these women because of the feminine side in his character.

Another side to Stephen Spano is his fascination with the internet and the devices that access it. He has given our class many internet sites to visit for information about the topics he covers. To interact with Stephen Spano is an education, and it's fun.

