

JULY 2025

“At our Firm,
Your Estate Plan
is Not Business,
it’s Personal...”



Patrick P. Phancao

*Asset Protection, Estate Planning,
Medi-Cal Planning and Business Planning*

Shadi Ala'i Shaffer

*Estate Planning, Probate Administration,
and Trust Administration*

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

- 01 Taking A Different Approach To Summer
- 02 Why Estate Planning Is A Lifelong Financial Compass
- 03 Book Review
- 03 Business / Health / Wealth Section
- 04 As July winds down...

“What good is the warmth
of summer, without the
cold of winter to give it
sweetness.”
- John Steinbeck

TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO SUMMER

July brings the full promise of summer—a time of warmth, longer days, and the gift of unstructured hours. For parents (speaking as one myself), it often feels like a challenge: how do you keep the kids busy, stimulated, and off their screens without turning their vacation into another checklist of accomplishments? The answer may lie not in what we add, but what we allow. July can be an opportunity not just to entertain our children, but to give them something deeper: space. And in giving them that, we might just reclaim some of our own.



In today’s culture of constant achievement, children are rarely given the chance to simply be. We rush from one school term into a packed schedule of summer camps, sports intensives, and enrichment classes—all in the name of giving our children “the best.” And while many of these programs offer genuine benefits, they often replicate the same performance-driven environments kids just escaped. As a kid, I remember long summer days and sometimes not having anything to do. Children today of course face the same challenge, however there is added layer that we never had to deal with – the internet... Tik Tok or some version thereof to be precise 😊.

Boredom, though often treated as a threat, can be a child’s doorway to creativity. When left to their own devices (in the analog sense), children come up with incredible imaginary worlds, games, and stories. They transform cardboard boxes into pirate ships, backyards into enchanted forests, and living rooms into theaters... at least one of my kids did! That kind of creativity is harder to cultivate when every minute is directed by an adult or tied to a goal.

That’s not to say structure is bad—far from it. A well-chosen summer camp or a few hours a week of guided activity can give kids social interaction, a new skill, or a sense of rhythm. But try to avoid filling every day. Let July be a mix: a blend of discovery and stillness, engagement and rest. Schedule the soccer clinic, yes—but leave the afternoons open. You may find that the most meaningful moments happen not at the camp, but in the quiet space shared with new relationships. And while we’re creating breathing room for our kids, it’s worth asking: what about us?

Parents need a reset too. The idea that we must be “on” all summer—managing kids’ calendars, keeping up with work, staying productive—can leave us burned out by August, May for some of us! But there’s an alternative. As author and productivity expert Cal Newport has argued, we should move away from the cult of “busy” and instead embrace what he calls **slow productivity**. This approach isn’t about doing more; it’s about doing better, with focus and intention.

Continued to page 2

INTRODUCTION

As we dive into July, many of us are already a few weeks into summer mode—taking trips with family, enjoying longer days, and soaking in well-deserved rest. Whether you’re on vacation or finding slower moments between your usual routines, this month offers a special chance to be present with loved ones and make meaningful memories. Don’t let the time slip by without savoring it.

But while the season invites relaxation, it’s also an ideal checkpoint for your year. We’re officially at the halfway mark of 2025, making now the perfect time to review your financial progress. Are your goals on track? Are your budgets, investments, and revenue targets holding up under the real pressures of the year? July gives you just enough breathing room to assess what’s working and what might need a refresh.

If your financial strategies are performing well, this is the time to double down, maintain momentum, and position yourself for a strong second half. If things haven’t gone as planned, don’t panic—course correction in July gives you the rest of summer and early fall to make up ground.

Remember, successful businesses and households aren’t built in one season—they’re built by those who keep showing up, reflecting, and refining. Make the most of July by blending enjoyment with intentionality. Let your time with family recharge your spirit, and let your planning set the tone for a productive, profitable finish to the year.

WHY ESTATE PLANNING IS A LIFELONG FINANCIAL COMPASS

For many adults, estate planning is treated like an uncomfortable obligation—something to check off a list once, then forget about for the next twenty years. It's understandable: talking about death, incapacity, and legal documents doesn't inspire excitement. In the spirit of transparency, in my early twenties, I was no different! But this common approach misses the deeper value of estate planning. When used wisely, estate planning is not just about what happens when you die. It's a dynamic, living framework that helps you govern your finances, protect your family, and track your journey towards true financial freedom.



At its core, estate planning is a legal toolkit. Yes, it includes your will, a trust, power of attorney, healthcare directives, and other important documents. But these tools merely scratch the surface! The true purpose of estate planning is to help you design and protect the life you want—while living and long after you're gone (sounds like a song, doesn't it? 😊). It's a way to make sure that your assets work for your values, and that your family won't be left sorting through confusion, red tape, or conflict in your absence.

Unfortunately, most people wait far too long to get serious about this process. Some avoid it altogether, convinced they're too young, too healthy, or don't have "enough" to worry about. Others treat it as a static, one-time event—drafting a will after their first child is born, then never touching it again. But life changes. Families grow, assets evolve, and laws shift. What worked for you five years ago might now be outdated or even harmful.

In truth, estate planning should be reviewed regularly and adjusted as needed, just like any good financial or business strategy. It's not just for the wealthy—it's for anyone who cares about their children, their spouse, their property, or even their own peace of mind.

One of the most overlooked aspects of estate planning is how much it can teach you about your current financial life. The process forces you to take inventory of your assets: real estate, investment accounts, retirement plans, life insurance, business holdings, and more. It makes you think about who depends on you and how your assets are structured. It makes you face questions like: Are my accounts aligned with my goals? Are my beneficiaries up to date? Have I considered the tax consequences of passing down this property?

This is why many people come out of a comprehensive estate planning session with a new sense of financial clarity. They learn whether their wealth is protected or vulnerable, whether their investments are tax-efficient or exposed, and how their financial decisions today will shape the options available to their family tomorrow.

Moreover, good estate planning helps you build toward financial freedom. It gives structure to your long-term goals—buying property, funding education, building generational wealth—and ensures that those plans don't collapse if life takes an unexpected turn. For entrepreneurs and business owners, it helps safeguard your company and ensures succession plans are in place. For parents, it guarantees your children are cared for in the way you choose, by the people you trust.

And perhaps most importantly, estate planning is an act of love. It's a way of saying to your family: I took the time to protect you, even when I'm not here. You spare them from chaos and conflict. You give them a roadmap. You honor the life you've built by ensuring it continues to serve the people who matter most to you.

So don't treat estate planning as a task you do once and forget. Reframe it as an ongoing part of your financial life—just as essential as earning, saving, or investing. Having been in the practice for quite some time, I have seen myself evolve from an ambitious, "nothing is going to happen" to me type of attitude, to realizing how fragile life can be and what a difference a proper estate plan can do. All I can do is share the knowledge, the next move is up to you... But in case you're wondering, here is our number 📞 714-966-2646

Continued from page 1

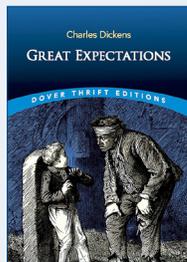
Put down the laptop for a few extra hours. Allow yourself time off that is truly off. Don't just check your inbox from the pool—leave the phone inside and jump in. Walk with your kids. Read without guilt. Cook something slowly. You may find that this deliberate slowing down doesn't sabotage your work—it enhances it. The clarity and calm that comes from a well-paced life often lead to better decisions, deeper creativity, and more meaningful connections, both at home and in business.

So this July, give yourself permission to ease off the gas. Let your kids play. Let them rest. Let them wander in their imaginations. And while they do, take a step back from your own pressures. Embrace the freedom that this season offers—not as a break from real life, but as a part of it. After all, some of the best growth—whether in children or adults—happens not when we're striving, but when we simply allow. I shall take heed of my own counsel and take two weeks off this July. Who knows, I may be in a sharing mood next week and tell you all about it!

ESTATE PLANNING TALK

Attorney Talk with Shilpa Bhatt - Special Needs Trust Planning July 15th at 10 am
RSVP tinyurl.com/APELSNT

Attorney Talk with Valerie Pasion - Safeguarding Your Business: Estate Planning for Entrepreneurs July 23rd at 10 am
RSVP: tinyurl.com/APELBIZ



BOOK SUMMARY. CHARLES DICKENS: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Great Expectations, written by Charles Dickens and first published in 1861, is a coming-of-age novel that explores themes of social class, ambition, identity, and redemption. The story follows the life of **Philip Pirrip**, better known as **Pip**, an orphan growing up in early 19th-century England.

Pip is raised by his harsh sister and her kind-hearted husband, **Joe Gargery**, a blacksmith. His life takes a turn when he is invited to visit **Miss Havisham**, a wealthy but eccentric recluse who was jilted at the altar and has stopped all the clocks in her decaying mansion. There, Pip meets **Estella**, Miss Havisham's beautiful but emotionally distant ward. He becomes infatuated with Estella and begins to feel ashamed of his humble upbringing, vowing to become a gentleman worthy of her love.

Pip's fortunes unexpectedly change when he receives news that he has a mysterious benefactor who will fund his transformation into a gentleman in London. Believing Miss Havisham to be the source of his "great expectations," Pip distances himself from Joe and his past life, chasing status and refinement.

As Pip grows into adulthood, he discovers that his real benefactor is **Abel Magwitch**, a convict he helped as a boy. Magwitch, who made his fortune in Australia, has been secretly supporting Pip's rise in society as a gesture of gratitude. This revelation shatters Pip's assumptions about class and respectability, forcing him to confront the moral cost of his ambitions.

Over time, Pip experiences deep personal growth. He loses his wealth, helps Magwitch during his final days, and eventually reconciles with Joe and others he had previously neglected. Estella, too, undergoes her own transformation after a difficult marriage. In the novel's final pages—depending on the version—Pip and Estella meet again as changed individuals, hinting at mutual understanding and the possibility of a future together.

Key Themes and Lessons:

- **Social Class and Mobility:** Dickens critiques the rigid class system and shows that true worth is found in character, not wealth.
- **Ambition and Disillusionment:** Pip learns that chasing status and outward success often leads to emptiness and regret.
- **Redemption and Forgiveness:** The novel emphasizes personal growth, repentance, and the healing power of forgiveness.
- **Parental Influence and Mentorship:** Figures like Joe and Magwitch play crucial roles in Pip's moral development, demonstrating that love and loyalty matter more than social rank.

Great Expectations is both a deeply personal story and a broader social commentary, offering a powerful narrative about becoming the person you were meant to be—not the one society tells you to become.

Leveling the Financial Playing Field: How Everyday Investment Apps Empower Long-Term Wealth

In the past, investing was often seen as a privilege reserved for the affluent—those with financial advisors, access to high-dollar opportunities, and the know-how to navigate volatile markets. But thanks to a growing wave of intuitive financial apps like **Acorns**, **DUB**, **Stash**, **Robinhood**, and **Betterment**, the average worker now has a gateway into the investing world that was once off-limits. These platforms are reshaping the wealth-building landscape by making investing **accessible, automatic, and educational**, allowing everyday earners to mirror the long-term strategies of wealthier individuals.



Apps like **Acorns** make investing as effortless as rounding up your morning coffee purchase. The app links to your debit or credit card and invests your spare change into a diversified portfolio. Over time, these small, consistent contributions compound and grow. Similarly, apps like **DUB** (Dollar Up Better) focus on **micro-investing and goal setting**, helping users develop responsible financial habits without needing a large amount of disposable income to get started. This removes the barrier of entry and helps establish a critical foundation: consistency.

But passive investing doesn't mean being hands-off. In fact, the key to successful long-term growth lies in being **actively aware of your passive investments**. Understanding where your money is going, monitoring performance, and regularly revisiting your goals not only keeps you engaged—it reinforces smart financial behavior. The more you educate yourself, even in small increments, the more empowered you become to make decisions that align with your family's future.

For business owners, there's often a misconception that financial freedom comes from launching the next unicorn startup. But the truth is, **wealth is most often built through steady, disciplined financial management**—not explosive, high-risk ventures. While ambition and innovation are important, most entrepreneurs achieve lasting wealth by being financially responsible, making calculated decisions, and focusing on sustainable growth.

Building a secure future doesn't require betting everything on a single idea. It requires **creating a long-term plan**, avoiding unnecessary risks, and using tools like financial apps to support that vision. Whether it's setting aside a fixed percentage of your income to invest each month, or using robo-advisors to automate retirement planning, the power lies in **taking consistent, measured steps** over time.

Moreover, these platforms also offer financial literacy tools—articles, calculators, projections—that help users understand market behavior, diversify wisely, and even prepare for taxes. The more financially literate you become, the less likely you are to make impulsive, emotionally driven decisions that derail your progress.

In today's digital age, the tools to build wealth are no longer locked behind complex investment firms or high net worth thresholds. They're on your smartphone, ready to help you put your money to work—responsibly, efficiently, and with purpose.

At the end of the day, wealth isn't defined by flashy ventures or short-term wins. It's built through discipline, smart planning, and patience. With the right tools and mindset, any individual—regardless of income—can chart a course toward financial security that benefits not just themselves, but generations to come.



ASSET PROTECTION & ELDER LAW CENTER
FOUNDED BY PHANCAO & SHAFFER, LLP



3187 Red Hill Ave. Suite #115
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
714-966-2646



Patrick P. Phanco
&
Shadi Ala'i Shaffer



As July winds down, summer is still very much alive here in beautiful Orange County. With so many local gems—from paddleboarding in Newport Beach, to exploring tide pools in Laguna, hiking in Crystal Cove, or catching a concert in the park—there's no shortage of ways to make the most of these long days with your family. Whether you're working from home or running a business, balancing summer fun with professional obligations can be a challenge—but also a powerful opportunity.

With kids out of school, this is the perfect time to involve them in your day-to-day life while still encouraging their independence. Let them explore their own interests, hobbies, or creative projects—but also bring them along for parts of your workday when possible. Teach them what it means to be responsible, resourceful, and focused—even if it's just for 20 minutes at a time.

Most importantly, no matter their age or aspirations, begin weaving financial literacy into everyday conversations. Whether your child dreams of being a doctor, designer, or entrepreneur, understanding money—how to earn it, save it, invest it, and respect it—is essential. It's a skill that applies across every walk of life.

As we prepare to enter August, let's continue making these summer weeks count: rich in experience, light in pressure, and full of simple lessons that will carry forward well beyond the season.

