

# Estate Planning: Lessons Learned From Norman Schwarzkopf

Norman Schwarzkopf passed away after complications with pneumonia in December of 2012. Schwarzkopf was best known as the commander of coalition forces in Operation Desert Shield or the Gulf War in 1990s. There are several estate planning lessons that can be learned from Norman Schwarzkopf.

The first lesson is that legacy and reputation are just as important in planning an estate as what to do with physical or monetary assets. One can leave behind much wealth to heirs, but if that wealth comes at a cost of a bad reputation or tarnished family name, that wealth can be tainted. Schwarzkopf already had his work cut out for him as father was a Major General in the US Army before becoming the Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police and the lead investigator on the 1932 Lindbergh baby kidnapping case. Schwarzkopf was able to leave behind a positive legacy that crossed over political or geographical divides. He was able to have an exemplary military career and be the face of a major war without any major scandals. The Persian Gulf War, itself was relatively successful, as it accomplished its initial goals and had major global support. After the war, Schwarzkopf, was able to step down and retire and live a quiet life and maintain his popularity and good will throughout the rest of his life. Schwarzkopf was able to become an author, speaker, and live a private life with his wife and three children. There were calls for Schwarzkopf to pursue politics after his military career, but he turned them down and was able to maintain his positive reputation, that might have had the possibility of turning negative had he entered the political arena. By staying out of the public eye later in his life, Schwarzkopf was able to keep all of the good will and capital he earned throughout the world and keep his positive legacy. Passing on a good family name can be just as important as passing on a large inheritance.

A second lesson about planning an estate from Schwarzkopf is a reminder that every veteran should be knowledgeable of their benefits available to them. A veteran does not have to be a general to be able to benefit from veteran's benefits that can help preserve and maintain an estate. Good resources to contact for more information on benefits are the The US Department of Veterans Affairs or an elder law or veteran's attorney. Many times a third party such as a spouse or child can help find more information for a veteran as well.

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