



About Matthew Crider, J.D.

Matthew Crider formed [Crider Law PC](#) in 1999 so he could help individuals and business owners by providing creative solutions and be their trusted advisor and legal counselor. He serves his clients by listening closely to their goals, dreams and concerns and working with them to develop superior and comprehensive estate and asset protection plans. His estate planning practice focuses on preserving and growing wealth by providing comprehensive, highly personalized estate planning counsel to couples, families, individuals and businesses.

Here's Why You Should Have Your Will Drawn Up By A Lawyer

By Matthew Crider, JD | Family Wealth Protection Attorney

The validity of painter Thomas Kinkade's will is the issue in the battle over his multi-million dollar estate.

The painter, who died April 6 at the age of 54, apparently signed two barely legible hand-written wills that appear to give his mansion and \$10 million to his girlfriend of 18 months. Kinkade, the so-called "Painter of Light," had separated from his wife of 30 years just before meeting his girlfriend, Amy Pinto-Walsh.

The court battle will center around whether Kinkade wrote the handwritten will (a "holographic will," in legalese), if he was of sound mind at the time he did so, and whether he was coerced.

[According to an article in the San Jose Mercury News](#), the painter descended into alcoholism after the separation from his wife.

Handwriting experts suggested Kinkade might have been drunk when he signed the wills. He died of alcohol poisoning after a night of heavy drinking.

California law allows handwritten wills to be valid even if not notarized, as long as they are authentic, the writer had mental capacity when they were written, and the writer was not unduly influenced.

The lawyer for Kinkade's girlfriend contends that even though the letters are not formal documents executed in a lawyer's office, they represent his wishes.

Lawyers for the Kinkade estate — which includes his wife and the company that operates his art business — say the only valid will is one that was previously executed by Kinkade and his wife.

Moral of the story: to be safe, have your will drawn up and executed in a lawyer's office.