

# Authors aim to make divorce less stressful

BY BETSY LEE

Special to Missouri Lawyers Weekly

Even when it's amiable, divorce can be messy.

But Alan Freed, co-author of "Divorce in Missouri," says few people anticipate the time, effort and paperwork associated with the process.

"I start from the premise that people who are going through a divorce are similar to people who are undergoing a major illness



or have just been hit by a truck. It's hard to make decisions or even think clearly when someone is hit by that kind of shock," said Freed, a St. Louis divorce attorney and mediator.

"It all comes back to realistic expectations. This book helps

people understand what they are going to go through in the divorce process."

"Divorce in Missouri," the first book of its kind, focuses on Missouri divorce statutes and procedures, all while offering readers the comfort of plain language and trustworthy information. Alisse Camazine, co-author and St. Louis divorce attorney, said the book was meant to be a dose of reality.

"If an attorney gives this book to a client prior to beginning the process, it can really help," she said. "It's hard for us when clients have unrealistic expectations. They expect us to be miracle workers and to be able to man-

**"We tried to write it like that, so people see that bitterness, pettiness and illogical behavior makes the whole thing much more expensive. And you're still probably going to end up in the same place."**

*Alisse Camazine, co-author*

ufacture money. We can't do either of those things."

"I've been doing this for 25-plus years, and Alisse has been doing this for 30-plus years, so we have a lot of experience," Freed said. "This book sort of encapsulates the advice we've been disseminating over a long time to our clients."

Both authors said they focused on making the book accessible to the public by tossing in anecdotes and even a bit of humor. Chapter titles like "Different Strokes for Different Folks" and "The Final Bill Please," help set a light, easy tone.

"We tried to write it like that, so people see that bitterness, pettiness and illogical behavior makes the whole thing much more expensive," Camazine said. "And you're still probably going to end up in the same place."

Elizabeth Mannen, financial consultant at Wells Fargo in St. Louis, said she has given the book to two of her clients so far.

"Everyone thinks their divorce is going to be an episode of 'Boston Legal,'" she said. "And there are so many misconceptions out there regarding divorce."

For example, Mannen said, many of her clients expect that they are entitled to more of

the marital assets because their spouses committed adultery.

"People come in thinking, 'Because he or she had an affair, I'm going to get 100 percent of the property.' But in reality, that's just not the case. Maybe if it's outrageous, they'll get 60 percent," Camazine said.

Through her clients, Mannen said, she has seen both attorneys in action. She recommends both Freed and Camazine to her clients, for different reasons.

"Alisse is a bulldog," Mannen said. "If it is going to go to trial, she is who you want. And Alan is a master negotiator. I keep telling him that he should go to work in the Middle East, because, if he did, he'd have things resolved in a month."

The book, which took about three years to complete, was a labor of love for Freed and Camazine. For them, the book is a way to give back to the community, their clients and the legal profession. With a list price of \$19.95, it is for sale at Borders and Barnes & Noble, as well as online.

"If the book does anything for anybody, I hope it will make people more aware of how to get through a divorce," Camazine said. "I've been doing this for a long time, and my



▲ Attorneys Alan Freed and Alisse Camazine co-authored "Divorce in Missouri." The book took them three years to write and is written in "plain language" to assist the public on what to expect during divorce.

Photo by Karen Elshout

goal is for my client to get from beginning to end with the least scarring possible — and for the kids to get through beginning to end with the least scarring possible.

"If you go into it waging war, you're going to have a lot of bad feelings set on a battleground in which many people are going to be raising children." ■