

Robert Stefani

Title: King, Krebs and Jurgens member

Age: 49

Family: wife, Kristin; daughters, Ellie, 16, Maddie, 14

Education: bachelor's degree in psychology, Brandeis University; juris doctor, Tulane University Law School

One of the biggest challenges of Robert Stefani's career has been his work in commercial and maritime transactions and litigation since the national financial crisis that reached its peak in 2008.

As banks and insurance companies were failing and receiving bailouts from the federal government, several elements of Stefani's practice came to a complete halt.

"We are now navigating a different economy which has changed the way lenders look at and document transactions," Stefani said. "Lenders have had to figure out how to make money in this new environment. The financial climate will likely never get back to the way it was before, but it is always changing and there is always something new to learn."

One of Stefani's largest financing cases began in 2004 when he handled the bankruptcy of a large international commercial financing firm and marine services company.

"My biggest responsibility was getting their collateral sold and cleared out," Stefani said. "The company had many investments and quite a few large vessels they had to get rid of. It ran the gamut of what I do as an attorney."

Although the atmosphere has stabilized, Stefani says there's not likely to be a consistent "normal" in the lending and financing business for the foreseeable future.

Stefani said his law school experience differed from most in that he went into it and left knowing what he wanted from his practice.

"When you go into law school, most of what you study is case law," Stefani said. "You leave with a clear litigation bend. I, however, came out knowing that I wanted to go into maritime transaction law. I look back and see that this is exactly what I wanted to do."

Stefani says he appreciates the transaction side of his practice in that it typically is a resolution all sides can be happy with.

"When people complete a transaction, they shake hands and they are usually happy with each other," Stefani said. "I like to be involved in those types of transactions that benefit our economy."

Growing up in New Jersey, Stefani came to New Orleans to attend Tulane University Law School. After graduation, Stefani moved to Washington, D.C., to practice but wanted to return to the Crescent City to set up a practice.

Outside the office, Stefani serves on the board for Akili Academy Charter School.

"I got drawn in last year and I am really proud of the work of the teachers and staff there," he said. "Education reform in New Orleans is an important part of our economic development."•

— Robin Shannon

