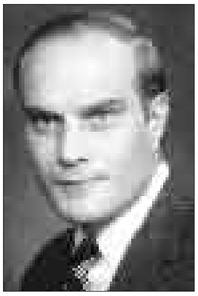

Technology Corner

By Joseph G. Hodges, Jr.

Retirement Planning Resources

There is a variety of excellent and very useful resources available *via* the Web, either directly or by online ordering, that can assist an estate planning professional when it comes to properly planning for and recommending the right beneficiary designations for retirement benefits.

Some of these resources are ones that I have come in contact with over the years as a consequence of my wandering around the vast World Wide Web trying to find useful Internet resources for estate planning professionals, and especially those that are free. However, in the case of this column, I am also deeply indebted to Boston Attorney Natalie Choate, author of LIFE AND DEATH PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT BENEFITS (5th ed. 2003) who has kindly consented to my incorporating into this column many of the resources that are mentioned in the September 3, 2003, version of her popular two-page lecture handout called *Retirement Resources 2004* and on her ATaxPlan Web site.

With that introduction, it goes without saying that one of the most useful resources for retirement planning issues that is available today is Natalie's own book, which is referred to above. The book can be ordered online either from Natalie's main distribution source, **ATaxPlan Publications**, which is located at *www.ataxplan.com*, or from Jane Schuck's **Pensworth** Company at *www.pensworth.com*. While the Pensworth site only offers the book, plus other software offerings from Brentmark Software, Inc. (*see* further below) and Financial Data Service, the ATaxPlan site offers a whole host of related products.

Perhaps one of the most significant and useful items on the ATaxPlan site is a free online listing of all the corrections to the 5th edition to date. These are listed both by chapter and by dated posted. In addition, if desired, the entire file of these corrections can be downloaded as a single 99KB (currently) Adobe PDF file (similar updates for prior editions of her book are also available). Another is the posting of the full text of the most recent issue of her CHOATE'S NOTES newsletter. Still another is the ability to order online both a diskette that contains the text of all the forms that are in the 5th Edition, called ***Forms-on-Disk,*** which can be a real time saver if you end up making heavy use of her suggested forms, as well as many of her seminar outlines, including her most recent one called ***The 100 Best and Worst Planning Ideas for Your Client's Retirement Benefits.*** Yet another is the ability to take a look at (but not post to) her retirement planning Bulletin Board, where you will find, among other things, an offer by Natalie to buy back your copy of the ***DistribuGuide*** software that was sold in 2001 by The Technology Group now that this company is no longer supporting the product and the software will not be updated or supported in the foreseeable future. Lastly, there is a link to Recommended Resources that contains a listing of many of the items that are mentioned in this column and several others, including some that are not retirement related.

A complementary resource that goes nicely with Natalie's book and other materials is the Laminated IRA Distribution Charts that have been produced by Jack McManemin of McManemin Wealth Management in Salt Lake City. These charts, which are 9″ x 11.5″ in size, consist of two colored charts that summarize the 2002 final minimum distribution rules, with the lifetime rules on one side and the after-death rules on the other side. These charts cost $19.95 each (including shipping), although discounts are offered for multiple orders. To order, either e-mail jack at *jackmcm@unidial.com* or call (801) 273-3310. Note that they do not accept credit cards.

Perhaps the next most useful resource, especially when it comes to IRAs, is a series of two Web sites that are maintained by Brentmark Software, Inc. The first

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is the main Brentmark Software site, which is located at *www.brentmark.com.* Here you will find information about and ordering information for a variety of useful estate planning software products, including the following that are retirement planning related: **Pension & Roth IRA Analyzer**, **RetireNow**, **PFP Notebook**, **Retirement Income Navigator**, **Pension Distributions Planner**, **Pension Distributions Calculator** and **Minimum Distributions Calculator**. Natalie Choate describes the **Pension & Roth IRA Analyzer** software as being "probably the most powerful and feature-filled software available to help planners analyze proposed plan distribution strategies from QRPs, IRAs and Roth IRAs (comparing up to 4 scenarios simultaneously), including income tax, estate tax and spousal rollover aspects, and determine whether it is worthwhile to convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA, as well as numerous other useful determinations regarding retirement plan distributions, such as pre-59 1/2 distributions, impact of life insurance and annual gifting." She also indicates that, while the Analyzer can perform all these tasks, she frequently uses the **Pension Distributions Calculator** mini-program for doing quick MRD what-if projections.

Another useful resource is the main Brentmark page, which provides links to several related but separately maintained Brentmark retirement planning Web sites, including *www.RothIRA.com*, *www.NewRMD.com*, *www.Roth401k.com* and *www.PensionPlanners.com*, as well as a link to the online retirement planning publication Web site *www.GoldbergReports.com*. Of particular note among these if you are dealing with IRA problems are **RothIRA** and **Roth 401k**. If your concerns are broader based, then the **NewRMD** and **Pension Planner** sites would be the ones to visit. Of particular note is the *www.RothIRA.com* site, as it is chock full of useful information about Roth IRAs and includes links to such information as relevant statutory history plus links to software that will help you evaluate the relative merits of various IRA options.

These Brentmark products lead naturally to the mention of a series of companion products that is offered by Leimberg Associates, Inc. and Leimberg & LeClair, Inc. at *www.leimberg.com*. Their retirement planning software offerings include **Pension & Roth IRA Analyzer** and **MRD Calculator.** In addition, they currently are offering the 8th Edition of their popular book entitled **TOOLS & TECHNIQUES OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND RETIREMENT PLANNING**, which is co-authored by Stephan R. Leimberg, J.D., CLU and John J. McFadden, J.D. A very popular companion service that is provided by Leimberg Information Services, Inc. is the **LISI Newsletter** service. For $19.95 per month, you will receive weekly editions of any one or all six of the following newsletters: ESTATE PLANNING, **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND RETIREMENT PLANNING**, BUSINESS ENTITIES, ASSET PROTECTION PLANNING, FINANCIAL PLANNING and CHARITABLE PLANNING. The commentators for the RETIREMENT PLANNING newsletter include Natalie Choate and Noel Ice. This site also offers access to the extensive **LISI archive** of past newsletter issues and related postings, as well at to the popular **LawThreads** service, which consists of edited collections of the commentary about significant discussion list topics of particular interest to estate and financial planners. You can try all these services for free one time to see if they will work for you and if you want to become a subscriber.

Speaking of attorney Noel Ice., he maintains a Web site at *www.trustsandestates.net* that contains a whole host of useful materials that are helpful for those of us who deal with the various tax and legal issues involving retirement planning, and in particular the MRD regulations. Included among the resources that are on his site are links to an annotated version of the final MRD regulations, an Excel spreadsheet that will make MRD calculations and projections under the new regulations, the full text of his treatise on **ESTATE PLANNING FOR DISTRIBUTIONS FROM QUALIFIED PLANS AND IRAS,** the full text of a Nutshell article he wrote entitled ***The Minimum Distribution Rules in a Nutshell*** and the full text of another excellent article he wrote entitled ***100 (or so) Do's and Don'ts in Estate Planning for IRA and Qualified Plan Distributions,*** all of which can be downloaded in full text for free. His site also contains links to numerous additional articles and Nutshells that he has authored, plus additional Excel spreadsheets that people might find useful in connection with other and related estate planning issues.

Yet another useful resource for retirement planning information, especially for nonprofessionals, is **THE RETIREMENT SAVINGS TIME BOMB AND HOW TO DEFUSE IT** written by CPA Ed Slott. Natalie Choate describes Ed's book as containing "the best information from one of the top IRA gurus" who is known for his "highly readable and unintimidating" writing style. This book can be ordered from *www.amazon.com*. Ed also has a second useful resource that is worth looking at called the **IRA ADVISOR.** This publication, which is in newsletter format, consists of 12 eight-page issues per year that are sent out by regular mail for a subscription cost of $125. This publication can be ordered online at *www.irahelp.com*, or by contacting E. Slott & Company at (800) 663-1340. Related to this, CPA Barry Picker has recently authored his latest book entitled **BARRY PICKER'S GUIDE TO RETIREMENT DISTRIBUTION PLANNING.** This publication provides a complete and accurate explanation of the minimum distribution choices our clients have, and includes in it a checklist, worksheets and tables. Natalie Choate describes this particular publication as being "perfect to give to a client with substantial retirement assets who is facing MRDs." This publication costs $24.95 and can be ordered online at *www.BPickerCPA.com* or by calling (718) 934-4300. If you have clients who insist on doing a certain degree of self-help, then you might want to consider **IRAS, 401(K)S & OTHER RETIREMENT PLANS: TAKING YOUR MONEY OUT** (now in its 5th Edition 2003) by Twila Slesnick, Ph.D. and Enrolled Agent, and attorney John C. Suttle, CPA from Nolo Press, the publishers of self-help books, at *www.nolo.com*. Natalie Choate describes this book as "another good book for non-professionals. She goes on to state that the authors not only know their stuff, they put great thought and care into producing a user-friendly book" that she wishes she had written and that our clients will love.

Some additional Web sites of interest include *www.benefitslink.com*, which is a free site that contains articles, a ***Benefits Buzz*** repository of pension article mined from other parts of the Web, Q&A columns, links to ERISA sections and a Benefits Yellow Pages. Natalie Choate describes this site as being "aimed mainly at the plan sponsor and administrator market" but she has found an actuary here that enables her to evaluate individual pension options plus an IRS provider that is willing to hold nontraditional investments. Another one is *www.FreeERISA.com*. This site offers extensive free information about private pension plans and ERISA data from IRS and DOL filings in an easily searchable format. Natalie describes this site as being "geared towards developing sales leads," such as potential clients where a company in a given state has filed to terminate their plans. You have to register to access this site, but it is free. Still another resource is attorney Larry Katzenstein's **TigerTables** Web site at *www.tigertables.com*. Larry's software is on a par with Brentmark's Estate Planning Tools and Leimberg's NumberCruncher in terms of the financial calculations it offers, many of which are relevant to retirement benefit planning issues. Still another, which is especially geared to asset protection planning issues involving retirement benefits, is Gideon Rothschild's law firm Web site for Moses & Singer LLP at *www.mosessinger.com* where he maintains the full text of several articles he has written, including one entitled ***Protecting Pension Plans*** from the April 1997 issue of the **JOURNAL OF ASSET PROTECTION** that contains a useful but somewhat outdated table of state law creditor exemptions applicable to retirement plans. Gideon was also instrumental in establishing a Web site for the **I-3 Asset Protection Planning Committee** of the Probate Division of the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section of the American Bar Association (*www.abanet.org/rppt*), but you have to be a dues-paying member of the ABA and the Section and a member of this Committee in order to be able to access the materials that are on this Committee Web site.

Last but not least, here are a few additional publications that you might find useful: For instance, there is J.K. Lasser's **YOUR WINNING RETIREMENT PLAN** by Henry K. Hebler. This book discusses the challenges that are involved in investing for retirement and how tough it is to build up a proper retirement fund after considering historic average and compound returns. The next two are for public employees with retirement plans. One is A PUBLIC EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE TO RETIREMENT PLANNING by Kathleen Jenks Harm. The other is EGTRRA: A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYERS WITH SECTION 457 DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLANS that is published by and available from the ICMA Retirement Corporation in Washington, D.C., *www.icmarc.org* or (800) 669-7400.

This Issue's Featured Web Sites:

- **Scirus**—the search engine for all things scientific—*www.scirus.com*
- **Discovery Resources**—a primary source for all things about electronic discovery—*www.discoveryresources.org*
- **TASI**, the Technical Advisory Service for Images—advice on how to search the Web for images plus search engines and links to images—*www.tasi.ac.uk/index.html*
- **LawInfo Legal Document Center**—*www.lawinfo.com/legal_document_center*