

Price & Farrington's Estate and Tax Planning FastFacts

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Estate, Tax, Retirement and Family Wealth Planning for Advisors+ Clients

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Wacky Will Provisions: *Pooches, Poems, Parking Tickets, Phone Books + Frisbees*

A *bequest* written into a will can be the testator's final revenge or flight of fancy or neurotic impulse. Sometimes all three. Many eccentrics have left behind extraordinarily bizarre provisions in their wills, illustrating that estate planning is a very personal affair. Here is a light offering of wacky, wild, winsome and just plain weird will provisions, proving that we make strong statements about who we are and what we value after we're gone.



Trouble. You might have read by now that real estate billionaire Leona Helmsley, who died August 20 at 87, left a \$12 million trust fund in her will — which was made public last week in New York surrogate court — for the benefit of Trouble, her cute-as-pie 8 year old white Maltese, with white stringy hair and button eyes. Trouble spent most of her days in pampered luxury, in a penthouse apartment atop the Park Lane Hotel at the southern end of Central Park. A hotel chef cooked her meals and a housekeeper served them, hand-feeding her steamed carrots and other vegetables with grilled chicken. The New York Post dubbed her “Rich bitch”. Life got to be so good that some people had to watch what they said around her. They didn't want to offend her — or her owner and

best friend — by calling her, of all things, a dog. (Leona preferred a more regal term, Princess.)

The goal was obviously to allow the dog to continue to live an opulent life. Two of Helmsley's grandchildren either barked too loudly during her life or didn't bark loudly enough since she left them nothing (for “reasons that are known to them”). She also left millions for her brother, Alvin Rosenthal, who was named to care for Trouble in her absence, as well as two other grandchildren from her late son Jay Panziner — so long as they visit their father's grave site once each calendar year. Otherwise, neither will get a penny of the \$5 million she left for each. (I wonder who is going to monitor that.)

Helmsley, who died at her Connecticut home, became known as a



symbol of 1980s greed and earned the nickname “the Queen of Mean” after her 1988 indictment and subsequent conviction for tax evasion. One employee had quoted her as snarling, “Only the little people pay taxes.”

No one made out better than Trouble, who once appeared in ads for the Helmsley Hotels, and lived up to its name by biting a housekeeper. “I direct that when my dog, Trouble, dies, her remains shall be buried next to my re-

mains in the Helmsley mausoleum,” she wrote in her will. The mausoleum, she ordered, must be “washed or steam-cleaned at least once a year”. She left behind \$3 million for the upkeep of her final resting place in Westchester County, where she is buried with her husband, Harry Helmsley, with a view of the New York skyline. She also left her chauffeur, Nicholas Celea, \$100,000. She ordered everything else, including cash from sales of the Helmsley residences and belongings, reportedly worth billions, sold and the proceeds given to the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

Two recent developments: (1) New York City officials have said that the law doesn't allow pet remains to be buried with humans, so Trouble might not get to spend eternity with her mistress; and (2) Zamfira Sfara, who was a housekeeper for Mrs. Helmsley for three months, sued her after she was bitten by Trouble. The suit was thrown out, but Ms. Sfara now says she intends to try to reinstate it. *Sweet.*



Ruth Lilly, an amateur poet and billionaire heiress, bequeathed \$100 million to an ailing poetry magazine that repeatedly rejected her work.

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The 87-year-old submitted her poems in the 1970s to "Poetry", a Chicago literary monthly. They editor thought they were unsuitable for publication and returned them with a handwritten note. Hmm. Must've been a *very nice* rejection note.

Robin Allen Miller of Bethlehem, PA., in his final will and testament did his part to reduce the annoying traffic situations caused by double-parking. When he died in 1995 at age 64, Miller bequeathed \$5000 as reward money for police officers who write the most tickets for double parking. *That's the ticket!*

Luis da Camara, a Portuguese man who had no family of his own, picked the names of his heirs out of the Lisbon phone book. When he died at age 42, his last act on earth bestowed £6,000 on each of the 70 disbelieving "heirs". *Moral: Never have an unlisted phone number!*



Ed Headrick, who perfected the Frisbee, loved Frisbees so much that his dying wish was for his ashes to be molded into memorial discs. "Steady Ed" also instructed that the discs be sold and the profits go to a museum dedicated to the history of the Frisbee.



Jeremy Bentham, (1748-1832) famous British economist and social philosopher, left a large fortune to

the University College in London on condition that his preserved corpse annually "attend" the board of directors' meetings. For many years he was recorded as "present but not voting". Bentham's clothes adorn his mummified corpse, still on display. (His wax head is maintained in the college safe.)

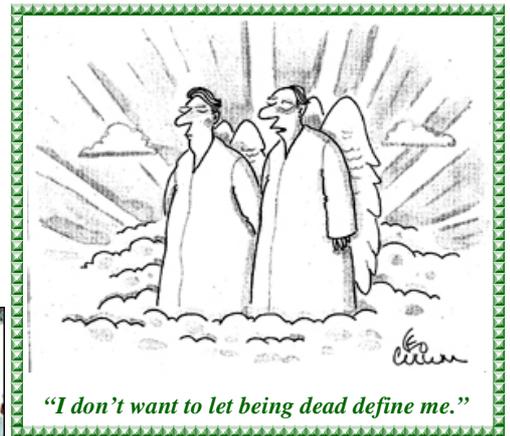


Mark Gruenwald, of Marvel Comics fame, died in 1996 and left instructions in his will for his friends to blend the ashes of his body with ink and use the mixture within the pages of a comic book. Apparently, 4,000 copies of Gruenwald's "ink-and-ashes" edition were distributed in 1997. *Seems more morbid than comical.*

Nina Wang, whose personal fortune was worth \$4 billion, died of cancer and bequeathed her fortune to her fortune teller, Tony Chan. According to reports, Wang willed her entire estate to him because he understood her the best. The 48 year old is married with three children and has a successful property trading business. *I wonder if Tony persuaded Nina that her bequest to him was in her future....*

James Kidd, a prospector, in 1946 granted his estate to research to find scientific proof that a soul leaves the human body at death. The trust was granted to the American Society for Psychical Research. *Research is ongoing.*

Charles Miller, Canadian lawyer, willed most of his \$1 million estate to the woman who produced the most babies in Toronto within 10 years following his death. His mischief didn't stop there. He bequeathed shares in a jockey club to two men who were known for their opposition to racetrack



betting, and left shares in a brewery to every Protestant minister in Toronto. *A lawyer with a sense of humor!*

William Shakespeare, the legendary English playwright, bequeathed his "second best bed with the furniture" to his wife. Scholars to this day are unsure whether this was an honor or an insult. It is commonly believed that the "best bed" was intended for guests, and the "second best bed" was for husband and wife.

Last but not least...



Henry Budd, in 1862, left £200,000 in a trust for his two sons on the condition that neither grew a moustache. *Would a goatee be okay?*

