

Wills, Trusts & Estates: Plain And Simple

Will Power: Strange Will Provisions

Time for some summer fun. You can make bequests in your Will and attach any contingency you would like. Whether the bequest or contingency will be able to be carried out, or withstand an objection by the beneficiary in the courts, will depend on the contingency. Here are some examples of weird will provisions.

William Shakespeare: Gave to Anne Hathaway (his wife) his “second-best bed.” The bulk of his estate he bequeathed to his daughter, Susanna.

Jack Benny: Directed that one red rose be delivered each day to his widow for the rest of her life.

Leona Helmsley (the “Queen of Mean”): Directed that a \$12 million trust be created to care for her 9-year-old Maltese, Trouble, while cutting out her grandchildren, or requiring that they visit their father’s grave annually (The trust for Trouble was subsequently reduced to \$2 million.).

Gene Roddenberry (Star Trek creator): Directed that his ashes be scattered via a space satellite orbiting the earth (This was carried out in 1997.).

Dusty Springfield (Singer): Directed that her cat, Nicholas, be fed imported baby food and have his bed lined with Dusty’s pillowcase and nightgown. In addition, Nicholas was to be serenaded to sleep with Dusty’s songs.

Napoleon Bonaparte: Directed that his head be shaved and his hair distributed among his friends.

Sandra West (California socialite): Bequeathed most of her estate to her brother, as long as he ensured that she was buried “in her lace nightgown and her Ferrari, with the seat slanted comfortably” (He carried this out, and had the car [and Sandra] covered with cement so no one could steal the car.).

If you want to add a contingency to a bequest in your Will, make sure to speak with your estate planning lawyer.

If there is a trusts or estates topic that you would like to know more about, please feel free to email me at pmarcin@farrellfritz.com with your suggestion and I will do my best to cover it in a future column.



Patricia C. Marcin is a partner at the law firm of Farrell Fritz, P.C. concentrating in trusts, estates and tax law. Patricia has lived in Lloyd Harbor since 2005 with her husband, John. They have two sons, Sam and Matt. Their faithful dog, Blizzard, still lives at home.



“I’m so glad we updated our wills. Farrell Fritz helped us understand all the recent changes and the best part is, we minimized our estate taxes. I feel so much more secure about our family’s future.”



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