Elvis Nearly Lost Graceland, a $12 Million Dog Retired to Sarasota: Probate.Help Explains Law behind 204 Wild Estates

Steve Jobs left $7B and no public trace. A lottery winner was poisoned the day after he won. A dog got a bodyguard. 204 true cases, each ending in the law.


Sarasota Probate Lawyer - Rachel Schadt

SARASOTA, FL, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Probate reads dry on the page and never is in practice. It runs on family, emotion, jealousy, love, memory, money, and regret. Probate.Help (https://probate.help/), a free resource published by Sarasota probate lawyer Rachel Schadt, has documented 204 real probate cases in an archive at https://probate.help/archive/ — sourced, sorted, and each ending the same way: with the specific Florida statute that would govern the same facts here. A sample of what it holds:

He Won $1 Million on a Scratch-Off and Was Dead the Next Day.

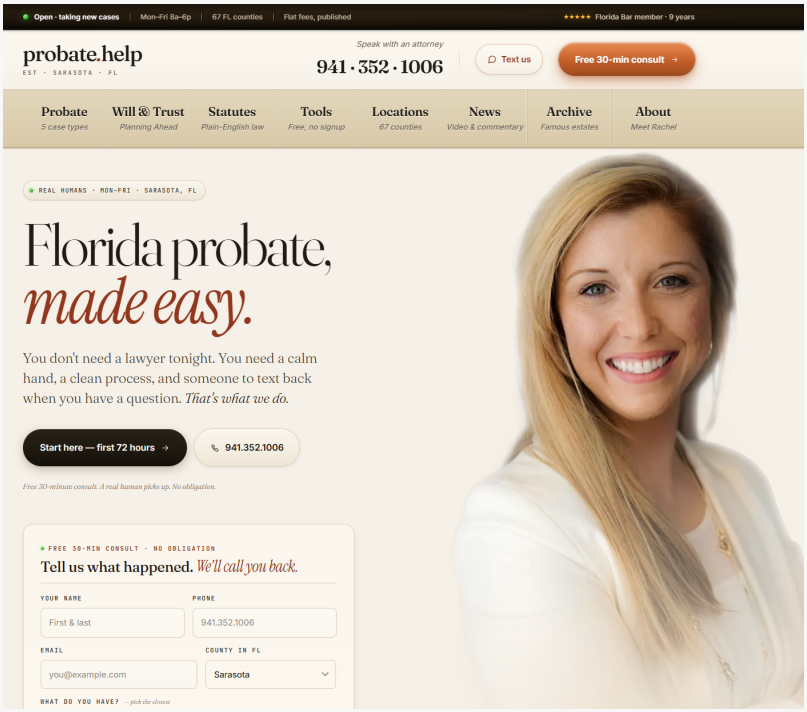
Urooj Khan collected a $1 million Chicago lottery prize in July 2012 and died the next day. The death was first recorded as natural causes; six months later the medical examiner called it cyanide poisoning. No one was ever charged, and the money moved through probate court either way (https://probate.help/archive/urooj-khan-lottery/). Florida has its own version: a Lakeland man won $30 million in 2006 and took $17 million in cash. Within three years the money was gone, his house was titled to someone else's company, and he was dead. His estate spent four more years recovering the house for his two sons (https://probate.help/archive/abraham-shakespeare-lottery/).

She Left Her Grandchildren Nothing and Her Dog $12 Million. The Dog Retired to Sarasota.

Leona Helmsley cut two grandchildren out entirely and left a Maltese named Trouble twelve million dollars. A judge trimmed the dog to $2 million and gave the grandchildren $6 million.

Trouble spent the rest of her life at a Sarasota hotel, with a security detail (https://probate.help/archive/leona-helmsley-trouble-dog/). A pet cannot own money, so a bequest to an animal only works through a pet trust — and Florida has a statute that makes them enforceable. Probate.Help collects the whole genre and explains the version that holds up versus the version a court throws out.

Gene Hackman and His Wife Died a Week Apart. One Line — "90 Days" — Decided Who Inherited.



Probate.Help - The Best Probate and Trust Resource Online

Gene Hackman and his wife died in the same house about a week apart in February 2025. Her will required her husband to outlive her by 90 days. He outlived her by roughly seven. That gap, not a word either of them wrote, decided where the money went (https://probate.help/archive/gene-hackman-survivorship/). Survivorship, simultaneous death, and the order of who dies first are the mechanics most people never consider — until they run an estate.

> Probate sounds dry but it's often high DRAMA. Every one of these stories is true. We tied the wild ones to the Florida law that decides them, so people learn the rules and understand the case law."
>
> *Rachel Schadt*

A One-Page Note Misspelled Priscilla Presley's Name — Then a Stranger Moved to Auction Graceland.

An unwitnessed one-page amendment removed Elvis Presley's widow as trustee of their daughter's trust and spelled her name wrong. Months later a stranger published a notice in a Memphis paper announcing the foreclosure sale of Graceland (https://probate.help/archive/presley-graceland-trust/). Both turned on the one thing every estate lives or dies by: whether the paperwork was valid, witnessed, and enforceable — the questions Florida's execution statutes answer line by line.

The Law Itself, in Plain English — 286 Times.

Behind the stories sits the reference most people come for: 286 plain-English explainers of the Florida statutes and rules that run an estate, free at https://probate.help/statutes/ — intestacy,

the spousal share, homestead, the elective share, creditor claims, summary versus formal administration, personal-representative duties, trust administration. Each says what the section does, what it means in practice, and the questions families ask, with a link to the official text. Section numbers auto-link across the site, so a reference in one story opens the law behind it.


Florida Probate Lawyer

The $2 Store-Bought Will That Reached the Florida Supreme Court.

Ann Aldrich wrote her own will on a $2 E-Z Legal Form, listed every asset she owned, then inherited more. The form had no line for a residuary clause, so the new property passed to two nieces she had never named — and the Florida Supreme Court held that was correct (https://probate.help/archive/aldrich-v-basile-ez-legal-form/). For readers who would rather not become a case study, Probate.Help pairs the archive with 174 how-to guides at https://probate.help/guides/ and three interactive tools at https://probate.help/tools/ — a probate-cost calculator, a will-and-estate quiz, and an heir visualizer that maps who inherits when there is no will. County-by-county coverage spans all 67 Florida counties at https://probate.help/locations/.

Easy on People, Tough on Problems.

"Every one of these stories highlights the DRAMA of probate law!" said Rachel Schadt, the Florida probate lawyer behind the site. "People will read about a dog with a security detail for an hour and never open a probate guide. So we tied the two together — read the story, then read the law that would decide it in Florida." Schadt, also a Sarasota trust lawyer, practices probate and estate planning in Sarasota and statewide on flat fees, under the line "Florida probate, made easy." She is admitted to the Florida Bar (No. 127500). "Probate lands on people at the worst moment of their lives, and the law makes it worse by being unreadable," she said. "Our rule is simple: easy on people, tough on problems."

The full archive, statute library, guides, and tools are live now at https://probate.help/.

About Rachel Schadt Law

Rachel Schadt Law is a Sarasota-based probate and estate-planning firm serving all of Florida on flat fees. Rachel Schadt is a Sarasota probate lawyer, Florida probate lawyer, and Sarasota trust lawyer, admitted to the Florida Bar (No. 127500). The firm handles formal and summary administration, trust administration, and estate planning, with an emphasis on clear communication and human-first service. Web: https://probate.help/

About Probate.Help

Probate.Help is a free public resource covering Florida probate and estate law: 204 sourced case histories in The Probate Archive (https://probate.help/archive/), 286 plain-English explainers of Florida statutes and rules (https://probate.help/statutes/), 174 guides (https://probate.help/guides/), interactive tools (https://probate.help/tools/), and local pages for all 67 Florida counties (https://probate.help/locations/). It is published by Rachel Schadt Law.

Rachel Schadt
Probate.Help
+1 941-352-1006
email us here
Visit us on social media:
LinkedIn
Other

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