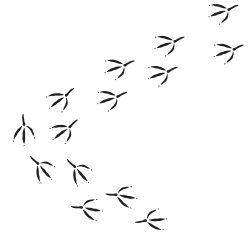


PREFACE



On August 20, 2007, Leona Helmsley, a reclusive billionaire hotel operator and real estate investor, died of congestive heart failure at her home in Greenwich, Connecticut, at the age of 87.

In life, Ms. Helmsley was a flamboyant woman with an alleged despotic personality that earned her the nickname Queen of Mean. Some of her employees complained that even the slightest mistake might be grounds for firing.

An often-cited example of her meanness occurred after her only son died in 1982. She sued his estate for money and property that she claimed he had borrowed from her. Her son's widow, and the mother of her four grandchildren, received an eviction notice for one of the disputed properties. The widow ruined herself financially fighting her mother-in-law in court.

Seven years later, the United States government convicted Ms. Helmsley of federal tax evasion and other white-collar crimes, sentencing her to 16 years in prison. She was released after serving only 19 months.

In 2001, a Chicago Sun-Times article portrayed her as living alone with her little Maltese dog, *Trouble*, who remained her constant companion for the rest of her life. At the time, she was estranged from her grandchildren and had few friends.

Despite her unsavory reputation, Ms. Helmsley was generous in her charitable donations. She gave \$5 million to help families of New York firefighters after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and another \$5 million to hurricane Katrina relief. In addition to other contributions, she gave \$25 million to New York's Presbyterian Hospital for medical research and millions in the 1990s to help rebuild African-American churches that had been burned in the South.