

Leona Helmsley's Little Rich Dog Trouble Dies in Luxury

Wealthy hotel heir left Maltese \$12 million, ignoring her family in will.

By ABC News

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June 10, 2011 -- The richest lapdog in the world -- a little white [Maltese named Trouble](#) -- died at the age of 12 in her final days in luxury, every need tended to around the clock, in Sarasota, Fla.

Trouble owed her coddled lifestyle to her former owner, [New York Hotel heiress Leona Helmsley](#), who died in 2007 and turned her back on relatives to bequeath the bulk of her estate, \$12 million, to her dog.

Helmsley bought the beloved pet for comfort after the death of her husband, billionaire hotelier Harry Helmsley.

A judge later knocked down the dog's inheritance to \$2 million. Though the pooch died in December, news of her demise was only reported this week.

The pampered pooch had led a life of luxury after her owner purchased her at a New York City pet shop and chauffeured her around in a stretch limo.

In death, Helmsley earned her nickname, the "Queen of Mean," cutting off her grandchildren and leaving a trust fund to the cherished pet.

Helmsley served 18 months in federal prison on tax evasion charges in the early 1990s.

But she did leave millions for her brother, Alvin Rosenthal. He was initially responsible for caring for Trouble. The other two grandchildren were spared her final wrath and left

\$5 million each, provided they visit their father's grave at least once a year.

But when her brother refused to care for the dog after Helmsley's death, Trouble was flown by private jet to Florida.

The will also stipulated that when the Maltese went to the big kennel in the sky, she would lie beside her in the 12,000-square-foot Helmsley family mausoleum in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Westchester County, N.Y.

The dirt-hating Helmsley ordered that the mausoleum be "washed or steam-cleaned at least once a year," for which she left \$3 million.

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Trouble lived the equivalent of 84 human years and was tended to around the clock at the Helmsley Sandcastle hotel in Sarasota.

The dog was blind and stricken with health issues before her death. Her caretaker, Carl Lekic spent \$100,000 annually on her care -- including \$8,000 for grooming and \$1,200 for dog food.

Trouble, who had faced 20 to 30 death and kidnapping threats, also retained a full-time security guard, according to news reports.

Her cremated remains will be "privately retained," spokeswoman Eileen Sullivan told the New York Daily News.

Funds held in the dog's trust will revert to the Helmsley family trust, which supports charities, she said.

Probate lawyers say the will is a person's last chance to seek revenge or reward the living, even if that means a beloved pet. Stories abound of monied eccentrics who speak from the great beyond with their will.

At her death at 105 in 2007, the philanthropic Brooke Astor left \$250,000 to the Animal Medical Center in New York City -- specifically for the veterinary care of the pets of poor and old people.