

"Pop Quiz: Wills"

My job as a Legal Services Community Educator is to educate people about the law, in an effort to prevent some legal problems from ever cropping up. It's like when a doctor gives you preventative medicine to strengthen your body before you're even sick. *The Herald* has been kind enough to help me by agreeing to print this weekly column, "Plain Talk About the Law."

For this week's column there will be a brief quiz. Circle the correct answer with a number two pencil. Do not confer with your neighbor. Time: five minutes.

1) What's the best way to control what will happen to your property when you die?

- a) Tell your dentist how you'd like it divided.
- b) Depend on the state to divide it up according to the constantly changing laws.
- c) Have a will made.

2) What's the best way to have your things distributed after your death?

- a) Assume that the state will be able to guess what you would have wanted.
- b) Don't think about it, and invite family tensions, strife, and bickering over who gets what that can last for years.
- c) Have a will made.

3) What's the best way to choose a guardian for your children in the event of the death of you and your spouse?

- a) Leave that for your relatives to worry about.
- b) Trust that the state will choose someone you would have wanted to raise your children.
- c) Have a will made.

4) A major cause of land loss in rural North Carolina is that

- a) often the land is small and people can't find it.
- b) often tornadoes blow the land away.
- c) often when someone dies without a valid will complications follow, which may lead to the land being sold at a price much less than its value.

5) A will is

- a) a famous English playwright.
- b) a backwards won't.
- c) a legal statement of what you want to happen with your property, possessions, and children after you die.

6) The best kind of will is

- a) spoken on your death bed.
- b) written and signed without witnesses.
- c) written with the assistance of a lawyer, witnessed by two people, and notarized.

7) When you go to a lawyer to have a will made you should bring

- a) beer.
- b) dirty laundry.
- c) all relevant information – titles, deeds, bank accounts, names and addresses of people you want to leave things to, etc.

8) The process of having a will changed is

- a) unbelievably tedious and difficult, and often humiliating.
- b) illegal, but possible by bribing certain public officials.
- c) the same as having the original will made.

9) A will is valid

- a) for twenty years.
- b) for one hour and fifty minutes.
- c) forever, or until you change it.

10) You should keep your will

- a) in the back yard.
- b) in the waste basket.
- c) with your other valuable papers, and somewhere your friends and relatives will know about.

STOP

Put down your pencils.

The correct answers are: 1)c 2)c 3)c 4)c 5)c 6)c 7)c 8)c 9)c 10)c

Because of the importance of the information the scale is tough: If you didn't have all ten correct, you flunked. And even if you got them all right but you don't have a valid will, you might one day cause lots of problems for loved ones, so I'll have to flunk you anyway.

So get in touch with a lawyer soon and have a will made. The costs are small compared to the troubles that having a will could prevent. If you are of low income, call your local legal services office to see whether you're eligible for free help.

The community education staff will have pamphlets with information about wills that they'll be glad to send you. They might even be able to give a presentation on wills to your community or church group.

And who knows. If you brush up on the facts, help me spread the word about wills, and have one made yourself, I might consider dropping your "F".