ETHICAL WILL - SAMPLE A

Getting started with an outline

You do not have to wait until the end of your life to begin writing an Ethical Will that has real meaning to you. Take a stage in your life, especially a transition. Share your experiences and your hope for future generations.

Below is one example of how to start writing your Ethical Will using an outline or a list of bullet points (Sample A). Here I used the 25 Things About Me note that was popular on Facebook in early 2009 as a starting point. After writing an outline (Sample A), I composed the first Ethical Will to my daughters (Sample B) at a transition in their life. I wrote another to all three of my children, telling them how much I cherish them (Sample C). Upon further reflection, I decided to write an Ethical Will to my mother (Sample D). I published it as a blog post for my children to read and mailed the original on beautiful parchment paper to my mother.

These are just four examples to give you ideas. The Ethical Will you chose to record may be as short as a single page or as long as your legal documents. It is your legacy. Record it.
25 things you should know about Mary V. Danielsen

by Mary V. Danielsen

1. My immediate family is more than 50 people, including my mom, 8 siblings, 13 in-laws (current, semi-retired, and definitely retired), 22 nieces and nephews, 2 great nephews, 7 first cousins, 4 very-cool first cousins from a spouse once removed and an assortment of friends so close that they're blood. Don’t ask me all their birthdays, but my brother Ken has an Excel sheet going.

2. My friends and family know my door is always open. They can show up at any time and I will always have a meal ready for them.

3. I hate chewing gum or listening to people cracking their gum or biting down on their fork.

4. I consider the women of Girl Scout Troop 92 my other daughters.

5. I pray when I drive and write in my mind when I run.

6. I get some of the best ideas for writing when I'm in the shower. (That's weird.)

7. I cannot sing to save my life.

8. I will never bail anyone out of jail who got caught for drunk driving.

9. I'm not proud of my occasional bad temper or filthy mouth, but I have no patience for certain things.

10. Things happen for a reason. Since I am a woman of faith, I'm sure God has a plan for me to see all the other beauty in my life. Sometimes it is tough to see.

11. When my husband smiles at me I light up like a giddy kid inside. When I first met him I said to a friend, “The woman who gets that man’s heart is a very lucky woman.” I was right…four years later.

12. If today were my last day I know I’ve lived a good life.

13. I’m so thankful for having been born into a big poor family. At some point when we were kids we only had each other. There never seemed like there was enough to go around, especially food and clothing. As we got older we realized we had everything in the world, because we had each other. We’re all still close.

14. I still like running, but love a two-hour speed walk on hills with hand weights and music.

15. My greatest accomplishment was becoming a mom. My babies are the sun that shines. My oldest child is exactly like the reoccurring dream I’ve had since I was 9 years old. My second child I wished...
for hard. My baby is the one I got on my knees and begged God for: Please, just one for this beautiful man you allowed me to love.

16. I love when my children make each other laugh, compliment each other, or sit around and talk like old ladies in curlers.

17. I don’t like to leave the house ever without the beds being made, laundry put away or the kitchen cleaned.

18. I do quilting sometimes (Stop laughing.)

19. I’m not a pack rat anymore. [I once owned 37 18-gallon Rubbermaid containers of fabric. That’s sick. [See above.]

20. I still have a rock I found on a walk in the woods with my grandfather and my cousin Anne in Mount Vernon, New York when I was 9 years old. It looks like old diamonds. Pop walked with a gentleman’s walking stick, probably Victorian.

21. My mother raised me to believe that since I’ve been on the receiving end of charity as a child I am obligated to give back far more in return throughout my life. (I was surprised when I heard Michelle Obama on the campaign trail saying the exact same words: “For those who have been given, much more is expected in return.”) Hence, the constant projects.

22. If I won the lottery tomorrow I’d buy my sister Paula a home to live in forever and then I have lunch with staffers from the Lance Armstrong Foundation and talk about the best ways to invest in cancer research and education. I’m always crafting the speech in my mind. Man, would I love to place those phone calls.

23. I never paid attention to cancer issues or the need to get involved in the growing community of medical research until cancer started taking the life of my dear brother-in-law, Cary. We were supposed to grow old together. For 30+ years he was my brother. I miss him with my whole heart. Now I’m keeping a promise to him to stay involved. The thing you need to know about me is that as long as I can I’m going to be involved in the LIVESTRONG Challenge and other local cancer fundraisers from the Relay for Life to the Susan G. Komen events. I do believe there is a better way to live then with cancer. I want to do what I can to ensure that our children and grandchildren live a better life.

24. I often question whether some of my dreams are really messages from those who have passed. There’s a difference in the dream, how I sleep and how I recall every detail.

25. No matter how bad my day is there is always a favorite part.