

## A Few More Personal Questions

The flow of questions continues. One distinct factor persisted in the preparation of *The Beneficiary Book*. Each time we thought we had covered all the questions for a particular section, more questions came up. As we addressed those new questions, they prompted even more new questions. Accordingly, *The Beneficiary Book* will continue to grow and improve with the guidance from those who use it.

<p>Do you have a safe? If so, both spouses plus a trusted party should know the combination or have access to the keys.</p>	<p>DO NOT KEEP THIS INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK!</p>
<p>Do you have important records stored on your computer? Is there a password to gain access? Also name the location of any off-premises backup files.</p>	<p>DO NOT KEEP THIS INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK!</p>
<p>Do you have a safe-deposit box(es)? If so, list the bank(s), box number(s), and the location of the keys.</p>	<p>DO NOT KEEP THIS INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK!</p>
<p>Do you have a family historian? If yes, list his or her name, address, and telephone number.</p>	
<p>Use this space to ask some personal questions we've missed . . .</p>	

Date of Entry	<i>Notes, Thoughts, and Attachments</i>

## ***Inside Secrets About Your Home and Personal Possessions***

We've prepared *The Beneficiary Book* for the use and benefit of your survivor(s) in the event of death or incapacity. Consideration should also be given to the restoration of household furnishings in the event of catastrophic loss (theft, fire, flood, earthquake, etc.). We suggest a complete room-by-room inventory (include the date of purchase and original cost and present value), with photographs and/or videos (taken from various angles) and perspectives of each room in the house(s). **Store this information in your safe-deposit box.**

How do you get the heater/air conditioner to work?	
Where is the gas meter located, and whom do you call for service? How do you turn off the gas in case of an emergency?	
Where is the water meter located, and how do you shut it off in case of an emergency?	
How do you turn off the water to the outside faucets in winter?	
Where is the fuse box or electrical breaker panel?	
What do you do if you run out of hot water?	
Are your photographs and negatives kept separately? Are your photographs labeled and dated? Where are they?	
Do you live in a part of the country that is subject to natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.)?	
Do you have an emergency evacuation plan? Do all household members know about it? Tip: If you have a plan, we strongly recommend that you detail it here and rehearse it with all household members.	
Do you have emergency supplies? Where are they kept?	



## **More Inside Secrets About Your Home and Your Personal Possessions**

<p>Do you have smoke and other (security) alarms? If so, do they require batteries? What size and type are they? How often should the batteries be changed? . . . And how do you shut the alarm off if it goes off by mistake?</p>	
<p>How do the automatic sprinklers work? Where are the automatic clocks located? How do you reset the automatic clocks after a power outage? Where are the faucets located?</p>	
<p>Where is the swimming pool equipment located and how does the pool equipment work? Which chemicals are needed, in what quantity, and how often?</p>	
<p>Do you have any other items about your home requiring your input and instructions? Don't forget your inside secrets regarding unique how-tos around your house.</p>	




## ***And Don't Forget Your Pets***

Have you discussed the disposition of the pets that may become orphaned upon your death or incapacity?

Those of you with pets may want to use this section to list your pet's eating habits, special treatment, medical problems, etc.—and the name, address, and telephone number of your pet's veterinarian.

Discuss with the person(s) to whom you wish your pet(s) to go if they are willing and able to take on the responsibility of caring for your pet(s).

*Don't assume that your children and friends will feel sorry for your pet python or fourteen-year-old Rover and take them in. Each year thousands of animals are orphaned and destroyed because their owners failed to plan for their disposition.*





## A Few Closing Thoughts and Ideas

*Ready cash:* While creditors may be sympathetic to your untimely exit, they still want to be paid on time. Delays in receiving life insurance proceeds and the distribution of other liquid estate assets can leave the surviving spouse short of cash. If he or she has no visible means of support, a bank may not loan him or her money or issue a credit card. Such circumstances can lead to financial hardship.

It may be a good idea for each spouse to have a separate credit card (with a cash reserve) *in his or her name*. Another idea may be to secure a home equity credit line in both your names. Talk to your banker.

*Power of attorney:* If either spouse becomes incapacitated, the lack of a power of attorney can cause undue expense and delays in transacting ordinary business. If you each do not have a current power of attorney, see your lawyer.

*Letters and parting words:* Unfortunately, the termination of life does not terminate ill feelings. All too many people die or become incapacitated without having the opportunity to impart last words that can, for instance, absolve a child's guilt or anger—words that both ask for and deliver forgiveness, words that tell loved ones that you really love them.

Now is the time to write those all-important thoughts to those you love and care about . . . and this book is a great place for you to store your letters and parting words.

Talk to your spouse and your beneficiaries about the answers and information contained in this book.

Settling your affairs will raise many difficult issues. You will need to learn how to say no to questions and requests that you are not comfortable with.

Always keep lines of communication open to family members.

