

WHEN THERE'S A WILL...

A. ROSS ECKLER

Morristown, New Jersey

The May 1996 Word Ways described the results of a National Public Radio competition of December 1995 in which listeners were challenged to write grammatical and understandable sentences containing the same word four or more times in succession. The largest number of entries involved the use of the word will; puzzlemeister Will Shortz was featured in many, either writing a will or exhibiting will and determination.

The minimum requirement of four consecutive wills was quite easy to achieve, usually taking the form of a testator and a legatee named Will and Will Jr., and at least once involving a listener named Will as well.

Grandpa Will will will Will Shortz a collection of unsolved puzzles (Claire Thomas)

Will Will will Will his yacht? (Marianne Stambaugh)

She says that what she will will Will will make him change his ways
(Martha Harrington)

Will, will Will will Will his willoware? (Lisa Bussey)

To add a fifth will, listeners sometimes placed a subordinate clause ending with will at the beginning of the sentence.

Feeling good will, Will will will Will, his cousin everything (Mark Halcyon)

Though it is gauche to speculate about the contents of a will, will Will will his puzzle collection to me? (David Scheinberg)

Of his own free will, will Will will Will Jr. his dog? (Daniel Waldman)

His rich aunt out of ill will will will Will nothing but her collection of tea cozies (Jane Alper)

Some contributors believed that one person could will another such intangibles as grit and determination.

Will Will will will itself? (Mary Ross)

In his will, will Will will Will will power? (Rick Narad)

Since I know my wife would be despondent if left a penniless widow, my will will will will. Will she then have the hope to carry on? (John Nardine)

The will will will Will will to live longer (Valerie Rodriguez)

She says that what she will will Will will make him change his ways
(Melissa Harrington)

In his will, will Will will Will will to be good or bad? (John Clement)

But gumption need not necessarily be passed on by means of a legal document.

Will Will will will itself? (Mary Ross)

When he sets a difficult puzzle, Will will will will and determination to all his listeners (Peter Bokor)

Will, will Will will Will will to continue on? (Jennie Raymond)

The will Will will will Will will will Will to change his behavior (Karan Talley)

A little judicious repetition for emphasis extends the string.

Mrs. Will reported the following inquiry about the Will will: Will Will will will Will Jr. his father's puzzle books (Anthony J.R. Cook)

When it comes to legacies--say what you will!--Will will will! Will Will will enough to satisfy greedy heirs? (Joe Clonick)

In answer to whom and what Will will will: Will will will Will Jr. everything (Hunter Daughtrey, Janet Parsons)

Most of these sentences can be extended one or two wills by substituting the full name Will Will for the Christian name Will.

Will will will Will-Will (Will Jr.'s pet name) his two tutus (Susan Chaffee)
Relatives wonder if the Will Will will will will Will Will Jr. any part of his father's estate (Alan Singer)

What does the George Will will will Will Will? (Chris Thorman)

Some listeners constructed quite elaborate scenarios. For instance, Mary tells her husband, Will, that if he dies first, she will cryogenically preserve his remains and upon her death donate both of their bodies to medical school. There are two possible outcomes, however, to this discussion: Will will agree that Mary after her death will will Will; Will will will otherwise, stating that he be cremated instead (Dennis Clark).

Another listener constructed a dialogue between Weekend Edition's two moderators:

LeAnne: Carolyn Hooker says she'll leave you money if you pick her puzzle entry. It's \$1000 her will will will Will!

Will: Will you call her or shall I?

Some of the longest chains of wills received in the competition made use of full names and a two-stage inheritance:

The inheritance Grandpa Will will will Will Will--will Will Will will it on to Nell? (Beth Parsons)

If a \$10000 bequest is what the J.Will Will "will" will will Will Will, will Will Will will Will Will Jr. the same amount? (R.W. Klamm)

Collectors of famous wills (such as the one of Will Shakespeare) can will them to others.

Of all his collected wills, which will will Will will Will Jr.? (anonymous)
 Since he bears his son Will no ill will, Will will will Will Will will, will he not? (Renee Pittin)

What will show how much affection Will had for Will? The will Will will will Will will: Will will will Will Will Shakespeare's will! (Edgar Bley)

The eleven wills in this story can be extended to fifteen by replacing the two protagonists with Will Will and Will Will!

Shakespeare can inspire across the centuries: Columnist George and puzzle-makers Weng and Shortz wonder about Shakespeare's last will-- will Will will Will, Will or Will his gift for words? (Craig Nelson)

Gordon Liddy wrote a book entitled *Will* which can be listed as a bequest (or, the bequest can refer to a horse named Will). Or, a town named Will (in Oklahoma) can be passed on by deed.

Will Will will Will *Will*? (Jeff and Loni Doyle; Bill Topazio)
 The owner of the town of Will, Will, will will Will to Will Jr. (Tom Straubert)

Several contestants bestowed names on imaginary texts or companies to extend the string.

If I name my contest entry "Will Will?", will Will will "Will Will?" to be the winner? (Susan Mills)

When Albert Will was on his deathbed, the family of his business partner William Baxter wondered: Will Will will Will "Will & Baxter"? (Lee Shari Weissbach)

Who will get the original manuscript of Grandfather's first novel, *Will Will Will*? We all know his favorite grandson and namesake, Cousin Will, will. "Will Will will *Will Will Will*?" will no doubt be Cousin Will's first question after learning that Grandfather has revised his will (Lisa Sarasohn)

The longest pure-will sentence is given above, but one should also note this near-miss sentence: Will Will will Will Will's will? Will will! (Robert Zani). Another pure sentence features Power's steamboat "Wood to Power" which ran out of fuel: Will Will will *Will* to Power to Power to power "To Power"?

The following story by Willis White is perhaps the cleverest received by National Public Radio:

Welcome back, everybody, to All Legal Things Considered here on the Courtroom Radio Network where, as we like to say, you get all the excitement of hours of mind-numbing scientific testimony without the added distraction of pictures. We'll be going shortly to Williamsburg,

Virginia for the live presentation of the videotaped last will and testament of William Williams, one of American's most cherished cartoonists for nearly 50 years. As most of you probably already know, Williams, who died last week at the age of 73, never made known, even to his family, his wishes for the future of his comic strip empire. His company, Will Will, Inc., though privately owned, is thought to be worth some 70 million dollars.

Mr. Williams got his start in cartooning in 1945 after his return from active military duty in Europe. While being treated at a VA hospital in southern Virginia, Williams and other patients in the Maximum Security Psychological Exhaustion and Combat Stress Studies Department were encouraged to write songs and stories or paint pictures as a method of relieving tension. Williams began to draw a comic strip he called 'Private Slaughter, Psycho Soldier'. Far from helping him deal with stress, the exercise seemed to make Mr. Williams more high-strung, irritable and, indeed, dangerous. Fourteen months later, showing little progress despite intensive psychiatric therapy, Williams was transferred to the Electro-Convulsive Treatment Center where, just six weeks later, staff doctors described him as 'a whole new man. Really completely different and new'.

The following year, after an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army, he wrote and starred in an off-Broadway musical-comedy revue called 'Cannon Fodder Follies'. The show was very well received and for many years afterward was a staple of the USO circuit. The show's most popular character, Pvt. Will Will, was of course based strongly on William Williams himself. Pvt. Will soon became the focal point of his own comic strip--Will Will, a humorous chronicle of the misadventures of a hapless buck private during World War II.

From 1948 to the present, the strip has had only one production break, a seven-month hiatus in 1972 which came at the end of a long, bitter and ultimately futile series of lawsuits filed by Williams against Mort Walker, the cartoonist of Beetle Bailey fame, alleging, as Williams put it, 'theft of intellectual property'.

Williams brought the strip back in November 1972 after a leave of absence spent in Sarasota, Florida at the Gentle Breezes Center for Rest, Relaxation and Electro-Convulsive Therapy. According to fans and critics alike, the strip was better than ever.

Still stinging from his legal reverses, Williams decided to incorporate himself. He filed for copyright and trademark protection for all names and likenesses of his comic characters, even down to Will Will's favorite catch-phrase 'Roger, Will-Will-Wilco'. He even went so far as to legally change his name from William Williams to Will Will in order to further the appearance of a 'legally unassailable unity between comic strip and creator'.

Though the strip continued to be as strong and popular as ever, Will's personal behavior had progressed from zealous protection of his creation to what some termed a 'paranoid delusion' that Mort Walker was plotting to end Will's long run as one of our country's favorite entertainers. It was for this reason that even Will's beloved son, Will Williams, was never made a partner in his father's business, despite being a loyal helper with the strip for 28 years and even, since 1984, doing all the principal artwork.

This is why there is such trepidation before today's proceedings--the adorable dogface we all chuckle at over breakfast may soon be no more. We can only pray that the strip will be allowed to continue, hopefully under the able leadership of Mr. Will's dutiful son, Will. Indeed, there is one question on everyone's lips as we await the presentation of the Will Will will--Will Will Will will Will 'Will Will'? We'll see...

RICHARD LEDERER'S BOOKS

Richard Lederer, widely acclaimed author, has kindly offered to sign copies of his books for WORD WAYS subscribers and give part of the proceeds to WORD WAYS. These would make fine holiday gifts. Be sure to include Box WW when you send him your order.

<i>ANGUISHED ENGLISH</i> (bloopers)	(check choices) \$6.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>MORE ANGUISHED ENGLISH</i> (bloopers)	\$6.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>GET THEE TO A PUNNERY</i> (pun and games)	\$6.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>CRAZY ENGLISH</i> (creative word play)	\$6.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>THE PLAY OF WORDS</i> (word games)	\$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>THE MIRACLE OF LANGUAGE</i> (inspirational)	\$6.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ADVENTURES OF A VERBIVORE</i> (my life in language)	\$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>LITERARY TRIVIA</i> (stories and games for book lovers)	\$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>NOTHING RISQUÉ, NOTHING GAINED</i> (good, clean dirty wordplay)	\$12.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>THE WRITE WAY</i> (a guide to real-life writing)	\$12.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>PUN AND GAMES</i> (word fun for kids)	\$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/>

Book Total : _____

Include \$1.50 for first book and \$.50 for each additional book for book rate postage : _____

Total Paid: _____

(Check or money order only in U.S. funds. Canadian or foreign orders must include \$5.00 for bank fee.)

Send your order to: Richard Lederer
5 Merrimack Street , Box WW
Concord, NH 03301

Please print the following:

Your name: _____

Your address: _____
(street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Instructions for inscriptions (to whom and message): _____