



Richard Mellon Scaife has untreatable cancer

By CharlesII

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Perhaps the seminal figure in the right-wing donor network has untreatable cancer. Richard Mellon Scaife's involvement with the politics of smear and division dates back to the Nixon era. We should remember it.

(Crossposted with edits from [Mercury Rising](#)).

[Richard Mellon Scaife](#), has an untreatable cancer:

Nothing gives perspective to life so much as death.

Recently, doctors told me I have an untreatable form of cancer.

Some who dislike me may rejoice at this news. Naturally, I can't share their enthusiasm.

The diagnosis has prompted me to consider my life, the city and region I call home, the country I love, and the many people I have known — especially those who are friends, or whose lives and achievements I respect.

In coming weeks and months, I hope to write about some of these things.

Today, I want to write about one thing that is so important to me: Newspapers.

Richard Mellon Scaife was responsible for some of the worst of American politics. As [Katie Heimer](#) wrote,

The Arkansas Project was created and funded with the sole objective of digging up, and if necessary fabricating, any information that could be used to defame the Clintons and those around them. Over the course of several years, Scaife allocated approximately 2.4 million dollars to the [American] Spectator for sole use in its “investigative” efforts to defame and humiliate Clinton(Lewis), efforts which resulted in the “revelation” (“fabrication” is perhaps more accurate

in most cases) of tabloidesque stories such as the “Troopergate” and Whitewater scandals, Paula Jones’ allegations of sexual harassment, and the legitimization and continuation of conspiracy theories about the death of Deputy White House Counsel and close Clinton friend Vince Foster, among others (Phillips).

The “investigative” efforts of those involved in the Arkansas Project eventually led, albeit indirectly, to Clinton’s impeachment in the Monica Lewinsky scandal....

...

Over the next thirty years, Scaife alone would contribute \$200 million to conservative causes (“The Right’s Big Moneyman”). This growth and expansion of conservative journalism and conservative think tanks, which together formed a cohesive social and political movement, continued throughout the 1970s and ‘80s, bolstered by the Presidency of Ronald Reagan.

Smear politics, using fabricated accusations, were a staple of Mr. Scaife's dedication to journalistic principles. [Vince Foster](#) committed suicide not just from depression, but because of the unjust accusations that Scaife's propaganda operations leveled at him. [Susan McDougal](#) spent years in jail because of Scaife. [Julie Hiatt Steele](#) was bankrupted. But the most heart-rending stories are of the ordinary people who didn't have any status or money to lose. They were ground into the dust for the sole purpose of illegally seizing power away from Bill Clinton, a man who was democratically elected. And, of course, the hypocrisy of [Dick Scaife](#) tormenting Bill Clinton for infidelity, exceeds all measure.

There are those who will welcome Mr. Scaife's illness and impending death. I am not one of them. His pain, if any, relieves none of the pain of his victims. His death, when it occurs, will restore nothing. It will simply remove the context for why this country is so polarized and angry. His illness will solve nothing. And from Scaife's tone, it sounds as if he has learned nothing, regrets nothing, and will use his immense fortune simply to further destroy our polity.

Sadly, there are dozens more like him, men (and a few women) of great power and wealth. They pour money into corrupting and perverting the functions of democracy, turning Americans from a proud and free people into desperate courtiers.

But I suppose that Scaife's illness can serve as a teachable moment, when we remember the evil that he did, evil that will live on long after his bones are interred and his name forgotten. Maybe evil can be turned to good.

Here is more on his activities by [Brooks Jackson](#) of CNN:

He was born to great wealth, the great grand-nephew of Andrew Mellon

...

He was the second-largest donor to the Nixon-Agnew campaign in 1972, giving \$1 million.

...

Later, Scaife gave to GOPAC, the political fund that helped make Newt Gingrich speaker in 1994. Gingrich says Scaife's money laid the basis for modern conservatism. And his money still flows:

To the Heritage Foundation alone, nearly \$3.5 million from Scaife foundations in the most recent three years on record.

\$1.22 million to the American Enterprise Institute.

\$1.40 million to Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

\$325,000 to the Cato Institute.

\$575,000 to the Citizens for a Sound Economy, among others.

Scaife has particular contempt for the Clintons.

...

Scaife's foundations shovel millions into groups hostile to Bill Clinton. The Free Congress Foundation, which runs a conservative cable channel, received \$1.9 million from 1994 to 1996.

Hollywood's Center for the Study of Public Culture, which sees liberal bias in the movies, got nearly \$1.8 million. Accuracy in Media, a group still promoting the idea that Clinton aide Vince Foster may have been murdered, got \$675,000.

Gene Lyons and Joe Conason relentlessly documented the mechanisms by which Richard Mellon Scaife kept "Whitewater" alive long after it was obviously a non-scandal. I urge people to read and remember.