

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

## **Richard Mellon Scaife, philanthropist, bankrolled conservative political causes**

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Richard Mellon Scaife, the Pittsburgh philanthropist and reclusive heir to the Mellon banking fortune, whose support for right-wing causes laid the foundations for America's modern conservative movement and fueled the 1998 impeachment of President Bill Clinton, died Friday at his home in Pittsburgh. He was 82.

His death was confirmed by his lawyer, H. Yale Gutnick. Scaife had announced recently in a front-page article in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, a newspaper he owned, that he had an untreatable form of cancer.

Decades before David and Charles Koch bankrolled right-wing causes, Scaife and Joseph Coors, the beer magnate, were the leading financiers of the conservative crusade of the 1970s and '80s. Scaife (pronounced Skayf) inherited roughly \$500 million in 1965 and nearly tripled his net worth over his lifetime. But unlike his forebears, who were primarily benefactors of art, education and medicine, he gave hundreds of millions to promote conservative political causes.

Scaife rarely gave interviews or addressed the controversies that regularly engulfed him. He had a long-standing drinking problem, engaged in bitter feuds with relatives, friends and employees, and found his troubled life examined in the media and online, despite phalanxes of lawyers and spokesmen paid to insulate him from public fascination with his wealth and power.

But in written answers to questions by the Washington Post in 1999, he said concerns for America motivated him.

"I am not a politician, although like most Americans I have some political views," he said. "Basically, I am a private individual who has concerns about his country and who has resources that give me the privilege - and responsibility - to do something to help my country if I can."

In his first foray into national politics, in 1964, Scaife backed Sen. Barry M. Goldwater, R-Ariz., who lost his presidential bid by a landslide. In 1972, Scaife gave \$1 million to the re-election war chest of President Richard M. Nixon, including \$45,000 to a secret fund linked to the Watergate scandal. And in the 1980s, Scaife ardently supported Ronald Reagan's presidency.

But, disillusioned by Watergate and Nixon, he switched his focus from officeholders to ideologies, and his influence in the rise of neoconservatism stemmed primarily from his

contributions to think tanks, lobbyists and publications that promoted free-market economics, lower taxes, smaller government and cuts in social welfare programs. Beneficiaries included the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute and Judicial Watch.

In another approach, in the 1990s, he poured millions into what critics called a moral crusade against then-President Clinton and his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, financing investigations by publications, notably the conservative American Spectator and his own Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, that were aimed at discrediting the Clintons. The accusations, which prompted Hillary Clinton to say on national television that her husband was the target of a "vast right-wing conspiracy," troubled the administration for most of its tenure.

In 2008, Hillary Clinton, then a Democratic senator from New York running for president, met Scaife and editors and reporters of his Tribune-Review for an interview. The newspaper endorsed her, and Scaife, in a commentary, said: "I have a very different impression of Hillary Clinton today. And it's a very favorable one indeed."

Richard Mellon Scaife was born in Pittsburgh on July 3, 1932, one of two children of Alan Magee Scaife and Sarah Cordelia Mellon Scaife. His father was the scion of a Pittsburgh steel family, and his mother was the daughter of Richard B. Mellon, who made fortunes in banking and oil, and a niece of Andrew W. Mellon, the treasury secretary in the Harding, Coolidge and Hoover administrations.

Richard, known as Dickie, and his sister, Cordelia, grew up on the family estate, Penguin Court, in Ligonier, Pa. Congressmen and senators were frequent guests in his home, and he developed an early interest in politics. He was expelled in his first year at Yale and later attended the University of Pittsburgh, where his father was chairman of the trustees.

In 1956, he married Frances L. Gilmore. They had two children, Jennie and David, and divorced in 1991. Later that year, he married his longtime companion, Margaret (Ritchie) Battle. They were separated in 2005 and divorced in 2012. Survivors include his daughter and son and two grandchildren.