

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2, 1999

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PAUL MELLON, RENOWNED PHILANTHROPIST AND PATRON OF THE ARTS,
LEAVES BEHIND A GREAT LEGACY

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Paul Mellon, renowned philanthropist, art collector, patron of the arts, and horse breeder, died on February 1, 1999 at Oak Spring, his home in Upperville, Virginia. He was 91 years old.

A private service will be held in Upperville and a memorial service will be held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, on a date to be announced. A memorial exhibition presenting his legacy of gifts of art to the nation will also be organized by the Gallery, dates to be announced.

"Paul Mellon is unparalleled in his service to the nation, education, and the arts and humanities. His leadership and generosity established the National Gallery of Art in the first rank of the world's museums. Modest and kind, he was one of the greatest philanthropists of our time and a gentleman in every sense. He leaves an extraordinary legacy to future generations," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

"Mr. Mellon's legendary generosity--of substance and spirit--did so much to enrich the lives of all who were

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privileged to work with him and all who were the beneficiaries of his philanthropic commitments. I have often thought of Mr. Mellon as an exemplar of the ideal of the donor--a thoughtful as well as cheerful giver, never a seeker of the limelight, remarkable for his taste and discernment. His gift for friendship, his impish sense of humor, and his unwillingness to take himself too seriously were evident always," said William G. Bowen, president, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Paul Mellon's survivors include his wife of 50 years, "Bunny," the former Rachel Lambert Lloyd; his daughter, Catherine Conover and son Timothy, from his first marriage to Mary Conover Brown, who passed away in 1946; and three grandchildren, John W. Warner, Virginia S. Warner, and Mary W. Greenway.

Quiet and intensely committed, Paul Mellon contributed to a wide variety of charitable organizations, but especially in support of higher education, the arts and humanities, conservation, and veterinary research. Under his leadership outstanding cultural treasures have been preserved in magnificent structures created to house them, including the East Building of the National Gallery of Art and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. He also helped to preserve nature through his contributions toward the purchase of Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina and his gift of Sky Meadows State Park to Virginia, among other areas. He once wrote that "the saving of these beautiful natural areas has given me the profoundest

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pleasure and the most heartwarming satisfaction."

Mellon called horses his "one great recreation in life." He enjoyed foxhunting and bred and raced top horses, including many stakes winners from his Rokeby Stables in Virginia. Among these are Mill Reef, the 1971 winner of the English Derby and the French Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe, who was one of the greatest horses of this century; Fort Marcy, twice winner of the Washington International and Horse of the Year in 1970; and Sea Hero, who won the Kentucky Derby in 1993.

Mellon's life story is told in Reflections in a Silver Spoon, written by Mellon with John Baskett and published by William Morrow and Company, Inc., in 1992. Among his many distinguished honors are the National Medal of Arts presented by President Reagan on April 23, 1985, and the National Medal of Arts and Humanities awarded by President Clinton on September 26, 1997. In 1974 he was made an Honorary Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (K.B.E.) and in 1982 he was appointed Knight Grand Officer of the Order of Orange-Nassau.

Paul Mellon and his sister, Ailsa Mellon Bruce, the son and daughter of Nora McMullen and Andrew W. Mellon, represent the second generation of major benefactors to the National Gallery of Art. His father was a Pittsburgh industrialist and financier, served as Secretary of the Treasury of the United States from 1921 to 1931, and as U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James's,

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1931 to 1932. He founded the National Gallery of Art in 1937 and donated his famous art collection to the country.

Mellon was born on June 11, 1907, in Pittsburgh and spent his early years there. Because his mother was English, he was often taken to visit that country, which led to a life-long devotion to its life and culture. In 1919 Mellon was sent to the Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut, and then continued his education at Yale University, from which he graduated in 1929. From Yale, he went to Clare College, Cambridge, from which he received an honours B.A. in 1931. He then returned to Pittsburgh, where he worked in the Mellon Bank and various businesses.

In 1935 Mellon married Mary Conover Brown. After his father's death two years later, Paul and Mary moved to a farm in northern Virginia, which remained his primary residence. They also spent time in Europe in the late 1930s, chiefly because of their interest in the work of C. G. Jung. In 1938 he received the M.A. degree from Clare College, Cambridge. The couple was in Europe when the Second World War broke out and stayed until 1940.

After returning to America, Mellon enrolled at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. Six months later he joined the U.S. Army. He received cavalry training and his commission at Fort Riley in Kansas and subsequently served with the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) in Europe, attaining the rank of Major. In 1945 he and Mary founded Bollingen Foundation, which was

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active in the advancement and preservation of learning in the humanities. The Foundation published 100 books, including a best-seller, I Ching, and supported the publication of many others before closing in 1969. Mary died in 1946.

In his forties Mellon began collecting art in earnest with his second wife, "Bunny." He purchased works by the French impressionists and post-impressionists. For many years he also collected English pictures and books. His collection was rich in the works of the recognized masters of British art, such as John Constable, Joseph Mallord William Turner, George Stubbs, William Hogarth, Thomas Rowlandson, and Joseph Wright of Derby, but he also collected works by their lesser known contemporaries, and he had particular interests in what he regarded as underappreciated genres, such as sporting art, informal portraiture, and topographical painting. While some of these paintings were given to the National Gallery of Art and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, the majority of the British collection went to the Yale Center for British Art, which he founded and of which he was the chief benefactor. He was also a major donor to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, which he served as trustee for 40 years.

Since 1964, Mellon and his wife have donated 913 works of art to the National Gallery of Art by such major artists as Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Berthe Morisot, Mary

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Cassatt, Winslow Homer, George Bellows, and Alexander Calder. In 1965 he gave 350 paintings of American Indians by George Catlin. Then, in 1983, Mellon gave the Gallery 93 outstanding works that he and his wife had collected over a period of thirty years, establishing him as one of the National Gallery's greatest benefactors. Further gifts of large groups of important works of art followed in 1985, 1986, and 1987.

In honor of the National Gallery's fiftieth anniversary Mellon donated many important works, including the great masterpiece Boy in a Red Waistcoat (1888-1890) by Cézanne, and 31 of the surviving 69 original wax sculptures modeled by Degas. This gift is in addition to 17 waxes given by Mellon in 1985, creating at the National Gallery the largest holding of original Degas wax sculptures in the world. In late 1996 he donated two important works by Pablo Picasso, The Death of the Harlequin (1905) and Woman Sitting in a Garden (1901).

In addition to the gifts of art, Mellon provided essential funding for a number of Gallery projects, including generous gifts to the Gallery's main fund for acquisitions, the Patrons' Permanent Fund. Most important, he, his sister, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided the funds for the construction of the East Building. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation was established by the 1969 merger of Paul Mellon's Old Dominion Foundation, founded in 1941, and his sister's Avalon Foundation. Mellon served as a trustee of the Foundation from its founding

until 1985, and as its only Honorary Trustee until his death.

Mellon's leadership of the Gallery has been as reliable as his gifts. He was first elected to the board of trustees in 1938, making him the Gallery's first president. He resigned in 1939. Following his military service, he was re-elected to the board in 1945 and served as president of the Gallery from 1963 to 1979. It was under his presidency that the East Building was designed and built. At the opening ceremony for the East Building in 1978, Mellon turned the building over to President Carter, "to be dedicated forever to the use and enjoyment of the people of the United States." In 1979 he became chairman, a post from which he retired in May 1985. By then his association with the National Gallery had continued over a period of 47 years. Thereafter he maintained his ties to the board by serving as the first honorary trustee.

Mellon was also instrumental in establishing the Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, whose mandate in his own words is "to increase our understanding of our heritage of the art of the Western world." In the field of art conservation, Mellon directed many foundation grants to laboratories, training programs for prospective conservators, and ongoing research aimed at developing new conservation materials and techniques.

Among the many other institutions which benefitted from his leadership and philanthropy are: Choate Rosemary Hall,

Wallingford, Connecticut; Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh; Yale University; Saint John's College, Annapolis; the Center for Hellenic Studies; the A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh; The Conservation Foundation, New York; the Fund for the Advancement of Education, New York; the Virginia Outdoors Foundation; the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg; and the Royal Veterinary College, University of London. He was a trustee of the Mellon Institute of Research from 1937 until its merger into Carnegie-Mellon University in 1967, and chairman of its board of trustees from 1960 to 1967.

Other recent awards include, in 1989: the American Philosophical Society Benjamin Franklin Award, the World Monuments Fund Hadrian Award, and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Medal in Architecture. The Yale Medal, awarded in 1953, is one of his earliest honors.

Near the end of his book, Reflections in a Silver Spoon, Mellon wrote, "I have been an amateur in every phase of my life; an amateur poet, an amateur scholar, an amateur horseman, an amateur farmer, an amateur soldier, an amateur connoisseur of art, an amateur publisher, and an amateur museum executive. The root of the word "amateur" is the Latin word for love, and I can honestly say that I've thoroughly enjoyed all the roles I have played."

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