

# Javier Marías, acclaimed Novelist on 'Mystery and Betrayal,' Dies at 74

By CLAY RISEN

Javier Marías, a Spanish novelist whose elegant style and intricate plots centered on espionage, murder and betrayal won him comparisons to Marcel Proust and Ian Fleming, died on Sunday at his home in Madrid. He was 70.

His publisher, Alfaguara, said the cause was pneumonia.

Though he was not particularly well known in the United States, Mr. Marías was among the few writers to combine critical praise with a best-seller readership: He sold some eight million copies of his 14 novels, four books of short stories and dozens of essay collections. His books were translated into 46 languages; his 1992 novel "Un Corazón Tan Blanco," which was published in English in 1995 as "A Heart So White," sold 1.3 million copies in Germany alone.

Mr. Marías occupied a reputational perch in Spanish culture that would be almost inconceivable for an American author. His novels were greeted like blockbuster summer films, he received practically every prize available to a Spanish writer, and he was regularly considered a favorite to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, one of the few awards to elude his grasp. Most critics considered him the greatest living Spanish writer; some said the greatest since Miguel de Cervantes.

He was more than just a famous novelist. Mr. Marías wrote a widely read weekly column in *El País*, Spain's leading newspaper, where he set down his thoughts on everything from bike lanes (he hated them) to the Spanish government (which he also detested, regardless of the party in power).

He cultivated a public image as a curmudgeon, but in person he was generous and witty, inviting interviewers for long conversations in his dimly lit study, his fingers tweezing an ever-present cigarette. (One column he wrote in 2006, "The New York Times castigating Madrid's antismoking laws as "far more befitting of Franco than a democracy.")

Mr. Marías wrote in a looping,

discursive style that critics often compared to that of Henry James or Laurence Sterne, whose epigram "I progress as I digress" Mr. Marías took as a personal motto.

He knew Sterne quite well: At 25 he translated that Irish writer's famously difficult, uproarious novel "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman" (1759) into Spanish, one of nearly a dozen British and American books that he rendered into his native tongue.

Though he did most of his translation work in his 20s, Mr. Marías made the character of the translator — and the idea of translation, in all its meanings — a central theme in his work. Opera singers, directors, spies: In his fiction all of them confront the tension between the urgency to know and the difficulty of understanding.

His novels were never overtly political, but they dealt with many of the themes that have occupied Spanish society since the fall of the country's fascist regime in the 1970s: betrayal, memory, moral ambivalence and the unexpected weight of the past.

In "A Heart So White," for example, the characters Juan and his wife, Luisa, explore his father's hidden past, including his several failed marriages. "Los Enamoramientos" (2011; published in English in 2013 as "The Infatuations") follows a woman drawn into a murder mystery.

Often, Mr. Marías rendered such themes through plots drawn from genre fiction, especially spy thrillers and murder mysteries. His three-part novel "Tu Rostro Mañana" (2002-2007; published in English between 2005 and 2009 as "Your Face Tomorrow") follows a Spanish translator who is recruited by British intelligence.

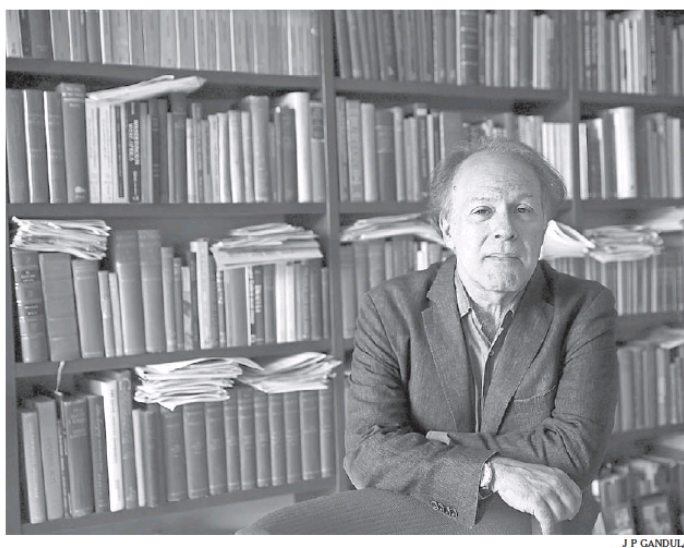
"Telling is almost always done as a gift," Mr. Marías writes in the book's first volume, "even when the story contains and injects some poison, it is also a bond, a granting of trust, and rare is the trust or confidence that is not sooner or later betrayed."

Though he was a staunch opponent of Francisco Franco, the dictator who led Spain between 1939 until his death in 1975, Mr. Marías went against the instincts of many of his fellow liberals by remaining skeptical, even critical, of the public urge to dwell on the memory of the fascist era.

"Some things are so evil that it's enough that they simply happened," he told a reporter with *The New York Times Magazine* in 2019. "They don't need to be given a second existence by being retold."

Then, reverting to his familiar ambivalence, he said, "That's what I think on some days, anyway," adding, "Other days I think the contrary."

Javier Marías Franco was born on Sept. 20, 1951, in Madrid, the son of Julián Marías, a philosopher, and Dolores Franco, a writer unrelated to the country's ruling dictator. In fact, his father, a follower of the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, had opposed Franco during the Spanish Civil War and was nearly executed afterward.



Javier Marías in 2015. His books sold millions of copies and were translated into 46 languages.

He received a last-minute reprieve but was forbidden to teach.

When Javier was a few months old, the family moved to Massachusetts, where his father had a visiting professorship at Wellesley College. Another temporary posi-

tion a few years later took them to New Haven, Conn., where his father taught at Yale.

The Marías household was liberal and intellectual, and Javier devoured books, particularly tales of adventure by Joseph Conrad and Robert Louis Stevenson. When he was 17 he ran away to Paris to spend a summer with his uncle Jesús Franco, a B-movie di-

rector ("Vampyros Lesbos"; "Virgin Among the Living Dead") and occasional pornographer whom Mr. Marías later called "something like the Spanish Ed Wood."

Javier translated scripts for his uncle, watched dozens of movies at a nearby theater and wrote his first novel, "Los Dominios del Lobo" ("Dominions of the Wolf"), published in 1971, when he was just 20 years old.

He returned to Spain to study at the Complutense University of Madrid, graduating with a degree in philosophy and literary sciences in 1973. He wrote another novel, then spent the next several years as a translator, taking on not just novels but poetry, too, including volumes by Wallace Stevens, William Butler Yeats and John Ashbery.

Mr. Marías's career as a translator culminated when, from 1983 to 1985, he lectured at Oxford University on the theory of translation. His time at Oxford left him with a slightly archaic, even fusty basket

of Englishisms and the makings of a plot for one of his most commercially successful novels, a campus satire called "All Souls" (1992).

After Oxford, Mr. Marías returned to Madrid, and aside from a very rare excursion as a visiting professor, he more or less stayed there, living in a dusty, book-filled apartment on one of the city's oldest squares.

He is survived by his wife, the editor Carme Lopez Mercader, and his brothers Fernando, an art historian; Miguel, a film critic and economist; and Alvaro, a musician.

By the turn of the century Mr. Marías had become the undisputed leading literary figure in Spain, and that was before the triumph of "Your Face Tomorrow," an epic that critics compared to Proust's "In Search of Lost Time" or Joyce's "Ulysses."

He wore his fame lightly, and joked that such comparisons said less about his talents than they did about a general decline in literary achievement. When "The Infatuations" won the state-run National Novel Prize, one of Spain's highest literary awards, he rejected the \$20,000 in prize money, saying he did not want to be indebted to a government of any kind.

He did maintain one such relationship, though: In 1997 he became king of Redonda, an uninhabited island in the Caribbean. The fictional Kingdom of Redonda is something of a running in-joke among European artists, who occupy the throne and make up most of its peerage. After his predecessor, the author Jon Wynne-Tyson, abdicated in his favor, Mr. Marías took the royal name Xavier I.

Like most modern monarchs, his role was largely ceremonial, his primary duty being to dispense noble titles to other artistic worthies — he named the director Pedro Almodóvar the Duke of Trémula and Mr. Ashbery the Duke of Convexo.

As of press time, a successor to King Xavier I had not been named, though several pretenders claim the throne as theirs.

## A perennial Nobel candidate who was venerated in Spain.

ment to quality, environmental protection, health and safety, and reduction of assured supply of new products, and outstanding customer service. He was instrumental in moving the company to adopt a vastly expanded corporate-wide focus on quality. He guided his organization through two major acquisitions and strategic thinking, and was a model to every Pfizer leader for his deep understanding of manufacturing issues and his outreach to all colleagues inside his organization. Not only was John valued for his leadership, dedication and strategic thinking, he was also deeply respected by his colleagues for his integrity, work ethic, and fairness. His team initiated group get-togethers with him long after his retirement, in celebration of their strongly felt camaraderie. John was a true leader. When John's father fell on hard times, the family relocated from New Jersey to an unincorporated town in Northfield, Mass., where the local school was small and poorly resourced. In 1952, John was granted a scholarship to enter Mount Hermon School for Boys in Northfield, Mass., now known as Northfield Mount Hermon School. This was a turning point in John's life that he frequently recounted. It created in him a lifelong respect for the power and influence of education. At Mount Hermon, he grew and thrived, becoming valedictorian of his class. He remained dedicated to Mount Hermon, later serving on its Board of Trustees from 2010-2020 and as a Trustee until his death.

John was a member of the 1960 graduate of Yale College. John majored in Electrical Engineering, was a resident of Berkeley College and a member of the Political Union. He was also a member of Berzelius, a secret society of the time, but ultimately his gift for persuasiveness prevailed. He was Chairman of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation (Monticello). In 2004, Tom's speedy negotiation and equity facilitated the purchase of the Jefferson Laboratory adjacent to Monticello, and permanently spared this important vista from future development. Tom was a founding donor in the effort to preserve and digitize the retirement papers of Thomas Jefferson. Tom was a member of the National Gallery of Art Trustees Council and had a keen eye for collecting. He was loaned The Saunders Collection, an exceptional group of European Old Mas-

er paintings, to the world's most prominent museums. Tom's curiosity was insatiable. From the infinite company to the infinitesimal double helix, he loved learning about everything. Whether he was talking to Margaret Thatcher or a stranger on the street, Tom had a gift for connecting with people. He was a Renaissance man, a passionate runner, cyclist, sailor, hiker, tennis player, traveler, art collector, self-taught ornithologist, and with dinner companion. Life with Tom was never dull. He was devoted to and fiercely loved his family. He survived by his wife and perfect life partner of 61 years, Jordan Saunders of Palm Beach, Fla., his daughter Mariah Colvert Claud Saunders Moore and son-in-law George Braffitt Moore of New York and their three children: Rebecca Carter Saunders Moore, George Saunders Van Rensselaer Moore and Mary Jordan Saunders Moore. Tom is also survived by his son Thomas A. Saunders IV and grandson Thomas A. Saunders III. Tom's life was a testament to his generosity, and his life will be planned for a date. The family asks that donations in his name be made to the Westchester Community College Foundation, 214-606-8571.

reel won New York Magazine writing contests. She was primarily celebrated, however, as a beloved teacher's aide in the Somers, N.Y., public schools for more than 20 years. Bev volunteered her own generosity. She served as a Trustee of the Katonah Museum, in Katonah, N.Y., and a Board Member of the SUNY Westchester Community College Foundation, in Valhalla, N.Y. She was devoted to improving educational opportunities for older women. Bev was no shrinking violet. She spoke her mind confidently. She lived with resolve and an inimitable style. Above all, Bev had a preternatural gift for making acquaintances, and sustaining lifelong friendships. She loved, and was loved by, an extraordinary number of people. Her radiance will be missed. She is survived by her sister, Janice White; her daughter, Andrea G. S. Gordon (Jim Gordon); her son, Sharon Shapiro (Sharon L. Morrison); her granddaughters, Cole S. Shapiro and Lauren S. Shapiro; her nephew, Tom ask and Edw W. Morey; and her nephew, David K. White. The age of 16. Her generosity, and Virginian charm will echo for generations in the memories of all who knew her. Godspeed Tom Saunders.

SONN—Lew, passed away on September 10, 2022. Lew was the beloved father of Felicia Sonn Boskin (Michael) and James Sonn (Meghan). Lew is survived by his wife, Yvonne; his children, Liam, Sabrina, Gabrielle, Alvida, and Michael. Dear husband of the late Margot and the late Ruth, and loved one of Ruth. Lew grew up in Waechtersbach, Germany and escaped Hitler in 1938 at the age of 16. He served in the U.S. Army as a Paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Pathfinders Unit, fought at the Battle of Iwo Jima, and was awarded a Bronze Star for exemplary service. After the war he built a career on Wall Street. Lew was also a volunteer in the town of Putnam Valley, N.Y. He was an avid golfer, tennis player, New York Times crossword puzzle enthusiast, and supporter of many civic causes, but above all he enjoyed spending time with his wife and family. He will be greatly missed.

WERTHEIMER—Joy W., passed away on September 10, 2022. Joy was the beloved wife of Lois and adored father of Jeanne Bennett, Sandra Wertheimer and Eileen Wertheimer. Joy was a real estate attorney who had his own practice. Wertheimer was a devoted father who grew up in Borough Park, graduated from Brooklyn College, and then became a naval officer during the Korean War. After the Navy, he went to Columbia Law School. Joy was an avid traveler, loved to read, and was a member of the first televised weekly variety show, "The Admiral Broadway Revue" in 1950. Joy was married to E. Shapiro. Her attention turned to family and raising their two boys, but she occasionally performed in summer stock and television commercials. The marriage ended in divorce. Bev was a widely curious, self-proclaimed learner. She read voraciously. When time allowed, she took courses and often focused on the history of the decorative arts (Hunter College, Columbia University, NYU, New York School of Interior Design). She ran an antique business during the 1950s. She had a knack for English phrasing and puns. She became a recorded lyricist and her hilarious dog-

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**Deaths**  
Affieri, June  
Bloch, Eric  
DeFuccio, MaryAnne  
DeWitt, Peter  
Driscoll, John  
Gluckman, Jack  
Hiat, Philip  
Kornacker, Marilyn  
Mitchell, John  
Saunders, Thomas

### ALFIERI—June.

June Rose Nigro Affieri, of New York City, died on September 10, 2022, at Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan, at age 94. Born to Anthony Nigro and Edith Capodanno on February 15, 1928, she graduated from Manhattanville College, Middlebury Language Schools (Italy), and Columbia University Teachers College. She taught in the pre-primary grades and tutored in the upper serving grades at Saint David's School for over 40 years and early on the founding faculty and later on the Alumni Parents Council, and leading the Parents Association as President. Her former husband, John B. Affieri, predeceased her in 2002. She is survived by her brother, Dr. Richard A. Nigro, of Southampton, NY; three sons, John, of New York City, Tony, of New York City, and William, of Wake Forest's Bowman Gray School of Medicine on a U.S. Navy scholarship, before Al-Affieri, Adrian Grant-Affieri, and William Grant-Affieri, and her daughters-in-law Rose Marie Affieri and Ellen Grant. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Edith and Dr. Anthony Nigro Memorial Fund at Saint David's School.

**DRISCOLL—Dr. John Manning Jr.,** peacefully at his home in Oradell, N.J., on September 9, 2022. He leaves a rich legacy of family, friends, and a lasting contribution to the medical community. He belonged to all of which serve as shining examples of fundamental medicine, boundless generosity, and abiding Catholic Christian faith. Born in Brooklyn, NY, to John and Margaret Driscoll, John grew up in Manhassee, NY, where he was a member of the first graduating class of St. Mary's High School, and would years later be an inaugural inductee into the school's Hall of Fame. John attended Hamilton College, where he was a member of the varsity lacrosse and basketball teams and several honor societies. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Wake Forest's Bowman Gray School of Medicine on a U.S. Navy scholarship, before attending Johns Hopkins University of Pittsburgh's Children's Hospital, where he met a fellow resident, Yvonne. The M.D. who would become his beloved wife of 58 years and mother of their six children. In 1966, the Navy sent John to Vietnam, while Yvonne completed her residency at Washington Children's as chief resident and then their two children under the age of two. John returned home from Vietnam in 1967 and was awarded the Bronze Star for overseeing the construction of a new hospital and providing health care to over 1,000 Vietnamese civilians who previously had none and resumed his civilian medical career. After the completion of his pediatric residency, John joined the faculty of the Columbia College of New York. He and the staff of Babies Hospital at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, where he was the Hospital's greatest source of professional pride was the Hospital's annual Alumni Day, where "graduates" give thanks to see the doctors and nurses who had cared for them. In addition to this annual celebration, there were several emergency surgery counters when John would meet the parents of a child he had cared for. Their gratitude is forever etched in his mind that the neonatal intensive care unit that John helped establish now bears his name. John was also a founding member of the Hospital's Ethical Committee at Babies Hospital (now the Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital) and was elected to the Medical Board of Presbyterian Hospital and following the merger of the Presbyterian Hospital and the New York Hospital, he served as the first President of the Medical

**BLOCH—Dr. Eric,** on September 10, 2022, of Voorhees, N.J. Beloved husband of the late Patricia Bloch. Dear father of Talia Bloch (Lorenz Wolfers) and Alexandra Bloch (Joseph Black). Relatives and friends are invited to a funeral service on September 14, 2022, beginning 10am to 12pm Memorial Chapel, Inc., 2001 Berlin Rd., Parsippany, NJ. Burial services will begin promptly at 10:30am. Contributions in his memory can be made to the Southern Poverty Law Center. www.splcenter.org.

**DeFuccio—MaryAnne (Kelly),** age 79 of Franklin Lakes, NJ passed away on September 9, 2022. She was preceded in death by her husband, Charles M. DeFuccio, and mother of Assemblywoman DeAnne C. DeFuccio who represented New Jersey in New Jersey and her husband Kevin Canavan and her cherished grandchildren Joseph Charles and Catherine Anne Canavan. The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Thursday, September 15, 2022, at Saint Aedan's Church, Jersey City, NJ. For additional information please go to www.mcloughlinfh.com

**DeWitt—Peter Wood,** died more than 40 years of Carnegie Hill, died in New York City on Tuesday, September 7, at the age of 69. Born in Granby, MA to William and Gloria DeWitt, he was a graduate of Phillips Academy, Andover and New York University in Pennsylvania, where he received a master's in architecture. He practiced architecture for his career also designed furniture. He was a partner at Beyer Blinder Belle before starting his own firm in 1992. Peter DeWitt Architects, which later became DeWitt Tishman Architects. The firm received several awards, including a 2005 Palladio Award. The firm's projects were profiled in a number of publications, including the New York Times, which credited the firm with helping to

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Board of the New York-Presbyterian Hospital. John served on the board of the building of the Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York, which opened in 1987 until 1995 and was the pre-eminent children's hospitals in the nation. In 2007, he stepped down after nearly forty years of service. The hundreds of physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals he trained and mentored over those four decades years carry on his legacy of compassionate, family-centered pediatric care. John was a member of the Executive Committee of the Perinatal Section of the American Academy of Pediatrics from 1987 until 1995 and was its Chair from 1993 to 1995. John served on the board of the Lucille Packard Foundation for Children's Health and the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University and was a fellow in the Division of Medical Ethics at Harvard Medical School. He was fortunate to receive many awards during his career, among them several Outstanding Teacher Awards and a Distinguished Service Award from the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Award for Humanism in Medicine. John was especially proud of the honorary degree bestowed on him by his alma mater, Hamilton College, in 2001. John is survived by his loving wife, Yvonne, his children, Anne (Robert St. Peter, M.D.), John (Ann Driscoll), Bill (Anne Margaret (Matthew Baltoy), Kevin (Katherine), Michael (Lauren), and sixteen grandchildren who knew him as "Grandy": Claire and William St. Peter; Harriet Driscoll; Meghan Grace; and Maeva Driscoll; Luke, Charles, and Matthew Baltoy; Declan, Mairead, and Seamus Driscoll; and Keelin, Eleanor, and Aidan. John was the oldest of four children and his brother Peter (Kathy, deceased) survives. John is preceded in death by his parents, John and Margaret; and his sisters, Mary (Edward, now living in Florida) and Sheila (Albert). John was a longtime parishioner of St. Joseph's Church of Oradell, N.J. Milford, where he served in a range of capacities, including basketball coach, parish council chair, and most recently as chair of the school board. He was also a Knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. John's warm smile, gentle manner, and his truly lived faith, which he shared with his children, grandchildren, and the entire family.

**HIAT—Rabbi Philip.** Beloved husband of Sylvia Hiat for 74 years, father of Susan Tisch, Merrill Tisch, and Jonathan Tisch. Born in Orange, N.J. on October 11, 1938. He was the son of Herbert and Elizabeth Hiat. When John's father fell on hard times, the family relocated from New Jersey to an unincorporated town in Northfield, Mass., where the local school was small and poorly resourced. In 1952, John was granted a scholarship to enter Mount Hermon School for Boys in Northfield, Mass., now known as Northfield Mount Hermon School. This was a turning point in John's life that he frequently recounted. It created in him a lifelong respect for the power and influence of education. At Mount Hermon, he grew and thrived, becoming valedictorian of his class. He remained dedicated to Mount Hermon, later serving on its Board of Trustees from 2010-2020 and as a Trustee until his death.

**HIAT—Philip.** UJA-Federation of New York mourns the passing of Rabbi Philip Hiat, Orthodox husband of Sylvia and beloved father-in-law of their friends Merrill and Jonathan Tisch. A community leader and unparalleled generosity, lift up countless lives. Rabbi Hiat's legacy lives on in his family's deep devotion to the Jewish community, their dedication to Chesed and tzedakah, and their unwavering commitment to social and humanitarian causes. We extend our deepest condolences to his loving wife, Yvonne; his children, Jerry (James), Herschel (Jill), and Susan Allen (Jeff); their grandchildren, and the entire family.

**KOMISAR—Marilyn, LCSW,** passed away on September 12, 2022 at the age of 73. Beloved mother of Marisa (Jonathan) and Vanessa. Loving grandmother of Maxwell and Joshua. She was a devoted and loving mother, beloved by her children and grand children and passionate about her career as a psychoanalyst. She touched the lives of many. She will be missed. She is survived by her daughter, Jennifer, and her great love of ballet and theater, and the joy it brought her, and their six children, and her grandchildren. John led the operation of 31 plants and 36 logistics centers in 37 countries with approximately 35,000 employees. He built a world class globally integrated supply organization. Through John's leadership, PGM became a strategic asset to Pfizer with its commit-

**GLUCKMAN—Jack L., MD.** Jack L. Gluckman, MD. Most recently worked at St. Vincent's Hospital. Devoted father of Nick (Kira), Kate (Brad), Simon (Emily), Jonathan (Chelsea), and Jennifer (Vitaly) and Eddie (Olivia). Adored and adoring grandfather of Oliver, Stephen, Bryce, Shlova, Jack, Simon, Charlotte, Olivia, Sammy, Alice, Jacob, Celeste and Alexan-

**MITCHELL—John Webster.** 1938-2022. John Webster Mitchell, age 83, the former President of Pfizer Global Manufacturing, passed away peacefully on September 3, 2022. The organization that John led so ably, Pfizer Global Manufacturing (PGM), was formed in 1999 and was responsible for worldwide manufacturing operations for all of Pfizer's human health care, consumer healthcare and animal health products. John led the operation of 31 plants and 36 logistics centers in 37 countries with approximately 35,000 employees. He built a world class globally integrated supply organization. Through John's leadership, PGM became a strategic asset to Pfizer with its commit-

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**SAUNDERS—Thomas A., III.** Tom made transformative contributions to the University of Virginia across the College of Arts and Sciences, Jordan Business School, and the Jefferson School. Tom served as Chairman of Darden and donated the lead gift for Saunders Hall, the main building of Darden's campus. While serving on the University's Board of Visitors, Tom spearheaded the effort to move the management of the endowment away from the Commonwealth of Virginia's political appointees and funding restrictions by creating and serving as board member of the independent University of Virginia Investment Management Company (UVIMCO). Tom's push for "UVIMCO" was hugely unpopular at the time, but ultimately his gift for persuasiveness prevailed. He was Chairman of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation (Monticello). In 2004, Tom's speedy negotiation and equity facilitated the purchase of the Jefferson Laboratory adjacent to Monticello, and permanently spared this important vista from future development. Tom was a founding donor in the effort to preserve and digitize the retirement papers of Thomas Jefferson. Tom was a member of the National Gallery of Art Trustees Council and had a keen eye for collecting. He was loaned The Saunders Collection, an exceptional group of European Old Mas-

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