

# VANITY FAIR

SCANDAL

## A Vast Right-Wing Hypocrisy

Richard Mellon Scaife, billionaire bankroller of conservative crusades, spent heavily to expose Bill Clinton's "Troopergate" misbehavior. **Now Scaife's divorce from his second wife, Ritchie, is providing another unsavory saga—adultery! addiction! assault! dognapping!?!—as both parties let loose to *V.F.***

by MICHAEL JOSEPH GROSS February 2008

Over many years, in the five households the couple shared, the wife hired scores of servants to help take care of her rich husband. Then, in 2005, she hired someone to tail him. Margaret Ritchie Rhea Battle Scaife (whose friends call her Ritchie) suspected Richard Mellon Scaife (whose friends call him Dick) of committing adultery, so she enlisted the services of an investigator. It was a private act that would have very public consequences. Richard Mellon Scaife is the best-known living member of Pittsburgh's storied Mellon clan, whose eponymous bank made the family a 19th-century fortune, which grew steadily with diversified investments, including major coal, steel, and real-estate interests, and Gulf Oil Corporation. Scaife, who owns several newspapers, is a major backer of conservative causes; his political donations fueled the rise of the New Right and its moral crusade against Bill Clinton, making Scaife the central figure in Hillary Clinton's "vast right-wing conspiracy." In the 1990s, his gift of \$1.8 million to *The American Spectator* funded investigations into Whitewater and Bill Clinton's personal life, including David Brock's notorious "Troopergate" exposé, which led to Paula Jones's sexual-harassment suit against the president.



Ritchie and Richard Mellon Scaife's 2005 Christmas card. Even as the holiday greetings went out, a private detective was confirming Ritchie's suspicions.

**In December of 2005, the private detective proved Ritchie's fears to have been well founded: he took pictures showing the reclusive 75-year-old billionaire with a woman named Tammy Vasco, a tall, blonde 43-year-old whose criminal history includes two arrests for prostitution. The pair was photographed at Doug's Motel, a roadside establishment near Pittsburgh, where rooms rent for \$49 a night, or \$31 for three hours.**

Dick and Ritchie's relationship, which began when they were married to other people, was always unconventional. During their decade-long courtship, Dick bought Ritchie a house in Pittsburgh's wealthy Shadyside neighborhood, a few blocks from his own—a domestic arrangement that didn't change when they were married, in 1991. Yet they moved easily back and forth between the homes until, the week after Ritchie discovered Dick's betrayal, a servant refused to let Ritchie enter her husband's Georgian mansion—and Ritchie saw Vasco's Jeep parked in the garage. Ritchie demanded to be let in, banging on windows and doors. Dick called the police, who told Ritchie she was trespassing and had to leave.

She got in her car, drove to a neighbor's driveway, then crept back to Dick's dining-room window (inside, the table was set with candelabras for a "romantic dinner"), hoping to document her husband's dalliance by using the camera on her cell phone. But when she set off the security lights in the yard, the police handcuffed her and charged her with "defiant trespass." The 60-year-old socialite spent that night—three days before Christmas—in

a holding cell at the Allegheny County Jail, where her fellow prisoners passed the time by petting the fur collar of her coat.

Ritchie was released the next morning, and the defiant-trespass charge was eventually dismissed. But as her lawyer announced several months later in a divorce filing, “The marriage was over!”

Some details of the Scaifes’ split were reported in local newspapers (the first account appeared in Richard Scaife’s own paper the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*), but the legal filings were sealed by the court. Then, last August, owing to an apparent clerical error, the filings were posted on a court Web page. Poring over them, Dennis Roddy, of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*—the city’s oldest newspaper, and the liberal rival to Scaife’s conservative *Tribune-Review*—disclosed previously unknown financial details about Richard Scaife’s \$1.4 billion fortune and about Ritchie’s jaw-dropping, court-ordered interim support payments of \$725,000 a month. (This stream of income, Scaife’s lawyers noted, “produces an amount so large that just the income from it, invested at 5%, is greater each year than the salary of the President of the United States.” Unconfirmed reports suggest that Ritchie’s interim monthly payments have since increased, to more than \$1 million.) **The *Post-Gazette* posted the court documents on its own Web site; locals took rooting interest in the story’s many subplots (alleged hair-pulling fights with the help, dognapping, and battles royal over a 94-page itemized list of art and *objets*, from a million-dollar Magritte to an \$1,800 set of asparagus tongs), which almost make one pray for Aaron Spelling’s resurrection from the dead.**

What, exactly, is at stake in the war of Scaife versus Scaife? Money, to be sure. Astonishingly, the Scaifes were married without a pre-nuptial agreement, so Pennsylvania statutes automatically entitle Ritchie to 40 percent of Dick’s net monthly income, but only until the divorce is final. Ritchie won’t have any legal claim on the core of Dick’s inherited wealth—but she is entitled to claim part of the appreciation in value of most of the assets he held during their marriage. According to Pennsylvania law, “marital misconduct” does not affect the equitable division of property in a divorce. Instead, settlements are determined by factors such as length of marriage, income disparity between spouses, employability, and “liabilities and needs of each of the parties.” Ritchie, who spent the better part of 14 years running Dick’s households, has a comparatively minuscule income of her own (and, as a 60-year-old, has less than stellar employment prospects), which might incline a judge to give her a hefty settlement. State guidelines for distribution of assets in a divorce are so broad, though, as to make it impossible to predict such decisions. Albert Momjian, a leading Philadelphia divorce lawyer, says that out-of-court settlements are usually preferable where fortunes are in play. In a case like Dick and Ritchie’s, he says, “so much depends on the reasonableness of the parties.”

Reputations are also at stake, and Ritchie, Dick, and their respective defenders are squaring off with rival narratives. In the first interviews he has given in eight years, Richard Scaife spoke with *Vanity Fair* about the divorce saga, depicting his estranged wife as conniving, greedy, and abusive. Through one of her attorneys, William Pietragallo II, Ritchie Scaife at first declined to be interviewed. **On her behalf the lawyer told a simple story of “a woman scorned,” a “very supportive and caring” wife who saved a husband from his “demons,” only to be thrown over for a harlot.**

Later, Ritchie changed her mind and agreed to what turned out to be a long and highly animated interview. Seated between Pietragallo and another of her attorneys, Eddie Hayes (the model for the scrappy defense lawyer in Tom Wolfe’s *The Bonfire of the Vanities*), Ritchie described a marriage that swung between emotional extremes, from the days when “I always called him ‘my snuggle bunny’ ... and he called me his ‘precious’” to the public embarrassments brought on by their breakup, which she compares to “the tortures of the damned.”

The estranged couple and their intimates aren’t the only ones with an interest in this divorce. **Richard Mellon Scaife is the man who funded the movement that made “family values” a watchword of the right and badly**

damaged the Clinton presidency. Many would now dearly love to hang him in the gallery of hypocrites whose Dickensian comeuppance exposes the moral bankruptcy of the culture wars.

## The Angora Sweater

Richard Mellon Scaife is an uncommonly boyish 75-year-old, with riveting pale-blue eyes and a sharp, lopsided grin that brings to mind Jack Nicholson's wily poise and Paul Lynde's smirking bitterness. An enthusiastic conversationalist, he comes across as more intuitive than intellectual, and he can be candid about his own blind spots. Asked whether a book has ever changed his life, he thinks a moment, shrugs, and, with a disarming smile, answers, "I guess the quick answer to that question is 'No!'"

Two hours later, in the course of the same interview, without a hint of guile or self-awareness, he abruptly names John O'Hara as his favorite writer, and *Appointment in Samarra* as his favorite book. *Appointment in Samarra* is the story of a rich young man who yields to the temptation of his most self-sabotaging urges—but whose private fear of judgment and retribution for his rashness drives him to a self-destruction that neither he nor anyone who knows him ever fully understands. (And the rich young man is from Pennsylvania.)

Scaife's charm has an odd sweetness to it (he recalls a period of unhappiness when his favorite TV show, *The Simpsons*, began running at the same time as Lou Dobbs, who took precedence), but he also takes petty swipes (his favorite characters on *The Simpsons*, he says, are Marge's cynical and trashy sisters, Patty and Selma, "because they remind me of Ritchie"). A curvature of the spine gives Scaife a shuffling gait, and since undergoing cochlear-implant surgery he has worn two bulky, high-tech hearing aids. But he remains a courtly presence in bespoke suits and with impeccably groomed snow-white hair.

Dick and his sister, Cordelia, spent most of their formative years in the gilded cage of Penguin Court, a family estate in Ligonier that was designed by an architect better known for building prisons. The gloom of the mansion was compounded by the family's isolation from Pittsburgh's larger Mellon clan: Sarah Mellon's decision to marry Alan Scaife, the scion of a Pittsburgh steel family, was never fully embraced by the Mellons. Her father, Richard Beatty Mellon, is said to have quietly answered "No" when Alan asked for Sarah's hand, and her brother, Richard King Mellon, the man who led Pittsburgh's renaissance in the 1940s, treated Alan with disdain, and seems never to have been close to Dick.

Alan joined the O.S.S., the precursor of the C.I.A., when Dick was young, and returned from his travels with gifts for the boy: newspapers from around the world, which Dick organized on racks of wooden poles in the family library. At the age of nine Dick was severely injured when his horse, Newsgirl, fell on him, and he spent his fourth-grade year in bed, reading newspapers. Another childhood enthusiasm was politics: he told the Mellon-family biographer, Burton Hersh, that, when the family lived in Washington, D.C., for a while, "I made it a kind of hobby to meet as many senators and congressmen as I could."

Dick caught what he calls "the Irish disease" of alcoholism early. (Both his mother and his sister also had drinking problems.) After it got him kicked out of Yale, he returned, flunked out, spent six months pumping gas, and eventually took his degree from the University of Pittsburgh. In 1956 he married Frances Gilmore, and they had two children (David, 41, now a Pittsburgh Porsche dealer, and Jennie, 44, who lives in Palm Beach). But he kept drinking, and his name and fortune alone were not enough to win Pittsburgh's respect. Kicked off the board of the Carnegie Museum of Art, he patronized small regional museums such as the Brandywine, in Chadds Ford. Marginalized within the family banking and oil businesses, Dick started buying small newspapers, and made one of them, the *Tribune-Review*, in Greensburg, into a conservative alternative to Pittsburgh's *Post-Gazette*.

With Franny, as his first wife is known, Dick became involved in Republican politics during Barry Goldwater's

1964 presidential campaign. Later disillusioned by Watergate (after he'd given more than \$1 million to Richard Nixon's 1972 campaign), he focused his donations on conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation (an incubator of Reagan's foreign policy, supply-side economics, and Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America") and later the Federalist Society (a legal network formed to combat what its members see as a liberal bias in elite law schools and the legal establishment). The aim was to provide intellectual infrastructure and train policymakers for the contemporary conservative movement.

Around the time that these investments started bearing fruit, he met Ritchie Battle, the charming, gorgeous southern wife of a young lawyer named Turner Westray Battle II, at a 1979 Pittsburgh dinner party for Jack Heinz II, the father of the late senator John Heinz.

Ritchie's friends, and even many of her enemies, describe her as fiery, fun, brash, and resourceful—comparisons to Scarlett O'Hara are common. In high school, the young beauty and her boyfriend were voted "Most Attractive Couple" by her senior class; she remains exceptionally alluring today, dressed for an interview in a green cashmere turtleneck and plaid Oscar de la Renta suit, with brown suede Manolo Blahniks. Her manner, like her dress, embraces the earthy and the immaculate. Her face is elegant but elastic, often stretching into imitations of the people she talks about. Her anecdotes are peppered with cinematic allusions. "She's Mrs. Danvers," Ritchie says of a hyper-officious servant; "Think of 'Rosebud,'" she explains after suggesting that Dick sold most of his parents' furniture from Penguin Court—"but kept all the maple furniture that was the help's." (Dick says he kept a lot of his parents' furniture.) To her lawyers' consternation, she seems to take pleasure in speaking about the forbidden. "It's a man's world, darling," she purrs, after being chastised by one attorney for off-the-record remarks about jewelry and divorce law.

Ritchie's father was a Georgetown, South Carolina, bank examiner who died of a heart attack during a family day at the beach, when Ritchie was 10 years old. After his death, Ritchie's mother worked as a secretary to support her three children; she committed suicide when Ritchie was 21. In high school, Ritchie worked at a department store selling Avon products. Later she studied at Queens University of Charlotte, where she met and married Battle, then a Davidson undergraduate. (Their son, Turner Westray Battle III, 33, is a navy lieutenant who has twice been deployed to the Persian Gulf.)

Ritchie's dark doe eyes flit among a disparate swarm of emotions when she describes her "terrible" first marriage and the "torrid love affair" with Dick that swept her out of it. Some in Pittsburgh say that Ritchie was socially ambitious and that the dinner party was a setup. But the party's hostess, Pamela Bryan, the whispery-voiced ex-wife of Houston department-store magnate Bob Sakowitz, says her intentions were innocent. There were too many men coming to the party, and too few women, "and it was beginning to look like a stag dinner. So I remember speaking to Westray and saying, you know, 'Would it be all right ... ?' So I put her next to Dick."

The place card, Ritchie remembers, came with a warning from the hostess: "I've got a job for you. I know that if *you* sit next to him, he won't leave." Leaning forward, as if confiding, Ritchie explains, "I think he had a reputation of leaving dinner parties if he was bored." A beat. "Well!" she sighs. "I didn't get rid of him for many years after that." The tone has both rue and triumph in it, as does the slender, red-lipped smile with which she underlines such interjections.

Ritchie says Dick started pursuing her immediately. Dick himself says that he didn't see Ritchie again for another six months. **Then one day she came to his office, soliciting for a charity; he couldn't take his eyes off her white angora sweater. That afternoon, he adds with a wink, "we did what comes naturally."**

**"Never owned an angora sweater," Ritchie protests, aghast and lilting. "I'm allergic to things like that!"**

itchie and Westray were divorced in 1981. Her alimony and child support, combined, amounted to a scant

**R**\$1,200 a month. She didn't have to worry. Dick bought Ritchie a condominium, and then the house, and their affair grew increasingly public. They started socializing as a couple when he took her to Alcoa heir Alfred Hunt's Christmas party in 1984, and then to a reception for the Hoover Institution at the White House. "He was forcing the point with Franny," Bryan explains.

By then, he had been forcing it for a while. The first time Dick's son, David, laid eyes on Ritchie was in 1982, when, after a night out, he says, Dick tried to drop her off but she refused to get out of his car. Drunk, he drove her home, where 16-year-old David, from inside the house, heard what he remembers as "yelling and screaming and all sorts of noise, and Dad came to the door and said, 'Get your mother.' I saw this woman, lying on the ground. I couldn't even decipher what she was saying. My mother came down. She had always sort of suspected that something was going on, but this was the first time that she had really confronted this person." David goes on: "I had always seen my mother act ladylike," but that night, David says, Franny walked out of the house, "kicked her, and called her a guttersnipe."

When asked about the incident, Ritchie says it "never happened." Two days later, she calls from one of her lawyers' offices in Pittsburgh. She wants to say that, in 1981, she did go to the door of Dick's house on a day when Dick wasn't home, to speak with Franny face-to-face: "I said, 'If I have to know about you, you have to know about me.' I later learned that her daughter was at the top of the stairs. My intention was never, ever—and I had had too much to drink—my intention was never to hurt anybody."

David says that Ritchie soon won him over: "My grades were so bad at school at that point, I just thought, Well, instead of getting yelled at," siding with Dick against Franny could be "a new chapter to our friendship. All of a sudden, he and I were drinking buddies." When Dick and Ritchie visited him at Deerfield Academy, David claims, Ritchie brought pot for them to smoke together, and his father bought him alcohol.

"To take marijuana to a child? To a prep school?," Ritchie marvels, when asked about the story. "Never," she declares, her petite hands holding one another in her lap. "And how *dare* anyone even make a comment like that?"

Dick, who regretfully confirms the details of his son's story, says that he did not inhale.

Pre-nup? What Pre-nup?

Franny filed for divorce in 1985, but a final settlement (sealed by the court but reliably rumored to be about \$35 million) was not reached until 1991. Dick and Ritchie's relationship remained outrageously volatile; Ritchie once kicked Dick in the crotch, according to a friend, and his testicles swelled to such a size that he had to be taken to the emergency room. Asked about the incident, Dick chuckles and says, almost plaintively, "I'd forgotten." Ritchie issues another denial: "I don't remember ever kicking him!"

In 1987, according to Dick, the two went to the Betty Ford Center together. He calls his estranged wife "a total pill popper," who had to be taken to "the loony bin" after a suicide attempt.

Wearily, deliberately, Ritchie says the only reason she went to Betty Ford was to support Dick in the "family program." Has she ever had any kind of substance-abuse problem? "Never," she says, four times.

Dick and Ritchie's wedding, planned on two days' notice, took place the same week that Dick's divorce was finalized. His lawyer Yale Gutnick prepared a pre-nuptial agreement, which Scaife refused to sign. "I was a fool!" Scaife says. "I begged him," Gutnick adds, explaining that Ritchie threatened to leave Dick if there was a pre-nup.



Ritchie laughs out loud at Gutnick's suggestion that she threatened to call off the marriage over this issue. She says she actually asked for a pre-nup, after witnessing the bitterness of his split with Franny. "I mean, you think I'm going to kick them both in the you-know-what to make him marry me? It wasn't very difficult," she scoffs. "He *wanted* to marry me."

And again, a second later, bemused, on velvet: "It wasn't difficult, darling."

For the exchange of vows, on the old Penguin Court property (Dick had had the gloomy mansion torn down after his mother died, in 1965), Ritchie wore a short white dress. For the reception, at Ligonier's Rolling Rock Club, the new wife surprised her husband, a fireworks aficionado, by hiring Zambelli, which is responsible for the July Fourth shows on the Mall in Washington, to create a blazing sign on the lawn that proclaimed, in sparkling letters, RITCHIE LOVES DICK. Even today, a certain set of Pittsburgh women, including wives of some of the country's most brass-knuckled industrialists, speak of Ritchie's flaming double entendre as among the most shocking moments of their lives.

It was not a double entendre, Ritchie says, with tears in her eyes: "My mind doesn't work that way. Please. His name is Dick. His name is Dick, and I thought of the human being. And how evil of them, because I was saying I loved my husband."

Many say marriage to Ritchie mellowed Dick. They say that Ritchie was instrumental in reconciling Dick with his sister, though Dick denies this. (Cordelia did not speak to him for more than 25 years after the death of her husband—ruled a suicide—on the day he was indicted for tax fraud, just after a blowup in his friendship with Dick, according to news reports.) They also say that she encouraged his sobriety, though in 1994 he started drinking again. By his own account, Dick has been sober since 2003.

"Ritchie was always ironical about her position" as Dick's consort-cum-wife, according to Ed Harrell, a close friend of the couple's and the former president of Dick's publishing company, Tribune-Review. Playing off her husband's fabled middle name, Ritchie carried a jeweled Judith Leiber bag in the shape of a melon. She teasingly begged Dick for gifts, according to a friend, calling him "the Prince of Pittsburgh" and pleading, "Daddy, you're so rich, you can afford it. Daddy, you could buy me anything." She once told the friend that she was planning to build an extra guest room for her son at the Scaife house on Nantucket; when the friend asked, "What will Dick think?," she says, Ritchie answered, "He'll never notice"—and he apparently didn't.

In happy moments, their hedonism could attain a Zen-like plane: when Ritchie fell in love with a 2,800-square-foot Sol LeWitt mural on exhibit at the Carnegie Museum of Art, a friend overheard him tell her, "It's yours," and Dick in fact bought the painting (as a gift to the museum) in her honor.

Another of Dick's gentler interludes, in Ritchie's account, sounds a bit like the last reel of *Citizen Kane*. The couple lived at the Hotel Bel-Air while Dick recovered from ear surgery, and at his insistence they watched, again and again, *How Green Was My Valley*, John Ford's melodrama, in which a coal-mining family dreams of a better life in a fast-changing world that defeats their traditional ideals. During that time, Ritchie says, her voice distant and soft, Dick also "liked to watch trolley videos ... just trolleys ... a trolley car, going down the road, for hours."

He could also be cruel. Dick lost most of his hearing in the late 1990s, and when Ritchie suggested that they learn sign language together, one friend says, "he told her, 'I'll give you sign language'"—and raised his middle finger. ("No, that didn't happen," Dick says, laughing, "but I wish it did.")

Yet Ritchie, by many accounts, has the more unpredictable temper. Several associates and friends of the Scaifes shudder when they speak of "Ritchie moments." These are high-decibel events—such as the afternoon on

Nantucket when she allegedly warned the staff that she would walk into the ocean if a misplaced set of winter slipcovers for the summer furniture wasn't located *right now*.

"I think this is just the stupidest thing I've ever heard," Ritchie says. "Please. Do I look like somebody who'd walk into the ocean over curtains? *Please*."

Jewelry, Dick says, reliably restored her equilibrium. After an ultimatum delivered in the kitchen of their Pebble Beach estate, he bought her a ring from Borsheim's, Warren Buffett's Omaha jewelry store—a \$600,000, 10-carat diamond that, Scaife recalls, was delivered to his office "by a very nice lady from Rhodesia, very pretty, with two armed guards."

"It was a 55th-birthday present!" Ritchie cries, and produces a handwritten love note from Dick that she says accompanied the gift.

Dick and Ritchie grew increasingly isolated, and, Dick says, Ritchie intentionally drove a wedge between him and his son. A few months after David Scaife married Sara Deutsch, Dick and Ritchie visited them to look at wedding pictures and presents. The couple say Ritchie disapproved of them from the start. On this day, Sara says, Ritchie was drunk and dropped all pretense of discretion when they found themselves alone. "It was literally like I'm showing her, like, a china pattern or something, and then she just turned on me with 'And, by the way, you're a nobody from nowhere,' berating me and yelling at me."

After Dick and Ritchie separated, Sara says, Dick told her that "Ritchie would take photographs of you out of a newspaper or a magazine, and she would stick pins in them.' He said, 'It was so disturbing, it was so horrible.'" Sara adds, "You want to say to him, 'But, Dick, did you do anything at the time?'"

Ritchie denies every detail of this story. There was an altercation, she admits, but she says it was Sara who "went berserk."

And did she stick those pins in the pictures?

"No, Dick did."

Her lawyer interrupts: "—Ehh—"

"It's true!," Ritchie says.

Pietragallo: "Stop. Stop."

Sara's story of their altercation sounds much like the judgment an element of Pittsburgh society passed on Ritchie when she married Dick. During the marriage, they mostly kept their opinions to themselves as Ritchie took her place on the boards of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Opera, and Parks Conservancy (whose director of development calls her "a God's blessing" to the group, for which she helped launch a version of the New York Central Park Conservancy's traditional Hat Luncheon). Eventually she was even admitted to the holy of holies, the Carnegie Museum of Art Women's Committee.

Ritchie says that she was aware of some resistance to her arrival on the scene "in the beginning. But once I was Mrs. Scaife, listen, they were falling all over me."

Sipping a martini at four p.m., the decorator Louis Talotta, who worked for the Scaifes during Dick's first marriage, says that when he met Ritchie "I think she cut her own hair. She didn't have art. She didn't have anything. She was just a dumb southern girl." From the tip of his Marlboro, an ash falls toward the pale

upholstery of his 18th-century Jacob chair. “She couldn’t even *set a table*.”

(At this, Ritchie laughs mirthlessly. Setting a table is “one thing a southern girl knows how to do, if she’s lived with her grandmother, and I don’t care how little money you had in the South, you had your silver. I never saw stainless steel till I moved to Pittsburgh with all those rich folks.”)

And there are ladies in bouclé (asking not to be named, because they’d “hate to hurt anybody”) eager to tell their story of how Ritchie never wanted anything but Dick’s money and his name. Pursing their lips, they say, one after another, that “*Do you know who I am?*” was Ritchie’s signature line.

(Ritchie, bewildered: “Never. Never. If anything, I said, ‘Call me Ritchie,’ because that’s the name I know I’ll always have.”)

Still, for all the stories of Ritchie’s behavior, it seems impossible to separate most of the moral assessments by detractors from their quiet rage over this outsider, this nobody from nowhere, having dared to dream that she could walk among them.

## Battle over Beauregard

This same tone, transposed a few octaves bassward, colors William Pietragallo’s voice when, in a conference room in a Pittsburgh skyscraper—coincidentally, directly beneath Richard Mellon Scaife’s office—the lawyer asks, “Have you seen Miss Vasco?,” and, with one eyebrow raised, produces a photocopied enlargement of Tammy Vasco’s driver’s-license photograph, thumping his index finger on the page. In Pietragallo’s account of the marriage, there were no troubles until Dick met Tammy—whose purported arrest history he rattles off in detail (and lards with defensive provisos: “I don’t know this.... I’m not telling you this as a fact”). Quite the contrary. Pietragallo claims that, except for the times when Ritchie nursed Dick back to health from alcoholism (“She slept on the hospital floor, she slept on a chair”), their life was an exercise of shared passions for antiques and travel. “Flowers were a really important part of their life together,” Pietragallo says. He describes Ritchie as “a sensible, grounded individual” who in her life with Dick was “a giver, a non-taker.”

Precisely how Dick became involved with Tammy remains something of a mystery. This was the only personal question that Scaife’s lawyer would not let him answer. Certainly since Ritchie discovered Dick’s relationship with Tammy, she and Dick have been playing the emotional equivalent of Australian Rules football. The whole imbroglio has begun to resemble a Christopher Guest parody.

After Dick had Ritchie arrested and thrown in jail (and stories about it appeared in his newspaper), Ritchie and the Scaife’s three dogs—including Dick’s favorite, a yellow Lab named Beauregard (Dick says Beauregard was a gift from Ritchie; Ritchie says the couple owned the dog together)—moved in with Pietragallo and his wife, Helena, who is one of her oldest friends. Then, in March 2006, Dick arranged for a sign to be made and placed on his front lawn: WIFE AND DOG MISSING—REWARD FOR DOG.

Beauregard, who is said to be a descendant of a dog that belonged to a King of England, is the only member of his species to have had his portrait painted by Chas Fagan, an artist perhaps best known for the official White House portrait of Barbara Bush. Soon after the MISSING sign appeared in Dick’s front yard, Beauregard disappeared from the Pietragallos’ backyard—“snatched” by an employee “who was actually a double agent” working for Dick, Pietragallo says. Not long afterward the sign on Dick’s lawn was replaced by a new one that said, WELCOME HOME, BEAUREGARD.

Then, on April 6, 2006, Ritchie was driving down Dick’s street and saw Sue Patterson, Scaife’s 54-year-old housekeeper, walking the dog. According to court documents, Ritchie stopped the car in the street, got out, and ran toward Beauregard, screaming “He’s taking everything from me; I’m taking his dog.” She then allegedly beat



the woman about the head and neck, pulled her hair, pushed her down, and kicked her—leaving a footprint on her white blouse. When Genevieve Still, Dick's head housekeeper, came to Patterson's aid, she claims, Ritchie kicked her too. ("And she knows I have cancer," says Still, who is 79.) Dennis Bradshaw, a former Secret Service officer now in charge of Scaife's security, attempted to break up the fight. Ritchie allegedly scratched his face and broke his glasses and threw them on the ground.

Assault complaints against Ritchie were eventually dismissed, after a hearing where a bystander testified that Ritchie, while wrestling for the dog, also hollered, "Keep the prostitute, or something like that." (From a distance, the witness said, the clash over Beauregard "looked like two kids fighting over a toy.") The ruling magistrate in the case said, "They should've given her the dog," adding, "This is nonsense. I'm not going to participate in this. This is absolute, total nonsense." With personal-injury lawsuits against Ritchie by all three employees pending, Pietragallo forbade Ritchie to answer questions about the incident.

Ritchie's next reported legal entanglement came when Vasco's daughter filed a criminal-harassment complaint, which has also been dismissed, after finding a note in her mailbox that said, according to Dick, "God will get you" and "All whores go to hell."

(Coincidentally, after interviewing Ritchie Scaife, I found an anonymous letter in my mailbox: a Christmas card emblazoned with the greeting "Have a Ho Ho Ho!" In imitation of a child's scrawl, someone wrote, "Hope you can use this!," evidently referring to the color snapshot of Dick and Tammy that was included with the card. A printed slip of paper provided the photo's caption: "Richard Mellon Scaife and Tammy Sue / On the waterfront terrace of Wit's End / Pebble Beach, California." Wit's End is Dick's estate there.)

For his part, Dick does not believe that any of his efforts to humiliate Ritchie were excessive. Erecting those signs in his front yard, he says, was just plain "fun." Do the end of the marriage, its escalating vindictiveness, and the ongoing consequences of such anger make him in any way sad? His eyes go blank, and he says, "No, I don't think about that. I just don't want her near me. That's all I think about."

Asked whether his infidelity is hypocritical, in light of his political commitments, he refers not to a moral principle but to his own personal history. "My first marriage ended with an affair," he says, amused. And monogamy is not, he continues, an essential part of a good marriage. "I don't want people throwing rocks at me in the street. But I believe in open marriage." Philandering, Scaife says with a laugh, "is something that Bill Clinton and I have in common."

## Lunch with Bill

Those are surprising words indeed to hear from a man who spent so lavishly to uncover Bill Clinton's sexual peccadilloes and to advance the movement fueled by family values. But it would be a mistake to read the saga of Richard Mellon Scaife's divorce as simply a story of moral hypocrisy. His treatment of women, especially his first wife, suggests a high regard for his own gratification. His commitment to conservative politics has never been primarily about upholding traditional morality; it has been about promoting policies that help to preserve his own wealth and that of people like himself. On the subject of Clinton his weather vane is now spinning wildly. Scaife speaks of a "very pleasant" two-hour-and-fifteen-minute private lunch with Bill Clinton at the former president's New York office last summer. "I never met such a charismatic man in my whole life," Scaife says, glowing with pleasure at the memory. "To show him that I wasn't a total Republican libertarian, I said that I had a friend named Jack Murtha," a Democratic member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania. "He said, 'Oh, Jack Murtha. You're talking about my golfing partner!'" In the midst of these backslapping memories, though, Scaife goes carbuncle-eyed and refuses to answer on the record when asked if he still thinks Vince Foster's suicide was, as he once told *The New York Times*, "the Rosetta Stone to the Clinton Administration."

Scaife left the meeting with an autographed copy of Bill Clinton's *My Life* and a head full of thoughts about the "scourge of AIDS" in Africa, which the two had discussed in detail—though Scaife emphasizes, twice, that Clinton "did most of the talking." Back in Pittsburgh, Scaife decided to send a \$100,000 personal check to the Clinton Global Initiative. That got him thinking about AIDS locally, he says, and so when he found a direct-mail solicitation for PERSAD, Pittsburgh's AIDS service center, in his mailbox, he wrote that group a check, too. Does he think his best gay friends should be able to get married? Scaife throws his hand in the air and exclaims, "Yes, I do!" A moment later he adds, "I haven't really thought about it. But if they want to get married, that's their business. I couldn't care less."

It is this contradictory bundle of a human being who arrives on a rainy November evening at the mahogany-paneled Duquesne Club, in downtown Pittsburgh, the sanctuary of that city's upper crust, to be honored with the Speaker Franklin Award at a fund-raising dinner for the Commonwealth Foundation, a Pennsylvania think tank affiliated with the Heritage Foundation. An invocation praises Scaife as a selfless "servant-leader" who, like Joseph in the book of Genesis, "could have just worried about himself. But like Joseph," he worried about his country. In a video tribute, former attorney general Edwin Meese calls Richard Mellon Scaife "the unseen hand behind so many important causes," the man who brought "balance and sound principles back to the public arena" and "quietly helped to lay the brick and mortar for an entire movement." Scaife's donations to conservative causes, the crowd seems to agree, are the best measure of his character, because, as another speaker declares, "checkbooks are the most accurate account of a person's values and priorities."

The drive from the Duquesne Club to Doug's Motel (recently renamed the Huntingdon Inn), where Ritchie's private detective photographed Dick and Tammy, takes about half an hour. Behind the river-stone exterior of Room 5, where the two are said to have dallied, is a small rectangular space containing a queen-size bed with a thin, soft mattress, two lumpy pillows, and a push-button phone on the brown bedside table. To match the brown bedspread, there is brown wood paneling, a brown carpet with its nap rubbed away, a brown dresser, and a chair with little nicks in the veneer. There is despairingly little else to describe.

## It's All About Dignity

The Mellon-family fortune was assembled largely by Andrew Mellon, the banker and industrialist who served as secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Richard Mellon Scaife is Andrew's great-nephew. "The first time the Mellons have ever been 'in print,'" Andrew Mellon himself once ruefully noted, was in 1910, when his divorce from Nora McMullen (an unsuitable young Englishwoman whom he'd married on a whim) made Pittsburgh "ring with scandal." For Andrew, divorce brought embarrassing public revelations about his wife's infidelities and his own foolishness. Yet Mellon controlled the damage to the best of his ability. To ensure that his divorce would not be tried by jury, which would have exposed even more of his private life, he arranged for Pennsylvania's legislature to outlaw jury trials for divorce.

The story of Andrew Mellon comes to an end in the 1930s, with his gift to the American people of the National Gallery of Art. The final chapter for Ritchie and Dick foretells no such grandeur. Richard Mellon Scaife, who vows he will never be married again ("too many responsibilities," he says with a sigh), is still dating Tammy Vasco, and in what may be the most emotional moment of a long conversation, he voices distress that she has been publicly drawn into this situation. "Miss Vasco is a very loving individual," he says with tears in his eyes. Her depiction in the press, he goes on, "really troubles me."

As for Ritchie, "after the night she was put in jail by her husband, from that day forward she wanted to get on with a new life," Pietragallo says. Her new life, he adds, will focus on charitable involvements and "starting a foundation" whose goals have yet to be defined. Perhaps that night in the holding cell holds the answer. Ritchie emerged, Pietragallo says, with a passion to "do something to improve conditions for women in prison."

Ritchie affirms all of this, and, mustering a bright face, adds, "I want you to know I'm not bitter. I'm not an embittered person. You know, it is what it is, and life has to go on, and there are a lot more issues in this world that have relevance, and this really has no relevance on the face of the earth when you think of all the issues that are in the world right now, the problems. I have no bitterness. I just want to go forward. And I hope that he is happy. I don't wish anything bad to happen to him. And it's just sad for me that we couldn't end our marriage in a dignified way."

Gravely, Pietragallo reminds her: "We still can."

Ritchie says, "Because dignity's very important to me."