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CORRECTION TO THIS ARTICLE

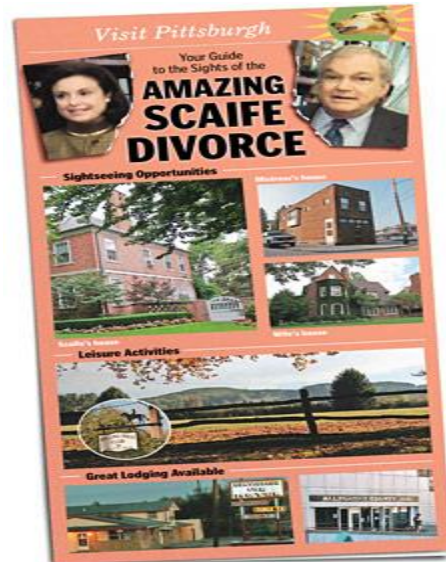
A photo illustration on the front page of the Oct. 22 Style section contained a picture of Margaret "Ritchie" Scaife and Richard Mellon Scaife that should have been credited to Bill Wade of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.



Low Road to Splitsville

Right-Wing Publisher's Breakup Is Super-Rich In Tawdry Details

By David Segal
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PITTSBURGH

Looking for a perfect little weekend vacation this fall? Here's a travel tip you don't hear very often: Head to Pittsburgh. Right away.

Seriously, get in the car and read this story later, because when you're done reading, you'll wish you'd left 10 minutes ago. There are towns with better vistas, sure, and there are getaways with more sunshine. But only Pittsburgh is the scene of the fabulously tawdry and surpassingly vicious spectacle that is the divorce of Richard Mellon Scaife.

Remember him? The cantankerous, reclusive 75-year-old billionaire who's spent a sizable chunk of his inherited fortune bankrolling conservative causes and trying to kneecap Democrats? He's best known for funding efforts to smear then-President Bill Clinton, but more quietly he's given in excess of \$300 million to right-leaning activists, watchdogs and think tanks. Atop his list of favorite donees: the family-values-focused Heritage Foundation, which has published papers with titles such as "Restoring a Culture of Marriage."

The culture of his own marriage is apparently past restoring. With the legal fight still in the weigh-in phase, the story of *Scaife v. Scaife* already includes a dog-snatching, an assault, a night in jail and that divorce court perennial, allegations of adultery.

Oh, and there's the money. Three words, people. No. Pre. Nup.

Unfathomable but true, when Scaife (rhymes with safe) married his second wife, Margaret "Ritchie" Scaife, in 1991, he neglected to wall off a fortune that Forbes recently valued at \$1.3 billion. This, to understate matters, is likely going to cost him, *big time*. As part of a temporary settlement, 60-year-old Ritchie Scaife is currently cashing an alimony check that at first glance will look like a typo: \$725,000 a month. Or about \$24,000 a day, seven days a week. As Richard Scaife's exasperated lawyers put it in a filing, "The temporary order produces an amount so large that just the *income* from it, invested at 5 percent, is greater each year than the salary of the President of the United States."

The numbers are just one of many we-kid-you-not dimensions to this tale. In late 2005, Ritchie Scaife peered through a window at one of her husband's many homes and saw him with one Tammy Sue Vasco, a woman whose colorful criminal history includes an arrest for prostitution. And this tryst was no one-afternoon stand. Ritchie Scaife describes Vasco in court filings as her husband's "mistress."

It gets better. But to fully appreciate this mesmerizing debacle, one must study it up close, for its many strategic blunders and its moments of epic brutality -- like a visit to Gettysburg, minus the gravitas. The good news, weekend travelers, is you can get close enough to most of the landmarks to gawk to your heart's content.

So buy a map and pack a lunch. And keep your hands inside the car.

Fireworks From the Start

We begin in Ligonier, 50 miles east of the city, at the Rolling Rock Club, once part of the Mellon estate, now a social center for the city's small community of super-rich, a place where Dick Cheney has gone game bird-hunting on a few occasions. The Scaifes wed here 16 years ago, with a reception that included a massive display of fireworks. The two had been openly dating for years, while Richard was married to his first wife, the former Frances Gilmore, with whom he had two children, and Ritchie was married to an attorney named Westray Battle, with whom she had a son.

Friends were not surprised that Ritchie, with her elegant cheekbones and lilting Southern accent, had turned the head of one of the country's richest men, currently No. 380 in the Forbes 400. She is known within high society as a woman who is fierce and formidable when she has a goal in mind, and in the '80s, her top priority was marrying Richard Scaife, say acquaintances.

Now, to the site of postnuptial domestic bliss, such as it was.

Head west on Route 30 to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and follow the signs to Pittsburgh. Once in the city, notice that "Mellon" is slapped on just about everything -- buildings, libraries, banks, streets, and on and on. That would be Andrew Mellon, the uncle of Richard Scaife's mother, a financial wiz who built a Gilded Age fortune through banking and oil. Income from the trusts of that estate yields roughly \$45 million a year for Scaife, according to a filing by his wife. That's a gross disposable income of nearly \$4 million a month, apparently just for having been born. As the lawyer of his soon-to-be-ex-wife noted, "These massive streams of income are attributable to no employment, business enterprise or other effort -- intellectual, physical, creative or ministerial -- past or present."

During the years they dated, Richard and Ritchie had lived a block and a half apart, in a moneyed section of town called Shadyside. Once the two were united in holy matrimony, for reasons perhaps only they know, the arrangement didn't change. She lived on a cul-de-sac called Pitcairn Place. He lived two blocks away, on Westminster Place, in a huge red-brick Georgian-style home, with a multi-car garage and an American flag on the front door.

Dickie, as he's known to his handful of friends, acquired a mean streak at an early age, according to his now-deceased sister, Cordelia Scaife. (She once told The

Washington Post that she and her brother hadn't spoken for 25 years.) His trouble with alcohol started when he was at prep school, and he later was tossed out of Yale when he rolled a keg of beer down a flight of stairs and broke the legs of a fellow student. His father, a below-average businessman, died a year after Richard graduated from the University of Pittsburgh. His mother was "just a gutter drunk," as Cordelia put it.

Scaife owns a handful of newspapers and newsweeklies, including the Pittsburgh Tribune Review, a conservative answer to the Post-Gazette. When he isn't tending to this modest publishing empire, he's underwriting what Hillary Clinton once called "a vast right-wing conspiracy." His highest-profile expenditure is the \$2.3 million he gave the American Spectator magazine in the mid-'90s, to try to unearth prurient and embarrassing details about Bill Clinton's years as governor of Arkansas. (The magazine came up virtually empty-handed.)

Though he jousts, indirectly, with public figures, Scaife seems to detest attention. He almost never speaks to the media, and on one of the few occasions he did, it was to tell a reporter, who'd sandbagged him on the street, that she was ugly and that her mother was ugly, too.

But Scaife is said to be extremely kind to his staff, which includes security, a chef, housekeepers, and a pilot for his DC-9. His lawyer did not return calls requesting comment for this story.

As for Ritchie Scaife, she was considered by her peers to be ostentatious and a touch too loud, say two acquaintances. Publicly, she was credited with helping to humanize her husband. It was she who reportedly helped him get sober after years of alcoholism, and she who persuaded him to channel some of his philanthropic largess to tsunami relief. (Richard Scaife has long given to charitable causes, but conservative politics is his passion.) Ritchie was involved with his business, too, serving on the board of her husband's publishing company. Through her lawyer, she declined to comment for this article.

At some point in late 2005, Ritchie started having suspicions about her husband and hired a private investigator named Keith Scannell, a specialist in high-end surveillance for insurance companies. In December of that year, Scannell followed Richard Scaife to nearby North Huntingdon, home of Doug's Motel, a place where the TVs are bolted to the furniture and rooms can be rented in three-hour

increments, for \$28. (It's now under new management and renamed the Huntingdon Inn. Head east on Route 8, then east on Route 30.) There, according to Scannell, Scaife spent a few hours with Tammy Sue Vasco.

Why a billionaire would shack up at Doug's Motel, of all places, is a mystery. Ditto his choice of companions. Vasco is a tall, blond 43-year-old mother who in 1993 was busted in a sting operation after showing up at a Sheraton hotel and offering to have sex with an undercover cop for \$225, the Post-Gazette reported.

Social Register material she is not, but Vasco and Scaife seemed to have a relationship that went beyond the purely professional. The two usually met each other twice a week, for months, at the motel, says an employee of the motel. Scaife would show up in a chauffeured car, dressed in a suit, wearing cuff links, always bearing flowers. Vasco would be waiting in same room every time, Room 5 on the ground floor, facing the parking lot, said the employee. Mr. Dick, as he was known at the motel, would stay for two hours or so, then get back in the car, which had been waiting, and leave.

"He actually seemed infatuated with Tammy," says the Doug's Motel employee, who did not want to be identified because of the powerful parties in the case. "She'd talk about trips that he took her on, to California, New York City. And it was great for her. It changed her life."

Despite a long history of financial disputes and a variety of liens, Vasco currently lives in a three-bedroom house that an attorney named Patrick Derrico bought outright for \$50,000 a few years ago. Her name is currently on the deed. Derrico, who practices in Washington, Pa., would not discuss the deal, or Vasco.

She has also traded up from the Jeep she once drove. She's now behind the wheel of a dark green Toyota Sequoia, a large SUV that goes for about \$40,000. Attempts to reach her for comment through her father, who lives in West Virginia, and through Derrico were not successful. She did not reply to a message hand-delivered to her home.

A few days after Scannell reported the Doug's Motel rendezvous to Ritchie Scaife, she noticed Vasco's Jeep in the driveway of his mansion at Westminster Place. Gaping through a window, according to court papers filed by her lawyers, she spotted Vasco. Then the trouble started.

Private investigator Scannell, commenting on what became a much-discussed local news story, put it this way: "Mrs. Scaife acted as any loving wife would upon finding out just days earlier that her husband had a confirmed meeting, for several hours, at a \$40 motel with a woman previously arrested for prostitution."

Police would later say that Ritchie Scaife began pounding on doors and windows and refused to leave, which is why she was promptly arrested for "defiant trespass." She was handcuffed and driven downtown to the Allegheny County Jail -- near the Liberty Bridge, at 950 Second Ave. -- where a woman accustomed to traveling with a personal hairdresser spent the night in what her lawyers later called a "grim" holding cell.

The trespassing charge was eventually dismissed, but as Ritchie Scaife's lawyer stated in a divorce filing, "The marriage was over!"

Baring Fangs

Both sides lawyered up, and the war over the Scaifes' considerable assets began. Ritchie started at a bit of a disadvantage: Few of her belongings were actually in her possession. In 2002, Richard had told his wife that as a birthday gift he would renovate her home, which required her to temporarily relocate virtually everything she owned. When the legal proceedings began in early 2006, Ritchie's home was still uninhabitable, and she lived around the corner from Pitcairn Place, at the home of William Pietragallo, her lawyer, and Pietragallo's wife, a friend of Ritchie's for many years.

For Pietragallo and his colleagues, one of the first orders of business was persuading Richard to cough up his wife's goods. Which took some doing. A lawsuit was filed, with Ritchie's lawyers accusing Richard of behavior "designed to harass and annoy Wife" and "to create obfuscation, chaos and uncertainty as to the existence, location, condition and ownership of the vast amounts of personal property owned by the parties."

The key word here is "vast." One of the most astounding stacks of papers in the pile that is the Scaife divorce is the inventory of Ritchie's stuff, compiled by her lawyers. The list runs for more than 80 pages, like an episode of "Antiques Roadshow" that will not end. Meat platters, sardine forks, melon forks, a circa-1804 Dutch teapot, a painting by Magritte, Victorian cream pitchers, bread trays, candlesticks, a sterling silver nutmeg grater, flatware service . . . you get the

picture. Much of it was stored at Vallamont, the weekend house Richard Scaife owns near the Rolling Rock Club.

"Defendant has and continues to unlawfully hold in his possession six pairs of asparagus tongs manufactured by Mappin & Webb, Birmingham, 1926 weighing 10 ounces total," reads one of dozens of paragraphs. "The last-known location for these items was at 'Vallamont,' 132 Pheasant Circle, Ligonier, Pa. 15658. The estimated cost for these items is \$1,800."

Eventually, Scaife returned this massive collection, with Ritchie's lawyers accusing him of "dumping" the stuff on her without a proper heads-up. Scaife's lawyers countered that the transfer was handled with respect and care.

The real fight, though, was not over the Shreve & Co. finger bowls. It was over the dog. Specifically, a yellow Labrador retriever named Beauregard, who Ritchie has told friends is a direct descendant of a pooch belonging to a king of England. Until March 2006, the animal was in Ritchie's hands, living with her and the Pietragallos. Then one day, Beauregard was scooped out of the Pietragallos' back yard and whisked around the corner, to Richard's house on Westminster.

This brazen canine abduction was not covered up. Quite the opposite. It was celebrated with a banner on wooden stakes posted on Richard's front lawn: "Welcome home, Beauregard," it read.

It's safe to assume that despite his lineage, Beauregard is unable to read. The point, it seems, was to needle Ritchie.

And it did.

On the afternoon of April 6, 2006, Ritchie stopped her car when she spotted a housekeeper of Richard's walking Beauregard in the neighborhood. *Game on.* The cops later said that Ritchie punched 51-year-old Sue Patterson, then tried to grab the dog. A secretary of Richard's, 77-year-old Genevieve Still, saw Ritchie and Patterson on the ground, with Ritchie on top, pulling Patterson's hair. When she tried to intervene, Still wound up with "a swift kick to the lower back," she told police. Then a security guard named Dennis Bradshaw got in on the action and took a slap to the head, which reportedly broke his glasses.

Ritchie did not win this one-on-three suburban cage match, nor did she manage to grab Beauregard. She did, however, get arrested, again, this time for assault. All three of Richard Scaife's employees went to the hospital, where they were treated

for scratches and bruises, then released, the Post-Gazette reported. A judge eventually dismissed the assault case, though personal-injury lawsuits by the employees are still pending.

Beauregard, by the way, still lives with Richard.

The lawsuits did little, it seems, to sate Ritchie's appetite for confrontation. In September of last year, she drove to Vasco's home, located in nearby Port Vue, perhaps to get a better look at her husband's paramour. Ritchie allegedly started shouting obscenities. Many obscenities, and she caused some kind of ruckus. Enough to provoke Vasco's 20-ish daughter, Winnifred, to file a criminal harassment complaint with a local magistrate, accusing Ritchie of what might be described as carrying on.

That charge was also eventually dismissed.

A Media Magnate & Magnet

The fight for the dog is matched in intensity only by the fight for the money. The filings in this case have unveiled a scrumptious buffet of new information about Richard Scaife's riches -- where they've come from and where they've gone. Until a few weeks ago, these documents were under seal, by consent of both parties. Then the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette discovered that someone in Allegheny County's prothonotary's office had mistakenly, and briefly, posted filings in the case on a part of its Web site that is publicly accessible.

Now we know that Scaife is beneficiary of nine different trusts, including one called the "1935 Trust," with an approximate value of \$210 million, and another called "The Revocable Trust," valued at \$655 million. Altogether, these gushers are worth about \$1.4 billion.

We learned, too, that the Tribune-Review has been a gurgling sinkhole from Day One; Scaife's lawyers say their client has pumped as much as \$312 million into it over the years. And he's going to have to keep on pumping. The Tribune-Review's CEO has predicted an annual shortfall of \$20 million for years to come.

These figures matter in the divorce because Scaife is arguing that the funds he forwards to the Tribune-Review should be deducted from his aggregate income, putting his annual haul closer to \$17 million a year, a long way from the \$45

million a year cited by Ritchie's lawyers. If true, that would of course reduce the monthly alimony check he could owe his wife once there's a permanent settlement.

Not surprisingly, Ritchie Scaife's attorneys have a different view. They say that Richard Scaife operates the Tribune-Review with so little concern for profit and loss that it's more a hobby than a business.

Viable Corporation or sugar daddy's divertissement -- either way, you can take a gander at the Pittsburgh office of the Tribune-Review. It's on the third floor of the building that was once the factory where the Clark candy bar was made, near the fields where the Pirates and Steelers play. (Over the Fort Duquesne Bridge, to 503 Martindale St.)

So, plenty to see, and truth be told, plenty of time to see it. A final settlement could easily be a year away, and the meanness, for all we know, has just begun. Which is why the Scaife Divorce Tour of Pittsburgh could be the ultimate family vacation. If it doesn't bring your family together -- in mutual horror, in a group hug *that* says "we don't have it that bad" -- nothing will.

Drive safely!