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**PAUL MUSCO: A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS**

By RICK REIFF

Paul Musco was an emotional guy. I saw him cry twice.

Once was over a dinner, just the two of us and our spouses. He broke down sobbing as he described the death of a sailor in World War II. Musco was a teenager back then who’d dropped out of high school to enlist in the Navy.

The other time was in 2015 in front of hundreds of people when he was being honored at the Orange Catholic Foundation’s business and ethics conference. So choked with emotion that he couldn’t keep speaking, Musco called his grandson to the stage to finish reading his remarks.

Musco, who has died at age 95, will long be remembered as a philanthropist, businessman and patron of the arts. His name and that of his widow Marybelle are etched forever on the campus of Chapman University.

**Plain Spoken**

But the first reaction to Musco’s passing has undoubtedly been tears from the many people whose lives were enriched by his generosity and joy. I’m one of them.

Musco was a plain-spoken, self-made success with refined tastes, an outsized personality, a quick wit and an unceasing desire to share his riches. More importantly to me, he was a friend and mentor.

Without my asking, he offered to help sponsor my public television show. After all, isn’t that what friends are for?

It didn’t hurt that we shared a Sicilian heritage–half in my case, full in Musco’s. He was proud of his 12-member family and his hard-scrabble youth, son of a school janitor in Providence, Rhode Island. “Dad spent 35 years working in education,” he’d quip.

Musco wasn’t much for sports or pop culture, preferring operas, dance, theater and symphonies. He was a patron and board member of LA Opera and a buddy of famed tenor Placido Domingo. He got Domingo to grant me a PBS interview, another favor for this friend.

Musco didn’t live ostentatiously but he enjoyed a few luxuries--an art-filled home, a chauffeured Rolls Royce and much fine dining. He quietly backed a couple of restaurants, to support the chefs, but also to ensure himself a private booth with white tablecloths.

He made his fortune recovering platinum and other precious metals from petroleum waste—an intensive, low-tech (his words) process that Big Oil would rather contract for than bring in-house. He named his Santa Ana-based company Gemini Industries, after himself and his beloved identical twin brother, Anthony, who died just two months before him, also of heart failure.

**Winding Down**

Musco started winding down his affairs during the pandemic. He donated the Rolls to City of Hope, which will auction it off at its gala scheduled for Oct. 23. And he sold Gemini and its Texas-based affiliate, Zodiac Enterprises, with the condition of full employment for their roughly 100 employees, according to Musco’s friend and accountant Frank DiBella.

Over the years Musco’s largely Hispanic workforce received bonuses, profit-sharing, scholarships for their kids and fully paid healthcare for themselves and their families.

“Mr. Musco, we love you,” then-Gemini CFO Melinda Munoz said in a tribute video a few years back.

Musco complained about charitable-giving lists ranked by dollars, saying it was nothing for a billionaire to write a check for a few million. For him to give that much took real commitment.

He often said, “Why not give it away while you’re alive so you can see the joy on people’s faces?”

That he did.