

George Weissman, Leader at Philip Morris And in the Arts in New York, Dies at 90

By DOUGLAS MARTIN

George Weissman, who helped transform Philip Morris from a midlevel tobacco company to a diversified conglomerate known for contributions to the arts, and who then led Lincoln Center for nearly a decade, died on July 24 in Greenwich, Conn. He was 90.

The cause was complications of a recent fall at his home in Rye, N.Y., his son Paul said.

Mr. Weissman began his corporate ascent in the movie and public relations businesses, and one of his early tasks as a young marketing executive at Philip Morris — which became part of the Altria group in 2003 — was to help develop the very effective masculine mythology of Marlboro cigarettes.

He applied similar deftness when Philip Morris acquired Miller Brewing in 1969 and came up with the new Miller Lite brand.

Mr. Weissman also pushed Philip Morris to become a major donor to arts groups, particularly experimental undertakings like the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. He said in an interview with The New York Times in 1990 that the arts initiative began with a traveling exhibition of modern art in 1965.

"We wanted to demonstrate to our own employees that we were an open-minded company seeking creativity in all aspects of our business," Mr. Weissman said. "And we were determined to do this by sponsoring things that made a difference, that were really dangerous."

In an interview with Forbes in 1983, he said that giving to the arts also impressed customers, and that more people go to museums than ballgames.

In 1983, Mr. Weissman installed a branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art on the ground floor of the company's new Park Avenue headquarters, across from Grand Central Terminal. He was on the Whitney board from 1979 to 1990.

When Mr. Weissman retired as chairman of the company in 1984, he spoke of fishing for salmon. But he was soon as busy as ever, becoming vice chairman of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in 1984, then serving as chairman from 1986 to 1994.

He oversaw the construction of the Samuel B. and David Rose Building and united all 12 Lincoln Center constituents in a 19-month festival to honor Mozart's bicentennial. He also encouraged the Classical Jazz series, a forerunner of Jazz at Lincoln Center, which eventually got its own space, in 2004.

George Weissman, the son of immigrants from Eastern Eu-



NEAL BOENZI/THE NEW YORK TIMES

George Weissman, long an executive at Philip Morris, became chairman of Lincoln Center in 1986, serving until 1994.

rope, was born in the Bronx on July 12, 1919. After graduating from Townsend Harris High School, he earned a degree in business administration from Baruch College of the City University of New York. He then edited a small weekly newspaper in New Jersey and worked as a reporter for The Star-Ledger, based in Newark.

He joined the Navy the day after Pearl Harbor, helping to chase submarines and shell

An early job was to create a cigarette's masculine image.

beachheads for 3½ years. After his discharge, he wrote a review of the Samuel Goldwyn movie "The Best Years of Our Lives" for some labor papers. Goldwyn hired him as a publicity agent at \$125 a week.

After Goldwyn fired him in a dispute over promoting a movie, he got a job with Benjamin Sonnenberg, who is credited with helping create the modern public relations industry. Soon, Mr. Weissman was devoted full time to the Philip Morris account. He was hired in 1952 as assistant to the president of Philip Morris.

In 1960, Mr. Weissman became chief executive of Philip Morris International, where he helped build up overseas sales to the point that they accounted for a third of both sales and earnings for the entire company. In 1966, he was named president of Philip Morris itself, and he guided the company's strategy of using profits from cigarettes to expand into other businesses, including the acquisition of the Seven-Up Company in 1978.

When Mr. Weissman became

chairman and chief executive of Philip Morris in 1978, he told Fortune magazine that he saw himself as the quintessential Marlboro man.

"I'm no cowboy and I don't ride horseback," he said, "but I like to think I have the freedom the Marlboro man exemplifies. He's the man who doesn't punch a clock. He's not computerized. He's a free spirit."

Mr. Weissman had few compunctions about describing his own habits. "Forty cigarettes a day, one or two beers and I also drink some wine," he said in a press conference in Paris in 1980.

Under his leadership, Philip Morris employed blacks in prominent executive positions, resulting in boycotts in some places in the South. The company also advertised in black and Hispanic newspapers and magazines.

Mr. Weissman joined other business leaders in signing petitions against the Vietnam War. When the Nixon administration's "enemies list" was released by a Senate committee in 1973, he was on it.

In addition to his son Paul, Mr. Weissman is survived by his wife of 65 years, the former Mildred Stregack; his daughter, Ellen; his son Daniel; and a grandson.

Mr. Weissman told Forbes in 1980 that he felt Philip Morris had a "Masada complex," referring to the desperate defense of first-century Jews against powerful Roman legions. He said it first fought the tobacco industry as it clawed its way up the ladder, then the government and anti-smoking activists.

He seemed to have trouble understanding the view of those who argued that arts organizations should refuse tobacco money as tainted. "Do you stop the Bolshoi from coming here because you don't believe in the Russian system?" he said in an interview with The Times in 1987.

Deaths

Auer, Bernhard	Germino, Florence	Sheinbo
Berser, Sol	Goldstein, Millie	Steinbe
Berman, Frances	Guterman, Bettie	Tekulsk
Blumberg, Hazel	Lesenger, Mildred	Weissm
Cohen, Joseph	Newman, Miriam	Wenzel
Cunningham, Merce	Shapiro, Beatrice	Whipple

AUER— Bernhard M., 93, of Hobe Sound, Florida, passed away peacefully on July 25th at Edge Hill in Stamford, Connecticut. Funeral Services will be held on Wednesday, July 29th at 11:00am at Christ Church, 254 E. Putnam Ave., Greenwich, Connecticut 06830.

BERGER— Sol. On July 25, 2009. Beloved husband of the late Marly. Cherished and incredible father of Renee and Sandye. Adored and adoring grandfather and great-grandfather of Kim, Joe, Jeff, Sharon, Pam, Grant, Leigh, Jake, Andie, Ryan, Elle, Tanner and Cooper. The sunshine of our lives—our hero. In our hearts forever. Funeral services will be held Tuesday, 9:30am at Frank E. Campbell—The Funeral Chapel 3076 Madison Avenue (81st Street).

BERGER— Sol. The extraordinary legacy of our dear friend Sol Berger is remembered today — and in the years ahead — by the entire Continuum Cancer Centers of New York (CCNY) community. At Beth Israel Medical Center, Sol supported several important programs in cancer care, including the naming in his honor and in memory of his beloved late wife the Sol and Margaret Berger Gastrointestinal Cancer Suite, and support for the surgical oncology database administration. The critical philanthropic support he provided will enable us to continue our efforts to create a center that fully integrates the medical and surgical subspecialties of gastrointestinal cancer. Our deepest condolences are extended to his daughters Renee and Sandye, the entire Berger family and, indeed, all whose lives were touched by this gracious man.

Louis B. Harrison, MD
The Gerald J. Freidman, Chairman
The Charles and Bernice Blitman Department of Radiation Oncology—Beth Israel and Director, CCNY
Warren Enker, MD
Vice Chairman, Department of Surgery—Beth Israel and Associate Director, CCNY

BLUMBERG— Board of members of the Club note with sorrow the beloved late Hazel Blumberg, all our merriment, our deepest sympathy, and our entire family.
Lew K.
Willia S. Rose

COHEN— Joseph, peacefully on July 26, 2009, after a short illness. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Rebecca, and their children: Aaron, Donna, and Joshua. He is also survived by his grandchildren: Joshua, Benjamin, Ethan, and friend, and his beautiful professional community, a generous spirit, and good humor. He is loved, and his family and friends.

CUNNINGHAM— Merce, the passing of a friend, mentored spirit who redefined the landscape of American culture. A choreographer, beauty in every movement of many of us changed our human form, eyes and mind, through his which will challenge and inspire to come. Sol whom I loved to know personally will be missed in lieu of flow- edgments, the Dance Foundation that contributed to the Foundation of Merce's Judith R. Fisher

BERGER— Sol. The entire Beth Israel Medical Center family acknowledges with profound sadness the passing of our dear friend and generous benefactor, Sol Berger. Sol supported clinical and research activities at the hospital in a number of important areas, including urology, cancer, the neurosciences and ophthalmology. His extraordinary history of philanthropy at Beth Israel has been recognized in the naming of several departments, services and clinical units in his honor and in honor of his beloved late wife, Margaret. To his daughters Renee and Sandye, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, the entire Berger family, and all of his loved ones, we extend most heartfelt condolences.

Lawrence S. Huntington, MD, Chairman
Board of Trustees
Harris M. Nagler, MD, Interim President
Louise M. Klebanoff, MD, President, Medical Board

BERGER— Sol. It is with a deep sense of sadness that the physicians, nurses and staff of the Sol and Margaret Berger Department of Urology at Beth Israel Medical Center acknowledge the passing of our dear friend and benefactor in whose honor our department is named. We will forever remember Mr. Berger's unparalleled commitment to the work that we do on behalf of the patients who turn to us for help for a wide variety of urologic disorders. He will be dearly missed by all whose lives were touched by his wonderful spirit and support. Our sympathies are extended to his daughters Renee and Sandye and the entire Berger family.

Harris M. Nagler, MD, Chairman, The Sol and Margaret Berger

BLUMBERG— on July 26, 2009, in Larchmont, survived by her son and their partner (Susan Co. Blumberg) her five grand- wives, David bin, Jonathan bin, Michael bin, Matt (A. berg, and A. Blumberg, her grandchildren Shirley Bloom. be held on T at 2pm at the woods at C. Ami in White

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Lois Hunt, 84, Half of Popular Operatic Duo

By WILLIAM GRIMES

Lois Hunt, whose operatic lyric soprano blended seamlessly with Earl Wrightson's baritone in a partnership that lasted nearly 40 years and brought them international fame, died on July 24 in Greenwich, Conn. She was 84.



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