



John C. Haas

May 22, 1918 - April 2, 2011

John C. Haas, 92, Civic Leader, Philanthropist and Business Executive

John C. Haas, retired Chairman of Rohm and Haas Company, and a tireless champion of community service both regionally and nationally, died Saturday, April 2 at age 92. He was a son of Otto Haas, co-founder of the global chemical company headquartered in Philadelphia and Phoebe Waterman Haas, who was among the first women to receive a doctorate in astronomy.

“Our father was a kind and charitable man, and that was reflected in every aspect of his life,” according to a statement from his children. “He truly lived the values handed down from his parents, and we are gratified that his good works continue to live on through the people and organizations he touched.”

Mr. Haas, of Villanova, spent his entire professional career with the Rohm and Haas Company beginning as a Process Engineer at the Bridesburg plant in Philadelphia in 1942. Shortly thereafter, he was called to active duty as a US Naval Officer during World War II, but returned to Bridesburg after his discharge in 1946. Very early in his career, he exhibited an affinity for what he often termed “the people side of the business,” and enjoyed subsequent managerial assignments at the company’s production facilities in Knoxville, TN as well as Houston, TX.

By 1953 he had risen to the position of Vice President in charge of Personnel, and soon after assumed the additional responsibilities of Purchasing and Logistics. He was named Vice-Chairman of the Board in 1959 and Chairman in 1974.

Mr. Haas was committed to the Company and its employees. It was his work in the community, however, that defined him.

In 1960, after the death of his father, Mr. Haas was named Chairman of the charitable foundation established by his parents in 1945 — now known as the William Penn Foundation — in response to social problems in the aftermath of World War II. He poured himself into this activity, and under his 32-year leadership, and with further bequests from his parents, the Foundation's Grants budget grew dramatically. The Foundation, and its unique family/private model, is widely admired in the non-profit world. After the sale of the Rohm and Haas Company to Dow Chemical in 2009, Mr. Haas directed a significant portion of the family's charitable assets from that sale to the William Penn Foundation to ensure a strong future for its work.

“Knowing Mr. Haas for the past seven years has been an extraordinary privilege for me,” said Feather Houstoun, president of the William Penn Foundation. “I know that the staff who have worked at the Foundation during the past half-century feel the same. He was the epitome of humility and kindness, setting an example for everyone associated with the Foundation. His special brand of quiet leadership has been deeply ingrained in our organization's mission, values, and work and remains the standard to which we hold ourselves. He will be greatly missed.”

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Mr. Haas attended Amherst College where he received his A.B. degree in 1940. He went on to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to earn a M.S.

degree in chemical engineering in 1942.

During the time he worked at the Houston plant, Mr. Haas was introduced by a colleague to Bryn Athyn, PA native Chara A. Cooper at a dinner party. The couple married in 1952. Mr. Haas credited his wife for the idea of devoting their personal estate to help children and families. Together, they founded the Stoneleigh Foundation to address the needs of vulnerable and underserved children and youth.

Mr. Haas was very active with the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, serving for a time as its president. In 1984, he was one of the founders of the Alexis de Tocqueville Society, created to encourage people to become significant donors to the United Way. Mr. Haas was also a former director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Philadelphia and the Chemical Heritage Foundation. He was a founding leader of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in 1976, and served as Trustee until it was absorbed into the Pennsylvania Historical Society in 2002. He was a member of the Board of Governors of Temple University Health System and a trustee emeritus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was an avid supporter of Natural Lands Trust.

“John Haas was a quiet and focused leader who used his prominence and wealth to support his strong social values and standards,” said Graham S. Finney, long-time Philadelphia civic leader. “He was modest and unpretentious. His involvement in so many charitable and civic endeavors was a true gift to Philadelphia. His legacy lives on through the organizations he supported, and the many people whose well-being and quality of life have improved because of him.”

In the 1960s, Mr. Haas was introduced by his mother to the work of an energetic minister who had embarked on a mission of teaching Self Help

through education and skills training as a component of the Civil Rights Movement. Mr. Haas was so inspired by the ideals of Reverend Leon Sullivan and the Opportunities Industrialization Center of America (OIC), that he became a staunch advocate for the fledgling non-profit. His support of the work of OIC continued for the next 50 years.

“John was totally committed to helping people who were in need,” said Delbert Payne, who first met Mr. Haas when they both lent their assistance to OIC. Payne joined Rohm and Haas and became the company’s manager of corporate social investment, working closely with Mr. Haas. “John recognized that people have pride and a desire to work and support their families, and he gave people opportunities – not just people at OIC, but all people.”

Ed Rendell, former Mayor of Philadelphia and Governor of Pennsylvania said, “John was a gentle, extraordinarily decent and honorable man. If you met him for the first time, Page 3

you would never have guessed he was extremely successful. He didn’t care much for the trappings of wealth or success. He only cared about using his resources to help others. His special passion was improving Human Services and protecting our environment.”

In an autobiography written for his family, Mr. Haas reflected on his idyllic childhood growing up in Haverford with his father and mother, who left her career to raise him and his older brother, F. Otto. Mr. Haas described his love of travel, which started with business trips with his parents and brother in Europe. Mr. Haas shared this interest with his wife, and the two traveled the world with his duties with the Company, as well as on family trips. His journeys spawned a lifelong passion for hiking and the outdoors, which he passed on to his children.

Mr. Haas is survived by his wife, Chara, a daughter, Barbara, his sons David, Leonard, Frederick, and Duncan and 10 grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his only brother, F. Otto Haas in 1994.

A private service will be held for the family, and a memorial service will be planned for a later date.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in memory of John Haas may be directed to the Boys & Girls Club of Philadelphia (Attn: Development Department, 1518 Walnut St., Suite 605, Philadelphia, PA 19102) or The United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (Attn: Memorial Gifts, 1709 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19103).