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May 23, 2017

Hi res images available upon request

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Hillwood mourns the death of Dina Merrill Hartley, daughter of founder Marjorie Merriweather Post and long-time board member and supporter

WASHINGTON—The staff and community of Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens was saddened to learn of the death of Dina Merrill Hartley, actress, philanthropist, producer, and youngest daughter of Hillwood founder Marjorie Merriweather Post, who died yesterday, May 22, 2017, after a long illness.

“Dina’s death greatly saddens all of us at Hillwood,” said Kate Markert, Hillwood’s executive director. “From the time her mother moved in and opened Hillwood to guests in 1957, Dina Merrill played a vibrant role in the life of Hillwood. Having shared important moments of her life with her family here, she was an active and generous supporter of Hillwood and honored her mother’s wish that the public learn and benefit from the collection and way of life that she established here.”

Born Nedenia Marjorie Hutton in 1923, Merrill was the only child of Marjorie Merriweather Post and her second husband, Edward Francis (E.F.) Hutton. She had two older half-sisters, Adelaide Brevort Close and Eleanor Post Close, from Post’s first marriage to Edward Bennett Close. While Merrill grew up primarily in New York and Palm Beach, and had her own room on Post’s grand sailing yacht, the Sea Cloud, she made many trips to Hillwood after her mother established residence at the grand Washington, D.C. estate. In fact, Merrill’s wedding to Cliff Robertson in 1966 took place in Hillwood’s French drawing room, with a luncheon celebration in the estate’s grand dining room.

“I have so many wonderful memories of my aunt,” said Ellen MacNeille Charles, Post’s granddaughter and president emerita of Hillwood. “Many of those I cherish most are the times we spent together stewarding the great legacy that her mother—my grandmother—left for future generations to be inspired by her passion for excellence and gracious way of life she established at Hillwood.”

Merrill was a member of the board of trustees of the Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation of D.C. and later the Hillwood Museum and Gardens Foundation, which were the entities that carefully maintained Hillwood beginning in 1976, until 2010, when she became trustee emerita. Throughout that time, she contributed to the organization’s mission to share with the public Marjorie Merriweather Post’s passion for excellence, gracious hospitality, and intent to share the beauty and history of her collections and gardens with both financial support and generous donations of art objects, jewelry, and apparel that are critical to telling the story of Post’s legacy at Hillwood.

In 2010, Merrill made a substantial gift to support film programs at Hillwood, making possible the continued commitment to furthering this aspect of her mother's imprint on Hillwood. The Dina Merrill Film Program includes a diverse lineup, including *Divas Outdoors*, which is presented annually as part of Hillwood's outreach to the LGBT community and *Family Movie Night*, allowing a broad audience to share in a tradition initiated by Marjorie Post. A centerpiece of the special exhibition *Wedding Belles: Bridal Fashions from the Marjorie Merriweather Post Family*, presented in 2011 to examine the evolution of 20th-century wedding style through the lens of this notable family, was Merrill's dress from her 1946 marriage to Stanley M. Rumbough, which she gifted to Hillwood in honor of this important exhibition. An exquisite Cartier evening bag that was a gift to Merrill from her father, E.F. Hutton, also on the occasion of her first marriage and inscribed, "For you darling to carry on your way to happiness. Love always, Pappy," which she gave to Hillwood in 1993, was also featured in *Wedding Belles*.

Other important gifts to the collection include a watch made of gold, diamonds, and sapphires by Van Cleef & Arpels to commemorate Merrill's graduation from the Mount Vernon Seminary in 1941 and the long-term loan of an intricately crafted model of the Sea Cloud.

Donations in her memory may be made to Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens.

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One of the premier art collector's museums in the United States, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens is dedicated to enlightening and engaging visitors with an experience inspired by founder Marjorie Merriweather Post's passion for excellence, gracious hospitality, and intent to preserve and share the beauty and history of her collections, garden, and estate. Hillwood is set upon 25 acres of gardens and surrounding woodlands in northwest Washington, D.C. Twelve acres of enchanting formal gardens include a Japanese-style garden, a Rose Garden, and a French parterre.