

The Women of Alzheimer's Series – Brooke Astor



She was one of the most famous philanthropists of her time and her motto was **“Money is like manure; it’s not worth a thing unless it’s spread around.”**

Vincent Astor, Newsweek magazine Chairman of the Board and descendent of the rich and socially prominent Astor family was Brooke Astor’s third husband. While married she became a member of the board of the Astor Foundation and oversaw the philanthropical distribution of his wealth upon his death in 1959.

Beneficiaries of both time and money included the Metropolitan Museum of Art (where she was a Trustee), New York Public Library, The Animal Medical Center, Light House of the Blind, Fresh Air Fund, International Rescue Committee and The Astor Home for Emotionally Disturbed Children among others.

In 1997 Brooke Astor liquidated the Astor Foundation having distributed over \$195 million dollars to charities, and in 1998 she would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her charitable contributions.

It would seem that her life story would end with these remembrances, but it would continue into **one of the most notorious case of elder abuse of a women with Alzheimer’s disease**. As New York Newspapers had followed her charitable and social endeavors, they would voraciously follow the trial of her son accused of diverting \$60 million from his mother at the supposed urging of his wife.

In 2009, Anthony D. Marshall age 85 and a son from a previous marriage was convicted along with the estate planning lawyer, Francis X. Morrissey Jr. of fraud and conspiracy and amending her will with a forged signature to increase his inheritance.

The sensational trial pitted Marshall's son Philip against his father along with testimony from Henry and Nancy Kissinger, Barbara Walters and Annette de la Renta (wife of fashion designer Oscar de la Renta) who had serious concerns of mistreatment of Mrs. Astor by her son as she declined with Alzheimer's.

One of the central issues of the trial was Mrs. Astor's level of competency at the time there was a change in her will. Under the new provisions it would give her son a retroactive \$1,000,000 for managing her financial matters and \$60 million dollars at the time of her death.

Mrs. Astor's friends would see that she lived comfortably with Alzheimer's care until her death in 2007 at the age of 105. Her tombstone reads "I had a wonderful life."

Sources:

<http://www.probatelawyerblog.com/brooke-astor/>

Wikipedia – Brooke Astor

New York Times, October 9, 2009 Brooke Astor's Son Guilty in Scheme to Defraud Her by John Eligon