



Oil Heiress Enters Women's Hall of Fame

By **BEN DOBBIN** – 4 days ago

SENECA FALLS, N.Y. (AP) — For most of her adult life, Swanee Hunt has given away half of her annual income, a commitment she started in 1981 when she earned \$70,000.

The daughter of the late Texas oil magnate H.L. Hunt grew much wealthier as her stake in Hunt Oil Co. skyrocketed, and so did the charitable foundation she launched 26 years ago to help poor and powerless people around the globe. So far, her donations exceed \$120 million.

On Sunday, Hunt was scheduled to be enshrined in the National Women's Hall of Fame along with Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art dean of engineering Dr. Eleanor Baum, Minnesota environmental advocate Winona LaDuke and University of Rochester astronomer Dr. Judith Pipher. Julia Child, who died in August 2004, is among five women being honored posthumously.

"There is so much hurt and so much need in the world," Hunt said. Alleviating it "is a matter of everyone doing her or his part and not saying, 'Well, I'll just leave it to somebody else because I can only do a little.'"

Child brought the intricacies of French cuisine to millions of American home cooks through her television series and books.

Established in 1969 in Seneca Falls, a western New York village where the first known women's rights convention was held, the hall acclaims women who have made valuable contributions to society and especially to the freedom of women.

Hunt, 57, a former Clinton Administration ambassador to Austria who directs Harvard University's Women and Public Policy Program, took a divergent path from her father, an arch-conservative with a disdain for philanthropy who was one of the richest men in the world when he died in 1974.

"His politics and mine are quite different, but there's another part of him that would say, 'you go girl!'" she said. "He just wouldn't be so happy about where I was going."

One big thing they shared, though, is a "real change-the-world" mentality, she said.

"Since I was a young girl, I've always thought 'how can I take my intelligence, my wealth, my connections, my creativity, my spunk — I'm really spunky — just any bit of any positive thing about my life and maximize what I can do for the world?'" she said.

The Hunt Alternatives Fund, which moved from Denver to Cambridge, Mass., a decade ago, started out by helping grass-roots groups tackle a multitude of ills, from illiteracy to homelessness, but is now deeply engaged in propelling women into politics and elevating their role as peacemakers in war zones.

"I care a lot about victims but I am not working directly with them," she said. "I'm working with helping people who may have been victimized feel a sense of leadership. It doesn't feel very good after a while being a poor victim who's rescued. It's not the ultimate solution."

Hunt said she and her sister, Helen — a fellow philanthropist who was inducted in the Women's Hall of Fame in 1994 — employ the same motivation and political philosophy in promoting peace, health and goodwill around the world as former presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

"What (they're) doing is making that bridge between people who have more than they need and people who don't have enough," she said.

On the Net:

- <http://www.greatwomen.org>
- <http://www.huntalternatives.org>

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