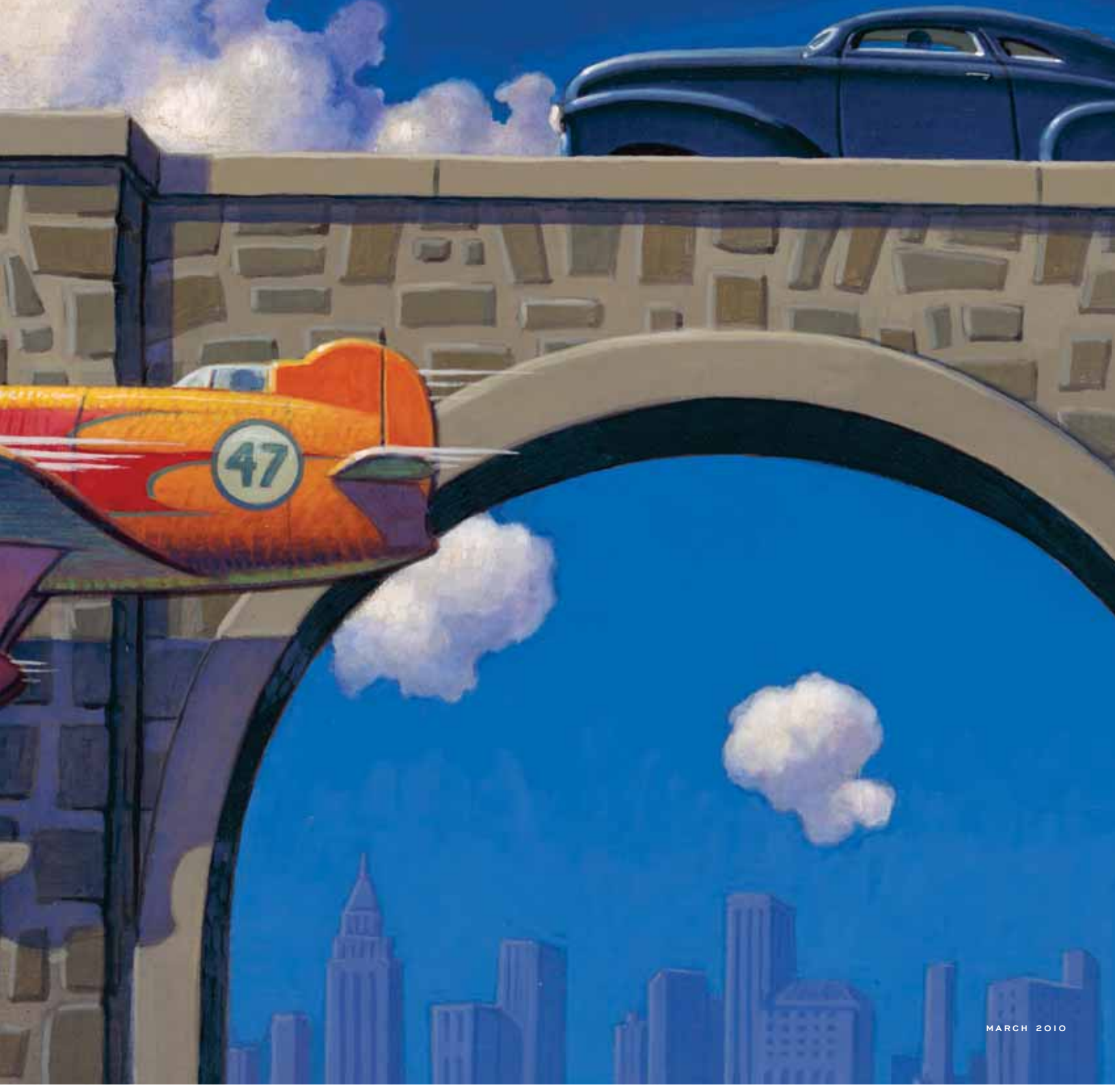


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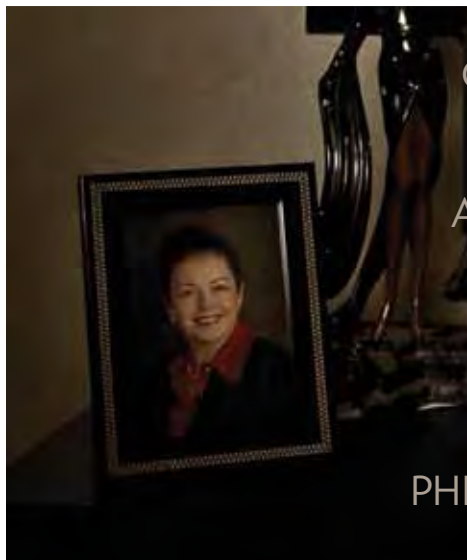
ORANGE
COUNTY

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PAUL MUSCO



CHAIRMAN OF
THE BOARD
AND FOUNDER
OF GEMINI
INDUSTRIES,
LEADING
PHILANTHROPIST

BY TERENCE LOOSE
PHOTO BY RALPH PALUMBO

If there's one thing Gemini Industries founder Paul Musco is better at than making money, it's giving it away. One of this county's most influential businessmen, Musco, along with his wife of 47 years, Marybelle, is also a leader when it comes to his philanthropic pursuits. He's a trustee and major fundraiser for Chapman University, vice chairman of the L.A. Opera, Sheriff's Advisory Committee member, and he is heavily involved with the Orange County High School of the Arts and the Muscular Dystrophy Association (Jerry Lewis calls him Uncle Paul). And that's just the short list.

But what makes Musco's generosity that much more inspiring is the fact that he is a self-made man, the son of an immigrant janitor and seamstress in a family of 12. So if Musco was the type to pamper himself with material goods and merely dabble in charitable giving for the tax write-off and good P.R., you could hardly blame him. But that's not the Paul Musco whom so many admire. In fact, it seems that when Musco does have an extra hour or two, he doesn't chase a small white ball around a grand green landscape or sail off to Catalina – he finds another charity to help. Philanthropy is his escape, his salvation. "I joined The Newport Country Club way back when it was called The Irvine Country Club. But I've played there about five times since 1972," he jokes. "I just find time too precious to spend four hours on the golf course. If it's not work, it's charities. Anything that has to do with children, education or the arts."

It's a conviction that is undeniably pure, because Paul and Marybelle Musco lead through words and actions, with one message: "Give, give, give."

YOU COME FROM A BIG FAMILY.

Yes, my parents were immigrants from Italy and had seven boys and three girls. I'm one of twins. It was fun, though. We were a loving family, which is good, because being a family of 12, you're living pretty close together.

LIFE WAS TOUGH FOR MOST IMMIGRANTS, THOUGH. YOU WERE PRETTY POOR, RIGHT?

Sure, but I never realized I was from a poor family. There was always food on the table and we had tailor-made clothes – because my mom made them. We made our own toys. We were just very happy and didn't know that we didn't have much in comparison to many others. True story: We had a dog one time that lasted one day because back then you didn't have dog food, you had scraps. And we never had any scraps. Unfortunately, today every home has a television so every young kid looks at TV and wonders why their parents can't buy them this or that. But we never knew the difference. We were able to live very happily.

WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO FOR WORK?

My mom was a seamstress; she learned in Italy. So she raised us but also took in work as a seamstress. My father, like most immigrants, was illiterate, and worked as a janitor in the public school system. But he was an entrepreneur in his own right because he would take me and my six brothers with him whenever he had to clean the school and assign us each roles. So in many ways, he was an executive.

BE A PHILANTHROPIST

■ **"GIVE, GIVE, GIVE..."** :: Taking Paul Musco's advice to give is as easy as a mouse click. Here are some of the Muscos' favorite giving places.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association :: mda.org

Chapman University :: chapman.edu

OC High School of the Arts :: ocsarts.net

L.A. Opera :: losangelesopera.com

Paul Musco*continued from page 25***YOU'VE SAID YOU LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING FROM YOUR FAMILY.**

Definitely. My father always gave and we always gave. It was a way of life. Even down to small everyday stuff, like I'd ask if I could have a friend over for dinner and my mom would just say sure, what's another one at the table? Then my other brothers would do the same thing and it would be a big deal, but they never said no.

Rhode Island and was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, less than an hour away. But I eventually ended up at every island in the Pacific and was away for four years.

DID YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WERE GETTING INTO?

What did I know, I was 16. I thought it was going to be a glamour thing. And sure, there were moments when it was scary as hell and I didn't think I would make it back, but all in all, my four years were some of the best of my life because they taught me so much. I went away as one of those wild little kids who thought he knew everything, but the Navy made a man out of me and cured that. I realized that there were other people with other viewpoints in the world.

SO YOU COUNT YOUR TIME IN THE SERVICE, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS DURING WAR TIME, AS A PLUS.

Definitely. I see kids today working in some hamburger joint and I say, what are you doing? Join the service. You get an education and get paid for it.

WHEN YOU GOT BACK DID YOU GO RIGHT INTO BUSINESS?

No, no. I came back and wanted to be a doctor. But, predictably, I screwed up. A friend said, "Let's go to California," so I took all the money I had and blew it all in California and came back

I borrowed \$500,000 from the Small Business Administration and opened my business. But back then you had to pledge everything you had to get the loan. And it wasn't easy at first. In fact, I used to come in on Saturdays and clean the toilets and vacuum the carpet because we couldn't afford a janitor. But we worked our butts off and today we're the largest in the world at what we do.

YOU ALSO GREW UP DURING WWII. DID THAT HAVE AN IMPACT?

Yes, there were six of our family in WWII and two of my sisters were nurses. In fact, when I was 16 years old, I lied about my age to enlist in the Navy to see the world. I enlisted in Providence,

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with nothing. So I decided I better go to business school, which I did. But I also worked at a precious metal company during the day and worked my way up and made more and more money. So I figured I didn't need the school. And I've been in that business ever since, 50 years.

AFTER HOLDING VICE PRESIDENTIAL AND PRESIDENTIAL POSITIONS AT MANY COMPANIES, YOU FOUNDED GEMINI INDUSTRIES IN 1973. WAS THAT A TOUGH DECISION?

Yes. I borrowed \$500,000 from the Small Business Administration and opened my business. But back then you had to pledge everything you had to get the loan. I used to joke I had to pledge my wife, my kids and my testicles to get government money. And it wasn't easy at first. In fact, I used to come in on Saturdays and clean the toilets and vacuum the carpet because we couldn't afford a janitor. But we worked our butts off and today we're the largest in the world at what we do. And we're probably one of the very few companies to actually pay the government back.

THAT'S ALL PRETTY COURAGEOUS.

That's nothing. I'll tell you what I find courageous. Immigrants. The only immigrants who ever came to this country were the poor ones. After all, why would the rich ones leave? So it's all those immigrants who had no opportunity, only hope and courage. When I first went back to see where

my parents were born, just this little dot on a map a thousand miles away, it struck me so hard that these people had real courage. To leave a place on such a long journey, not knowing the language or anything about where you were going. It boggles my mind. I travel and have money and still get concerned. So I admire all immigrants enormously.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL?

One, God's been good to me. Two, I've worked my butt off for it. No, really, it comes down to the fact that we're a big family here. My employees are the greatest. I like to play "What if" with my [business manager], and one day I said, "What if business went really bad?" He said, "We'd lay off five people." And I said, "No, we never lay off anyone." I told him that everyone, including me, would take a pay cut to keep those five workers on. And he said, "That's not for me." So I said, "Then I guess you're one of the five to go."

SO IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE MONEY?

It's never been. It was always wanting to make our parents proud. Believe it or not I was considered the bad one in the family. Then I went away to war and I remember writing my mother a letter apologizing for all the hurt I had caused her and that someday I would make her proud of me. About 35 years later when I opened up my plant, she was there. And I said to her, "Momma, I told you I'd make you proud of me." And she said, "My dearest son, I was always proud of you." That was wonderful.

BUT YOUR SUCCESS HAS MADE YOU A VERY RICH MAN.

One of my employees asked me one time what it feels like to be rich. I asked him what he thought rich was. And he said you can buy a big home, a boat, you can travel... so I said, "Ask me what I think being rich is." He did and I said, "It's good health, good family and good friends. If you have a hundred million dollars and have cancer what good is it? If you have a hundred million dollars and no family to share it with what good is it?"

SO IT MUST ANGER YOU TO HEAR ABOUT EXECUTIVES GETTING OBSCENELY HUGE BONUSES WHILE THEIR COMPANIES ARE FIRING PEOPLE.

Incredibly. And it's also just bad business. Say an executive gets a \$10 million bonus. Why don't they go to management and say, "How many people can we keep on for my bonus money?" If they did that, those men and women whose jobs they saved would work their butts off and be the most loyal workers ever. Profits would go higher and everyone would win.

IT'S WORKED FOR YOU.

Definitely. I have a staff of about 60 people here and I just love coming in to see them. When we first started, we couldn't pay much and the parking lot was filled with the worst cars you could imagine. Now, I come in and there are all



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QUIKSILVER 

Paul Musco

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these beautiful cars. And that makes me feel great, because a lot of those people have been with us for 30 years and were able to buy homes and raise families and really better their lives, because as we grew, we were able to pay more. And today, they're some of the most loyal staff I can imagine.

AND NOW ONE OF YOUR BIGGEST JOYS IS GIVING BACK, YOUR PHILANTHROPY.

I've been doing this all my life in small ways and big ways. As I gained more success, I gave more and more. If there was any one thing I could say, it's that there's such a joy in giving and to see the smiles on the people who you've helped is the greatest gift you can receive. It really is. Those "thank you"s are everything. Most important is to give while you're alive, because you can see what good you've done. And more important than that is that the recipient has someone to thank. It provides that personal connection.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE FROM YOUR GIVING OF THAT PERSONAL CONNECTION?

Several, but one sticks out. We were doing a photo op when I was named Man of the Year for MDA and it was with a young girl with muscular dystrophy. She was in this pretty white dress and she was leaving the office and I called her back because I happened to have a string of white pearls in my desk. I gave them to her and she looked up at me and said, "I love you and I'll never forget you as long as I live." She died six months later. But the message there is just to give, give, give. Giving is a blessing.

IN ADDITION TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH CONCERNS, YOU ALSO GIVE GREATLY TO THE ARTS, PARTICULARLY OPERA. WHEN DID THAT APPRECIATION BEGIN?

I remember during the Depression years, my father came home with one of those [phonographs] that you wind. He paid \$15 for it and my mom was so angry with him, saying "Do you know how much food I could have put on the table for the children with that money?" And he pointed to the [phonograph] and said, "That is food. They need music, education, opera." So we had that and Saturdays we sat in front of the radio and listened to the Metropolitan Opera. We would want to listen to "The Lone Ranger" or whatever, but my father made us listen to the opera and soon we came to appreciate it.

DO YOU THINK YOUR MESSAGE OF GIVING IS RESONATING?

Yes, I know it is. The other day I played a game with the poster girl for MDA and American Celebration. I put money in both hands and told her to pick one. She picked the one with a hundred dollar bill. She came over later and said she was going to spend \$50 for herself and give \$50 to MDA. So the message gets passed on.