

One Man's Fortune

How Would You Use Your Money If You Were Stewart Rawlings Mott, 30, Son of Flint's Multi-Millionaire?



Stewart Rawlings Mott: "He had established himself as a prodigy of political philanthropy at the age of 30, contributing \$365,000 to various politicians in a single election year in the hope of advancing the cause of peace on earth."

Jill Krenetz

By PATRICK J. OWENS
For *DETROIT* Magazine

Arrow-straight Stewart Rawlings Mott sits on a charming old wooden chair behind an equally charming, equally straightforward old wooden desk in a ninth-floor cubbyhole on Madison Avenue in New York.

"Yes, this is a handsome room," he agrees, "but I can't take any credit for it. It really belongs to Miss ~~Paula~~ ~~Truman~~. The truth is, my staff has grown so much that I've been crowded out and don't have an office of my own here any more."

In this emergency, Mott has leased the topmost, or 42nd floor, of a Madison Avenue building. He and his five assistants will have plenty of room up there to sprawl around. Pending the migration, Mott mostly works at home, in a \$100,000 Park Avenue penthouse about a mile from his office.

He is wearing a necktie boldly patterned in red, green and blue, a shirt with wide but faint gray stripes, and a rich blue-gray suit with vest that he bought in Pakistan when he hitchhiked around the world in 1958 and 1959.

There is a chrysanthemum in his button hole.

Mott is six foot two inches tall but looks taller, weighs 190 pounds but looks skinnier. He sits with assurance but not aplomb, like a man taking his first jet airplane ride on his own jet.

He is explaining quietly, careful not to seem to be making any demands, what he thinks a story about him should be like.

"So often these things come off featuring the peculiarities of personality or the amounts of money involved.

"I don't look upon these things as my peculiar uniqueness. My uniqueness is that, having inherited a lot of money, I have chosen to put it to work in an anti-establishment pattern of causes.

"I know of very few examples of young people who have chosen to devote themselves full-time to a lifetime of public service."

Outside, it is raining buckets, drenching Mahattan and driving inhabitants into museums and saloons.

Stewart Mott's bicycle, a Raleigh sporting model made in England, is stoutly padlocked to a post in front of his building. Big, tearful raindrops roll down the three Rockefeller - for - President bumper stickers fastened on the bike, one of them ingeniously entwined in the front

wheel.

Cheerful Stewart Mott smiles his gentle smile and offers coffee. All of his people respond, as they come in and out on the most urgent business only, with gentle smiles of their own.

"I devote 60 to 90 percent of my energies to public service now," Mott continues. "I use what time I can spare for looking after investment opportunities and my financial affairs.

"So many other young people who are wealthy spend so much of their time and attention on themselves, on their clothes or their apartments, without ever really getting down to the nitty-gritty of what life is all about."

Stewart seldom spends more than \$70 on a suit. He lists himself in the New York telephone directory as a philanthropist.

Mott is the son of Charles Stewart (C. S.) Mott of Flint, long the largest single stockholder in General Motors, the world's biggest corporation, the senior member of the GM board, and approximately as rich as Croesus.

C. S. Mott is now 93. When he was 30, which is Stewart's present age, he was moving his own father's wagon wheel factory from Utica, N.Y., to commence in earnest the laying up of his great fortune.

Only in his later years did the senior Mr. Mott turn his full attention to philanthropy, creating the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, now the nation's fourth largest, with about \$430 million in General Motors stock and other assets.

The elder Mr. Mott, who is still spry enough to make a speech or take a walk, had three children by his first wife and three more by his fourth, the present Mrs. Mott.

Stewart was in the second brood. His father was 63 when he was born. Despite the age difference, or maybe because of it, Stewart has been uncommonly delineated in his character and behavior by his father. In almost every way, the younger Mott is either markedly like his father, or pointedly unlike him.

Stewart had established his own foundation while still in his 20s, and established himself as a prodigy of political philanthropy at the age of 30, contributing \$365,000 to various politicians in a single election year in the hope of advancing the cause of peace on earth.

When he talks about automobiles, which isn't often, Stewart sounds faintly anti - automobile. He commutes from his penthouse to his office on his bike and he owns, for slightly more extended excursions, a

1966 Volkswagen convertible. The senior Mr. Mott has ridden in it once. "I drove him across town," Stewart recalled. "And he said it was the bumpiest ride he ever had."

But Stewart has also been an early bloomer as a millionaire investor and entrepreneur.

"Seven years ago," he explained, "Father settled on his children all they will inherit. My money was left with father's financial staff. Two years ago (when Stewart was 28) I asked to take over my own portfolio. Father resisted at first, but he has become reconciled, as people in a family do. So far, at least, I think we've done rather well with the portfolio."

A well-groomed gray head poked into the room.

"If I can interrupt you for just a moment," asked John Hodgkin, Stewart's financial advisor, "you might want to consider something I just got a call on."

"What is it?" Mott asked.

"About a hundred thousand of Booth Newspapers stock."

"You ask that," Stewart smiles, "with a newspaperman from Michigan in the room?"

After everybody smiles, Mott says, "What do you know about it?"

"It's performed very well, and has very good prospects. But there might be one problem."

Hodgkin, who used to be chief accountant for the Rockefeller family, crinkles his mouth into genteel disdain.

"Dividends," he says. "I understand that the dividends are very good."

"What facts have you got on it?" Mott asks.

"I don't have anything written down."

"Is it that urgent?"

The look on Stewart Mott's face says both that \$100,000 is too much money to spend without some concrete information about the investment and that \$100,000 is not a big enough deal to go rushing around about.

"Why don't you see what you can get me on earnings and prospects and dividends," he says.

Stewart Mott is now worth about \$5 million in his own name. He also has the income from a trust established by his father that will one day become the property of the children that Stewart, a bachelor, doesn't have yet.

His income totals about \$1 million a year. If the figure seems impressive to wage-slaves and other readers, it

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The son, Stewart Rawlings Mott: To explain himself he turns to the myth of Sisyphus.



The father, Charles Stewart Mott of Flint: Long the largest single stockholder in General Motors.

Tony Spina

Stewart Mott: A Record Of Remarkable Philanthropy

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does not bulk large against C. S. Mott's potentialities as a benefactor.

In all, Stewart estimated, the Mott family fortune, including the foundation and all of the money C. S. Mott has settled on his kin, adds up to \$800 million.

Hodgkin has spent part of this damp, rainy day explaining that Mott can't afford many ordinary investments, like those that pay good dividends. The tax bite on them is too great.

Financial experts for the wealthy must, he has made clear, be at least as knowledgeable about taxes as they are about investments, if indeed there can be any distinction between the two specialties.

The quest is for tax shelters, investments that will yield returns on which little, if any, federal income tax will have to be paid.

Mott owns \$3 million in municipal bonds, and pays no tax at all on his income from them.

An Arizona orange grove, a computer leasing firm, an oil exploration company and something called Red Diamond Marine have all attracted his money because they are tax shelters.

"Red Diamond Marine," Hodgkin has explained, "is either a Liberian tanker firm owned by some Panamanians or a Panamanian tanker firm owned by some Liberians. Anyway, it's run by some Greeks, and it's very attractive, from the tax point of view." Almost anything connected with oil seems to be.

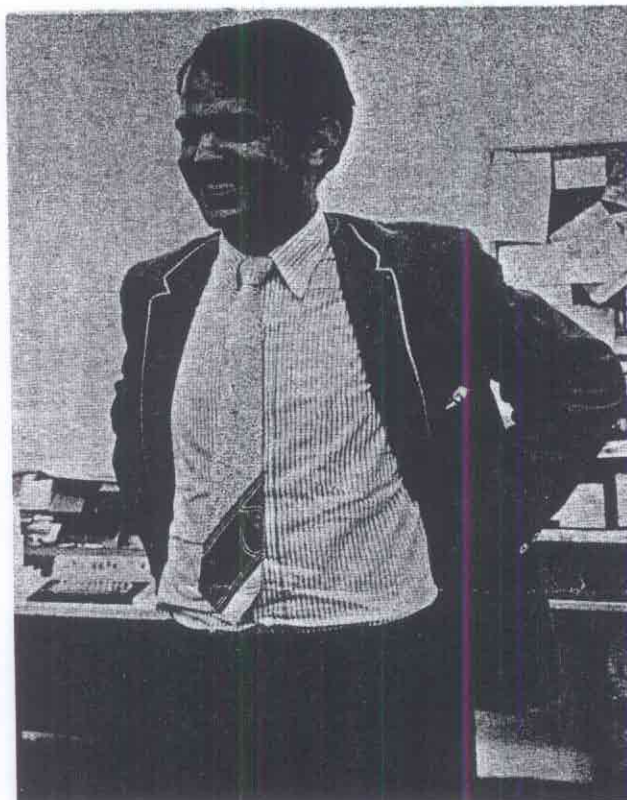
Mott is pursuing a tax theory which requires him to give away at least 90 percent of his taxable income each year.

"I really do feel," he said reflectively, "That I've focused on the two major problems facing humanity. Those are population control and arms control. Sometimes, though, I wish I could be more singleminded about my focus on those two things."

His discursions have included the American Schizophrenia Foundation, the Urban League of Flint, Ramparts Magazine, in which he is an investor, and the Deerfield Academy, of which he is an alumnus.

He is interested in the performing arts and expends \$5,000 a year on New York Pro Musica, a group which performs baroque and renaissance music with great style and authenticity. Typically, Mott has come to head Pro Musica's fund-raising activities, and has increased contributions.

year. He tends to follow his money into groups that interest him and his one regret about the many groups in which he has become enmeshed in the past few years is that, "I so



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often wind up on the fund-raising end."

His interest in population control has taken him into such byways as the National Sex and Drug Forum and the Ad Hoc Committee for Abortion Law Reform but his benefactions in this first of his "major areas" have showered primarily on Planned Parenthood-World Population, the big gun in the field in the United States.

In 1963, Mott got into the group by starting a Flint chapter. Three years later, his foundation gave \$99,000 to the chapter.

Mott is now a member of Planned Parenthood's national executive committee and chairman of its bequest and long-range planning committees. He and other enthusiasts quietly rejoiced a few weeks ago when they were able to persuade the board to endorse abortion reform.

A few weeks ago, Mott gave a

party for about 60 of the group's top people at his penthouse, an 1,800-square-foot eyrie with another 1,100 square feet of living space in terraces outside its sunny windows. Stewart often likes to minimize his personal expenditures and he says when asked that the place has "eight small rooms," emphasizing the word small.

It has floors of Mexican terra cotta tile and an alley cat named Shalom as its only other permanent resident. Mott bought it about two years ago, on moving from Flint to Manhattan. He is in the middle of an ambitious reconstruction effort that foundered last spring, when he and a contractor disagreed. Mott has been too busy with politics most of the time since to replace the defector but everybody at the party had a lovely time and no one paid any attention to such signs of the disruption as could be glimpsed.

Mott's reputation as a stupendous giver has not, however, been made in population control but in his other major area, arms control. In his opinion, the most urgent business in the arms control line is an end to the war in Vietnam.

A tabulation personally prepared for the duplicator by Mott (who is a swift and accurate typist and who likes to practice the skill) details the expenditure of \$365,000 he spent in 1968 in pursuit of the theory that the way to end the war was to elect Americans to office who were opposed to it.

Like the federal government, Mott likes to stretch his benefactions by the matching fund principle.

Last March 3, in an advertisement in New York City and outstate Michigan newspapers, he hailed George Romney for his "courage, wisdom and foresight" both in running for president and then abandoning the campaign before the New Hampshire primary. Romney, Mott told him in the ads, had earned the vice presidential nomination. Now it was Rockefeller's hour.

"As for me (Mott wrote) I am willing to pledge \$50,000 of my own personal funds to Rockefeller's campaign if . . ." His conditions were that Rockefeller must announce his candidacy by March 15, Rockefeller must clarify his views on Vietnam and offer a plan for a negotiated settlement "as soon as possible" and readers of the ads must match Mott's offer two for one, pledging at least \$100,000.

Mott raised \$144,000 with the ad. He forgave Rockefeller's failure to announce by the deadline and continued to work for his nomination.

On May 19, though he still had Rockefeller on his mind and the three Rockefeller bumper stickers on his bike, Stewart was ready to encourage Eugene McCarthy, too.

He turned out, in coarse brown corduroy jacket, a yellow shirt and a chrysanthemum, at Madison Square for a rally called to "Make the Garden Green for Gene." Mott, who relishes surprises, rendered the occasion greener than anyone had expected by contributing a check for \$50,000.

By October, with the major-party choices narrowed to Humphrey and Richard M. Nixon, Mott sat down and wrote the vice president a lengthy letter about a meeting Mott had arranged in New York City.

At the meeting, Mott said, Humphrey would encounter affluent McCarthy types.

"I cannot promise you that any of us will be willing to give a thin dime towards your campaign. And we certainly will not be functioning as a

Stewart Mott: He Does Not Portray Himself as a Contented Man

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group—each will make his own decision individually.

"We realize that you would like to have us become contributors toward your campaign, but you should not expect an immediate decision from any of us, checkbook in hand. If we become 'turned on' and enthusiastic towards your candidacy, we have the capacity to give \$1 million or more to your campaign—and raise twice or three times that amount. But we will each make our own individual judgments on the basis of how you answer our several questions and how you conduct your campaign in the coming weeks."

Six of Mott's affluent 15 disavowed plans for a meeting after Mott's letter got into the papers. The meeting was never held. Humphrey got Mott's vote but not a red cent. Mott is faintly optimistic that Nixon, who didn't get any money either, will end the war.

When he muses about his own future, Mott thinks he would like to spend at least 10 years in government, either in an elective or appointive job.

About a year ago, he seriously considered running for Congress against Flint's popular and aggressive freshman Republican incumbent, Don Riegler. He told his father of the plunge: he was thinking of taking.

"Father, as you no doubt know, is pretty much of a Goldwater-Reagan Republican. He said he saw no reason for me running. He was very fond of Don Riegler and thought he was a very promising young man.

"So I asked him, 'If your own son ran how would you feel about this?'

"It didn't seem to give him pause at all. 'You have your views and I

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Stewart with Mrs. Charles Mott at a wedding in 1963.

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have mine,' he explained.

"So I asked him, 'With your own son in the race, could you take a back seat and not say anything?'

"And he answered, 'I don't see why I should.'"

Mott didn't run, and one reason why may have been that Riegler was probably unbeatable anyway. William Blue, whom Riegler trounced, got \$2,000 of Mott's money.

Stewart's attitude toward his father is mixed of reverence and impatience.

He recalls growing up in Flint, a happy child, occasionally regretful that his dad was too old to rough-house. He remembers Applewood, the 64-acre family estate near downtown Flint as a "country club for kids" where Stewart and the children of white-collar fathers who lived half a mile away could bowl, shoot pool and do almost anything else that might interest a boy. Stewart had nearer neighbors, the children of blue-collar auto workers, and he doesn't know to this day why he played with them so seldom.

Before he came to New York, Stewart made an heroic (for him) offer of reconciliation with his father. He offered to go into the Mott Foundation even though he considers it parochial, because its benefactions are confined almost exclusively to Flint, and not very chal-

lenging, because it concentrates on such establishment-endorsed activities as adult education.

Stewart's offer was rejected. "Father said we would just argue all the time and this wouldn't be good for him or myself. This created in me a deep sense of rejection, but I think I'm pretty well over that. Father was no doubt right, and I'm sure I'm happier pursuing my own interests."

Stewart Mott examined the world and his place in it in 1958, and decided to chuck the business career he was training for at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He dropped out and spent a year hitchhiking around the world, picking up the blue-gray suit en route.

When he went back to college, it was to Columbia, for degrees in business administration and comparative literature and graduate work in English literature. He got good grades without working very hard for them, having an IQ of 135, and was Phi Beta Kappa.

He spent a year as an executive trainee in such disparate ventures of his father's as Michigan department stores, a Florida cattle plantation and the St. Louis County Water Co. in Missouri, then taught English at Eastern Michigan University at Ypsilanti for a year.

He "found" himself, at least for now, when he decided to become a

philanthropist and investor.

His life in New York is a ball, book-store browsing, tennis, dinner and concerts with a pretty girl he is serious about, political rallies and the typewriter to which he returns when he wants to write a letter or prepare a press release for the duplicator.

But Stewart Mott does not portray himself as a contented man.

When he talks about himself in the broadest philosophical terms, he returns to the myth of Sisyphus to explain his behavior. Sisyphus spent his days rolling an enormous rock to the top of a hill, knowing that once it had reached the top it would roll down again.

"This may seem a funny way for me to look at life," Stewart says, "but that's the way I feel." Then he laughs, gently, and is able to laugh again when told that his rock is not round but long and green. [D]

