



Blaine Townsend Phillips

May 3, 1930 - December 3, 2025

BLAINE TOWNSEND PHILLIPS, of Chadds Ford, PA, and of Easton, MD, died December 3, 2025, at the age of 95. The son of the late Emmons Blaine and Mae Townsend Phillips, he was born in Frankford, Sussex County, Delaware, on May 3, 1930, and always was proud of his lower Delaware heritage - the ancestors of all four of his grandparents, the Townsends, Grays, Melsons and Phillips, were early settlers of the area more than 200 years preceding his birth.

After attending small public schools in Sussex County, he entered the University of Virginia where over his first four years he achieved the highest academic rank in his class and at graduation from the College was awarded an Honors Degree, the University's highest bachelor's degree. In addition to Phi Beta Kappa, and membership in TILKA and IMP Societies, he was President of the Raven Society.

His achievements continued during his three years in The Law School, where he was a Welch scholar and a DuPont Scholarship recipient, a member of the Law Review, and elected President of the university-wide student governing body. There he proposed a separation of its historical legislative and judicial functions, which led to the creation by University officials of the Judiciary Committee in 1954, and which stands today as a pillar of student governance at the University of Virginia. At graduation, he received the Raven Award for

outstanding achievements and manifold contributions to the University. At his death it was revealed for the first time that he was a member of the University's secret Seven Society.

Phillips joined the law firm that became Potter Anderson. He spent the next 45 years of his career as a practicing lawyer with the same firm, eventually heading the firm as Managing Partner and as Senior Partner. He served for years on the Board of Delaware Bar Examiners (Chairman 1984-1986), and in 1991 was appointed by the Governor as Chairman of Delaware's Judicial Nominating Committee. Phillips retired from active practice in 1993 and became "Of Counsel" with his firm, a status which continued the remainder of his life. In 1999, the University of Virginia School of Law established a permanent Chair in his honor, The Blaine T. Phillips Distinguished Professorship in Environmental Law.

His "second" career, which commenced before his retirement, involved a heavy commitment to numerous charitable endeavors. In cultural and foundation efforts, he served on the Board of Winterthur Museum & Gardens (and was its Secretary and Vice-Chairman) for more than 30 years, on the Board of Hagley Museum & Library (President 2002-2003), and as Trustee and President of Fair Play Foundation for more than 25 years.

He also was President of Mt. Cuba Center for 30 years, where in addition to leading its traditional horticultural endeavors, he initiated as a parallel mission a quiet but resolute effort to protect carefully targeted vital open-space properties throughout the region that were threatened by dense residential or commercial development. Mt. Cuba Center provided the acquisition funds from its own sources and arranged ownership to be transferred to suitable non-profit entities, under terms of permanent protection, which maintained the properties for public use and enjoyment forever. Over the years the program grew and enjoyed several major successes.

In academic matters, he was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Board of Visitors of Delaware State University, and until his death, he was Trustee of the Alumni Board of the University of Virginia Endowment Fund. His substantial contributions to the conservation of natural resources included service on the boards of Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Red Clay Reservation, the Coldwater Conservation Fund of Trout Unlimited, the Council of National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Wild Earth Allies, and Delaware Wild Lands. An abiding interest of both Phillips and his wife Susan was furthering their knowledge of sub-Saharan Africa, focusing primarily on fauna and flora. Together they took many adventurous safaris to remote areas in their quest to find, study, and help in the conservation of open spaces and endangered species. In 2013 his lifetime achievements as a conservationist were honored by his election as an officer of Fauna & Flora International at an event in London celebrating its 110th anniversary as the world's oldest international conservation organization.

Phillips enjoyed several clubs. He founded The Virginia Club in Delaware and was its first President; was a longtime member of the Wilmington Club (President 1991-1993); and Vicmead Hunt Club (President 1972-1974); Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, VA; Chesapeake Bay Yacht Club; Legal Limit Dove Club in Easton, MD; and Vienna Canvasback and Rat Club on the Nanticoke River in Maryland.

His recreational interests were fishing, wingshooting, retrievers, trees and Chesapeake Bay boating, in that order. He was an accomplished fly fisherman who angled for trout from Patagonia to Alaska, but his favorite was the Atlantic Salmon. He did not quite achieve his goal of catching and releasing 1,000 during his lifetime, but on many trips to Russia, Norway, Iceland and Canada, he came close, and in the effort succeeded in enjoying many of his happiest

experiences. He was an enthusiastic hunter and spent many pleasurable times at his getaways on the Chesapeake wingshooting doves and teal with his friends and Labrador Retriever companions. He had a great interest in trees and planted so many he said he needed a shoehorn to fit more in his properties. He loved the out-of-doors and was at home on his Maryland farm, on the ponds and in the marshes, or in his skiff with his Labs on the Bay. He was deeply committed to the protection and conservation of the region's unique natural resources for those coming behind.

He is survived by his wife and best friend, Susan Simmons Phillips, and by three children - his daughter Andrea P. Salley and her husband Thomas R. Salley, III, of Sperryville, VA, and their children Lawton Phillips Salley and his wife Anne-Sophie Mahle Salley and their daughter Cosima, of New York City, and Charlotte Whitcomb Salley and her wife Grace Ann Roberts, of Charlottesville, VA; his daughter J. Riley Miller and her husband Edgar R. Miller, III, of Ruxton, MD, and their children Edgar (Ted) R. Miller, IV, and Anna Riley Miller; and his son Blaine T. Phillips, Jr., and his wife Eliza Vellines Phillips, of Rockland, DE, and their sons William (Witt) Townsend Phillips and John (Jack) Southerland Phillips; and by his stepdaughter Harriet Cella and her husband Raymond White, and her children McKay, Ellie and Ned, and by his stepsons John and Louis and their families, all of St. Louis, Missouri.

Interment will be private

Tribute Wall

AS

“ Abe, Yudith, Daphna & Shawn purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Blaine Townsend Phillips.



Abe, Yudith, Daphna & Shawn - December 21, 2025 at 01:46 PM

KS

“ To Blaine, Eliza and the extended family, please accept our best wishes following the loss of Blaine. He leaves behind an impressive, long-time career as an attorney; stewardship of organizations so loved in our community such as Winterthur, Hagley, Mt. Cuba, Fair Play and Delaware State University; and a loving family that will remember him fondly.

Kevin Sullivan - December 16, 2025 at 01:57 PM

GA

“ Glenda Andrew lit a candle in memory of Blaine Townsend Phillips



Glenda Andrew - December 11, 2025 at 06:14 AM

HF

“ Hands Family lit a candle in memory of Blaine Townsend Phillips



Hands family - December 09, 2025 at 02:15 PM

DD

“ Donnie And Amy Dulin lit a candle in memory of Blaine Townsend Phillips



Donnie and Amy Dulin - December 09, 2025 at 11:17 AM

MM

“ I had the pleasure of working with Blaine and we became friends. He was a tough cookie but was very gentle once you got to know him. I will miss his sense of humor and our talks. He truly loved his wife, Susan he adored her so much! Blaine was very proud of his children and grandchildren and their accomplishments. God bless all of you.

Mary Ellen Manley - December 09, 2025 at 07:12 AM