

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## **Josephine Long Biddle bequeaths \$1 million to support age-related macular degeneration research at UT Southwestern**

DALLAS – Sept. 14, 2004 – When macular degeneration robbed Josephine “Jodie” Long Biddle of the ability to paint – one of her life’s passions – she vowed to do something to help eradicate the debilitating eye disease. The result was a \$1 million bequest to establish two chairs in age-related macular degeneration (AMD) research at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

The gift, which was made to Southwestern Medical Foundation, will establish the Josephine Long Biddle Chair in Age-Related Macular Degeneration Research and the Royal C. Miller Chair in Age-Related Macular Degeneration Research.

“Jodie was a wonderful artist who completely lost her ability to paint,” said Lyn Viles, a close family friend. “Legally blind, she felt that macular degeneration had stolen something very important from her. But she was determined to make a difference in the lives of other people living with this disease and believed wholeheartedly in the AMD research being done at UT Southwestern. This gift was a natural decision for her – and one she felt very good about.”

AMD, which plagued Mrs. Biddle for nearly a decade before her death in 2003, is an incurable progressive eye condition that affects as many as 15 million Americans. The disease attacks the macula of the eye, where sharpest central vision occurs, resulting in a loss of all but the outermost, peripheral vision. Mrs. Biddle’s late sister, Virginia Murchison Linthicum, a major UT Southwestern benefactor, also suffered from the disease.

“Mrs. Biddle had a desire to support research aimed at determining the underlying causes of this devastating visual problem. She wanted to do whatever she could to help prevent its occurrence in future generations and find better means of treatment for those already suffering from AMD,” said Dr. James P. McCulley, chairman of ophthalmology at UT Southwestern and holder of the David Bruton Jr. Chair in Ophthalmology. “We are tremendously grateful for this generous bequest, which will substantially support the expansion of our macular degeneration research program.”

Dr. McCulley, who oversaw Mrs. Biddle’s treatment in the final years of her life, is director of the Jean H. & John T. Walter Jr. Center for Research in Age-Related Macular Degeneration.

Mrs. Biddle was a dedicated supporter of the arts and historic preservation. The Texas native

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was a co-founder of TACA, a nonprofit organization that has distributed more than \$13 million to Dallas-area arts groups since its inception in 1966. She also was active in the Dallas County Heritage Society, the Dallas Civic Opera, and the Dallas Symphony Association. She was a supporter of Northwood University, which named her a distinguished woman in 1971.

Born in Commerce, Mrs. Biddle studied at Kidd-Key College and Music Conservatory in Sherman. She was first married to Royal C. “Pug” Miller of Dallas, the grandson of a Dallas pioneer who built the Millermore House. It and the Miller family cabin, which housed the first Dallas public school, are part of Old City Park partly due to Mrs. Biddle’s preservation efforts.

Several years after Mr. Miller’s death in 1973, Mrs. Biddle married George E. Biddle. He died in 1991.

“This gift is significant not only because it supports research of great importance, but because it stems from Mrs. Biddle’s desire to spare others the suffering that she herself faced,” said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. “We are thankful to Mrs. Biddle for this generous bequest, which will be of enormous assistance in our efforts to find better ways to prevent and treat age-related macular degeneration.”

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