

## SIDNEY UNOBSKEY

**SAN FRANCISCO** - Sidney Unobskey, international real estate developer, philanthropist, and former Chairman of the San Francisco Planning Commission died on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, at his home in San Francisco at the age of 83, after a long fight with cancer.

Unobskey was an early innovator in shopping mall development, with projects in Europe, Australia, and the United States. As a developer, he pioneered the concept of multiple theaters under one roof. In 1967, Sidney took a leave of absence from his development career to work on Senator Robert Kennedy's plans for the redevelopment of Bedford-Stuyvesant, an economically disadvantaged area of Brooklyn, New York. In 1968, Sidney developed a strategy for Senator Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign. Unobskey used his business contacts to set up events in suburban shopping centers throughout the country because as Sidney told Kennedy, the suburbs are where the voters are.

In the city of Calais, Maine, where Sidney grew up, he and his wife, Nancy, introduced programs for recreation, trail development, and math and computer education. They also founded Unobskey College in Calais. In 2006, President George W. Bush appointed Sidney to the Roosevelt Campobello International Commission (RCIC), on Campobello Island. In the 14 years that Sidney was on the commission, he worked on improving the outdoor areas for hiking, biking, and camping. He also worked to make the island a more sought-after vacation area that would attract visitors from both Canada and the United States to the St. Croix River Valley. In 2009, Husson University awarded Unobskey an honorary doctorate in business administration for extraordinary entrepreneurial creativity, for transforming

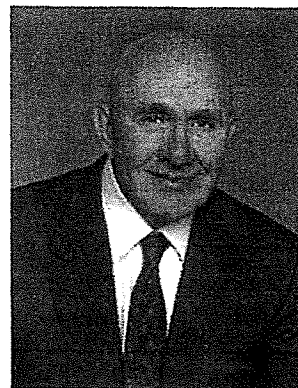
cities around the globe, and for his passion and generosity towards the people of the St. Croix River Valley.

Unobskey was a philanthropist for education, rural Maine economic development, and the arts. He endowed a chair in American History at Yale College in honor of his father, Arthur Unobskey. Sidney Unobskey was born in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, on April 18, 1937. As a young boy, he worked in the family store as it developed into an icon in Washington county. He earned degrees from Phillip's Academy, Andover, and Yale University.

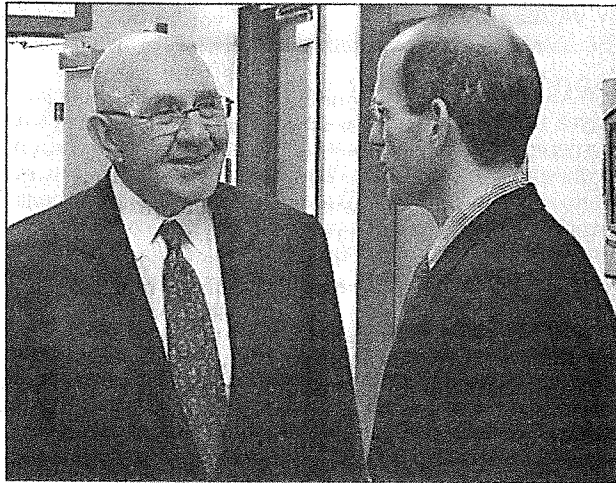
In 1961, Sidney married Nancy Goldstein, the start of a 60-year partnership of love, family, philanthropy, and the arts. Sidney's career took the family from New York to Philadelphia, Boston, Brussels, Detroit, San Francisco to Robbinston Maine, with projects in Hawaii, Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia. In 1991, Unobskey was appointed Chairman of the San Francisco Planning Commission by Mayor Frank Jordan. Unobskey helped the city recover from the 1989 earthquake with visionary plans for reconstruction.

Sidney is survived by his wife, Nancy Unobskey of San Francisco; daughter, Laura Unobskey; son, Arthur Unobskey and his wife, Deborah Reck, with grandchildren, Oscar, Nadav, David, Ella, and Noa.

Sidney will be interred in Bangor, Maine. Due to COVID-19, no public services will be held. In lieu of flowers, please contribute to the Unobskey Scholars Program. This program provides scholarships to Phillips Academy, Andover for rural economically-disadvantaged high school students from Washington County, Maine and Charlotte County, New Brunswick. Unobskey Scholars Program, care of Unobskey Foundation, 1000 Mason St., San Francisco, CA 94108.



SIDNEY UNOBSKEY



BDN FILE

Gov. John Baldacci speaks with Sidney Unobskey at Husson University in 2007.

# Developer Sidney Unobskey dies

## Philanthropist grew up in Calais

BY EMILY BURNHAM  
BDN STAFF

Sidney Unobskey, who grew up in Calais to become a nationally prominent real estate developer and pioneer the concept of the movie multiplex, died on Jan. 20. He was 83.

Unobskey died in San Francisco after a long battle with cancer, according to his obituary, published Wednesday in the Bangor Daily News.

Unobskey was best known as one of the early innovators in shopping mall and movie theater design, pioneering the concept of the multiplex, which houses multiple theaters under one roof. In 1967 and 1968, he worked on Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's plans to redevelop the then-struggling Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, and later on Kennedy's fateful 1968 presidential campaign. He used contacts from real estate development to set up campaign events at shopping centers in voter-rich suburbs, according to his obituary.

Last year, Unobskey launched the Unobskey Scholars Program, which each year will send 12 students from nine high schools in Washington County and Charlotte County, New Brunswick, to a summer session at Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts, where Unobskey attended high school.

"Phillips Academy has had many famous students — two presidents, five Nobel Prize winners, numerous actors and actresses, and coach Bill Belichick," Unobskey said last year in announcing the program. "My hope is that someday a student from Washington or Charlotte Counties will be on the list of famous Phillips Academy attendees."

Unobskey was born in 1937.

His grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from Russia, via Ellis Island, in the early 20th century, and the family settled in Eastport in 1905, eventually opening Unobskey's Store in nearby Calais in 1911, a clothing store that was in business for nearly 70 years.

In 1991, he was named chair of the San Francisco Planning Commission, helping guide the city's recovery from the 6.9 magnitude earthquake that hit the city in 1989, killing more than 60 people and causing more than \$5 billion in property damage.

In Maine, Unobskey was a well known supporter of education and economic development in Washington County, funding programs to expand local students' opportunities.

"Sidney grew up in Calais, and while his professional life took him around the world, he never forgot his roots," said Richard Warren, publisher of the Bangor Daily News, who served with Unobskey on the Roosevelt Campobello International Commission, the body that oversees the international park on Campobello Island. "He was a determined supporter of tourism and development in both Washington County and Charlotte County, New Brunswick. When he had an idea he felt worth pursuing, he was tenacious."

Unobskey and his wife, Nancy, founded Unobskey College in Calais in 1998, which for 12 years offered college classes in one of Maine's poorest counties with limited access to higher education. The college eventually became part of Husson University, to which the Unobskeys donated the \$1.25 million Unobskey College building in 2007. Husson ended the college in 2010, citing low student numbers.

In 2009, Husson awarded Unobskey an honorary degree.

Unobskey's grandmother, Sarah, founded the first and only synagogue in Washington County, the Congregation of Chaim Yosef, which was active until 1974.

"Sarah liked Eastport. Its climate and look reminded her of home," Sidney Unobskey said in an article published by the Maine Historical Society. "Even better... they could buy land here, something not allowed Jews in Russia."

Unobskey's father, Arthur, had an eighth-grade education, but was determined to send his son to college. Sidney Unobskey wrote in a 2009 BDN op-ed. Unobskey attended the prestigious Phillips Academy Andover, then went on to Yale University.

"Arthur knew something about the importance of education," Unobskey wrote. "He and my mother made great sacrifices to send me to college."

Unobskey later endowed a chair in American History at Yale in his father's honor.

In 2006, President George W. Bush appointed him to the Roosevelt Campobello International Commission. In the 14 years he served on the commission, Unobskey worked on improving Campobello's hiking, biking, and camping infrastructure, and promoting the island as a tourist destination.

Unobskey and his wife were married for 60 years, and they and their family traveled throughout North America, Europe, Southeast Asia and Australia during Unobskey's long career in real estate development.

He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter, and five grandchildren.