



## Marcel Molins

November 1, 1936 - March 1, 2021

Marcel Molins (known in Spain as Marcel Molins Viaplana) passed away on March 1, 2021 at his home in Chicago, Illinois.

He was a devoted husband to Martina Molins; loving father to Tom Molins (Elizabeth Persichetti Molins) and Nicole Molins Nash (Arnold Nash III); adoring grandfather to Emily Molins, Sophie Molins, Chloe Molins, Marcel Nash and Arnie Nash IV; caring brother to Marina Molins Viaplana (Antoni Mestre Prades); beloved uncle to Alex Mestre Molins (Isa Mas Talens), Irmina Mestre Molins (Pau Miralles Sabadell), Marc Mestre Molins, and Magali Mestre Molins (Francesc Vendrell Laborda); and cherished grand-uncle to Nil Mestre Mas, Lluç Mestre Mas, Albert Mestre Mas, Marina Miralles Mestre, Pere Miralles Mestre, Jordi Miralles Mestre, Toni Miralles Mestre, Xavi Vendrell Mestre and Juan Vendrell Mestre.

Marcel was born in Granollers, Spain, in 1936 during the Spanish civil war to Pere Molins

Canudes and Rosa Viaplana Mitad. He attended high school at the Institute de Enseñanza Media de Granollers. He then attended the University of Barcelona, graduating in 1958 with a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) degree.

Marcel had an adventurous spirit and a thirst to see the world at a young age. Through a series of scholarships, he studied in London, Strasbourg, Hamburg, Trieste, and Helsinki, before coming to Chicago in 1963 to study (on yet another scholarship). This international curiosity and drive to learn would continue to feature prominently in his professional life.

He married Martina, the love of his life, in 1963. While Marcel's parents undoubtedly would have liked that he choose a Catalan wife and stay closer to home, he fell head over heels in love with Martina, a young German woman (whose parents similarly would have preferred that she stay local and marry a German) whom he met while studying in Strasbourg, France a year earlier. Not long after his wedding, Marcel headed to Chicago in the fall of 1963 to attend

Northwestern University School of Law on a Fulbright scholarship. There he studied

international/comparative law and received a Master of Laws (LL.M) degree in 1964. He then decided to attend law school in the United States to obtain a Juris Doctor (JD) degree so that he could work as a licensed lawyer here.

While law school normally takes three years to complete, Marcel finished in two, graduating in 1966. Even though English was obviously not his primary language, he graduated with honors. After passing the Illinois bar exam, Marcel started working as a lawyer for the law firm, Baker McKenzie, when it was still a relatively small, Chicago-based law firm (and long before it

became the globally recognized firm that it is today). Just four years later (in 1970), Marcel became a partner. He held leadership positions at the office and firm level, serving for a time as head of the Chicago office and as a member of the firm's executive committee. But Marcel was most invigorated by the practice of law and helping clients. His practice focused on international transactions law, and he mainly advised companies investing and doing business in Latin America, Spain, and the rest of Europe. He also derived great satisfaction in mentoring younger lawyers at the firm, especially those rotating to the Chicago office from foreign countries. Most of all, he treasured the friendships with colleagues and clients. Marcel's devotion to the firm and his clients was evident by the fact that he continued to work there long past the age that most lawyers retire. Marcel was 80 when he finally retired in 2016, though he would still periodically come into the office after that to stay

connected with colleagues.

While Marcel lived his entire adult life thousands of miles from his homeland, Marcel never lost touch with his Catalan and Spanish roots. Whenever he could, he visited his family back home in Granollers. Those visits became more frequent after Marcel successfully convinced Baker McKenzie to open a Barcelona office. Marcel particularly enjoyed eating the delicious home cooked meals prepared by his mom and sister that were made with fresh vegetables from the family “campo.” Although Marcel had only one sister (with whom he was always very close despite their age difference and geographic distance), his extended family was quite large. Because his mother had six siblings and his dad had four, Marcel had more than 20 cousins, with whom he spent lots of time growing up and with whom he remained close after he left for Chicago. Marcel seemed most in his element when he was back home at large family gatherings, regaling family with stories about his life in Chicago and his travels.

During his life, Marcel was an enthusiastic promoter of Spain. He championed Spain for its culture and as a burgeoning place to do business after Franco's dictatorship ended in

1973. Marcel was for many decades actively involved with the Instituto Cervantes in Chicago, an organization that promotes the study and teaching of the Spanish language and culture. For his efforts, Marcel was honored by the King of Spain. In 1997, he was granted the Orden del Mérito Civil (Order of Civil Merit); and in 2009, he was granted the Orden de Isabel la Católica (Order of Isabella the Catholic). Both orders were granted in recognition of his contributions and services for the benefit of Spain.

Even though he lived in the United States for nearly 60 years, Marcel never lost his strong Catalan/Spanish accent. Nor did he try to. He was unapologetically and proudly a Catalan and Spaniard. His accent was part of his charm, as were his malapropisms and minor grammatical errors. In conversations he frequently used improper pronouns and he said certain

English expressions slightly incorrectly. He would say things such as "Don't put all your potatoes in one basket" and "That's comparing apples to pears." It is possible that some of those expressions were not malapropisms at all, and instead were the English translations of Catalan expressions.

Whatever their derivation, they would bring a bemused smile to a listener's face as they were said in Marcel's thick accent and with the usual happy glint in his eye.

Marcel spoke seven modern languages. In addition to English, Catalan and Spanish, he also spoke Italian, Portuguese, French and German. These language skills were undoubtedly useful in Marcel's international law practice and while traveling. Because Marcel was a big fan of the opera, these language skills also allowed him to enjoy opera performances without the need to read the supertitles.

Even though Marcel was extremely smart, he did not have a sense of self-importance or take himself too seriously. Marcel was very practical and modest. As such, he did not have a need for extravagant things or luxury items. The fanciest car he ever owned was a used Toyota Corolla. So long as his clothes still fit, he felt no need to replace them. At the office, he often would wear suits and ties that were decades old, but still in good condition. Around the house, he frequently wore hand-me-down shirts and sweaters that his son had worn in high school.

This trait was undoubtedly a byproduct of his upbringing, but it also made gift-shopping for him very difficult.

Marcel was a true gentleman. Not only was he exceedingly polite and respectful, but he was kind and truly cared about others. He was generous with his time – whether in mentoring young lawyers or helping his neighbors while serving as president of his condominium association (which he did for over 30 years).

Marcel was also a fine sportsman and athlete, and he took pride in staying fit. He enjoyed playing soccer and basketball, and he also was an accomplished racquetball player. But his athletic passion was tennis. On weekends he

played tennis with his children, friends and neighbors — typically at the tennis court at his apartment building or at public courts nearby; during the week, he "victimized" work colleagues with tennis matches at the courts in Grant Park or tennis clubs near his office. He was not deterred from playing outside by the strong lakefront breezes and he was known to have even played tennis outside while it snowed. Marcel continued playing tennis into his early 80s. Marcel (or "Avi" (which is the Catalan nickname for grandpa), as he was called by his

grandchildren) relished being a grandfather and was extremely proud of his grandchildren. He enjoyed attending their milestone events and their school and out-of-school performances and took great pride in their achievements. When he could not attend events in person, he liked to hear about them or watch video recordings of them.

As Marcel's health deteriorated in his last years and limited his activities, his family and friends were his greatest source of joy and happiness. While the pandemic limited in-person gatherings, he relished the phone calls and email exchanges with family and friends. He particularly enjoyed his daily email exchanges and weekly phone calls with his sister back home in Granollers, and his frequent phone calls with his children and grandchildren. Through it all, his wife, Martina, doted on him lovingly and took care of him.

In many ways, Marcel's life was a unique Catalan version of the embodiment of the American dream. He was born in Catalonia, Spain in the middle of a civil war, and grew up during the aftermath of that war in challenging circumstances. His adventurous and entrepreneurial spirit brought him to America, and his curiosity, work ethic, drive and good nature enabled him to achieve professional success, make friends, and raise a family. He capped off that dream by becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen in November 2016 (after which he immediately (and proudly) performed his first act as a citizen by voting).

Marcel was deeply loved and respected. He will be sorely missed.

Due to the pandemic, there will be a small service for immediate family

members only.

However, the family plans to have a memorial service in the coming months when people can safely assemble.

Instead of flowers, Marcel would want you to express your love to those you cherish and, if you desire to make a financial contribution, to do so to a charity or cause that is meaningful to you.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Marcel Molins*

---

October 08, 2023 at 11:31 AM