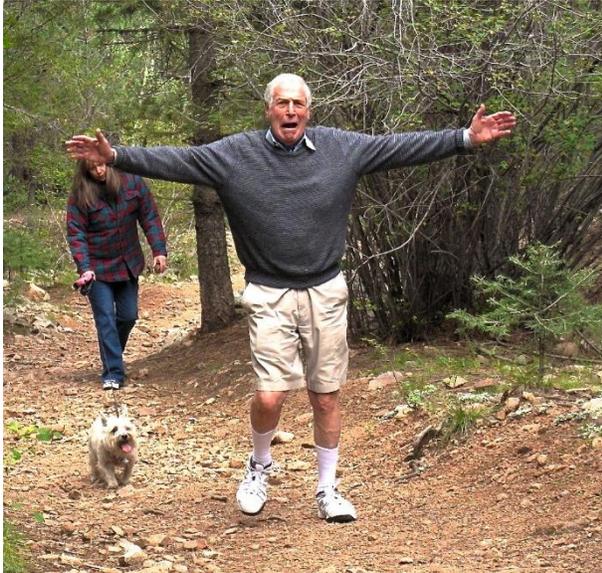


Philip Birnbaum obituary

October 3, 1928 – February 3, 2026

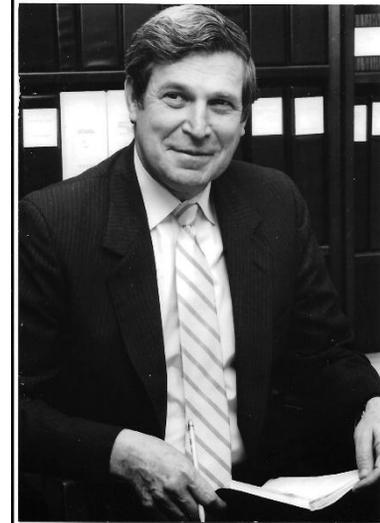


Philip Birnbaum, an accomplished development economist, passed away on February 3, 2026, at the age of 97. He resided in Great Falls, Virginia. He is survived by his son Frederic and his wife Sue, and son Nicholas and his partner Jennifer, and cousins, (grand) nephews and (grand) nieces. His beloved wife of 65 years, Joan Elaine (formerly Lewis) Birnbaum, passed away in December 2024.

He was born on October 3, 1928, in Union City, New Jersey. His parents were Henry Jack (Jacob) Birnbaum and Lena Birnbaum,

both of whom were born in Eastern Europe, and he was predeceased by his brother, Norman Birnbaum. Mr. Birnbaum attended public school in Teaneck, New Jersey. He received a B.B.S. degree from Rutgers University, and an M.A. in economics from Columbia University. He also attended Cambridge University in England on a Fulbright scholarship and received his Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University. He taught economics in the School of General Studies at Columbia University, and served in the U.S. Army from 1955 to 1957 as an instructor in the Infantry School at Fort Benning, GA.

In 1959 he joined the USAID predecessor agency ICA until USAID itself was established in 1961 and served in the U.S. Agency for International Development for over 25 years, including as Assistant Administrator for Policy and Program Coordination, as well as in overseas assignments in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. He headed the U.S. delegation in the negotiations with OPEC countries that led to the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy, and served as IFAD's first Senior Vice President from 1978-83. After his tenure at IFAD, he worked at the World Bank as Co-Financing Advisor in the Africa region, mobilizing bilateral donors' support for the Special Program for Africa,



and later as a consultant in the Inter-American Development Bank in support of Consultative Groups in Central American countries.

Philip was very proud of his career, but his family was most important to him. Not only his immediate family, but he was generous of his time and resources with his (grand) nephews and (grand) nieces. He enjoyed family vacations, including trips throughout the U.S., in Canada, Europe, and the Middle East. He also enjoyed spending time with Joan's relatives, and the two of them often traveled to New York City for visits.

He encouraged and supported Joan's lifelong love of art and her work as an artist, often helping her frame her paintings and assisting her art group with exhibitions. He was very involved with many Jewish and Israeli organizations, including Ben Gurion University of the Negev and was a member of Temple Sinai in Washington, DC. He also supported the four universities he attended and numerous wildlife organizations.

Philip enjoyed playing tennis, gardening, fishing, and participating in The Mavens men's group. He was also an avid reader of histories and biographies, particularly those pertaining to World War II and its celebrated heroes.

In the last several years, with the challenges Philip was enduring, we are grateful for the time we were able to spend with him. We will also cherish the lifetime of memories that we have.

The Memorial Service for Philip Birnbaum will be held on April 12, 2026 at 3pm ET at Temple Sinai located at 3100 Military Rd NW, Washington, DC 20015 (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/9ftfwkbsEQaQ9tae6>).