The Autry Announces the Death of Founding President and Life Trustee Joanne D. Hale (1928–2016)

Los Angeles, CA (February 4, 2016)—Autry Founding President and Life Trustee Joanne D. Hale died Tuesday, February 2, 2016, in Burbank, California. Hale is survived by her daughters Susannah Urlik, Brandy Burnett, and Andrea Haverback; son Harlan Haverback and daughter-in-law Ming Zhao; and grandchildren Kyle Haverback and Christopher Burnett. She was 87 years old.

“Joanne was more than a friend. I considered her my cherished sister. She was also the heart and soul of the Autry. As much as I feel a tremendous sense of loss, I take comfort in the fact that her vision and passion for the American West will forever illuminate the museum she co-founded,” said Jackie Autry, Founding Chair of the Autry’s board of trustees.

Together with Jackie and Gene Autry, Joanne Hale and her husband Monte (1919–2009) were instrumental in the creation, planning, construction, and continued growth of the Autry Museum. As its founding president and CEO, Hale’s style, boundless enthusiasm, and unwavering commitment helped define and shape the Autry into a world-class cultural and educational institution. She retired as president in 1999 and continued to serve on the museum's board of trustees.
"We have lost a dear friend and visionary. Throughout the Autry and beyond, Joanne was known for leading the museum with immense dedication, energy, and focus. But a second element of Joanne's great success here at the Autry was personal rather than professional—it was her deep and abiding love for this museum and its subject, the American West," said W. Richard West, Jr., the Autry's President and CEO. "We will continue to honor Joanne’s legacy each and every day."

Prior to her work at the Autry, Hale served as director of administration services for the United Sporting Goods Division of Edison Bros. and co-founder and chair of Sabre Products Inc., a computer company later purchased by Bell and Howell. Hale served on the executive committees of the Music Center, the Employers Group, and the June Ebensteiner Hospice Foundation. She also served as a member of the board of directors of United Way and was co-founder of United Way’s Women’s Initiative; the trusteeship of Arts Inc.; the board of governors of Town Hall Los Angeles; the dean’s advisory board of the UCLA School of Public Health; and the board of the Downtown Women’s Center. An alumna of UCLA, Hale received numerous honors for her contributions to the community, including commendations from both the City and County of Los Angeles.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Hale’s name to the Autry or the American Humane Association.

About the Autry Museum of the American West
The Autry is a museum dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future. The museum presents a wide range of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and performs scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry’s collection of more than 500,000 pieces of art and artifacts includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, one of the largest and most significant in the United States.