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# MAIN LINE TODAY

MARCH 1996



the  
**Prince**  
of the  
**Main Line**

**Robert Montgomery Scott  
comes home to Ardrossan.**



*Bobby Scott's  
castle-keep is called  
Ardrossan.*



*Its 650 acres  
constitute some of the  
most valuable real  
estate in America.  
These days Scott is  
confronting a  
changing world and  
his own mortality.  
As Ardrossan goes,  
so goes the fate of the  
Main Line.*

*by Mike Mallowe*

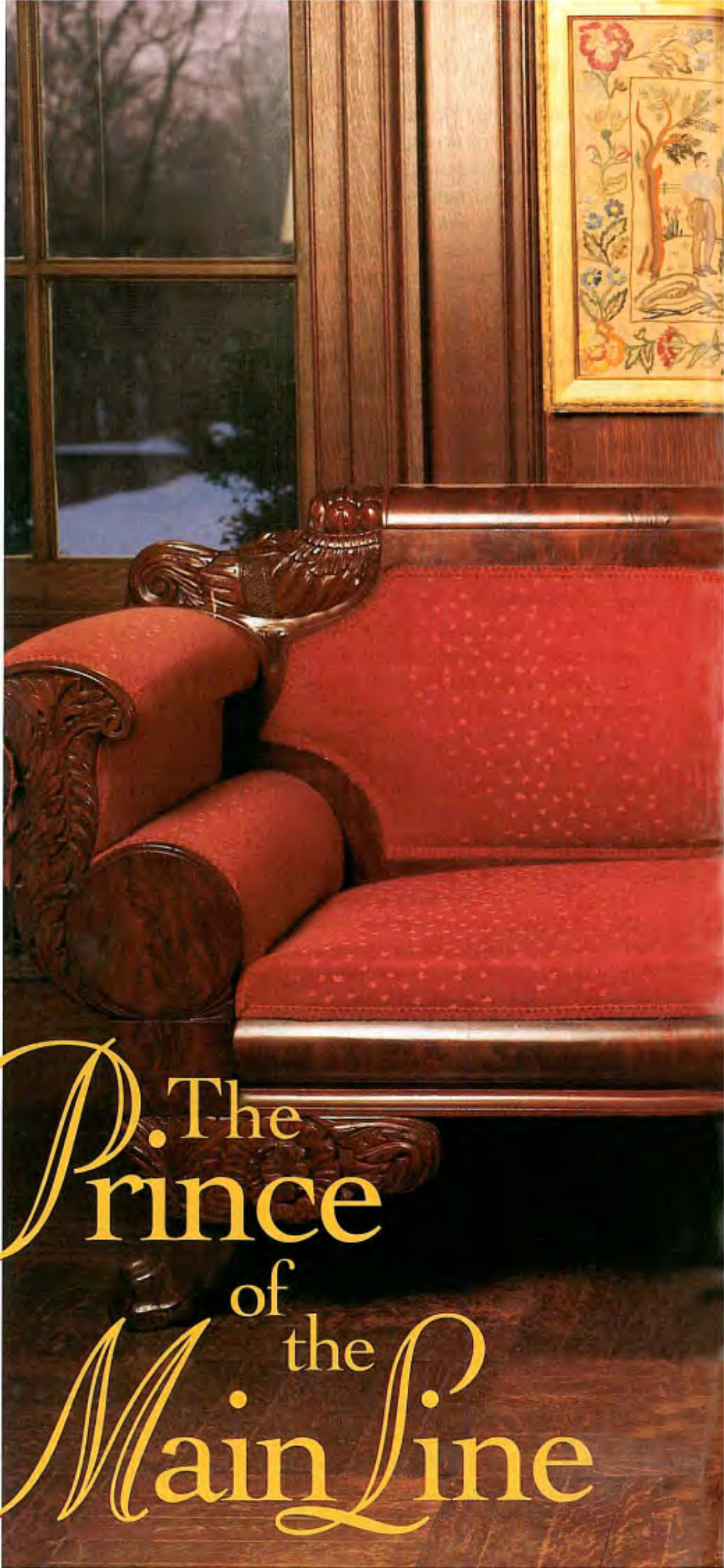
*Photography by  
Dominic Episcopo*

The cows have come home to Ardrossan. So has Bobby Scott.

A circle is closing. The true Main Line, the old Main Line, the best-known neighborhood in America, the Main Line of myth and memory and fabled families united by blood and privilege and power — that Main Line is passing, vanishing forever.

But, not yet. There's still a flicker of recognition out there, still a vestige of the way it was. The way they thought it would always be.

And, Bobby Scott, Robert Montgomery Scott, the benign lord of Ardrossan, the squire of the farm, the



*P. The  
Prince  
of  
the  
Main Line*



**Scott poses in dinner jacket on an antique couch in the great hall at Ardrossan. Behind him, a needle-point depicts his grandfather's love of early aviation.**



**Ardrossan was modeled on the ancestral home of the Princess of Wales, seat of the Spencer family in England. Scott's roots include noble families in both France and England.**

last defender of the realm, has come home to make his separate peace with the past that created him.

The last, best Main Liner is back where he belongs. Holding court at Ardrossan, in Radnor, receiving guests and valiantly preserving traditions.

And, yes, even the cows have come home. For one last stand, at least.

"I've returned to the temple," Bobby Scott says matter-of-factly, conveying in that simple phrase generations of breeding and acceptance and understanding.

He turns the brass key; gives the heavy door a firm push, moving its weight and stiffness. "I'm home now and it feels absolutely wonderful."

In the distance, you can even hear the herd lowing, steam escaping from their mouths as they greet a cold, moon-lit, cloudless dusk.

"Welcome to Ardrossan," Scott's hand feels its way along the entrance hall wall, searching for a light switch in the darkness. "So nice of you to visit."

There's a ruddy, crimson-cheeked regalness to Scott, like a rough-and-ready monarch used to following the hounds; one who has lived much of his life in the bush. You guess that maybe Teddy Roosevelt came across this way, too; both men seem to share an affection for lives lived unflinchingly.

Scott's animated eyes don't wait long to search out his guest's. He has a quick, rapier-fine sense of humor and he appears to meld instantly with anyone who displays a similar need for a good laugh. He moves just a little stiffly, a fraction too carefully. That momentary inflexibility doesn't add up with his otherwise robust good health. It's the single

reminder that Scott has recently come back from a serious leg injury, one that almost incapacitated him. But, he worked through that like a pro football running back rehabbing himself for the playoffs, amazing his doctors and eagerly returning to the one pastime they warned him he would never again be able to pursue — long-distance bike-riding.

"It's still in my plans to bicycle across New Zealand," Scott says, making it clear that he means to do it. "I know that the one thing that won't stop me is this leg." And, he gives his thigh a rough pat.

He was walking up the steps of a hotel in Center City, having just ducked out of a fancy charity ball, when the largest muscle in his leg snapped on him, sagging like a spent rubber-band.

He stands up to demonstrate. He leans on Aaron Burr's handsome wing chair. Scott family legend has it that Burr was born in this very chair, as was the custom of the day. "But, it's been recovered," he assures you. "It's probably all a lie, anyway." But, an oft-repeated one.

"I heard this noise," he goes on, "that sounded exactly like a gun-shot to these old ears," he recounts, "and, as I'd been taught to, I dove for cover. Well, it must have been a car back-firing because nothing hit me, but I couldn't get up out of my crouch. When I finally did, I had to walk like this." And, he pivots, stiff-legged.

"The problem was, I'd left two very beautiful ladies back at the ball. So, I just hitched my leg up and hobbled all the way back." Again, he grotesquely catapults himself, across the slippery floor.

Finally, he deposits himself back on an overstuffed white couch. "Now, that's idiocy, of course. Very dangerous, when you think of the damage I could have done to this leg. But, it was also the *polite* thing to do." The word comes out like a terminal condition diagnosed.

"That's one of the prices I pay for my upbringing. Idiocy is acceptable, as long as it's in the pursuit of good manners."

Robert Montgomery Scott is an icon. That's the only sensible place to begin. There's no statue to him now, and there might never be, but that's only because we are a people who have lost our taste for statue-making.

Just imagine a Thatcher Longstreth type, minus the funny socks — aristocratic, well-bred, eloquent and knowing in that way of the unarguably rich — with *real* power, clout that *can* be measured and a true record of solid, undisputed accomplishment. Go even further than that. Make him a courtly country squire who can trace his roots back to 10th century England and Normandy; a man who numbers a President of the United States among his forebears. *That's* Scott.

He has, almost single-handedly, revived the cultural scene in Philadelphia by saving — literally — the financial bacon of both the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Art Museum. At the same time. Now, make this Main Liner a seasoned diplomat who handled some of the most intricate negotiations of the Cold War during his time as the ambassador to England's chief of staff, negotiations that included: buttressing NATO, establishing the European union and Common Market, trading delegations with the Communist Bloc, and maintaining good relations with England at the height of the Vietnam War. And, finally, just for good measure, credit this savvy millionaire with having been one of the few who was able to walk away from the Nixon years with his integrity and credibility intact. That, too, is Scott.

After you've imagined all that, make this aging raconteur a lawyer, a battler and an athlete and huntsman of some renown; place him at the very center of Main Line and Philadelphia society and watch him stand up to Wilson Goode, Ed Rendell and a whole generation of nit-wit, philistine city councilmen — banal office-holders, all, who, through sheer neglect, would have allowed the Museum to fall into decay and mediocrity and second-rate status.

But, of course, the real Bobby Scott, the lord of Ardrossan, absolutely refused to allow this to happen. Instead, he increased the Museum's endowment by ten-fold; introduced sound business practices to the day-to-day running of the institution for the first time in history and even inaugurated aggressive marketing

campaigns to open the Museum to the community and assure its on-going performance as the cultural leader of the Ben Franklin Parkway.

Finally, place Scott in a grand, genteelly decomposing castle like Ardrossan and marvel at the restoration plans he has for the old place, maybe \$5 million worth.

This is the same Bobby Scott who was recently asked to pose for photos for a magazine article. The session was long and cold and awkward, at times. And, just to relieve the stuffiness and the inevitable tension, after he's donned several changes of wardrobe and agreed to

*Despite his tremendous family wealth, Scott has always worked hard for his living, as corporate lawyer, diplomat and museum president. And, he isn't slowing down.*

pose coat-less, outside, in three feet of new-fallen snow — without a murmur of complaint or annoyance — Scott stopped the photographer and the entire entourage dead in its tracks by suggesting that he wiggle his ears for a few of the shots. "I can wiggle them both together, or separately, whichever you like," he dead-panned; then, he went on to demonstrate, to peels of unexpected laughter. "I can also do that while crossing my eyes. The kids love that trick." The "kids" being his several small grandchildren. Then, he cracked a mildly lewd joke and amiably moved on to another of his 51 rooms for still another picture.

This is Bobby Scott. The last of his breed. The last Prince of the Main Line.

"Something very special took place here," Scott says, as he shows his guest around Ardrossan. Effortlessly, his mind reaches back over 60 years. Instant recall; detail-for-detail.

The house, Georgian and magnificent, seems not at all eerie or foreboding as is

the case with so many of the Main Line's macabre, late Victorian mansions. Despite its enormous size, Ardrossan is considered a mere "miniature" of the ancestral home of the Spencer family in England and the current Princess of Wales, Althorpe. "It's clearly the inspiration," Scott says. "But, if you've ever been to Althorpe . . ."

Horace Trumbauer was the architect. Building commenced in 1912 and took less than two years. The cost was something under \$100,000. Trumbauer, the dean of his profession in his day, the hottest designer in the east, had hurried the project along as quickly as he could.

He had another commission coming his way back then that was about to seriously distract his attention and concentration.

"Oh, yes," Scott explains, "Trumbauer was also the architect for the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Quite a few of the things that he did here, at Ardrossan, the turns of the halls and the height of the ceilings and the sense of ample space—not-wasted; that's all echoed in the Museum, too.

"It's ironic isn't it when you consider how my life turned out, coming home to Philadelphia from England to take over the Museum job? My grand-parents, Colonel Robert Leaming and Charlotte Hope Tyler Montgomery, known as 'Binney', couldn't have dreamed of anything like this. To them, this was just 'home'; they knew it was a grand house, surely, but they'd been guests at much grander estates."

The last quoted price that Scott received on the manor house and adjacent grounds was \$36 million. He mentions that in passing; makes no issue of it, no boast. He simply seemed pleased that the estate had held its value that well. "The uses and the marketability are limited," he says, "severely limited. Maybe if a golf club would want to buy it for a clubhouse; I can't think of any other use . . ." And, the thought trails off into the chilly walls.

"This used to be my grand-parents' place," Scott goes on. Every weekend, a liveried chauffeur would come to our house across the street and pick me up

for a visit and lunch. And to be told by Grandmother to, 'Stand up straight, Bobby.' He'd drive me here, up that long, winding drive-way, past the lawns and animals and deposit me at the 'temple.' I'll always think of it in those terms.

"We'd have an early lunch with my grand-mother; later they shifted that to the late afternoon and everything would be cold. Hot roast beef versus cold roast beef. I envied the servants because they had it in the morning when everything was steaming from the oven.

"I spent as much time as I could in the kitchen. Stuffing my face, I'm sure. My mother and father were wonderful parents. Enormously kind and caring in their way. But quite . . ." He searches and finds the word. ". . . Distant . . . unused to children . . . busy with their own lives, entertaining and so forth. But very decent, loving people."

As a result, Scott was raised, largely, by a succession of jolly Irish cooks and housemaids. "And, I adored them," he says, reeling off a list of litting Irish names. The inflection is no gimmick. To this day, Scott speaks with the long shadow of an Irish brogue, his first, most dearly remembered tongue. "And, that didn't sit well with some of my more austere relations," he says, "especially the ones from Boston."

The memories are bitter-sweet, even chilling: A favorite Nanny who was fired by his grandmother before he even had a chance to say good-bye to her; early schooling with other estate children, little contact with children from the neighborhood; two suicides in the great house, both butlers. "But the one," Scott says, expertly snapping on the affectation and exaggerated diction that he knows goes best with the story, "had the good grace to do it after dinner was served; the other fellow before. I went hungry."

And, he winks. Bobby Scott wants to make sure that you do understand. Of

course, it's a horrible story; the very rich at their very worst. Human tragedy as an annoyance, a dinner-hour irritant.

That's not the way he is; never the way he brought up his own children, son

## Bobby Scott Briefing

*Age:* 67

*Family:* Divorced from Gay; two daughters, Hope, Janny; one son, Elliot; six grandchildren

*Job:* Philadelphia Museum of Art, President and CEO (since 1982)

*Profession:* lawyer, last court case was 1981, non-practicing

*Education:* Groton, Harvard, Penn Law

*Avocation:* Bicycling, riding to the hunt, entertaining, partying

*Roots:* Scottish, French and English; his ancestors were the ones who didn't back William The Conqueror. Had things been different, Scott might be in the House of Lords. Or, on the throne.

*Where his money comes from:* Real wealth on both sides; one ancestor founded the brokerage firm that was eventually sold to become Janney Montgomery Scott, Inc.; a grand-uncle founded the old line Philadelphia law firm, Montgomery, McCracken, Walker and Rhodes. And that's just for starters.

*Where his style comes from:* Mom, Hope Montgomery Scott

*Claim to fame:* 1) Ran the show for Walter Annenberg when Annenberg was the Ambassador to the Court of St. James (England), 1969 to 1973; did some neat Cold War diplomatic cloak-and-dagger. 2) Rescued the Art Museum from near bankruptcy and near obscurity.

*Cliche that applies:* The rich are different . . .

*Status in Main Line Society:* Lord of the Manor -- and make sure that knee touches the ground when you genuflect.

*Assessment:* Don't be blinded by the wealth and power; if John Madden had an All-Stand-up-Guy team, Bobby Scott would be on it. Or own it.

Elliot and daughters Janny and Hope. However, it was the world and the stratified social order into which he was born. In many ways, he's been getting over that beginning ever since. And,

coming back to Ardrossan, as a very sad, but amicable separation and divorce, has forced him to do, has brought that storied past home to him, again, in more ways than one.

Of his two year old separation from his wife, Gay, he tells you, "I left with the clothes I was wearing. I saw absolutely no reason that the both of us should suffer. I left virtually everything in the house right where it was. And, since that was just about the time that Ed Rendell had closed the subway concourses to the homeless, I had to move somewhere."

Today, Scott lives alone in an apartment on Ardrossan's third floor; four modest, comfortable rooms connected to the rest of the mansion by a 60-year-old elevator. "It terrified me at six and every time I set foot in it today, it terrifies me all over again," Scott says of the narrow, tomb-like metal contraption. This wing of the upper house was originally his mother's, Hope Montgomery Scott's, nursery, several large rooms. "She was vibrant," he tells you. "Badly schooled, but very well-educated. And, just about everything that's been written about her was accurate, to a point. She had enormous appetites, for life, for her friends, for a good laugh. She delighted in giving other people pleasure."

At the time of her death last year, he remarked that it might be late in life for him to find himself motherless, but the feeling, regardless of when it happened to come, was devastating. No expression of grief was ever put more poignantly.

A niece of his, Mary, lives in similar solitude on the second floor. They see very little of each other. "It's perfect synergy," he confides. "I need her in the house

*see SCOTT, page 62*

**One of Scott's great-aunts was a concert pianist at age 19, until a bad case of stage fright side-lined her. He stands in her favorite room.**



## SCOTT

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to take care of it when I'm not here which is often; I couldn't do it on my own; and she needs the money I can put into it. She trains dogs, by the way," he offers. "She's very much in demand for it, too. Her classes fill up. Adores animals. The pig out back, the very large one — you might have heard him when you came in — is her pet. Ham, the pig. He got loose just the other day and terrified a Radnor Township road crew. I'm sure they were convinced they were under attack by some wild boar from Ardrossan. But, it was only Ham."

Ever since Bobby Scott's mother, the heroine's role-model in the *The Philadelphia Story* and the grande dame of Philadelphia society for half a century, died in 1995, at 91, the fate of Ardrossan has been the subject of extreme (sometimes panicky) speculation.

At its initial assemblage back in 1912, Ardrossan was an eclectic, poorly-defined collection of large working farms, smaller stone estate houses, tenant farmsteads and rolling open spaces, over 750 acres worth. The estate took its name from the Scottish village where Scott's ancestors holed up, even as William the Conqueror's men furiously pursued them in the 11th century.

At the request of Radnor about 100 acres were sold to the township in 1970. Beyond that, the estate has remained remarkably intact, all 38 assorted dwelling units (none as large as the main house, but several of mansion quality) and something over 650 acres. Four men work on the grounds, full-time.

It's hardly an exaggeration to think of Ardrossan as a lynch-pin of the traditional Main Line. It's the last great estate left, east of Chester County. To put it bluntly, billions of dollars in property values in the three Main Line counties, are as intertwined with what happens to Ardrossan's acres as snaking ivy.

An expert in Main Line real estate, who's admired Ardrossan from afar for decades, suggests a striking analogy.

"Think about this," he tells you, "what would the value be of 650 acres of prime,

undeveloped real estate in the middle of Manhattan. Or Beverly Hills. Millions? A hundred million? What would Trump or some Japanese bank pay for 650 acres of the best suburb in the United States?"

Scott has been spared none of the controversy. "Nothing's for sale now," he says, with just a touch of frost on the grass. "That is not to say that it will never happen." This last sentence doesn't come across as a warning, or even admonition. It's merely the lawyer in Bobby Scott dutifully laying out all the options.

"It's not my decision, alone. There's a trust involved, several people, all of whom would have to reach a consensus with myself and my older brother, Edgar. That's just the way it's set up. There are no restrictions, whatsoever, on selling the land. But, the trust will be in effect until 21 years after the last heir dies.

"I do feel, however, that it would be extremely wasteful to sell anything now. I'm persuaded that there's a general agreement on that point."

*Wasteful.* Now, there's a Bobby Scott word, if ever there was one. Wasteful, as in messy, inexact, unnecessary and, worst of all, in very poor taste.

Scott cleverly changes the subject, never missing a beat, even as he appears to be embracing it.

"I've hired a decorator to come in and spruce up the place," he tells you, as he enters the study, surrounded by magnificent portraits of his ancestors. He has a riveting story about every single picture. Enough for a book, for several.

"I think it will take about \$5 million to really do it. I have no idea where the money will come from. I'll have a job raising it. I do intend to stay alive long enough to see it through, though. My friend, DoDo Hamilton, tells me that as soon as I do one room, everything else will look awful. And, of course, she's right, you know." He pokes at the almost thread-bare, but priceless, Aubusson rugs; makes a face.

One of Hope Scott's great personal achievements was the establishment of Ardrossan Farm as the Main Line's largest (and one of its last) working, prize-winning dairy farms. Her herd of 300 Ayrshire milk cows was a familiar, reassur-

ing sight — and an unexpectedly bucolic one on busy Darby-Paoli Road — to anyone driving home, past Ardrossan.

Naturally, when the herd was sold off last summer, the sick fear of Ardrossan's imminent dismemberment spread through much of Radnor and the Main Line like some unchecked virus. Bobby Scott — who else? — was the point-man (in some ways the lightning rod) for all of that fear and loathing.

"That herd — my mother's; she knew every animal by name, I'm sure — was transported to Colorado in air-conditioned buses," Scott explains, as he settles into a Chippendale sofa in his 50-foot-long living room. No harm came to them. She would never have stood for that."

Recently, almost as a gesture of reassurance to the neighborhood, Scott purchased 70 handsome Angus steers at auction in Virginia and in Lancaster County.

"I think that about 10 cows are in calf," Scott says, sounding content, mindful of the calming effect of such prodigious fertility. "One bull. Lucky fellow. I'm single like him, now. I think he'll keep us in business. A dairy farm is a very, very difficult business proposition. This will be a beef herd. Successful, I trust."

It's almost time to go. But, Bobby Scott can't resist one last tale of Ardrossan.

He pulls aside a heavy drape. It overlooks a lawn larger than most golf courses. The greenery has run to brown now, retreating from the winter.

"In the mornings," Scott says, "If I arise just before sunset, I can sometimes spy a large red fox, a dog fox, they're called, creeping along, just beyond the house. He's following a squirrel."

And, showing off again, the lord of Ardrossan, imitates the red dog fox creeping, again putting his whole body into it.

"And, as I look," Scott says, holding you with those innocent, playful eyes, "I see him darting about, disappearing from my sight-line for just a moment. When he returns, I see him with something in his mouth, chewing on it. And, I realize that it's the leg of the squirrel. He's found breakfast." Then, Bobby Scott closes the drapes.

Life and death. At Ardrossan. ♦