

**Warren  
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Frank E. McCarthy had a thing about facts. He figured that with facts used properly he could do a better job of representing his people, the 20,000 members of the National Automobile Dealers Association, as their president and chief executive officer. It always made sense to try to know as much as McCarthy did before meeting with him for an interview.

That was practically impossible. McCarthy had been with NADA since 1968. I started covering the automotive beat in 1982.

He not only had more experience, but he had a passion for doing his job that I did not understand until years later. I say "passion." Perhaps "belief" is a better word.

McCarthy believed in the value of the franchised dealer system. He knew it was flawed, especially in the area of ethnic diversity. But he believed it could change, and he worked with the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers and others to help bring those changes about.

# Saying Goodbye to Frank E. McCarthy

McCarthy cared little for bombast. He was a lawyer by training, a politician by instinct and a very decent human being at his spiritual core. McCarthy believed that you could change minds more quickly with facts than insults. I know this because I used to needle him just for the heck of it. I'd find a real case of dealership wrongdoing. I'd say, "Hey, Frank, if your guys are so good, what's this all about?"

He never responded in anger, and never attacked the dealer in question. He'd point to NADA's best practices, talk about the value of treating all customers fairly, direct me to

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NADA staffers who had facts on the economic impact of dealerships on local communities, and discuss candidly what steps NADA was taking to end current abuses of consumers, and to prevent their reoccurrence. It was hard to ignore a presentation like that. McCarthy knew it. His approach was simple. You might not agree with him but, if you had an ounce of professionalism, you'd at least have to write a balanced story.

He worked similar magic on a variety of issues and campaigns, including NADA's success in protecting franchised dealers from what many of them viewed as unfair sales competition from Internet companies. But McCarthy succeeded most in his efforts to give the auto retail business a credible face, and he did this the old-fashioned way. He simply told the truth, as best he could, as best he knew it.

McCarthy, 66, died February 25th at the

Washington Hospital Center from complications related to kidney cancer. A funeral for him was held here March 2nd at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church. NAMAD president, Sheila Vaden-Williams, was among the hundreds of mourners in attendance.

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The NADA board of directors will choose a successor to McCarthy at its meeting in June. In the interim, Bruce Kelleher, NADA's chief administrative officer who worked with McCarthy since 1970, will serve as president.

NADA's leadership search actually began several months ago in anticipation of McCarthy's planned retirement, which was scheduled for December 31, 2001.

"McCarthy will be missed," Vaden-Williams stated. "He was a good man," she said, echoing the words of many who had worked with McCarthy over the years.

McCarthy was a native of Indiana and a graduate of the University of Notre Dame in South Bend. He also held a law degree from the Georgetown University School of Law in the District of Columbia. His numerous awards, including the International Freedom of Mobility Award he received this year at the NADA convention in Las Vegas, are tributes to his success as the leader of the association.

I learned a lot from McCarthy. He was a good teacher, a good friend, a man of his word. I salute his life and his work.