

OBITUARIES

Charles F. McCafferty Sr., founder of auto dealership

By LISA DAVIDSON
CORRESPONDENT

Charles "Bud" F. McCafferty Sr. of Blue Bell came home after serving in the U. S. Merchant Marines to work for John B. White Ford in Philadelphia, which was the largest Ford car dealership in the Delaware Valley.

"Dad, his brother Joe, a sales manager, and their friend Joe Foster, a salesman, were all there and the three of them were buddies," said his son James of Northeast Philadelphia. "One day, Dad found a place called Street Motor Company in Bensalem and bought it. He told Mr. White he was quitting, and he, Dad's brother, and Joe Foster all quit and went to work there in 1952."

White called him in 1954 to inform him about a Ford franchise for sale in Langhorne.

"Mr. White told Dad that he'd back him into the deal and, thus, McCafferty Ford in Langhorne was born," he said. "The automobile business is a bootstrap business — the way to become a dealer is to know a dealer."

Father of six, grandfather of 15 and great-grandfather of nine, Mr. McCafferty, 92, died March 27 from pneumonia. He was married to the late Verna M. for 64 years.

"As my sister said, 'All he wanted in life was corn on the cob, a garden tomato and a hamburger,'" he said.

Born in West Philadelphia, he was a resident of Blue Bell and formerly of Glenside. He graduated North Catholic High School in 1932 and attended University of Pennsylvania Wharton School.

"Dad was a practical joker and got his best friend Chappy back for something he had done," his son said. "Dad threw a fish inside the wheel-cover of Chappy's demo car and it stunk to high heaven — it was hysterically funny."



Charles F. McCafferty Sr.

Originally, Mr. McCafferty, his brother and Foster ended up at Whetley's Garage in 1954, where Darlington Styer of Styer Orchard helped build their showroom and shop, and that's where McCafferty Ford is now located.

"It's been a three-generation business," he said. "Back then the partners used to get together at Jim's Steakhouse in 1956 and complain about the bad conditions of Whetley's Garage; there was no heat, no water and you could throw a flexible hose through the wall into the creek."

His son said that many of the car dealers congregated at the Blue Fountain Diner in Middletown as friendly competitors.

"Ralph Reedman and my dad were never introduced, but they'd see each other three times a week at the diner and nod and wink to one another," his son said.

Mr. McCafferty enjoyed boating on the Chesapeake Bay with his son or a friend from the dealership and family holiday gatherings.

"His best move was when his grandmother gave him \$5 to go get milk and [he] took it instead to marry his bride-to-be... on April Fool's Day in 1940," he said.

Lisa Davidson, a freelance writer, can be reached at eagleschool02@yahoo.com.