

Mike McCormack Dies At Age 83

Written by Staff Reports

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Mike McCormack, who played an instrumental role in the expansion process for the Carolina Panthers and later became the team's first president, died early

Friday morning at the age of 83.

McCormack was an advisor for Jerry Richardson's efforts to bring the National Football League to the Carolinas during the six-year process to obtain a franchise, which culminated with the awarding of the team on Oct. 26, 1993.

McCormack served as the organization's first president and held that post for Carolina's first two seasons (1995-96) before retiring. On Sept. 21, 1997, he became the first inductee into the Carolina Panthers Hall of Honor.

"It is safe to say that we would probably not have a team in the Carolinas if it were not for Mike McCormack," Richardson said. "He had the contacts in the National Football League and was universally respected by everyone associated with professional football. He was a wonderful man, and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Ann, and the entire McCormack family."

McCormack, a native of Chicago who lived in Palm Desert, Calif., at the time of his death, made his name in the NFL long before joining the Panthers as a consultant in 1989.

He both played and coached in the league and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1984 following a standout career (1951-62) with the Cleveland Browns that included six Pro Bowl appearances. Teaming with quarterback Otto Graham, McCormack helped the Browns win NFL championships in 1954 and 1955. He later blocked for running back Jim Brown.

Legendary Browns coach Paul Brown gave McCormack's Hall of Fame induction speech, calling him "the finest offensive lineman I have ever coached." Before the 1994 season, USA Today agreed, featuring McCormack in its 75th anniversary all-NFL team as one of the three finest tackles in league history.

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McCormack began his coaching career as an assistant in 1965 with the Washington Redskins, learning under coaching legends Vince Lombardi and George Allen. McCormack went on to hold head coaching positions with the Philadelphia Eagles (1973-75), Baltimore Colts (1980-81) and Seattle Seahawks (1982) before serving as Seahawks president and general manager until 1988.

Richardson hired McCormack in 1989, two years into his campaign to bring the NFL to the Carolinas, and McCormack proved a trusted and valuable advisor. Upon his retirement following the 1996 season, a historic season in which the Panthers advanced to the NFC Championship in just their second year of competition, McCormack had spent nearly a half-century in the NFL as a player, coach and administrator.

Photo Courtesy: Mike McCormick, Carolina Panthers