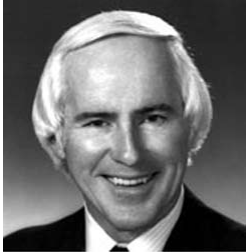


## Michael McCormick



When a Milwaukee Journal photographer asked Michael McCormick to pose for a photo with WTMJ-TV (Channel 4) news anchor John McCullough for a story about the general managers of Milwaukee's television stations, McCormick balked.

He didn't want to be photographed looking over McCullough's shoulder because he said it would send the wrong message - that as the general manager he was dictating what journalists were writing. McCormick believed in hiring good employees and letting them work.

"He was just so good at making sure that the news product was protected from all kinds of influences - advertisers and other kinds of things," recalled Ed Hinshaw, retired vice president for human resources at Journal Broadcast Group. "I can remember several meetings when advertisers were upset at what we did with the news and Mike would say, 'Well, is it true?' and they would say, 'Yes' and that would be the end of the conversation."

McCormick, 82, died Sunday January 1, 2012, of cancer in Winston-Salem, N.C., where he lived for many years.

After working at television stations in St. Louis and New York, McCormick was hired in 1972 to oversee operations at WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee. He became president of WTMJ Inc. and senior vice president of Journal Communications in 1975. He retired in 1987.

McCormick was known as a broadcaster who believed in the importance of local news and the independence of the newsroom, said Steve Smith, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Journal Communications.

When McCormick was inducted into the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame in 2008, he spoke about the need when he arrived in Milwaukee for audiences to have access to more news, which is why he helped expand news operations.

"I believe very strongly in news because that's how the audiences judge a station - by their news operation, not by some program in prime time," McCormick said.

He also thought television stations have the responsibility to editorialize on important issues in the community, so viewers can form their own opinions. Bob Reitman was hired at WKTI-FM (94.5) when McCormick was senior vice president of Journal Communications. In his interview, McCormick asked Reitman only one question: Why did he want to work in radio? Reitman's response: Radio was a way to reach out to the community.

Starting in 1982, Reitman was paired with Gene Mueller at WKTI, and in 1986, they traveled to Moscow to broadcast their show. Before they left, McCormick gave Reitman a St. Christopher's medal and wished him good luck.

"He was so successful because he followed the adage: Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you. Not that he wasn't smart himself. But he let his people do what they were hired to do," Reitman said. Mueller, now at WTMJ-AM (620), lauded McCormick for his efforts to turn WKTI - now WLWK - into a much bigger operation.

"He understood what KTI could be. At the time, it was kind of sleepy and he thought it had real potential," Mueller said.

McCormick is survived by his wife, Gay, and their seven children. Funeral services were scheduled in Winston-Salem, N.C. A memorial service will be held in Milwaukee at a later date.