



## Frank Madsen

October 4, 1943 - July 26, 2018

Frank Madsen passed away on Thursday, July 26 from complications due to a fall. He was born in Chicago on October 4, 1943, the son of John and Eva Madsen.

Frank went to Taft High School and then to Illinois Wesleyan University in Normal, Illinois. In 1968, he received a degree in Industrial Design from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Frank joined the Field Museum at the beginning of their Exhibition Department where he worked until 1972, designing numerous exhibits. From 1972-78 he taught Industrial, Product, and Exhibit Design for the Institute of Design at IIT. He founded the interpretive exhibit firm ExhibitStaff in 1975.

In 1978, Frank was a founding partner in the museum exhibit and design firm Abrams Teller & Madsen, later teller|madsen where he successfully completed over 100 exhibits nation-wide. Frank lectured extensively and was the recipient of the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History. Frank was one of the first designers to lecture on the exhibit design implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

After retiring from the design world, Frank indulged his second passion—antique toys and cars. He was a frequent presence at fairs and auctions and a valued member of Stateline Toy Club, collecting Dinky toys and other rare and

unique toys.

Frank was a quiet, detail-oriented, humorous, creative and practical designer. His strength was in his dependability, honesty and steadfastness. He understood both design and audience and the exhibits he produced reflected an understanding that good design helps tell stories. The slogan for his firm was “We can think and draw at the same time.” He was an inspiration and friend to many and will be sorely missed. He is survived by his long time partner Dawn HoFung. A memorial celebrating Frank’s life is being planned.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Frank Madsen*

October 04, 2023 at 02:13 PM



“ *Frank Madsen*

December 31, 2022 at 11:36 AM



“ *Frank and I were arrested by the Bloomington Illinois Police Department in 1961 for underaged drinking. This was while we were both freshmen at IW. It was an overnight in jail and a \$50 fine. We were placed on citizenship probation for one semester by the Illinois Wesleyan administration. We learned a lesson in life together and remained roommates at the TKE house. Frank moved on to IIT and the rest is history. He also had an Auburn-Cord-Dusenberg automobile that he was restoring. I wonder whatever happened to that car. I just learned of Frank's death today (April 20, 2022) Frank was always a gentleman and friend. ...Mike LaReau, IWU 1964*

Michael LaReau - April 20, 2022 at 10:08 PM



“ *Andy and I were sad to hear of the passing of Frank. He was always so kind and gentlemanly and enjoyable to be around. He and Dawn and I would go to the Chinese Restaurant on Argyle Street and have congee. It was fun. We are glad to have known him. Sincere condolences to Dawn and all of his friends from Andy and Margo Rodriguez*

Margo Rodriguez - August 07, 2018 at 10:42 AM

“ My Best Friend Forever

*The photo below was taken when Frank and I were students at Taft High School. We were so proud of our 1933 V-12 Auburn 6-wheel sedan, which we purchased jointly for \$350. We did most things jointly from 3rd grade, at Edison School, on into our teen years. Frank and I were like brothers.*

*In 1965 we sold the Auburn and used the money to buy a rare 1931 MG model M boat-tail roadster. I transferred my ownership to Frank in 1978 so he could sell the car to our good high school friend, Larry McCann, and use the money to invest in his business. We spent many wonderful hours together working on cars and dreamed of bringing them to car shows and coming home with trophies. Later on, our car adventures included a road trip to Sebring, Florida for the 12 hour race. We left in high spirits in my Alfa Romeo, but it broke down in the snow in Indiana, so we limped home and borrowed money from my parents to take a Greyhound Bus to Sebring! We rented a VW in Orlando and drove out to Sebring where we stood on the roof of the car to see the race. Unfortunately, the roof caved in, but it was a memorable trip!*

*Frank and I were avid Cubs fans in the early 1950's. We would take the bus and CTA elevated train to Wrigley field at 8 AM so that we would be there in time to get autographs when the players got out of their cars for pre-game batting practice. This was when the Cubs were habitually locked in 9th place, but we continued our trek for several years. Together, we enjoyed the Cubs recent revitalization through e-mail conversations.*

*In grammar school we got hooked on the Hardy Boys series of mystery books. We would alternate buying the latest one as soon as it was available (95 cents each). Between the two of us we owned and read the entire series. We even had an informal Hardy Boys mystery book club! We would meet one night a week at each other's house and spread out all the books on the kitchen table and talk*

*about the plot of each one, just from looking at the picture on the dust jacket. Frank and I financed our adventures by walking the neighborhood streets with snow shovels over our shoulders, cleaning neighbors' sidewalks for 75 cents.*

*Frank and I started playing band instruments in grammar school. Frank played trumpet and I played trombone. We continued to play in the Taft High School concert band and the ROTC marching band. Once a week we would go to each others' house and play trombone/trumpet duets. Good fun and good music! We developed a keen interest in Jazz and whenever possible would go to the Blue Note Night Club on Wabash Avenue under the CTA Elevated train to see and hear Duke Ellington or Stan Kenton. We also liked the London House on Wacker Drive to see smaller groups.*

*We had a great ride together, in style, well past adolescence, Frank. Wonderful Memories. Al*



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**Al Crumbliss** - August 05, 2018 at 01:55 PM

DT

“ My mother and I were blessed the day Dawn introduced us to Frank. We both remember how nice Frank was and his great knowledge of antique toys and cars. He was so very interesting and patient sharing information. To this day, whenever my mother and I watch "Antique Roadshow" and a toy appears, we both think of Frank. I personally will always cherish the fun time spent with Bonnie, Dawn and Frank at the Antique Toy Show Frank and Dawn were participating in. Over the years, we created some wonderful memories.

*My mother and I wish to send our love and deepest condolences to The Madsen family and our dear friend Dawn. Love, Marie and Diane Torti*

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**Diane Torti** - August 02, 2018 at 07:35 PM

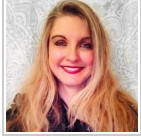
ES

“ So many wonderful times to remember...great get togethers with Frank and Dawn...wish we had done it more. Whether it was jazz concerts, family events or visiting him at his antique toy shows, Frank shared himself and his knowledge with such kindness and love for what he enjoyed. My heart is sad and heavy for those who loved him so much, especially my dear friend Dawn. Thank you Dawn for bringing Frank into our lives...his gentle spirit will be missed. xxoo Eileen and Mike



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**eileen sanfilippo** - August 02, 2018 at 09:57 AM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Alexxis Avalon** - August 01, 2018 at 01:04 PM

KN

“ I am honored and blessed to have known him as my mentor and friend. I am deeply saddened by the news of your loss. I pray that God will grant you the strength. My most sincere condolences.



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**Kyoji Nakano** - August 01, 2018 at 10:04 AM

JR

*Frank was a saint and I was honored to meet and know him.*  
*Jeanne Radysh-Oury*

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**Jeanne Radysh-Oury** - August 01, 2018 at 08:03 PM

KS

*When I was a Museum Intern 23 years ago, at the very beginning of my career, I had the opportunity to be a part of a team that was working with ATM. It was amazing to learn about the exhibit development and design process and see how museums and contractors work together to make something great. The professionalism of that experience lived on with me and set a standard for my expectations throughout my career. It has been all those years, yet Frank left a lasting impression on a new professional. My condolences to his family.*

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**Kimberly Stull** - August 08, 2018 at 05:46 PM

BL

*Frank was a friend and a mentor. I learned so much from him about exhibit design and was so sad to hear of his passing. I always thought he was the coolest guy.*

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**Berna J. Love** - February 19, 2019 at 05:24 PM