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NEWS

Lawyer, painter J.M. McCarthy dies

He was part of the city annexation case that brought wards

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By JEREMY SLAYTON
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF
WRITERTo view images of John
McCarthy's artwork online, go
to:www.lesyeuxdumonde.com/artists/McCarthy/

John Montgomery McCarthy became a prolific landscape painter after retiring.

John Montgomery McCarthy was as adept in the courtroom as he was painting on a blank canvas.

The Norfolk native and University of Virginia graduate enjoyed a long, successful career as a lawyer and in retirement flourished as a painter, specializing in contemporary Virginia landscapes.

Mr. McCarthy, who retired as a senior assistant attorney general for Virginia, died Friday at his Kents Store home, apparently of a heart attack. He was 66.

Early in his legal career, Mr. McCarthy served as one of the lawyers representing Curtis Holt Sr. in the case that blocked elections in Richmond for six years with the claim that the annexation of close to 23 square miles of Chesterfield County would dilute black voting strength in the city.

At the time, Mr. McCarthy had recently joined the firm started by University of Richmond law school classmate Cabell Venable. Venable was the lead attorney for Holt, but Mr. McCarthy was heavily involved in the case, which resulted in Richmond returning to a ward system to elect City Council members beginning with the 1977 elections.

The work done by the lawyers was free.

"He had one of the keenest legal minds of anybody I ever worked with," said Richmond lawyer Thomas F. Coates III, who worked on the Holt case with Mr. McCarthy. "He is somebody I have called on to consult with on legal ideas of a case."

In 1978, Mr. McCarthy joined the Virginia attorney general's office as a special assistant. He retired in 1996. He represented state agencies such as the Virginia State Police, the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Port Authority in court proceedings.

Toward the end of his legal career, Mr. McCarthy became interested in art, and took workshops under artist Wolf Kahn. From there, Mr. McCarthy evolved into a prolific artist; many of his works are on display at the art gallery Les Yeux Du Monde Art Gallery in Charlottesville.

Lyn Bolen Warren, who owns the gallery, described Mr. McCarthy as a wonderful colorist whose paintings "are subtle, but powerful."

Many of his paintings were landscapes of Goochland, Fluvanna and Albemarle counties. He used a camera to capture his subject and used the photograph as a guide for his artwork, said his wife, Judy McCarthy of Kents Store.

Mr. McCarthy expanded his artistic interest to printmaking and was active with the group, Virginia Arts of the Book Center and "was generous and eager to share his knowledge with younger printers," said Kevin McFadden, associate program director of the Virginia Festival of the Book.

In addition to his wife, Mr. McCarthy's survivors include a daughter, Carrie McCarthy Webster of Richmond; two brothers, James M. McCarthy of Atlanta and Benjamin T. McCarthy of Boca Raton, Fla.; and two grandchildren.

A graveside service will be held Wednesday at 11 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church, 43 Washington St., in Columbia.

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