



SCWA 2021 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Sonny Fazio, founder of Sonny's The CarWash Factory - 1926-2013

Salvatore “Sonny” Fazio was born in Boston in 1926. Sonny joined the Navy in 1944 and served our country during World War II. Sonny married the love of his life, Gloria and together they had four children, Paul, Michael, Barbara and Marie.

It didn't take Sonny long to find the car wash industry by becoming the owner of a full serve car wash in the Boston area in 1949. His car wash life shifted to the “supplier” side of things when he founded Sonny's Enterprises, Inc. in 1978. Sonny said he never thought he would manufacture equipment, but he needed to keep busy after his sons, Paul and Michael, took over operation of his carwashes. He would test out the equipment at his sons' locations and made sure every piece and part was functioning perfectly.

“Anyone who knew Sonny knows his life revolved around three things: His family, his friends and his work. There was no room left for anything else.”

In 1981, Sonny's business started to grow and he began to manufacture equipment for friends along with his family and Sonny's The CarWash Factory was born. The new business quickly grew to a 23,000 square-foot manufacturing plant in Fort Lauderdale to meet growing demand. And today, Sonny's The CarWash Factory, is the world's largest conveyerized car wash equipment manufacturer.

Paul Fazio offered his memories of his dad, “Anyone who knew Sonny knows his life revolved around three things: His family, his friends and his work. There was no room left for anything else. He lived for those three things - not necessarily in that order! Car washing was his life. If you knew him, you know just how true that is. To say he had a passion for it would not even come close. He loved it and he loved the people that loved it. They were indeed his family. Helping people made him happy and of course he loved going to the car wash shows”.

“Following his “retirement” and the passing of our mother, Gloria, there were two things that kept him going. First there was his extended car wash family. Many car wash friends called and wrote him regularly to make sure he was doing okay. Ben Alford, an operator in Louisiana and longtime friend, called Dad every Saturday right till the end. It amazed me that two men with such different backgrounds could become so close. Both men described the relationship to me on separate occasions as simply being brothers.”



“The second thing was his love for telling stories- especially to those going through the Sonny's CarWash College. For those of you that went on a factory tour with Sonny, I am willing to bet it was an experience you will never forget. On the tour he would tell what I considered to be the most inappropriate stories, to the students about car washing's past history. He knew I hated it when he would tell those stories. He would laugh when I would say to him “you can't say that stuff” and he would respond with “I'm 86 years old — I can say anything I want.”

“Dad was old school and very black and white in his opinions. He had no trouble letting you know exactly what he thought. He had no patience for bologna. He loved seeing the industry grow. He told me when I took over as CEO of Sonny's in 1991 that if I didn't continue to help people - he would take his name off the building - and he meant it. He loved telling me I was becoming more like him every day. He knew that made me crazy.”

Sonny passed away on April 17, 2013 at the age of 86. The SCWA Board of Directors and membership are pleased to honor Sonny Fazio with the 2021 SCWA Lifetime Award in recognition of his significant contributions to the car wash industry and to thank Sonny and his entire family for their support of SCWA and the car wash industry. ■

CONGRATULATIONS FROM SCWA