



Joseph McNamara RIP: Champion Against Cops Drug Warring

October 1, 2014

By [Allen St. Pierre](#)

A genuinely early and respected voice against the war on some drugs [passed away](#) Friday, September 19 in California.

Joe McNamara was a former police chief in Kansas City and San Jose who, in the late 1980s, started to both write and lecture about the need for substantive changes in law enforcement practices (and that the law enforcement community and establishment inherently should SUPPORT drug law policy reform, not reflexively oppose it).

Joe is often credited with being the ‘father of community policing’.

When I first arrived at NORML in 1991, I devoured everything Joe wrote about the drug war. His efforts are clearly the *sui generis* of one of the most important drug policy reform organizations today—[Law Enforcement Against Prohibition](#) (LEAP).

His arguments were so persuasive and fact driven (he was as highly educated as he was a decorated police officer) that, in time, I came to see him as the proxy editorial voice for ‘legalization’ at a hugely important and politically influential newspaper—the *Wall Street Journal*. He spoke to the concerns the editorial board is unfortunately still to date too timid to publicly express under their own byline. His affiliation with the [Hoover Institution at Stanford](#) only enhanced his credibility in the eyes of WSJ editors.

Joe was able to breakthrough with ‘conservatives’ on the need to end cannabis prohibition like few others have (i.e., William F. Buckley).

It was in reading the WSJ last week that I learned of Joe’s passing...

Joe gave great, revealing, informed and prescient lectures at NORML, Drug Policy Foundation/[Drug Policy Alliance](#), [Cato Institute](#) and other public policy conferences and seminars. I personally enjoyed conversing with him whenever, about whatever. He had much to share.

Passing at the age of 79, Joe lived what can readily be described as a full life, and that his intelligent and law enforcement reform advocacy, driven by decades of tough and challenging field police work, will live long after his days among us.

Joe McNamara RIP!