

# The Many Accomplishments of Fred Goad: A Life Well Lived

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Fred C. Goad, Jr. was an extraordinary man—humble yet driven, principled yet irreverent, a man of action who rarely spoke of his vast accomplishments. Beneath his modest self-image as a “salesman” was a visionary who reshaped industries, gave generously, and inspired fierce loyalty in all who knew him.

Born into modest means, Fred's early life was marked by loss. At twelve, he lost his mother. His overworked father, a car salesman, meant well but was unequipped for the task of raising two children alone. Fred credited much of his trajectory to his Aunt Maude and Uncle Ralph Grooms. Having no children of their own, they took a keen interest in Fred and his sister, enrolling them both in boarding school and encouraging Fred to attend the University of Virginia at their expense. Ralph's counsel to a teenage Fred—that how you use wealth is as important as how you earn it—left a lasting imprint.

Fred's first education in sales came on used car lots with his father. After high school, a brief stint in welding didn't hold his interest, but a summer opportunity selling magazines door-to-door did. On one sales call to a local business, Fred convinced company management to give a subscription to each employee as a holiday gift. He sold a bulk subscription order that day that changed the subscription company's business model—and nearly earned him the CEO job (which he declined).

That early spark ignited a ten-year career at IBM, where Fred rose quickly, teaching sales and marketing, helping shape IBM's Advanced Marketing School, and managing sales for half of Iowa. From there, he joined Docutel, contributing to the early development of the ATM, including innovative keypad security features.

Fred's business career began its meteoric rise when he met Jim Kever, his future partner and close friend. Jim introduced Fred to ENVOY Corporation, a healthcare payments startup in dire need of leadership. Fred joined as CEO and, in short order, turned a struggling company into a national player in credit card and healthcare transaction services. He often told employees: “I don't expect perfection—I expect your best. If you see a dirty window, clean it.” His belief in personal accountability and trust powered ENVOY's rise.

Under Fred and Jim's leadership, ENVOY went public and was later sold to Quintiles for \$1.7 billion. That sale was followed by another to WebMD for \$2.4 billion. Not content to sit idle, Fred and Jim soon launched Voyent Partners, having recruited longtime friend and Controller Connie Mayberry, to focus on healthcare and early-stage innovation. One of Fred's most notable investments was as a founding investor in HealthSpring, supporting Herb Fritch's stewardship of the company into a unicorn, which sold to Cigna for \$3.8 billion.

In 2006, the pair orchestrated the remarkable re-acquisition of ENVOY from WebMD, eventually selling it again to Blackstone for \$3 billion. Later, Blackstone would take the

company public for \$2.5 billion. Few investors had Fred's instincts; fewer still had his grace. Though he never bragged, insiders considered him a "super angel" with a Midas touch.

Fred's curiosity, coupled with charm and intellect, took him well beyond healthcare. He backed Papa Pilar Rum with Paul Vlasic, inspired by Hemingway's legacy. He invested in Brett Jones' Big Borassa Music and personally vetted and hired songwriters. Among them was Dallas Davidson, whose hits became country anthems such as "[Honky Tonk Badonka Donk](#)" and "[That's How Country Boys Roll](#)." Inspired by his granddaughter's health challenges, he invested in Blackrock Neurotech, a brain-computer interface company. A competitor to Elon Musk's Neuralink, Blackrock Neurotech is now the industry leader.

In 2018, Fred joined digital health venture firm Relevance Ventures as a general partner and board member, where his corner office desk still bears the weight of his presence.

Throughout his life, Fred remained deeply grounded in close friendships that included people ranging from his farm manager to industry leaders. A unique assembly of diverse backgrounds, often coupled with sound judgement, they shared at least one thing in common: they were members of the "Goad Mafia." They were all friends of Fred; relationships he deeply cherished to inform his investments and nurture his soul.

Fred's true legacy lies in his love. He adored his daughter, son-in-law, grandchildren, and great-grandson Peter, who fueled his boundless optimism. But no love compared to Deana, his wife and soulmate. Their relationship surpassed the most moving of romance novels. Their marriage was, in Fred's words, his life's greatest gift—and she stood unwaveringly by him through every triumph and trial.

Fred served on countless boards, including Performance Food Group, Ingram Entertainment, Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, and the Nashville Healthcare Council. Through the Goad Family Foundation, Fred and Deana gave back to over 50 causes, with a focus on children's health, veterans, and education.

In 2023, Fred was inducted into the Smart Business Dealmakers Hall of Fame. It was a rare moment of public recognition for a man who preferred to let his work speak for itself or not speak at all. Fred avoided the limelight of many of his biggest accomplishments.

Fred believed his story was written by God, not by his hand. He honored that belief not through words, but through action—through generosity, loyalty, and a life lived fully, gratefully, and with relentless purpose.

Fred's legacy will live on not only in the companies he built and the industries he transformed, but more importantly, from Fred's perspective, in the hearts and souls he touched along the way. He will be missed beyond measure.

*Fred Curtis Goad, Jr. — August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1940 to June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025. An extraordinary man.*