



Press Release

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NAAA Honors Gregg Kobel as Industry Pioneer

Former auction owner and past NAAA president recognized for contributions and commitment to the remarketing industry



ORLANDO, Fla.— The National Auto Auction Association (NAAA) has named auto auction veteran Gregg Kobel a pioneer of the industry for his achievements and contributions to the remarketing profession. The honor was presented during the association's 67th annual conference this month in Orlando, Fla. The NAAA represents more than 300 auction members in North America.

This Industry Pioneer Award, given to those who have worked in the wholesale motor vehicle industry and/or NAAA, recognizes an individual who has innovated or enhanced methods of improving services to remarketers through NAAA member auctions.

Kobel, who has spent more than four decades in the auto auction industry, served as NAAA president in 2007-2008 and as chairman of the association's board of directors. He was also president and director of the Midwest Auto Auction Association twice.

During his term as NAAA president, Kobel worked diligently to boost member participation, streamline the organization's committee structure, launch a new awareness marketing campaign, and create the Annual Review publication that examines the events of the previous year, reports data and provides an analysis of the state of the industry.

He also envisioned a common technology platform that put every auction on the same page for data analytics, and while in office pushed for the industry's development of a web-based, single-point inventory locator tool for both wholesale buyers and sellers.

In addition to his leadership contributions to the association and industry, Kobel's early support of NAAA's then fledgling scholastic foundation earned him a Warren Young, Sr., Fellow. The now \$2.25 million fund provides scholarships to help deserving students pursue their dream of higher education.

The oldest of seven children growing up in the inner city of Chicago, Kobel was surrounded by the landmark buildings of his hometown and aspired to be an architect. After attending Richard J. Daley College there, he changed his goal to joining the police force. He passed the police exam but while employed as a service writer at a Firestone store he also occasionally worked at the Greater Chicago Auto Auction across the street and became close friends with the late Joe Lyng, one of its managers. At lunch with Lyng one day, Kobel learned of his plans to open an auction and was offered an opportunity to join him.

So in 1969 Kobel entered the auto auction business with the opening of Auction Way Sales in nearby Crestwood, Ill. Nine years later when Lyng bought Greater Chicago, he tapped Kobel to be the general manager and vice president of both operations. It was during those years that Kobel first became involved with NAAA when Lyng took his young executive to the annual convention in 1972.

When General Electric bought the two independent auctions in 1987, the company kept Kobel as GM for both. He remained in that position after Manheim acquired the auctions in 1991.

Kobel's opportunity to become an auction owner appeared in 1996 as he teamed up with retailer Tom Crane to purchase a small auction in Crestwood that they renamed Tri-State Auto Auction. In a decade they had grown the business from two lanes featuring 200 cars a week to six lanes running 1,600 cars a week with a reconditioning facility and 170 employees.

He later joined South Bend Mishawaka Auto Auction where he served as general manager and vice president, before being named executive vice president in 2011. Today Kobel is a buyer for Frank Shirey Cadillac in Oak Lawn, Ill. He and his wife Patricia have three grown children and four grandchildren.

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