

Lives remembered: Sir Frank Williams and John Welsby

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Sir Frank Williams in 2003

MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sir Frank Williams

The Rev Jonathan Aitken writes: Sir Frank Williams ([obituary](#), November 28) was renowned for his ruthless determination on the Formula One racing circuit but he was also the kindest and most patient of friends.

In his wooing of Saudi backers for the embryonic Williams team, Frank became known in Riyadh for his patience in sitting, sometimes sleeping, in royal waiting rooms for days at a time. One of the Saudis he most wanted to see was Prince Mohammad bin Fahd whose company, Al Bilad, I managed in the UK in the late 1970s.

After more than 20 postponed appointments Frank finally met the prince in London. He brought with him a prototype of a Williams F1 car.

When it was rolled out of a vast pantehnicon parked outside our offices in Mayfair, it was cheekily painted with the Al Bilad logo. Prince Mohammad was strapped into the driver's cockpit, where he received lessons from Frank in "heel and toe" and other F1 driver techniques.

As he clambered out of the car to cheers from a fast-gathering crowd of spectators the excited prince instructed me to make the first £100,000 payment (£500,000 in today's money) from Al Bilad to the Williams Team. This was Frank's big breakthrough into Saudi sponsorship.

Although my help to Frank was of minor importance, he never forgot it. So when I was going through the miseries of disgrace, bankruptcy and jail he was my kindest supporter. He made two visits to me in prison, gave me a Williams car when I was released and helped to pay for my children's education. What a friend.