Frank McMahon, 48, chief investigator for The Humane Society of the United States, died on July 1 after suffering a series of strokes over the past 6 months.

Mr. McMahon had been a driving force in HSUS investigative activities from 1961 until last December. He was best known for his investigations of dog dealers, research laboratories, and inhumane transportation of animals. His work took him to rodeo arenas, slaughterhouses, stockyards, cockfights, dog fights, animal auctions, and the Pribilof Islands seal clubbing.

Rodeo promoters, dog fight enthusiasts, and other persons who earn their living by exploiting animals could spot his face in a crowd and had their followers constantly on the alert for his presence. He had been shot at, threatened with personal harm, and his home in Washington's Foggy Bottom section had been bugged.

One of the many headlines describing McMahon's activities labeled him a "tough guy." And he was tough. Once, when the Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) would not allow a cargo of African animals destined for American zoos to dock in New York, he told USDA officials that he would see to it that the animals were humanely destroyed unless they were unloaded. The officials relented, and the ship was cleared to enter the harbor.

When it arrived alongside the dock, there was Frank McMahon standing on the bridge. He had convinced the captain of a small boat to take him alongside the ship at 3 a.m. and the ship was still outside the 3-mile limit.

But McMahon was no tough guy in dealing with fellow animal lovers. Humane leaders throughout the nation remember him as the man from Washington who came to help them put an end to local cruelties.

One of McMahon's best known accomplishments was a 1966 raid on a Maryland dog dealer in which he was accompanied by writers and photographers for Life magazine. President Richard M. Nix was not impressed. McMahon uncovered at the site were featured in an article headlined "Concentration Camp for Dogs," which resulted in more than 80,000 letters to Congress. In subsequent congressional hearings, McMahon played a role in the passage of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, which required the humane treatment and care of animals destined for research laboratories.

"Frank McMahon was one of the most valuable assets HSUS had for fighting cruelty," said HSUS President John A. Hoyt after learning of McMahon's death. "There is no doubt that he helped make this nation more humane. He was courageous beyond the point of caution when fighting for the cause of animals that, in the long term, no one who knew and worked with him will miss his indomitable spirit and his unceasing passion toward his fellow creatures."

Mr. McMahon is survived by his mother, Mrs. Victoria Middleton of Lynn, Mass., and a sister, Mrs. Maryanne Rudzinsky of Winthrop, Mass. The family requests that expressions of sympathy be in the form of contributions to the Frank J. McMahon Memorial Fund established by HSUS to support prevention of cruelty to animals and no signs that hay had been fed to the horses. Many of the stalls had been chewed, some were kicked in and broken, pushing boards loose and exposing nails that were dangerous to the horses. Water from a nearby road drained into the stalls, and a pasture provided for the horses was almost barren of grass.

In a letter to the owner of the stable, Mrs. Avis Hairston, Weller urged that a veterinarian be immediately to examine the horses, as well as to prescribe a high nutritional diet. Weller warned Mrs. Hairston she was in violation of the Texas State Penal Code 42.11 which states that a person commits a crime if he intentionally or knowingly fails to provide food, care, or shelter for an animal in his custody or confines the animal in a cruel manner.

Weller returned to the stable on several occasions offering numerous recommendations to improve the health and living conditions for the horses. Mrs. Hairston refused to follow Weller's recommendations and threatened to sue HSUS for interference and harassment in her stable operation.

In a hearing before a local court Dr. R. D. Ward examined the horses and found some of them to be only 50% of their normal weight. He also discovered numerous violations of the Texas health code at the stable.

Mrs. Hairston was evicted from the stable, but she subsequently set up another stable operation using the Westheimer horses. She is now awaiting trial on charges of cruelty.

"I believe that fat, healthy horses are too dangerous for children to ride. My old, thin horses are safer for little children," HSUS is convinced that the inhumane conditions at the Westheimer Stable exist in scores of stables throughout the nation. In some states, including Maryland, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, laws specifically regulate horse riding stables. In some states, including Maryland, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, laws regulate stable owners by specifying conditions under which they must maintain their horses. They also require a yearly veterinary examination of horses to ensure the regulations are upheld.

Humane leaders say HSUS should be congratulated for its crusade to improve the living conditions of horses in this country.