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NYC CRIME

Mobster Anthony ‘Gaspipe’ Casso, who murdered dozens and caught COVID-19 behind bars, dead at 78

By Noah Goldberg

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Death came to Luchese family underboss Anthony “Gaspipe” Casso exactly where the feds wanted — in their custody, far from the end of his 455-year prison term.

Casso died Tuesday at age 78, the government said. Casso’s death, [caused by complications relating to the coronavirus](#), came two weeks after the Daily News reported that [he caught](#) COVID-19.

He caught the virus at his Arizona federal prison in November and his lawyers desperately filed a motion for compassionate release as he lay in a Tucson

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hospital on a ventilator. Casso and two other men have died of COVID-19 at the prison in the last four days.



Anthony Casso, reputed member the Luchese crime family. (Daily News)

But federal prosecutors and a federal judge determined that some crimes are too heinous for compassion.

“All defendants sentenced to life in prison will, at some point, begin to succumb to one disease or another, or suffer from failing health due to old age,” federal prosecutors wrote in response to Casso’s application for release.

Brooklyn federal court Judge Frederic Block agreed, and rejected Casso’s application in a brief order Nov. 28.

“My father was a very good man to his family and children and that’s all that matters to me, not what anyone else has to say about him,” Casso’s daughter, Jolene Geraci, told The News.

Even before catching COVID-19, Casso was in ill health, his lawyers said.

He needed a wheelchair to get around, had prostate cancer, and was awaiting a heart operation and already had lung issues.

Casso was sentenced to 455 years in prison after pleading guilty to 11 counts of murder in aid of racketeering — which doesn’t even account for half of the murders to which the feds say Casso confessed.

The fearsome Mafioso’s nickname “Gaspipe” — used in the Daily News as far back as 1972 — came from his father, who carried a small gas pipe around with him to use as his weapon of choice, according to a law enforcement source.

He respected his father so much that he adopted the nickname.

Casso rose through the ranks of the Luchese family through the 1980s, serving as captain and consigliere. He was the family’s No. 2 leader, an underboss, when he was charged in 1990 in a 67-count indictment brought in Brooklyn Federal Court.

Casso, who grew up in Brooklyn and committed most of his crimes in the borough, conspired to kill a federal prosecutor and a federal judge in 1992 and 1993, though the plans didn’t pan out.

He was also part of the 1992 botched Brooklyn attempted murder of an innocent woman, Patricia Cappazola, whose only crime was being the sister of an informant. She survived after being shot in her car in Bensonhurst.

Cappazola’s brother, mob informant Peter “Fat Pete” Chiodo, survived being shot in May 1991.

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Italian-born Charles "Lucky" Luciano, perhaps the most influential mobster in U.S. history, sits between guards court on Aug. 24, 1936, in Plattsburg, N.Y. Special Prosecutor Thomas E. Dewey's racket jury has convicted him 62 of 90 counts of an indictment charging compulsory prostitution. (Charles Hoff/New York Daily News)

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Casso killed rats and mobsters he thought might become rats, and he killed mobsters suspected of being rats. Then, after pleading guilty in 1994 in a wide-ranging racketeering case, Casso became a rat himself.



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He spilled secrets to the feds, telling them about two NYPD detectives, Louis Eppolito and Stephen Caracappa, who took bribes from Casso and informed him of coming indictments as well as of suspected informants.

Information from the crooked cops helped Casso skip town and elude a nationwide manhunt from 1990 to 1993.

Finally the feds caught him in 1993 at a hideout in Mount Olive Township in New Jersey. FBI agents snagged him as he got out of the shower wrapped in a towel.

Casso was never put on the stand against other Mafiosos after it was discovered that he repeatedly broke the law while imprisoned. He bribed prison guards and

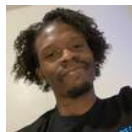
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“The Brooklyn U.S. Attorney’s Office contends Casso to be a liar, and yet continues to use his information till this day,” the mobster wrote in the third person in a handwritten note. “I am a sincerely changed man, and God only knows I have certainly earned a second chance for leniency.”

The note was addressed to Block — the same judge who by denying his release

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last month assured that Casso died in federal custody.

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