

NYC CRIME NEW YORK

Carmine Persico, storied New York mobster and longtime Colombo family boss, dead at 85

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One of New York’s most storied mob bosses met his end in prison Thursday — old and sick, and mired in a lawsuit over his medical treatment.

Carmine (The Snake) Persico, the longtime boss of the Colombo crime family, died at age 85, the Daily News has learned.

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Persico was convicted of racketeering and murder in the famous mid-‘80s “Commission trial,” which put three of the city’s five crime family bosses in prison in one fell swoop.

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University Medical Center, confirmed his lawyer, DENSON WENIGER. AMONG HIS reported pals at the medium-security prison was Ponzi schemer Bernie Madoff.

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Persico spent the last 36 years of his life behind bars, serving a staggering 139-year sentence. But by most accounts, he remained the titular Colombo boss.

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In 2016, Persico’s lawyers described a litany of health problems and called his 100-year sentence a “virtual life sentence.”

“Mr. Persico is legally blind in his right eye, and has diminished vision in his left eye. He also has limited use of his left and right arms and a deformity of his left wrist that has severely impacted his upper mobility,” his lawyer, Anthony DiPietro, wrote in March 2016.

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addition, Mr. Persico suffers from anemia and a multitude of cardiac issues that require periodic medical attention.”

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Persico sued the prison warden and a doctor there in December, alleging “deliberate indifference” to his deteriorating medical condition and calling for his compassionate release. He had serious infections in his legs, and was trying to block doctors from amputating his leg above the knee.

Wientraub said he suspected Persico died of the leg infections, which he said “spread as a result of deliberately indifferent treatment.”

Persico was known to his friends as “Junior” and to his enemies as “The Snake.”

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He was born on Aug. 8, 1933, and grew up in the working class Brooklyn enclaves of Carroll Gardens and Red Hook. His dad was a law firm stenographer, while his mother stayed home to raise Carmine and his siblings – fellow future mobsters Alphonse and Theodore, along with their sister Dolores.

Persico was a high school dropout and ran with a local street gang. His first arrest was at age 17 in the fatal beating of another youth during a melee in Prospect Park.

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Mugshot of Carmine Persico circa 1963. (Obtained by Daily News)

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[killed Harlem mom »](#)

By his mid-20s, Persico was a made man in the family headed by Joe Colombo.

He became affiliated with fellow Brooklyn mobsters the Gallo brothers – “Crazy” Joey, Larry and Albert, aka Kid Blast. Their crew was widely credited with the execution of mob boss Albert Anastasia, famously whacked inside a Manhattan barber shop.

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The hit led to an internal family war, with the Gallos taking on boss Joe Profaci over what they felt was a slight following the Anastasia killing. The younger crew expected bigger responsibilities and more cash, only to clash with family’s old guard.

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Persico turned on the Gallos, aligning himself with Profaci in the war that left nine dead, three missing and 15 more wounded. He was reportedly involved in the attempted strangling of Larry Gallo inside a Brooklyn bar, a hit interrupted by a local police sergeant.

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in 1963.

Persico, though in prison for hijacking, ruled over a powerful crew inside the Colombos. After the 1971 shooting of boss Joe Colombo, he and his brothers grabbed control of the family. Persico ran the family from the outside after he was released from prison in 1979 — but his time on the street was short.

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Persico was indicted for racketeering in 1984 and arrested in the home of an FBI informant. He was also charged with the heads of other four families in the “Commission” prosecution led by then-U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani.

Persico’s reply was to put out a contract on Giuliani.

He got a 39-year term in the first case. In the second, where he acted as his own attorney, Persico was hit with a 100-term – ensuring his death behind bars.

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One small victory: Federal Judge John F. Keenan hailed Persico as “one of the most intelligent people I have ever seen in my life” for his performance as a lawyer.

While running the family from behind bars, the Colombos descended into another internal bloodbath pitting Persico loyalists against supporters of new boss Victor (Little Vic) Orena. The war destroyed the family, which was decimated by a dozen murders and as many defectors to the government side – including the family’s consigliere and two capos. Sixty-eight made men and associates were arrested, including Carmine’s kid

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his request in 2017, and the U.S. Supreme

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