

LONG ISLAND / OBITUARIES

Maurice Nadjari, prosecutor and defense lawyer in NYC and Long Island, dies at 95

By Zachary R. Dowdy

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It's not every day when a dad inspires his son to cut class, but Maurice Nadjari — when prosecuting perhaps his biggest case ever in the 1970s — did just that, said his son, Douglas.

"I practically flunked geometry in high school watching him try Thomas Mackell," said Douglas Nadjari, who practices law in Uniondale, adding, "It inspired me and it's what pushed me to become a prosecutor and now a defense attorney."

Maurice Nadjari of Huntington, who handled, as trial lawyer and prosecutor in New York City and Long Island, some of the biggest cases in local history and gained a national reputation as a fighter of high-level corruption, died Friday at his home. He was 95.

"As a prosecutor he was ahead of his time," Douglas Nadjari said during a telephone interview Friday. "He was a visionary prosecutor and trial lawyer with extraordinary talent and a gift for connecting with a jury in a way that few others can."

So legendary was Nadjari's legal acumen, displayed in media reports of his trials in Manhattan — where his son said he won 248 of 250 cases — that former Suffolk prosecutor George J. Aspland brought him out east to work on the county's prosecution of land speculators in Islip and the East End.

A Harlem native, Nadjari lived in Queens, the Bronx, Manhattan and, ultimately, Suffolk, where he had lived since the late 1960s, Douglas Nadjari said.

He graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, City College of New York, and then New York University's law school.

He "cut his teeth," his son said, as a defense attorney for the Legal Aid Society for the City of New York and then became a prosecutor in Manhattan, where he racked up hundreds of convictions, his court being nicknamed the "snake pit" as it was the place where defendants would go to be bitten by his prosecutorial skills, his son said.

Aspland appointed him chief assistant district attorney in 1969 in Suffolk, where he prosecuted public corruption and mob cases, including the murder of Irene Brant, for which Julius F. Klein was convicted in the slaying of the 20-year-old dancer at his Sayville club.

Later, in 1972, Nadjari was tapped by then-Gov. Nelson Rockefeller as a special prosecutor charged with trying corruption cases in New York City's criminal justice system, trying police officers, district attorneys and judges, his son said, adding that the techniques he used at the time were unorthodox but later adopted and put in regular operation now.

Nadjari secured an indictment in 1973 and conviction in 1974 against Mackell, who had resigned as Queens district attorney after his indictment on charges he blocked prosecution of a \$4.4 million get-rich-quick scheme involving nine members of his staff.

Mackell was convicted and sentenced to six months in jail but the conviction was reversed and dismissed on appeal.

Besides his son, Douglas, Nadjari is survived by his wife, the former Joan Boskey who was his college sweetheart; another son, Howard; and four grandchildren.

Services will be private but the family requests donations be made in his honor to Island Harvest Food Bank.

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