

LONG ISLAND / OBITUARIES

Richard Hartman, 'mad genius of police labor negotiations,' dies at 75



Richard Hartman, pictured in his office in Mineola on Aug. 23, 1976, was known for negotiating lucrative Long Island police contracts, and for serving a prison sentence for a kickback scheme. He died Aug. 13, 2015 of lymphoma. Credit: NEWSDAY / Stan Wolfson

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Richard Hartman, a gregarious math savant who negotiated lucrative Long Island police contracts in the 1970s and served a federal prison sentence for a kickback scheme involving city police unions, has died of lymphoma. He was 75.

Hartman died Aug. 13 at The Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, said his sister, Lynn Alpert of Merrick.

Though he once made millions in fees from New York City police unions, he spent the last years of his life as a math teacher at Christ the King High School in Middle Village, Queens, and rented a split-level apartment in Maspeth, Queens.



In the 1970s, Hartman, an MIT and New York Law School graduate who grew up in Long Beach, employed a cadre of secretaries and drivers to be on call around the clock while he devoted himself to Long Island police unions.

He negotiated generous contracts for Nassau and Suffolk cops, making them the highest paid in the country.

Once described as the "mad genius of police labor negotiations," his forceful advocacy led NYPD unions to hire him in 1978 for \$760,000.

"There's no question he was single-handedly responsible for making Nassau and Suffolk the highest-paid police departments in the country," said Leonard Levitt, who runs NYPDConfidential.com and writes a column for [amNewYork](http://amNewYork.com). "And in the end, the crown jewel was getting the assignment in New York."

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Gary Dela Raba, former Nassau PBA president, said, "Every cop on Long Island owes him a debt of gratitude."

Hartman also rang up large debts gambling at Atlantic City casinos.

In 1988, a Manhattan district attorney grand jury investigated Hartman's use of \$800,000 in a union escrow account to pay gambling debts.

He returned the money and was not charged, but he surrendered his law license.

The next year he secured \$2 million as a PBA labor consultant and another \$2 million in commissions by selling life insurance policies to police officers, Newsday reported at the time.

In 1998, he was convicted of paying more than \$400,000 in bribes to union officials with the Transit Police Benevolent Association in return for more than \$2 million being paid to a law firm connected to Hartman.

Hartman was sentenced to 5 years in federal prison, where he taught prisoners math, his sister said.

Gary Melius, Long Island power broker and owner of Oheka Castle, said he became good friends with Hartman in 1968, when Melius hired him as an attorney. "Nobody did as much for the police as Richard Hartman," Melius said.

One of their last conversations was when Hartman wanted 80 tickets to bring students to a garden party at Oheka Castle this year. "I did it for him, because for many years he did the same for everybody else," Melius said.

Alpert said Hartman never wanted material things for himself, but would help friends get what they wanted, from suits to autographed baseballs and concert tickets. "That was his way," she said. Her brother enjoyed his last years teaching and coaching the math team to No. 1 in the state. "These were some of the happiest few years," she said.

Besides his sister, survivors include her son and daughter. He was preceded in death by an older brother, Elliott.



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