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U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MOURNS DEATH OF VALUED FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

Organized Crime Chief Mitch Mars, 55, dies after struggle with lung cancer

CHICAGO -- Mitchell Mars, longtime Chief of the Organized Crime Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office, died last night after a struggle with lung cancer, said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

"We lost a very dear friend and a treasured colleague today," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

Mr. Mars, 55, a Chicago native known to all as "Mitch," had a remarkable career in government service during which his many accomplishments were often hidden by his modest demeanor and sharp sense of humor. Following graduation from Georgetown University Law Center, Mitch started working for the government in 1977, when he joined the staff of the U.S. House of Representatives. He was later appointed to work for the House select committee that investigated the John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinations. Mitch joined the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice in 1978 and then headed to the Organized Crime Strike Force in Chicago in 1980.

"Little could anyone have known then what an impact his arrival would make upon this city," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

Mitch formally joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in 1990 when the Justice Department Strike Force merged with the office. Mitch became the Organized Crime Chief in 1992 and led the section

for the next 15 years, during which he tried some of the most significant organized crime cases in the country, including *U.S. v. Tocco*, *U.S. v. Sarsinelli*, *U.S. v. Infelice*, and more recently *U.S. v. Spano*, the Cicero case involving former town President Betty Loren-Maltese. Most recently, he led the investigation and prosecution of *U.S. v. Calabrese*, the Family Secrets case, an historic prosecution that resulted in convictions involving 18 previously unsolved organized crime murders since 1970, and which Mitch completed shortly before learning that he had cancer.

“Mitch’s impact on organized crime in this city cannot be overstated,” Mr. Fitzgerald said.

“The Chicago legal community will note that it lost a great and accomplished trial lawyer. The world of law enforcement will note that it lost a committed and savvy investigator of organized crime, who every few years accomplished time and again what others would hope to accomplish in a lifetime – with Mitch, of course, giving 100 percent of the credit to the agents and trial partners he worked with and none to himself,” Mr. Fitzgerald added.

“But we would do a disservice to remember Mitch only by what he accomplished as a prosecutor in the courtroom. Mitch personified the word ‘public servant.’ He came to work every day and served the citizens. He worked extremely hard and was quite talented and sought nothing in return except the feeling that he was part of doing something good. We will best remember Mitch as the most decent of persons: honest, to a fault; committed, beyond a doubt, to his wife, his friends and his country; and a team player who assumed all responsibility but took no credit. Anyone who knew Mitch as a person knew that he was also quite funny, laughing as often about himself as about others, and all too happy to enlist others to join in as well,” Mr. Fitzgerald said.

Mr. Mars had been on leave for the past few months after learning that he had cancer, following the Family Secrets trial.

“Mitch was determined to deal with his struggle privately with his wife and his family with his quiet resolve and strong sense of humor,” Mr. Fitzgerald said in a personal message to the 300 employees of the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Funeral arrangements are pending.

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