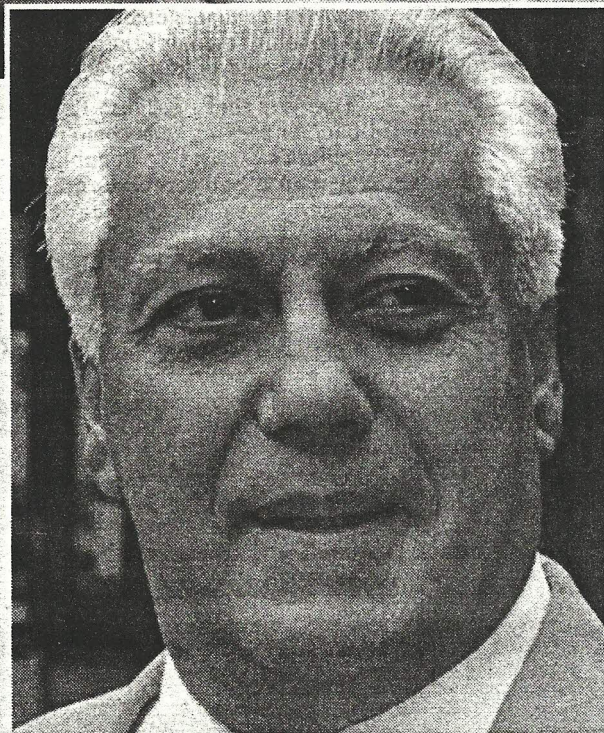


ANDREA MIHALIK/DAILY NEWS

Frank Antico Jr. leaves courthouse yesterday after his father (below) was found guilty of extortion, racketeering and wire fraud

Frank Antico convicted



STEVEN M. FALK/DAILY NEWS

Ex L&I big guilty of using his power for sex, bribes

by Jim Smith

Daily News Staff Writer

A middle-aged man out on the town many a night, Frank Antico enjoyed free cognac and topless dancers.

He had a way with women and club owners.

It wasn't just his handsome mug, his thick white hair, his dark tan, his flashy wardrobe, his gift of gab, his quick smile.

For Antico, his inspector's badge from the Department of Licenses and Inspections gave him the edge.

The L&I badge worked wonders on the seamy side of Philly.

In the topless bars he haunted, the owners' rule was: give Antico anything he wanted — booze, food, a \$100 bill now and then, a free couch dance, a pig roast, a picnic for his buddies, strippers for a deputy mayor, limo rides, Phillies tickets.

And in return for the treats, Antico said

to hell with the law, allowing anything to go at the topless joints.

Such were the findings of a jury, which yesterday found Antico guilty of one count of racketeering, nine counts of extortion and eight counts of wire fraud following a 16-day trial in federal court.

The verdict means Antico may have to forfeit up to \$365,000 — a sum that prosecutors contend represents all his ill-gotten gains over a 13-year period.

He also faces the loss of his city pension, said Joseph Herkness, executive director of the city's Board of Pensions.

Antico, 59, worked for L&I for about 37 years. He was making nearly \$56,000 a year as a supervisory inspector when he retired in 1996, and his pension is about 80 percent of his salary, or nearly \$41,000 a year.

In all, the jury found that Antico extorted about \$40,000 between 1983 and 1996 from topless club owners, a private con-

sultant and a wealthy madam who operated several Center City brothels.

"There was extortion, but it was innocuous," juror Larry Sybrandt, 32, a computer programmer from Malvern, said after the verdict. "He didn't put a gun to anybody's head," but "they understood they needed to play ball with this guy, not so much for protection but at least to be on his good side."

Antico was released on bail by U.S. District Judge Jan E. DuBois to await sentencing on Aug. 12. Sentencing guidelines call for a prison term in the six-year range, the prosecutors said.

Antico and his attorneys, Brian McMonagle and Mark Cedrone, declined comment.

Trial testimony painted a picture of an amoral and corrupt city official who sold his badge for petty bribes and sex flings.

For many years, Antico's wife and two sons lived with him in one house, and his mistress, who bore him two other sons, lived in another house in another neighborhood. Antico cheated on both families.

He romanced a wealthy madam who gave him free sex and cash for keeping L&I away from her Center City brothels. Other nights, he made love to a topless dancer young enough to be a daughter, in

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his L&I office. There also was a pretty paralegal. Like the topless dancer, the paralegal was much younger than Antico.

All four ex-lovers testified against Antico.

Elizabeth Ricciardi, his ex-mistress of 22 years and mother of two of Antico's sons, told the jury that Antico set her up in business as a consultant to private clients who needed help in getting L&I permits or licenses. It was a lucrative trade for both of them. According to the prosecutors, Ricciardi grossed more than \$700,000 in 10 years as an expeditor. In exchange, she dropped her demands for child support.

Most of the \$365,000 forfeiture that Antico faces was attributable to this alleged scam, one in which Antico saved himself a lot of money while enriching a close associate at taxpayers' expense, prosecutors said.

**He romanced a
wealthy madam who
gave him free sex
and cash for keeping
L&I away from her
Center City brothels.**

A second lover, Maureen McCausland, was a wealthy madam who operated several brothels in the city. McCausland said she paid Antico about \$8,000 over a 10-year period and made love to Antico at New Jersey motels to keep L&I off her back.

A third lover, topless dancer Jennifer "Stevie" Pizzerello said she didn't have to get a \$200 city license to perform on club stages because she was having sex with Antico in his L&I office at night.

The fourth former lover, paralegal Kathy Walker, worked in a large Center City law firm, Obermayer, Rebmann, Maxwell and Hippel. Walker said she got speedy approval from L&I, for paperwork needed by the firm, solely because she was having an affair with Antico.

Antico elected not to testify in his own defense, which lasted just one day. His lawyers contended that the key prosecution witnesses weren't worthy of belief since they had made deals with the government in hopes of avoiding prison for their own crimes. ■