

Paul Ricca Dies; Led Capone Gang

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Paul (The Walter) Ricca, 74, who took over the Al Capone gang in Chicago after the notorious gangster was jailed for income tax evasion in the 1930s, died Wednesday of a heart attack in a Chicago hospital.

Ricca, who had served prison terms for extortion and income tax evasion, was named the "nation's most important criminal" by a Senate subcommittee in 1958.

For years Ricca had battled U.S. efforts to deport him as an unsavory racketeer and murderer, who had lied about his background when he came into the United States from Italy in 1920.

He had been naturalized in 1928 but his citizenship was revoked in 1957 when it was found that his name was Felice DeLuca and that he had killed men in Italy, where he had grown up outside of Naples.

He had been convicted there in 1917 of murdering two men, and served two years in jail. When he came out, he murdered the man who testified against him, for which he was convicted in absentia in 1924.

"No country will take me permanently, so I guess I'll have to stay in this country for awhile," Ricca boasted as he fought deportation up



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PAUL (THE WALTER) RICCA

through the Supreme Court, which upheld the deportation order by refusing to hear his case. During the years, formal

application for residence had been made by Ricca to more than 60 nations. All of them turned him down, understandably, since he al-

ways included newspaper accounts of his gangland activities with the applications. He was never deported.

After coming to this country, Ricca headed for Chicago, where he became a waiter in a place owned by Diamond Joe Esposito. There he met Frank Nitti, a Capone henchman who introduced him to the Capone gang.

The two of them were top lieutenants when Capone was sent to jail, and at first they shared leadership of the hierarchy.

But the two of them ran into trouble in the early 1940s, when they were convicted of extorting close to \$2 million from the movie industry. Nitti committed suicide. Ricca served three years of a 10-year sentence, then was paroled and took over as the leader of the Capone operations.

The circumstances of the parole, reported to have involved payoffs, were investigated in 1952 by the Justice Department, but the probe eventually was dropped.

Ricca's citizenship was revoked in 1957. About the same time, he ran into trouble with the Internal Revenue Service over his taxes. He was convicted of income tax evasion and served a prison term from 1959 to 1961.

During the years, Ricca's role had dwindled to that of

elder statesman of the Chicago crime syndicate.

With his smattering of white hair he was a conservative dresser who more resembled a banker than a top hoodlum in the underworld.

Ricca came back into the news again in 1967, when he was called into federal court in Chicago on a charge of lying under oath when he testified at a deportation hearing that his income of \$80,159 had been won at a race track in 1963.

He had also been accused, but not charged, of lying when he listed \$91,710 in 1959, \$91,930 in 1962 and \$89,816 in 1964 as race track winnings when he filed income taxes for those years.

The perjury case against him ended in a mistrial before a jury was selected on the grounds that newspaper publicity had made a fair trial impossible.

The last publicity came a year later, when Italy refused to issue a travel authorization for U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents to return him to his homeland.

Ricca, who lived quietly in recent years in a fortress-like home in a Chicago suburb, is survived by his wife, Nancy E. Ricca; two sons, Anthony P. and Paul R.; a daughter, Maria Ann Ponzio, and three sisters, who are in Italy.