

William Albert Costa Sr.



William Albert Costa, Sr., the former Commissioner of Public Works for New Rochelle, died Saturday at Montefiore Hospital in New York. He was 88.

Costa, a civil engineer, was Commissioner of Public Works for New Rochelle from 1971 until his retirement in 1992. Born in the Bronx in 1925, he was a graduate of Dewitt Clinton High School, class of 1943, and Manhattan College, class of 1950.

Costa served in the [Army](#) Air Force from 1943 to 1946, and was a squadron navigator on a B-29 bomber. He flew 22 missions over Japan, held the rank of First Lieutenant, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, and the [Purple Heart](#).

On one mission in June of 1945, his plane was shot down on the return from a mission. Mr. Costa and the other crew members bailed out and were rescued by a [U.S. Navy](#) submarine after more than a day in the water.

Costa came to work for the city of New Rochelle in 1957 as an assistant city engineer. His original appointment was a temporary position for two weeks. "I guess I'm the proverbial man who came to dinner and never left," he once quipped. He was appointed Deputy Director of Public Works in 1965, and Director of Public Works in 1971. Later, his title was changed to Commissioner.

Costa's no-nonsense style of management was legendary during his years in City Hall. He was also known for his long hours and hard work. A 1977 Standard-Star profile noted: "A key to Costa's character is his office, which resembles a war room more than the quarters of the Commissioner of Public Works."

"Covering one wall is a giant map of New Rochelle to which Costa's eyes constantly move as he talks about the roads, sidewalks, garbage, leaves, streetlights and other public property of which he is charge." (The Standard-Star, October 9, 1977, Page A3)

"I like my work," he told an interviewer. "It is very varied, never boring, sometimes frustrating and sometimes difficult to keep your temper. However, you do get to see the fruits of your labor."

Costa leaves his wife of 63 years, Lida (Draghi), and three children, Barbara and husband Eric Stange, of Arlington, MA; a son, Michael and wife Claudia of Armonk, NY; and William, Jr. of Medford, Mass. In addition he leaves four grandchildren, Michael of Armonk, NY., Cristina of San Francisco, CA, Alexander Stange of Toronto, Canada, and Mia Stange of Providence, RI.

A wake will be held Tuesday, January 14, from 3-7 pm. with a funeral home chapel service Wednesday, January 15, at 10 am, followed by cremation at Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Salvation Army.

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