

Slain currency dealer Deak eulogized in Manhattan

By **BETSY AUGUST**
Staff Writer

"Nick, it's impossible to understand this absurdity that took your life away," Ibrahim Oweiss told his friend Nicholas Deak, who lay in a closed casket strewn with orange and yellow roses.

"Nick, I shall miss you forever."

Oweiss' words rang out Thursday in the cathedral silence of the All Souls Unitarian Church in Manhattan, as more than 300 people mourned the death of the 80-year-old Deak, a millionaire currency dealer from Scarsdale who lost his life Monday at the hands of a homeless woman accused of firing the bullet that shattered his heart.

DEATH NOTICES

MADONIA, Domenica (Mamie) on Nov. 19, 1985 of Piermont N.Y. Beloved wife of Benny. Devoted mother of Nick, Beatrice Valenza and Rose Guinta. Also survived by 7 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren. Mass Sat. Nov. 23, at 10am at St. John R.C. Church, Piermont. Entombment Rose Hills Mausoleum. Visiting hours at the MORITZ FUNERAL HOME, 290 Rte 303, Tappan N.Y. from 2-4 & 7-9pm

SPECIAL NOTICES

ST. JUDE NOVENA

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world, now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. St. Jude worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us. Say This prayer nine times per day by the eighth day your prayer will be answered. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thank you for answering my prayer.—L.G.

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"We all feel the loss of a giant," Oweiss, an associate professor of economics at Georgetown University in Washington, told the mourners as he eulogized Deak as a warm, loving man who had a curiosity for the new and a penchant for perfection.

"It was a difficult task to keep up with his ingenuity and his standards," Oweiss said. "Nicholas Deak was a perfectionist in whatever he did, and likewise, he did not accept less than perfection from others.

"His wit and sense of humor intrigued me, his quick remarks fascinated me and his distinguished characteristics overwhelmed me," he continued. "He made you earn his friendship. Behind his awesome look was true affection and a kind, tender heart. He was a humble and modest individual with an enormous reservoir of love and affection.

"Nicholas Deak will be a torch to enlighten a successful road for those who wish to follow in his giant steps."

Police said Deak was killed Monday when 44-year-old Lois Lang, a Seattle native claiming to be part-owner of Deak-Perera, walked into his Lower Manhattan headquarters, fired two shots at his receptionist and then aimed three more bullets at him.

The receptionist, Frances Lauder of Staten Island, died instantly. Deak died shortly after arriving at a Manhattan hospital.

Ms. Lang was charged with two counts of second-degree murder and was being held without bail.

She reportedly told police she believed that during the 1940s the government gave her Deak-Perera, the country's oldest foreign currency exchange and precious metals firm, and that she entrusted its operations to Deak. When divisions of the company filed for bankruptcy last December, she apparently blamed Deak for mismanagement and decided to kill him.

Deak, the son of a banker, was born Oct. 8, 1905 in Hateg, in the Transylvania region of Hungary. He

studied forestry at the University of Vienna, and shortly after the collapse of his family's fortune during the Depression, he went to Switzerland and earned a doctorate in economics and finance.

Fluent in five languages, he went on to work at the Royal Hungarian Trade Institute, the British Overseas Bank and then the League of Nations in Geneva.

Deak became a U.S. citizen in 1939, the year he founded Deak & Co., and enlisted in the U.S. Army during World War II. He soon became an intelligence agent for the Office of Strategic Services, and in 1945, personally accepted the Japanese surrender at Burma, where he had parachuted into jungles in search of prisoners.

In recalling Deak's days as an OSS agent in Malaya, Hungary, French Indochina, Singapore and the Mideast, his longtime friend, Arthur Lipper, told mourners Thursday that Deak was "a serious man who loved life."

"He was always curious and always probing," Lipper said. "There was never anything he wouldn't try."

After the war, Deak acquired the Perera Co. currency business, and built the company into a financial empire that included dozens of currency and bullion offices and several banks.

In 1984, Deak's worth was placed at \$400 million by Forbes magazine, which named him one of the nation's wealthiest men.

During the funeral service, Deak's nephew, Howard Ranken, read Deak's favorite poem, "If," by Rudyard Kipling. Ranken said Deak "was the kind of man Kipling was writing for."

In closing the eulogies, Lipper urged the mourners to do as Deak would have done: "As he would have wished, let's pull ourselves together, stand up straight and march into the future."

Deak was buried in the Ferncliff Cemetery in Greenburgh. He is survived by his wife, Lisl; his son, Robert Leslie; his grandchildren, Lindsay, Travis and Amanda; and his sister, Margaret Lengyel.