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# Arthur Novit, Chicago Police Officer - *Superman of the Subway* -

Chicago Police Officer Arthur Novit was an expert at disguising himself as a vagrant or country bumpkin while he worked as a decoy in the subway to attract would-be robbers.

But one day he decided to have a little fun. The adventure earned him a nickname: "Superman of the Subway."



Mr. Novit dressed in a Superman costume and hid in a CTA storage closet while he waited for criminals to make their move on a fellow police decoy slumped on the floor — like a man on a bender — at the Red Line station at Jackson and State.

When two robbers pounced, Mr. Novit burst out in full superhero regalia, knocking the closet's steel door to the ground as if it were made of cardboard. (He and other officers had loosened the hinges so they could slip in and out.)



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And he made a speech that would become departmental legend.

"Halt! In the name of the Law! Law and Order will prevail in the subways of Chicago!" he told Leonard Aronson, who reported the story in a 1976 issue of Chicago magazine. "As long as I'm in this metropolis, law and order will prevail."

When one of his police partners thanked "Superman" for helping officers, he replied, "Any time you need me, I'll be here. It takes me only 10 minutes by cape."

When the robbers appeared in court, a judge asked them who made the pinch.

"Superman arrested me," one said. The judge sent him to see a court psychiatrist.

Mr. Novit died July 8, 2012, at Our Lady of the Resurrection Medical Center at 89.

"He was a good policeman; a very active policeman," said his friend, retired Officer Harold Brown, who recalled the Superman adventure. "He did make a lot of arrests."

He was a born performer who could play music and sing in the style of Sinatra, said his wife, Arlene. "Being a decoy fit him perfect," she said. He also had boxes full of commendations for his work.

With expert use of cosmetics, fake facial hair and changes in clothing, he could transform into a captain of industry or a tourist or a homeless person. Often, he would flash a gold watch to attract the attention of thieves before lying on the subway floor to approximate a drunken stupor.

"He used to dress up like a cowboy, like he just came from Texas," his wife said. "He had fake moustaches; he had fake sideburns. He put powder in his hair so it looked gray."

He was so skilled at disguise that a neighborhood busybody felt it was her duty to inform Mr. Novit about the strange men she thought she saw going in and out of his house.

She warned Mr. Novit, "You don't know what your wife does when you're at work," Arlene Novit recalled with a laugh. The woman told him, "When you're not here, I see a wealthy businessman come out; I see an Indian."

Mr. Novit thought her nosiness was so funny that he didn't explain: "He said, 'Thanks for telling me.' "



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He received many commendations from the Chicago Police Department. "He was a natural police officer who had a sixth sense about the street," said his former partner, Vic Jacobellis. "His best disguise was Superman. . . .I trusted him more than I trusted anyone else I worked with. He would never back down to anyone and always had everybody's back."

Mr. Novit grew up in Albany Park at the height of the Great Depression.

"Dad went to a lot of different grade schools, eight different grade schools," said his son, Antonie. "My dad said they kept bouncing; he had to keep moving out of one apartment to another to another."

He attended Von Steuben High School. Those early hard times made him especially generous with others, his son said. He always worked two jobs, and he loved to see his kids' faces when he bestowed gifts or shiny new bicycles.

In his prime, Mr. Novit played handball every day at the YMCA, and he enjoyed Chinese food so much, he could eat it all day, every day. He loved his dog, Booboo, a husky mix with powder-blue eyes who lived 15 years. He swore the dog had ESP and could follow commands without a word.

[Obituary from the Chicago Sun-Times Newspaper]