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Dr. Marks, 85; public discovered his mettle in '79 ransom attempt

LINCOLN — Dr. Joseph Marks, 85, formerly of 1111 Smithfield Ave., a general practitioner here for 40 years, died yesterday at the Miriam Hospital. He was the husband of the late Caroline (Nathan) Marks.

Dr. Marks came into the public eye as a cool customer under stress when he was taken prisoner in his Smithfield Avenue home on Jan. 10, 1979 by a man, brandishing what turned out to be a toy pistol. He was kept captive overnight and in the morning went to a bank to withdraw a $5,000 ransom.

Dr. Marks, then 82, went to the bank in Cumberland and asked to withdraw the money in small bills. A teller who knew him sensed there was something amiss, noted the man waiting in the physician's car and called police. The would-be extortionist was arrested.

Looking back on the night he spent with his captor — who smashed valuable porcelains and threatened him with a knife — Dr. Marks said, "He was a real bad egg. But I know how to play 'em. I was good natured, kind to him ... Now he's got nothing."

Dr. Marks said he had not been afraid. "I said to hell with it. If I die, I die. When you get to be 82, you don't care so much anymore." He added, though, he planned to move away as soon as he could.

He stayed on, though, in the Saylesville house that was his home since 1930 — and in June of last year his home was entered, ransacked and burglarized and his car stolen. The stolen items were recovered. Not long after that incident, he was admitted to the Oak Hill Nursing Center in Pawtucket.

Dr. Marks was a 1919 graduate of the New York University School of Medicine.

Born in Warren, he was a son of the late Nathan and Eva Makowski) Marks.

Dr. Marks was a member of the American Medical Association and the Rhode Island Medical Society. Memberships included the Citizens-Veritas in Linden, N.J., the Palestine Temple and the Scottish Rite.

He leaves a son, Dr. Leon Marks of Brookline, Mass.; four brothers, Charles Marks of Warren, Israel Marks of New Jersey, Raymond Marks of Central Falls and Milton Marks of Pawtucket; a sister, Mrs. Rose Brown of Pawtucket, and two grandchildren.

The funeral was to be held today at 3:30 p.m. at the Max Sugarman Memorial Chapel, 458 Hope St., Providence. Burial will be in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick.

MARKS, Dr. JOSEPH

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