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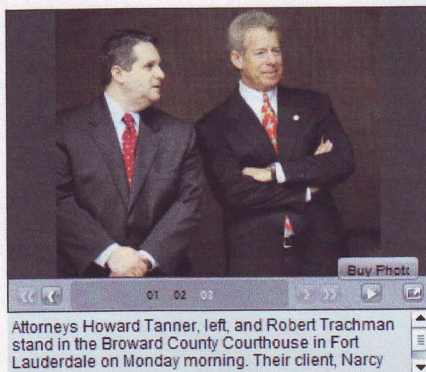
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THE NOVACK FAMILY

Ben Novack Jr.'s widow gains control of \$10M estate

Ben Novack Jr.'s fortune has been placed in the hands of his widow, a suspect in his murder.



Attorneys Howard Tanner, left, and Robert Trachman stand in the Broward County Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale on Monday morning. Their client, Nancy Novack, is partially visible behind them.

BY JULIE BROWN
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The widow of slain Fort Lauderdale businessman Ben Novack Jr. -- a suspect in his death -- won control of his \$10 million fortune Monday, despite relatives' efforts to cut her off without a dime.

Broward Probate Judge Charles M. Greene dismissed a lawsuit filed by the relatives, who wanted Nancy Novack removed as the estate's executor under the state's slayer statute. Under that law, a killer cannot inherit the victim's estate.

Ben Novack Jr. was worth more than \$10 million when his wife found him beaten, bound with duct tape and dead in a suburban New York hotel room July 12.

Nancy Novack, 53, has not been charged, and no arrests have been made. Sources close to the case said it is likely the relatives' lawyers dropped the case because they didn't have enough evidence to prove she was the killer.

The lawyers asked for the dismissal without prejudice, which allows them to file another challenge to the will at a later date. The lawyers, Stephen J. McDonald and Bill Crawford, did not say Monday why they made the request.

They had tried, without success, to subpoena detectives in Rye Brook, N.Y., who are investigating the slaying. That effort was quashed because of the detectives' ongoing probe.

Nancy Novack's lawyer, Howard Tanner, called the relatives' case "an attack on Mrs. Novack" based on rumor and innuendo, not hard facts.

"This is a miscarriage of justice. If it can happen to her, it can happen to anyone."

He has said his client is innocent and had nothing to gain from killing her husband.

But Nancy Novack's daughter, May Abad, and Novack Jr.'s aunt, Maxine Fiel, contend that Nancy Novack arranged the murder to collect her husband's fortune. At the time of his death, he was also having an affair, police said.

A discouraged Fiel declined to comment after the hearing.

Nancy Novack has accused Abad of the murder, a charge her daughter denies. Neither Abad nor her mother attended Monday's hearing in Fort Lauderdale.

Ben Novack Jr., 52, a convention planner, was found bludgeoned to death July 12 in his room at the Hilton Rye Town hotel in Westchester County, N.Y., where he was overseeing a business conference he had organized. His business, Convention Concepts Unlimited, earned \$50 million in business annually,

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according to its website. Narcy Novack found her husband's body when she returned from breakfast.

Because her husband left her his estate, she is now free to sell his assets, including their home, his boat and his massive collection of Batman memorabilia. Narcy Novack will also eventually gain the estate of her late husband's 87-year-old mother, Bernice Novack, who was found dead three months before her son. Her estate was inherited by her son before his death.

Bernice Novack's death was ruled accidental, though an anonymous letter received by Rye Brook detectives claims that both she and her son were killed by Narcy Novack and an unnamed accomplice. The letter describes details of the two alleged killings. Rye Brook police released the letter last week in the hope of tracking down its writer.

The Novacks, who wed in 1991, had a tumultuous marriage. In 2002, Narcy Novack and two others tied Novack Jr. to a chair, threatened to kill him and removed money from his safe, according to the police report.

"If I can't have you, no one else will," she told him, according to a divorce petition he filed and later dropped.

At the time, Narcy Novack told police the incident was part of a sex game.

She also showed them pornographic pictures of women with artificial limbs, claiming her husband had a fetish for them.

Novack Jr. was the son of the late founder of the Fontainebleau hotel in Miami Beach. Ben Novack Sr. built the luxurious hotel in 1954, and his son grew up in the hotel penthouse.



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