



KILLER GETS LIFE

LONG ISLAND ARCHITECT REX HEUERMANN, WHO ADMITTED TO KILLING EIGHT WOMEN, WAS SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON ON WEDNESDAY WITH NO POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE. **A5**

HEALTH

A rare tick-borne virus stole his memories and quality of life



Marty Novar's life was turned upside down in November 2025 by Powassan virus, a rare but potentially deadly tick-borne disease. Novar is seen here at his Frankford home with his dog Raven. Photos by Ed Murray, for NJ.com

A fateful hike led to a bite that infected Sussex County man with Powassan virus.

Jackie Roman NJ.com

Martin "Marty" Novar remembers flashes of his 65th birthday on Nov. 2, 2025. But he doesn't remember anything else from that month. Memory is a tricky thing for Novar nowadays.

When we made plans to meet at his house on Lake Owassa in Frankford Township for this story, he called three hours before the scheduled meeting, wondering where I was and offering directions.

It's not personal. He can't remember any clients he's had in the last year either and, after more than 20 years as an attorney, Novar was forced to give up his legal practice.

"I don't really have short-term memory," Novar said in an interview. "Some things I remember, but a lot of things I don't."

He also doesn't remember taking a hike with his dog, Raven, in the lush woodlands surrounding his Sussex County home in mid-November. He'd taken dozens of hikes like it before. Sometimes he wonders which hike is responsible for giving him the rare tick-borne virus that would steal his memories and quality of life.

"I've been hiking in those woods for over 10 years and I've gotten lots of ticks, but you look at yourself and you take them



Novar with his partner Karen Ezra, who realized something was wrong when Novar had no memory of her cats.

off," Novar told NJ.com. "Maybe I went in shorts or something. I never really sprayed myself with tick repellent. I just never worried about it."

A HOLIDAY TO FORGET

The night before Thanksgiving, Novar was in bed when he should have been traveling to Washington, D.C. with family.

He wanted to go but he wasn't feeling well. Or, at least, that's what people tell him. "Evidently, I had a headache and fever, so

I stayed in bed and the rest of the family went to D.C.," Novar said.

Novar stayed at his partner Karen Ezra's apartment in Brooklyn; he'd insisted she proceed with their trip to D.C. Before she left, Ezra made him promise to call the next day.

But when they spoke on the phone Thanksgiving morning, Novar was unintelligible.

"He was trying to communicate to me that he had walked the dog and he couldn't finish his sentence. He sounded altered in some way," said Ezra.

When she asked about the cats, Novar replied, "I don't know about any cats."

Alarm bells went off in her head. Novar loves Ezra's two cats, Moxie and Calvin, like they're his own. She immediately asked a mutual friend living in Park Slope to pick up Novar from her apartment and get him medical attention.

Novar was brought to an urgent care, and doctors there instructed him to go to a hospital. By 9 p.m. on Nov. 27, 2025, doctors at NYU Langone were on the phone with Ezra, asking for her consent to perform a lumbar puncture, also known as a spinal tap.

The test determined that Novar was suffering from encephalitis, a serious condition in which the brain becomes inflamed. Symptoms may appear mild or flu-like at the outset. But for some people, the condition can cause seizures, memory loss and coma, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. **SEE POWASSAN, A2**

POLITICS

Murphy aide the victim of a romantic scam, lawsuit says

Robert Field says secretly recorded videos were posted by conservative site days before the gubernatorial primary.

Rebecca Heath NJ.com

Robert Field, a former top aide to Gov. Phil Murphy, met "Leah Andrews" on Bumble in December 2024.

The two matched on the dating app and quickly arranged a first date in Mountain Lakes, where they bonded over their shared love of music and discussed New Jersey politics.

One date turned into several, and over a five-month span, the relationship appeared to blossom.

But on June 4, 2025, a phone call from Bernards Township Mayor Janice Fields left Field devastated.

Videos of Field discussing political views on their dates had been spliced with secretly recorded audio and posted on X by Steven Crowder, host of the conservative political comedy show "Louder with Crowder," just days before the June 2025 gubernatorial primary election.

Field claims that "Leah Andrews" was a false identity used by Alysia Gamble, a former QAnon organizer from Florida. He alleges that she recorded him with a hidden body camera and intercepted phone calls before sending the recordings to Crowder's show.

Field, 36, of Bridgewater, filed a lawsuit on June 2 in the U.S. District Court in New Jersey against Gamble, Louder with Crowder LLC, and host Steven Crowder, alleging they intercepted and disseminated private communications through deception and fraud, violating federal and state laws.

The suit claims the operation was an attempt to influence the Republican gubernatorial primary by steering voters toward Bill Spadea and away from Jack Ciattarelli. Ciattarelli ultimately defeated Spadea by a significant margin.

According to the complaint, Field was not the only alleged victim of the scheme. Gamble and Crowder allegedly used similar tactics against at least eight other individuals.

Gamble and Louder with Crowder did not immediately return requests for comment.

The suit states that Field served as Murphy's deputy chief of staff in 2024 and 2025 after working as a senior aide to the governor and director of intergovernmental affairs.

His primary role was to build bipartisan relationships across New Jersey, the **SEE FIELD, A3**

MARGATE

Doctor accused of biting rival physician on neck

A simmering legal battle between the two boiled over at a church fundraiser.

Rebecca Heath NJ.com

A simmering legal battle inside a Jersey Shore medical practice boiled over at a Margate fundraiser, where one doctor allegedly bit another on the neck, according to police and court records.

The encounter unfolded Nov. 20, 2025, at Sofia's restaurant, where Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church was holding a fundraiser.

Tamim Naber, a nephrologist and founding member of SMC Physicians, allegedly confronted fellow physician Anan Haija.

Naber "accosted and threatened" Haija while expressing anger over pending litigation between them, according to court documents filed Feb. 4.

Naber allegedly tried to lift Haija on the dance floor before biting him on the neck, leaving a bleeding wound. Afterward, Naber allegedly cursed at Haija and insulted his family, according to Joseph Scullion of the Margate police.

The incident was caught on the restaurant's surveillance cameras, police said. Haija later filed a police report and received treatment at a local hospital.

Naber was charged with simple assault and ordered to pay a \$983 municipal court fine earlier this month.

The confrontation came against the backdrop of a legal fight between the physicians.

Haija, along with former SMC physician Nickolas Tyriss, filed a lawsuit on Oct. 18, 2023, against Naber, SMC Physicians and others in Atlantic County Superior Court, alleging wrongful termination, retaliation and other claims.

According to the complaint, Naber and Haija had known each other for nine years, and Haija had once considered Naber a close friend. **SEE MARGATE, A2**

NEW YORK CITY



Knicks parade today

Knicks fans have waited forever for this. Today's ticker-tape parade for the new NBA champions will be a first. When the team won two titles in the 1970s, they weren't honored with New York's signature procession. **Page F1**