

Miami civic leader and banker Abel Holtz, namesake of a children's hospital, dies at 86

BY CARLI TEPROFF

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Abel and Fana Holtz *MIAMI HERALD FILE*

When Abel Holtz came to South Florida from Cuba in 1961, he used his law degree and determination to build a banking empire that would turn him into a multimillionaire.

He used his fortune to help the community.

He supported arts, sports and children's medical care across Miami-Dade County. A downtown Miami street, a [children's hospital](#) at Jackson Memorial and a [tennis center in Miami Beach](#) all carried his name.

The Miami Beach philanthropist, who founded Capital Bank in 1974, died Saturday. He was 86.

"We are grateful that we were privileged to have him in our lives," the Holtz family said in an obituary. "He brought us so much joy and taught us so much by example. Even though he has left us, he will never leave our hearts."

Holtz's reputation took a hit when he pleaded guilty in 1994 to lying to a federal grand jury about making secret payments to a former Miami Beach mayor. In January, before he left office, President Donald Trump [pardoned Holtz](#), wiping his record clean.

“Before his conviction, Mr. Holtz, who was the chairman of a local bank, never had any legal issues and has had no other legal issues since his conviction,” the White House statement on the pardon said. “Mr. Holtz has devoted extensive time and resources to supporting charitable causes in South Florida, including substantial donations to the city of Miami Beach.”

BORN IN CUBA

Holtz was born Jan. 3, 1935, in Placetas, Cuba. In 1956, he graduated from the University of Havana with accounting and law degrees. He went on to practice law, but was arrested after representing political prisoners, according to his family.

His wife, Fana, secured his release. So the couple, with two small children, came to Miami.

HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE

By 1974, Holtz started Capital Bank, and began donating generously to various organizations. After the Fana Holtz Foundation gave \$5 million to the children’s hospital at Jackson Memorial, it was renamed Holtz Children’s Hospital in 1998, according to the Jackson Health Foundation.

Carlos A. Migoya, CEO of Jackson Health System, called Holtz and his wife “passionate advocates” for children.

“Abel was a remarkable man who made many contributions throughout our community, and his impact will never be forgotten,” Migoya said in a statement.

MAYOR PAYMENT CASE

In the 1980s, Holtz met former **Miami Beach Mayor Alex Daoud**, who in 1991 was slapped with a 41-count federal indictment charging him with racketeering, extortion, money laundering and filing false tax returns.

Daoud testified that Holtz bribed him for political favor. Daoud was sentenced to five years in prison, but served only about 18 months.

Holtz was sentenced to 45 days. After his conviction, he could no longer run the bank, and turned it over to his son Daniel.

Before **his felony conviction was pardoned by Trump**, Holtz had support from Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart along with friends and business colleagues in the Greater Miami community, according to the White House.

COMMUNITY TRIBUTE

Gary Nader posted a tribute to Holtz on his Art Centre's Facebook page. Holtz was a longtime client of the Miami business, according to the Miami Herald archives.

"We mourn the passing of our dear Abel Holtz," the post said. "Long-time supporter of our art and health communities. I will miss you greatly my dear friend. You were an amazing gentleman that all of us should emulate."

Besides his wife of 64 years, Fana, Holtz is survived by sons Daniel and Javier, six grandchildren, a great-granddaughter, and brothers Moises and Jaime.

Donations may be made in memory to the Holtz Children's Hospital through its website at www.jacksonhealthfoundation.org or by calling 305-585-4483. Arrangements and services were not immediately announced.



Santa Claus greets a group of young patients at Holtz Children's Hospital and Jackson Memorial Hospital during a parade accompanied by the marching band from Hialeah-Miami Lakes High School performing holiday favorites. Santa arrived on a City of Miami Fire Rescue Department truck, was lifted on a telescopic hook-and-ladder toward the windows of Holtz Children's and waved to patients inside on Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2018.

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