

Brooklyn Heights

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Watchtower exec jumps to his death

Walks out 3rd floor window in the Heights

By Michael Clark
Brooklyn Paper Publications

A high-ranking Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witness) printing press supervisor jumped to his death from the third floor window of the society's Brooklyn Heights infirmary on Wednesday, July 25 around 3:30 pm, police said.

Richard Wheelock, 75, died instantly from multiple blunt impact injuries, said city Medical Examiner's Office spokesperson Ellen Borakove. His death was classified a suicide, police said.

A Watchtower official said Wheelock was suffering from severe depression and was under a doctor's care for the past several years in the society's infirmary at 79 Willow Street between Clark and Pineapple streets in the Heights.

He apparently became increasingly despondent after the death of his wife five years ago, Watchtower officials said.

"He had mental problems and suffered from severe depression spells," said George Couch, a Watchtower vice president and spokesperson. "It's a very sad case."

Couch, who was a good friend of Wheelock's, said Wheelock had never mentioned suicide to him, though Couch noticed that Wheelock's problems worsened after his wife died in 1985.

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Park Sloper Luisa Ma
Street in Park Slope re

Witness suicide...

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The Watchtower is one of three legal corporations of the Jehovah's Witnesses, a denomination that has more than 500,000 members in the US.

Wheelock worked for the Watchtower for some 50 years, managing the church's massive printing presses at Sands and Jay streets Downtown, Couch said. He retired from the press facility about five years ago.

84th Precinct police said Wheelock jumped from a third floor infirmary window in the rear of 79 Willow Street, landing in the courtyard of 35 Clark Street, between Willow and Hicks streets.

Detectives are investigating the incident, police said.

Wheelock's body was found by Jerry Marino, building superintendent of 35 Clark Street, who said he had just returned to his ground floor apartment after grocery shopping in the Heights around 3:30 pm.

"I was washing the vegetables in the sink and I just happened to pull back the curtain on the kitchen window and I saw a pair of feet," Marino said. "Then I saw the blood."

The section of the courtyard where Wheelock landed is about 10 feet wide and is used often by children as a play area where they set up a kiddie pool, Marino said.

"It's a good thing the kids weren't out there playing when it happened," Marino said.

His wife Lorraine rushed into the building after seeing police and ambulance outside 35 Clark Street.

"Jerry was white as a ghost. It really was a horrible thing," she said. "Maybe they should have bars on the windows."

A memorial service was held Monday, July 30 at the Watchtower residence hall on Columbia Heights and Orange Street.

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