

Beat: Miscellaneous

Cop-turned-actor Dennis Farina, star of "Law & Order," dead at 69

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USPA News - Dennis Farina, a Chicago police officer who went on to become an actor and played Detective Joe Fontana on the NBC legal drama television series "Law & Order," died Monday at a hospital in Arizona, his publicist said. He was 69 years old.

Farina, who was born in Chicago and served on the city's police force for eighteen years, died early Monday morning at a hospital in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his girlfriend of 35 years, Marianne Cahill, at his bedside. Publicist Lori De Waal said the actor died of a blood clot in his lung. "We are deeply saddened by the loss of a great actor and a wonderful man. Dennis Farina was always warm-hearted and professional, with a great sense of humor and passion for his profession," De Waal said in an e-mailed statement. "He will be greatly missed by his family, friends, and colleagues." The publicist asked Farina's family to be left alone to allow them to grieve in private. "We hope that he finds a new life where great roles are plentiful and the Cubs are always winning the pennant," she said. "We ask that the press refrain from contacting his family at this time so that they can mourn their loss together." While still employed as a Chicago police officer, Farina served as a police consultant for director Michael Mann who eventually gave him a small role in the 1981 film "Thief." He went on to moonlight as an actor in the Chicago theater scene before Mann chose him for his "Crime Story" series on NBC. Farina also starred as Jimmy Serrano in the 1988 action-comedy film "Midnight Run," Ray "Bones" Barboni in the 1995 crime-comedy film "Get Shorty," Lt. Col. Walter Anderson in the 1998 epic war film "Saving Private Ryan," and as Abraham "Avi" Denovitz in the 2000 crime comedy "Snatch." His TV roles included Albert Lombard on the crime drama series "Miami Vice" and Victor Pellet on the comedy "In-Laws." But one of his most notable television roles was as Detective Joe Fontana on "Law & Order." Dick Wolf, executive producer of "Law & Order," said he was "stunned and saddened" to hear of Farina's unexpected death. "The 'Law & Order' family extends sympathy and condolences to his family," he said.

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