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Encyclopedia of Cleveland History

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STURMAN, REUBEN

STURMAN, REUBEN (16 Aug. 1924-27 Oct. 1997) controlled a pornography empire that originated in Cleveland and included businesses in Nevada and California.

He was born on Cleveland's East Side to Nahum and Esther Sturman. He earned a bachelor's degree in business, majoring in management, at Western Reserve University's Cleveland College in 1948 (see **CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY** ([/ech/articles/c/case-western-reserve-university/](https://ech/articles/c/case-western-reserve-university/))). He began selling comic books, but went on to control a pornography business that at one time included over 200 companies.

In the 1980s, the U.S. Justice Department identified Sturman as the number one distributor of hard-core pornography. In 1985 he was arrested in Louisiana [?] on 16 counts of tax evasion, and his bail was set at \$3 million. Prosecutors alleged that Sturman controlled an empire of adult bookstores and movie theaters that originated in Cleveland and included businesses in Las Vegas, Reno, San Francisco, and San Diego. In 1989, he was convicted in U.S. District Court in Cleveland of conspiring to obstruct the Internal Revenue Service, and federal investigators estimated that Sturman had evaded as much as \$40 million in taxes during the 1970s and 1980s. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison on the tax charges.

His only conviction on obscenity charges took place in Las Vegas in 1992, when he pleaded guilty to racketeering and shipping obscene materials across state lines. He was sentenced to time served for the tax evasion case, but on

December 7, 1992, he escaped from the minimum-security federal prison in Boron, California. He was captured in Anaheim two months later and in 1993 was convicted on extortion charges in Chicago and sentenced to 19 years. In 1994, Sturman and his former wife, Naomi Delgado, pleaded guilty to juror and witness tampering, and were sentenced to 27 months and 21 months respectively.

Sturman was married twice. His first marriage (1951) ended in divorce in 1970. He then married Naomi Delgado. Sturman had four children, David, Lee, Peggy, and Erica. Sturman died of heart and kidney failure at a federal prison hospital in Lexington, KY.

Article Categories

Public Safety (</ech/categories/public-safety>)



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