

A Report Never Written

When James Cardinali turned government witness, the case against the "leaders" and "substantial earners" of the Gambino Organized Crime Family took a meteoric rise. Conceived from a plan for a novel RICO prosecution, the case began without witnesses or evidence and for the first time John Gotti and his crew could be directly linked to a multitude of crimes.

The thirty year old, handsome and very affable Cardinali first met John Gotti and his lieutenant, Angelo Ruggiero, while in prison in the late 1970's and quickly ingratiated himself. He was the type that Gotti liked; smart, tough and at the same time respectful. So when Cardinali paid his respects to Gotti after his release, he stayed with him for a year and a half, observing and participating in crime. And according to Cardinali, John Gotti became his mentor, instructing him in the ways and mores of La Cosa Nostra. Jamesy, as he was called, was being groomed to be a "made" member of the Mafia by its most powerful captain.

But Jamesy had a major flaw; he stole and sold drugs to support a "bad" cocaine habit. And when Michael Castigliola told John Gotti that Cardinali was violating the mob's hypercritical ban on trafficking in narcotics, Jamesy shot him.

Arrested for the murder, Jamesy offered his testimony in exchange for a "reduced" sentence and immunity for his other crimes. He confessed to four other murders; drug dealers whom he shot and then stole their cocaine in a drug induced madness. But what Jamesy had to offer far exceeded his need to be severely punished for cleansing the world of four "low life" cocaine peddlers. A deal was cut; a year for each murder.

The intense debriefing of James Cardinali took hundreds of hours and his story was checked and rechecked for accuracy.

"Tell one lie and the deal's off," he was told. But Jamsey had both a phenomenal memory and a good reason to tell the truth. His detailed and graphic descriptions of the crimes committed by John Gotti and his crew were "right on the money" to the best estimates of his interrogators.

On one occasion when Jamesy was being questioned about the identities and nick names of Gambino mob figures, he casually mentioned that Jack Giordano, a made "soldier" and soon to be "capo," was known as "Jackie the Actor."

"Why is he called that?" a curious Special Agent Eddie Magnuson asked.

"Because he's so good looking, he could be an actor," the helpful Cardinali answered.

"Really?"

"Yea really, he's so good looking that even Geraldine Ferraro is in love with him," Cardinali continued innocently.

"Who?" Eddie asked, wishing he hadn't heard it.

"You know, the lady that want's to be Vice President," James Cardinali said innocuously and not understanding the implication of his words. In 1984, ~~Congresswoman~~ Geraldine Ferraro was the Democratic candidate for the Vice Presidency of the United States.

Seeing the uncontrollable mixture of indignation and bewilderment on Eddie's face, James Cardinali went further. "If she gets elected, the mob will even have a hook in the White House," he smiled wickedly and then laughed.

When the debriefing was over for the day, Eddie went to see his boss, Larry McEllyn. He believed that Cardinali

was telling the truth as he knew it and needed a little guidance. Regulations required that all pertinent information provided by an informant be documented but in Eddie's mind politics and law enforcement didn't mix. If he put on paper what Jamesy had told him, it would cause a "stir" and he would have the Secret Service and the FBI on his back. And for sure, there were already enough problems with the FBI!

Following Larry McEllyn's advise, Special Agent Eddie Magnuson paid an unannounced visit to Assistant United States Attorney Diane Giacalone. And after listening to Eddie in detail, Diane Giacalone explained somewhat cryptically that the "government" was aware of a possible association with Organized Crime by Geraldine Ferraro and her husband, John Zaccaro; a situation centered on Long Island was being "investigated."

But what Giacalone did not tell Eddie was that Robert DiBernardo, A wealthy "real estate" investor who coached little league on Long Island, was also a Gambino soldier and the "King of Porn." Although his suburban neighbors viewed him as just another "successful" family man who loved children, his specialty in the "trade" was child pornography and his network of Times Square book stores generated enormous profits for the Family. DiBernardo, according to the FBI, was the biggest pornographer in America and his company, Star Distributors, was the largest distributor of pornographic material in the United States. And DiBernardo's headquarters in the "smut" business was located in a downtown building owned and managed by Ferraro's husband, John Zuccaro. Sources also indicated that the substantial rent collected from Robert DiBernardo was used by Geraldine Ferraro to finance her political ambitions.

Although John Zaccaro publicly denied knowing DiBernardo, the media played up to the scandal and any chance Geraldine Ferraro might have had to become Vice President was laid to rest.

Robert DiBernardo subsequently fell out of favor with John Gotti and was fed to the fishes.

The report documenting James Cardinali's statements concerning Geraldine Ferraro was never written.

All's well that ends well!