

The Early Bird Gets The Worm

When Special Agent Eddie Magnuson initiated a probe into the activities of a gang of young Italian thugs called the "Swat Team" in 1981, he did not have the foggiest idea where it would lead. In his wildest dreams, he would not have believed that it would consume the next five years of his life and that he would be drawn into a labyrinth of Federal intrigue whose passages would be blocked at almost every available turn by a totally "pissed off" FBI, an irate Federal Strike Force, and a DEA which tried to walk the line between support and political appeasement.

However as Eddie's odyssey twisted and turned towards the hierarchy of the Mafia's Gambino Organized Crime Family, small victories came along the way. Take for instance the time Brooklyn Assistant United States Attorney Diane Giacalone asked him to find FBI fugitive Francesco Boccia.

"The FBI can't find him," she advised. "They look for him between nine and five and then go home."

And as they both knew young hoodlums, who robbed armored cars and had lots of money, partied all night and slept all day. So Eddie devised a "scam" based on the difficulty Boccia, who was probably still living with his immigrant parents, was having with the INS concerning his "green card." But the plan needed two ingredients; a cooperative INS agent and an agent who spoke fluent Italian. And after a few quick telephone calls, Eddie's arrest team was complete.

On March 16, 1982, at approximately seven thirty in the morning, DEA Special Agent Eddie Magnuson, NYPD Detective Billy Burns, and FBI Special Agent Richard Robley watched as DEA Special Agent Tony Wilson and INS Investigator Eddie Burke knocked on the door of the Boccia family's Ridgewood, Queens, home. After a short wait, the door was opened by an older

Italian lady and INS INvestigator Eddie Burke displayed his credentials as Tony Wilson began his rehearsed script in perfect Italian. Francesco had been sent two letters by the Immeigration Service and had nOt responded to them. And since Tony did not want to see a nice young Italian boy deported because of a probable "misunderstanding," he and his partner, out of the goodness of their hearts, had come to see him to resolve the problem.

A little confused and somewhat hesitant, mother Boccia stammered in her native tongue that she would get her law abiding son, who had just gotten home and was in his room sleeping. And later that day, DEA Special Agent Eddie Magnuson returned the Arrest Warrant for the FBI's fugitive to a Federal judge while embarrassed bureau agents sat in the courtroom's gallery.

The early bird had gotten the worm!

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