

Gotti's Little Joke

A little before four AM on March 28, 1985, DEA Special Agent Eddie Magnuson drove slowly along a dark and deserted 101st Avenue in Ozone Park, Queens. As the government owned 1984 gray Ford LTD neared the Mafia owned Bergin Hunt and Fish Social Club, Eddie spied the familiar 1985 white Lincoln parked out in front. And as he proceeded a little further along the avenue, he identified another familiar automobile.

Struck by his good fortune, Eddie reached over and took the concealed microphone from the glove box. Ten members of the Gambino Organized Crime Family had been indicted and two of the "major players" were obviously inside the club. Breathing deeply to control his excitement, Eddie called for back up and telescoped his attention on the front door of the club. He had labored hard for three years for the anticipated arrests and prayed that nothing would go wrong.

With the arrival of reinforcements, Eddie led the team of DEA agents and New York City Detectives into the not too crowded and brightly lit Mafia den. John Gotti and his good friend "Willie Boy" Johnson were seated at a round table, covered with a green felt cloth, playing cards with three other wiseguys.

"You're under arrest John, please stand up," Eddie said with as serious and authoritative voice as he could muster.

Gotti knew the drill and pushed himself away from the table. Standing erect, he placed his hands behind his back with a bravado befitting a mob boss. "Is it all right if I put my jacket on?" he questioned politely.

"No problem, John," Eddie responded with equal courtesy.

Special Agent Bill Kennedy took the white nylon jacket from a coat rack and handed it to him. Nodding an appreciative thank you, Gotti put the jacket on over his expensive jogging suit and again submissively placed his hands behind his back.

And while Eddie was reciting the ritual Miranda warning, NYPD First Grade Detective Billy Burns tapped "Willie Boy" Johnson on the shoulder. "Get up Willie Boy, You're under arrest too," Billy explained.

"Willie Boy's getting arrested," John Gotti gleefully interrupted. "That's great, Willie Boy never gets arrested." Their boss's witticism caused snickers to form on the faces of the other wiseguys in the club. Even "Willie Boy" Johnson was forced to crack a smile, although he really didn't want to under the circumstances. For "Willie Boy" Johnson had a deep dark secrete which he now believed Gotti would soon find out about. He had been a Top Echelon informant for the FBI for for sixteen years and had once helped put his boss behind bars for the murder of Irish mobster James McBratney.

Ironically, "Willie Boy" Johnson was now being charged with conspiracy to murder mob loan shark Anthony Plate whose body has never been found.

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EJ