



THE POSE . . . is one of reflection as Joseph Valachi testifies yesterday before the Senate investigations subcommittee in Washington. As Valachi continues, the senators find his testimony . . .



. . . IS CANDID AND revealing about the national crime syndicate of which he was a member, the Cosa Nostra. Valachi tells of "kiss of death" from Vito Genovese. Genovese was high in the syndicate and . . .



. . . SO WAS VALACHI but the underworld has now put a \$100,000 price on the informer's head. Despite this, Valachi betrays no nervousness as he publicly talks of the Cosa Nostra for the first time. (AP Wirephotos)

Valachi Recounts Prison Terror

By Bob Greene

Newsday Staff Correspondent

Washington, D.C.—The chill picture of death walking the cell-blocks, dining halls and exercise yard of Atlanta Federal Penitentiary was painted for Senate crime probes yesterday by songbird Joseph Valachi, the man who received a kiss of death in his prison cell from Vito Genovese, kingpin of the Cosa Nostra.

The painfully detailed story of the stalk that ended with a terrified Valachi beating and killing an innocent man who closely resembled the man he knew had been detailed to kill him was unfolded yesterday before the Senate investigations subcommittee by the gravel-voiced informer. He told the senators he would be "dead in five minutes" if he ever went back to jail.

Valachi's account of the terror-filled fight for survival within the walls of one of the nation's largest and most securely guarded federal prisons was the highlight yesterday of three hours of testimony by the dumpy, squarely-built witness, who, according to New York City police, "has the underworld scared to death." His testimony resumes Tuesday.

Yesterday, Valachi:

- Described in close detail the organizational procedures of the Cosa Nostra. He told of its domination by the "commission" (the ruling board of the nationwide crime syndicate); of the one or more "families" (groups of hoodlums related by activities, not common ancestry) running such areas as New York and Long Island, and of the infinite number of "regimes" (working groups) that operate within any given family.

- Told what the syndicate offered a man who did what it wanted. "They protect you in any business you have . . . if someone steps on your toes," he said. What did he have to do to earn that protection? "I just go out and kill for them."

- Asserted that the death orders of the Cosa Nostra can penetrate the walls of any jail. As examples he gave: the execution of Peter LaPlaca who was the only murder witness against Genovese and his Queens lieutenant Michael Miranda and who was poisoned in the Raymond Street (Brooklyn) jail in the early '40s, and the silencing of Murder Inc. witness Abe Reles, found dead in 1941 70 feet below the window of his room in the Brooklyn Half Moon Hotel, where he was supposedly being guarded by five police officers. (Said Valachi, after a go-ahead look from William Hundley, Justice Department rackets specialist: "They (cops) threw him out the window."); and the "suicide" of Bronx narcotics boss Joseph (Pip the Blind) Gagliano in the Bronx County jail, sometime within the past several years. Of Gagliano, Valachi said: "We all knew he was talking to the district attorney. He was found hanging in his cell. Me and some of my friends believe they hung him . . . We knew he was talking."

- Charged that Genovese, from his Atlanta jail cell, ordered the execution of Anthony (Tony Bender) Strollo, reputed rackets boss of Greenwich Village who angered the syndicate by supporting Brooklyn's insurgent Gallo mob. Bender and his mistress disappeared 18 months ago.

Valachi, who cited a revenge as his major motive for

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spilling the secrets of Cosa Nostra, painted a startling picture of a man condemned to death within the confines of a federal prison by the man who was his best man when he was married and the man who recruited him in the Cosa Nostra, his cellmate, Genovese, now in prison in Ft. Leavenworth, Kans. Said Valachi: "He arranged to get me put into his cell at the (Atlanta) prison. We got along fine." But, Valachi said, he did not reckon with Vito Agueci, whom he described as "a greaseball" (an Italian-born member of Cosa Nostra who does not speak good English).

Agueci, Valachi said, approached him to arrange a meeting with Genovese. Valachi said that Genovese at first did not want to meet with Agueci ("greaseball" being considered the lowest form of Cosa Nostra society). Valachi said that he understood Agueci finally got his message through to Genovese. The message, Newsday learned, was that Valachi had been a secret informant for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.

Immediately life in prison took on the atmosphere of instant death for Valachi.

Shortly thereafter, he said, Genovese took him aside in the cell which the two shared with five other convicts. He said that Genovese told him that "sometimes when

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He Defies Oath of Blood and Fire: 'If I Talk...'

By a Staff Correspondent

Washington, D.C.—Apprentice gangster Joseph Valachi stood in front of a table in east Harlem in the dark of the night. It was late in the year 1930. On the table in front of him lay a gun and a knife. Blood trickled from the cut in his hand, now clenched in agony over a burning piece of newspaper, as he repeated the oath: "If I talk, I die."

Thirty-three years have passed since Valachi became a member of Cosa Nostra, the dread underworld society, and was administered his baptism in the rites of crime by his old friend Vito Genovese. Yesterday, chain-smoking cigarettes and smiling broadly at news and TV cameramen, Valachi had ample time in the vaulted hearing room of the Old Senate Office Building to reflect on the intervening years.

Valachi was born on the Lower East Side of New York in 1902 to Italian immigrant parents. He was a

school drop-out at 15, completing the seventh grade. By 1921 he was the driver for an infamous burglary gang known as the "Minute Men."

Obviously relishing the propounding of former burglary skill, Valachi yesterday sucked expansively on a cigaret as he boasted that his burglary gang could manage to break a store window, loot the showcase and get away in less than a minute. His cigaret drooped noticeably, however, when he admitted to Senate investigation subcommittee probes that he was finally caught by police and sent to prison for burglary. He wasn't a talker then.

Valachi had his first brush with death a short time later, fleeing with friends from a burglary scene in the Bronx. He was hit in the back of the head with a bullet as he drove on Tremont Avenue. His friends, Valachi wryly recalled, thought he was dying and dumped his body on the curb of a busy street.

His friends returned an hour later, Valachi recalled,

found him still alive, and took him to a local doctor who took out the bullet, using a full bottle of Scotch as an anesthetic.

Over the years, Valachi has killed for his syndicate and waxed moderately rich on his investments in such profitable sidelines as the numbers racket, the slot machine racket, and the other avenues of profit open to persons of his "soldier's" rank in Cosa Nostra. By way of thanks for the syndicate's protection, Valachi occasionally killed persons that Cosa Nostra figured it could get along without.

Recently, however, a series of narcotics convictions for Valachi have sharpened his desire to stay out of the limelight and to shorten his term in prison. He forsook his oath of fire and blood and began to give federal authorities specific information on narcotics crime. Genovese learned that he had turncoated and marked him for death. But he is still alive — and talking.

Senators Get a Look at Rogue's Gallery

New York (AP)—Here are thumbnail sketches of men named yesterday by Joseph Valachi in Senate testimony about the national crime syndicate, Cosa Nostra:

Vito Genovese—"They'll never put me away again," vowed 19-year-old Genovese when he served a 60-day rap in 1916 for carrying a weapon—four years after he came here from Italy in steerage. Except for another weapons conviction he made good his boast until 1960 when the federal government put him away for 15 years as boss of a huge narcotics syndicate.

As he climbed to the top of Cosa Nostra, the New York gangster survived arrests for murders, assaults and burglaries, and amassed a personal fortune estimated at \$30,000,000 in Senate testimony. Federal law enforcement authorities said the 66-year-old Genovese continued to run Cosa Nostra from inside a prison cell, keeping subordinates in line through fear.

Anthony (Tony Bender) Strollo—A lover of the soft life and expensive cars, Tony Bender, Genovese's lieutenant who would be 63 now, disappeared in April, 1962, from his palatial home in Ft. Lee, N.J. He had kissed his wife goodbye, saying he would return in a few

minutes. He was wearing a silk suit and driving a borrowed Cadillac. Described by police as the boss of Greenwich Village rackets and the New Jersey waterfront, Bender hasn't been seen since and rumors persist that he was executed by the mob. Valachi said Genovese ordered the death.

John (Johnny Dio) Dioguardi—Johnny Dio, a dapper labor racketeer with a compelling taste for respectability, observed his 46th birthday April 29, 1960, in a courtroom, being sentenced to four years for income tax evasion. Well-known in the underworld, Dio suddenly became a national figure with the acid attack which blinded labor columnist Victor Riesel. He was charged with complicity but the government dropped its case when two key prosecution witnesses, who had admitted a part in the attack, refused to testify. A federal judge called it "underworld lockjaw." From a beginning on New York's tough Lower East Side, Dio traveled a long way to a comfortable home at Point Lookout on Long Island. He was a major gangster by 20, and a gang boss by 24. A protege of the chiefs of Murder, Inc., Dio twice went to jail for extortion.

Anthony (Trigger Mike) Coppola — Trigger Mike Coppola holds the dubious distinction of being the only man, or at least one of the few men, in history ever placed in \$50,000 bail for vagrancy. Bodyguard and chauffeur to Albert (Boom Boom) Anastasia, Coppola was mysteriously missing when gangland killers executed the old boss of Murder, Inc., as he sat in a Manhattan hotel barber chair Oct. 25, 1957. Questioned throughout the night after the slaying, Coppola gave conflicting reports of his whereabouts and was grinning when booked for vagrancy. This charge was dropped the next day and he was placed in \$50,000 bail as a material witness. The case never came to trial.

Vito Agueci—Vito Agueci, 43, of Toronto is serving a 15-year sentence in New York for smuggling narcotics. He was one of 11 men convicted in a \$150,000,000 narcotics case two years ago. His brother, Alberto, 39, of Carsborough, Ont., was murdered gangland style while free in \$20,000 bail in the same case before the trial. His body was found in a field near Rochester, N.Y. The government called the brothers kingpins in the U.S.-Canada narcotics smuggling business.



John Dioguardi
A Taste for Respectability



Vito Genovese
Boss of The Bosses



Anthony Coppola
Bodyguard Was Not on Guard



Anthony (Tony Bender) Strollo
Former Greenwich Village Boss

Valachi Gives Details of Prison Terror

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you have a barrel of apples one of them is touched—not all rotten but touched. It has to be removed because it hurts the rest of the apples." He said Genovese "grabbed my hand and gave me a kiss . . . a suspicious kiss. I gave him a kiss back on the cheek." He said that a cellmate (non-Cosa Nostra) mumbled: "You have got the kiss of death."

Said Valachi: "I kissed him back, because I wanted him to know that I knew what he meant. And the one thing being in prison is that you are every man for himself." Valachi said this incident took place last year.

Life became a shuddering, over-the-shoulder-looking operation for Valachi. He would not eat in the mess hall because he knew that wherever there were crowds, he could be knifed without notice. For the same reason he avoided the communal prison showers—presided over by Lido Beach mobster John (Dio) Dioguardi—and walked carefully in the prison exercise yard.

Every hand on the shoulder, every sudden movement, every gathering group could be an occasion of terror, Valachi believed. He said that on a Tuesday Dio noted that he had not taken a shower and suggested he take a shower on Wednesday. Said Valachi: "There are no showers on Wednesday. Dio would not look me in the eye when he talked. I knew I would be dead if I walked into the shower."

On another day, Valachi said, "the only two men in the seven-man cell who were non-Cosa Nostra or who did not take Vito's orders were suddenly sentenced to solitary." Valachi said that if he had walked into his cell he would have been murdered. He said he violated a prison rule so that he could be sentenced to four days in solitary confinement for his own protection. But, despite his worries, prison officials sent him back to the cell after four days. He said that each night he

would pretend that he was asleep and across the cell he could see Genovese watching him.

Valachi said that he knew Genovese's assigned killers in the prison to be Cosa Nostra members Michael (Trigger Mike) Coppola of New York and Florida, Dio—now released from prison and living at home, 109 Freeport Ave., Point Lookout, L.I.—Joseph DiPalermo (Joe Beck) of New York, the leader of the execution squad, and four other members of the Cosa Nostra.

Finally, Valachi said, he felt he had reached his last day. He knew that DiPalermo had been designated to deliver the death blow and he decided to get DiPalermo before DiPalermo could get him. He walked out into the prison yard and suddenly noticed that he was alone. All was strangely quiet and deserted.

Suddenly, a swift-moving form loomed before him. Behind the form were four to five other men. He was

sure the form was Joe Beck. He lashed out with a length of iron pipe, clubbing the man to the ground. The man he hit was not Beck, but Joseph Saopp. Saopp died 34 hours later of multiple skull fractures. It was a case of mistaken identity. Committee chairman John McClellan (D-Ark.) introduced pictures both of DiPalermo and Saopp at the hearings yesterday. The two men closely resembled each other. The killing resulted in the conviction of Valachi for second-degree murder and a life term in prison. And, eventually, to his appearance before the committee as the first member of Cosa Nostra to bare its secrets to the world. Asked by McClellan why he was willing to testify, Valachi replied: "To destroy Cosa Nostra . . . the whole thing that exists." He said, "They (the Cosa Nostra-higher-ups) have been very bad on the soldiers (the lowest level of the Cosa Nostra organization). You get nothing out of it (Cosa Nostra) but misery . . . Once you are in, you don't get out."

Nab Lier as Bookie; Mob Tie Seen

Huntington — Suffolk police smashed their way into a private home here yesterday and seized a 53-year-old unemployed bartender who they said was running a \$624,000-a-year bookmaking operation.

Police said the operation, which they termed "extremely well organized," was believed to be closely linked with the gambling syndicate operating in Nassau and Suffolk under the control of John (Sonny) Franzese of Roslyn. Police from Suffolk's confidential squad and Second Squad detectives closed in on William A. Davern, who gave his address as 86 Woodhull St., Huntington Station, at about 1:30 P.M. Lt. David Prince, chief of the confidential gambling unit, said Davern has a long record of bookmaking arrests and convictions dating back to 1940.

Prince said Davern was running the bookmaking

operation from a room at 26 East Fourth St., in a home owned by Ethel Mixon. He said the woman, who was not present during yesterday's raid, would be questioned but it was unlikely any charges would be filed against her. Prince said police found records indicating Davern was turning over better than \$12,000 a week in bets and that police recorded more than \$500 in bets yesterday before disconnecting the telephone.

Davern, who received a three-month suspended sentence in June, 1962, on a bookmaking charge, was described by police as a man "apparently closely linked with the huge gambling syndicate operating in Nassau and Suffolk." Davern is scheduled to be questioned today about possible connection with the Franzese organization. Davern's operation was "too well organized not to be part of a bigger link." Davern is scheduled to be arraigned on bookmaking charges in Huntington Town Court today.