

Indict Ameruso in ferry favor

Panel says he lied about 250G investment

By SUSAN MILLIGAN
and MARCIA KRAMER

Daily News Staff Writers

A new city scandal emerged yesterday with the arrest of former Transportation Commissioner Anthony Ameruso on charges of lying to a mayoral anticorruption panel in order to cover up possible conflicts of interest in the awarding of lucrative ferryboat franchises.

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau said Ameruso, 49, was charged in a three-count perjury indictment with lying about his

\$250,000 investment in a New Jersey real estate company linked to a firm that got a permit to provide ferry service across the Hudson River from Weehawken, N.J., to Manhattan. The ferry permit was signed by Ameruso on Jan. 16, and service is scheduled to start today.

Ameruso, released in his own recognizance, refused comment.

The 'first step'

Morgenthau said the indictment is the "first step" in a wide-ranging probe by state

and federal officials into possible corruption in the awarding of ferry service contracts by the Department of Transportation.

Reacting to the indictment, Mayor Koch yesterday said he had "made a great mistake" in naming Ameruso to the transportation post over the objections of a mayoral screening panel in 1978. Ameruso resigned on March 1.

Sources told the Daily News that the investigation will involve calling a number of "active" city officials before the grand jury. The investigation also involves the activities of the city's Bureau of Ports and Terminals, sources said.

Target Scopetta

Probers also want to question former Department of Investigations Commissioner Nicholas Scopetta, who represented Ameruso when he was called to testify before the so-called Martin commission. The panel was formed by Mayor Koch after the Parking Violations Scandal erupted last January.

Probers want to ascertain what Scopetta knows about an alleged attempt by Ameruso to conceal his \$250,000 investment in the Chief Realty Co., which has some \$3 million worth of holdings in Hudson County.

Scopetta yesterday said he had not seen the allegations "but any time the district attorney wants to talk to me I'd be happy to talk with him."

Shredding alleged

In court yesterday, Assistant District Attorneys Michael Cherkasky and Daniel Castleman said Ameruso tried to hide his investment in Chief Realty by having a friend in the firm destroy company records, back-date checks and falsify documents "to make it appear he (Ameruso) was never an investor."

They said Ameruso wanted to cover his tracks because a general partner in Chief Realty "had a business relationship" with the firm that won the DOT franchise for the trans-Hudson ferry.

Records indicate that Chief general partner Frank Lembo owned a lease at Pier 79 that he sold to developer Arthur Imperatore and his Arcorp ferryboat company. Arcorp was awarded a franchise by Ameruso to operate the ferry from Weehawken to Piers 78 and 79 at 38th and 39th Sts.



RUDE TRANSPORT: Female detective escorts Anthony Ameruso to Manhattan Criminal Court yesterday.

TOM MONASTER/DAILY NEWS

'87 Register: The high & flighty

What the heck, there's always the phone book if you really want to see your name in print.

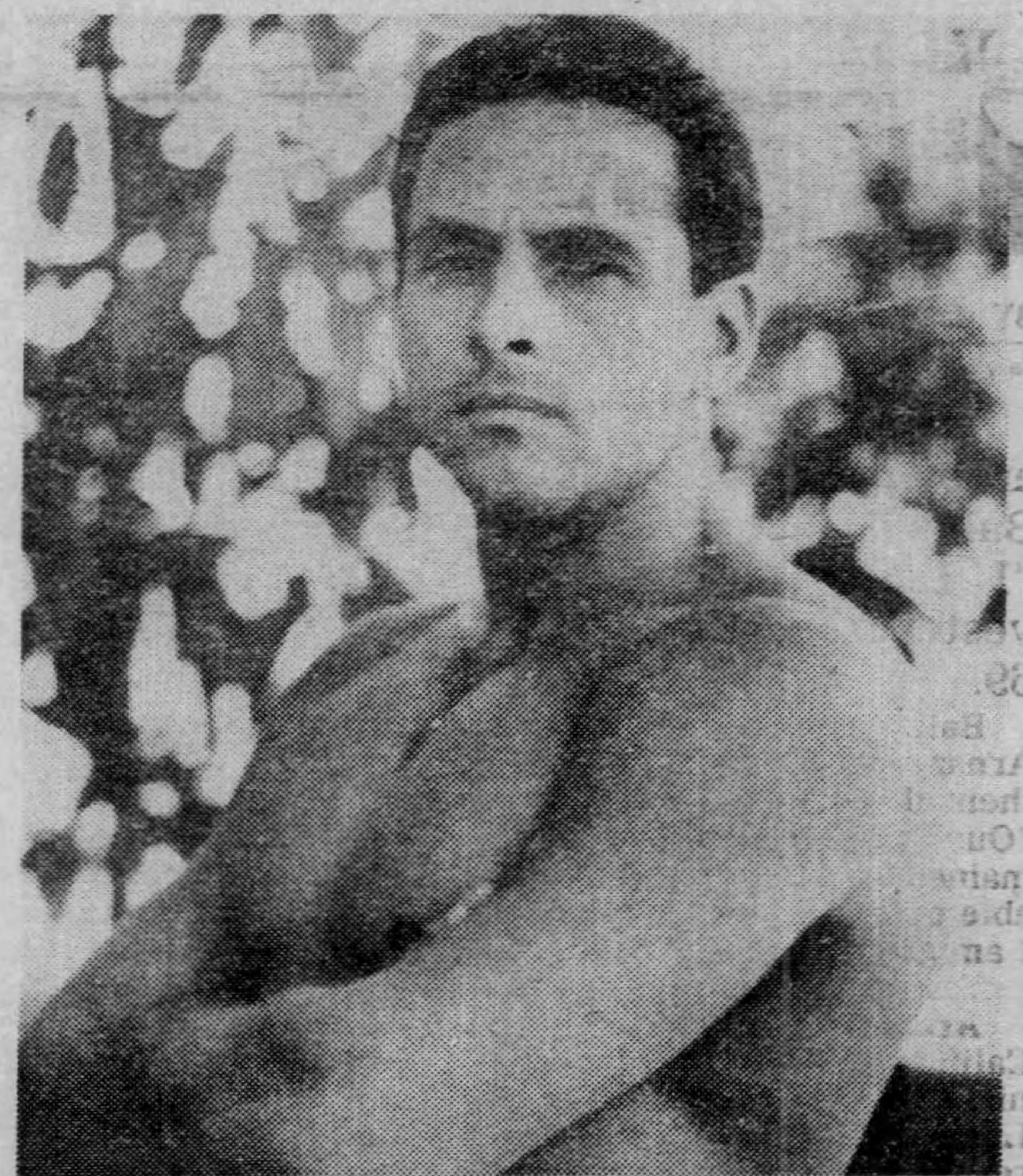
So don't feel too bad if you didn't make the new 1987 Social Register, published yesterday.

Ever so subtly noted in the new edition is society's biggest scandal of 1986—the romance of married billionaire Sid Richardson Bass of Houston and Mercedes Kellogg of New York, wife of retired Reagan administration diplomat Francis Kellogg.

The Kellogg listing carries the notation "Mrs. absent," while the listing for Bass indicates a "dilatatory domicile"—the Register's Victorian way of saying Bass and his wife are separated.

The chunky black-and-orange-bound national social listing, now in its 101st year, lists 31,678 entries, down from 33,196 in the 1986 edition. Magazine publisher Malcolm Forbes, who reportedly owns the publication, is said to be getting rid of "dead wood."

—Bob Kappstatter



BARES ALL: James Cardinali was fully clothed when he took the witness stand in Brooklyn yesterday. This picture reportedly was taken on a previous trip to Florida.

Gotti called Mr. Turf Guy

Threatened rivals, jury told

By DANIEL HAYS

Daily News Staff Writer

A top mob informant described yesterday how John Gotti met with rival gangsters and threatened them with death for intimidating people under his protection.

The description emerged during a second day of testimony from James Cardinali. The self-described mob errand boy tied Gotti and his six co-defendants to murder, gambling, loansharking and armored car robberies.

Cardinali, 37, under questioning from Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Giacalone, also told a Brooklyn Federal Court jury that he is a multiple murderer who confessed to five slayings after federal authorities promised him immunity in exchange for his information.

The witness, who is receiving a \$10,000 fee for testifying, portrayed himself as a Gotti protege. He said the accused Gambino crime family boss invited him to his Howard Beach, Queens, home for Christmas, lectured him on the ways of organized crime and promised him a piece of loansharking action.

He said he went to a mob sitdown in 1979 in the Bronx where Gotti dealt with a rival mobster who

had attempted to shake down the family of an imprisoned Gotti associate.

"You tell your skipper if you ever go to a guy's house while he is in jail I will kill you," Cardinali said Gotti told his rival.

Cardinali said he spent Christmas 1979 at the Gotti home, and that Gotti warned him to avoid two men because they were "kidnapers." He recalled Gotti telling him, "I already killed a kidnaper and I don't want you around them."

He said Gotti related that the kidnaper was slain for abducting the nephew of now dead crime boss Carlo Gambino.

Cardinali also narrated how Gotti faced down Colombo crime family captain Michael Franzese, warning him not to crimp the operations of a caterer under Gambino family control because "you can't win this."

Gotti, Cardinali said, protected another caterer who was menaced by hoods who threatened to put a grenade in the caterer's mouth. He quoted Gotti as telling the hoods: "I'll stick the grenade in your -- and pull the pin."

The witness said one of the murders he committed was sparked by Gotti's threats to kill any associate who dealt drugs.