



Edwin Santiago is shown kneeling at left in this picture of the Garcias, his foster family at their home in Patchogue.

Foster Family Suffers Ache 'That Won't Heal'

By Adam Z. Horvath and Phil Mintz

Edwin Santiago always liked a good laugh.

So when the 20-year-old asked his foster father, Jesus Garcia, to cash his \$37.14 paycheck Thursday while he went on a five-minute visit to his girlfriend, Garcia decided to get a chuckle by laying 37 dollar bills and 14 pennies on the kitchen table. He then sat down with his wife, Miriam, to wait for their son.

An hour later, it wasn't Edwin who returned to the family home on Gilbert Street in Patchogue, but two Suffolk County detectives, to let the Garcias know that their foster son of 16 years was dead. His motorcycle had collided with a pickup truck on Sunrise Highway in Bohemia.

The driver of the truck, Thomas Byczek, 24, was charged with drunk driving and has been released on \$7,100 bail. A man identifying himself as Byczek's father declined to comment on the accident, saying the family was too upset.

Santiago's death was a keen blow for the Garcias, who count nine children as their own — eight of them adopted or taken in for foster care. They were proud of Edwin, who was studying to be an airplane mechanic and who taught karate at a local YMCA, as they are proud of the accomplishments of all their children.

Garcia, describing the dollars-and-pennies joke he knew would have amused Edwin, said, "When I did something like that, he would go and pick me up in a hug and say, 'What are

you doing?'" Breaking into tears, he said, "This is going to be a wound that will never heal. This house cannot be the same."

It is a house that has been filled with up to nine children. After Jesus and Miriam had their son, Jesse, 21 years ago, they were told they could not have any more children. Soon after that, through their church, St. Francis de Sales, the Garcias started taking children from the Little Flower Children's Home in Wading River.

There were two half-brothers, Joseph Alamo, now 24, and Carmine Galarza, 16; Joseph Padilla, 21; Edwin and his younger brother, Robert; and adopted children Rosemarie, now 18, Jose, 14, and Tania, 11.

The Garcias are very proud of the fact that all the children either have jobs or are in school. Jesus Garcia, who is housing rehabilitation manager for the Town of Brookhaven, described their upbringing as being able to "save their futures."

Edwin, family and friends said, had a bright future. A 1985 graduate of Patchogue-Medford High School, he was studying at LaGuardia Airport to be an airline mechanic, a trade he felt would remain in demand. A black-belt karate expert, he had talked with friends about opening a karate studio in Patchogue.

"He wanted money because he wanted to own his own home so when he got married he would be able to own his own home, to take care of kids properly," said Bob Grippi, a friend.

Santiago also hoped to take care of his natural mother, Anna Santiago, and his sister Carmen, who live in Queens.

While on a visit to Puerto Rico, family members said, Edwin scouted out land he hoped one day to buy for a house for his mother and sister. They were at the funeral home, where people talked about how he laughed and always liked a joke.



Edwin Santiago

Reputed Mobster Seeks Ruling That Would Free Him

By Tom Renner

Leadership of the Colombo crime family may hinge on a legal motion in Brooklyn federal court tomorrow as an attorney for one of the family's most respected reputed crime captains seeks to vacate his conviction 20 years ago on bank robbery charges.

Attorney Michael Pollack of Manhattan said that he would ask U.S. District Court Judge Jacob Mishler to reverse the bank robbery conviction of reputed Colombo family crime captain John Franzese of Roslyn.

Franzese is serving an 8-year federal prison term for violating his parole in the bank robbery case. If the bank robbery conviction was to be reversed, legal authorities said, Franzese would walk free on the parole violation.

Law enforcement sources said Franzese could exert powerful influence on the Colombo family if he were released. "If Sonny were able to overturn the original bank robbery conviction," a federal source said, "... he'd be the most powerful capo on the street in the Colombo family... maybe even the new family boss."

Mishler granted tomorrow's hearing after Pollack submitted an affidavit from John Cordero, one of Franzese's alleged accomplices in the bank robberies, in which Cordero states that he testified for the government against Franzese as part of a frame-up engineered by FBI agents and a federal prosecutor.

Another of Franzese's four alleged accomplices, Charles Zaher, submitted a similar affidavit 10 years ago. Two other persons peripherally involved in the case have also submitted affidavits in the past supporting the frame-up charges. FBI spokesman Joseph Valiquette said Cordero's charges would be answered in court.

Franzese, 67, has long been regarded as one of the only captains to have

the respect of almost every faction of the strife-torn Colombo family, according to law enforcement sources. He was considered a potential boss of the family until his 1967 conviction and long prison term. His stepson, Michael Franzese, who has also been identified as a Colombo family captain by federal agents, is serving a 10-year sentence for federal racketeering that resulted in the skimming of millions of dollars in tax revenues from illegal oil and gas sales.

Police sources said the crime family is now in a state of confusion. Its principal leaders, boss Carmine Persico Jr. and underboss Jerry Langella, and several of its major crime captains, including Persico's son, Alphonse Jr., are in jail. Persico's brother, Alphonse, better known as Allie Boy, was the family underboss until he was convicted of loansharking. He has been in hiding and a federal fugitive for more than four years.

A recent wave of gangland killings linked to the Colombo family has resulted in seven dead and several others injured. While most of the killings have involved low-level family associates, police say that several of the murders appear to have been in retaliation for the slaying of Salvatore Scarpa, brother of reputed Colombo captain Gregory Scarpa.

In his affidavit, Cordero said that to win a light jail term and to curry favor with federal authorities, he perjured himself during the bank robbery trial in April, 1965. Franzese was accused of plotting with the bank robbers to set up bank jobs.

Cordero, who was a key government witness against Franzese, said that three FBI agents and a federal prosecutor conspired with him and two other bank robbers to give false testimony against Franzese, who was at that time one of the crime family's most notorious captains.

DA: Witness Is Lying

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Jablonski told a reporter that he would reconsider the plea bargain in light of Cuccio's testimony. In the interview, Jablonski charged Cuccio with lying.

"He's making it look like Cheryl was not involved with it and he's not really involved with it... I believe he's lying now because back then he was trying to work out an arrangement so he would not be prosecuted. Now he thinks he can come in here and save Cheryl."

Hughes, who was present at the earlier interview, said that there were some changes in the testimony, but characterized them as minor.

At the conclusion of summary arguments, State Supreme Court Justice Harvey W. Sherman, noting that the court had "considerable work to do," said a decision on whether Pierson would be treated as a youthful offender would be handed down on Oct. 5 and that he would "prepare a written memorandum so there will be no question" as to his findings.

In his summation yesterday, Jablonski asked that Pierson receive the maximum sentence of 1 to 4 years in prison if she is sentenced as a youthful

offender. The minimum sentence is probation.

Even if she is granted youthful offender status, Jablonski said, "I implore you that she receive state incarceration of one to three years or more."

Jablonski, hands in the pockets of his navy suit, addressed the judge, but glared at Pierson as he spoke and she cried.

"The bottom line here is not whether James Pierson was a terrible father," Jablonski said, conceding the validity of testimony that depicted Pierson as a vulgar, violent man who had a reputation for abusing and intimidating family members and friends.

"I would have loved to prosecute James Pierson for that conduct. I would have enjoyed it. I would have felt that I was doing a service to this county to prosecute him."

"I never got that opportunity... because she became prosecutor, judge and jury. She decided whether this man should live or die. She decided it all by herself with the help of others... and for her to receive probation... I feel would perpetuate more conduct like this."