

# Spring is here, hopes Nicky Barnes

**J**AILED HEROIN kingpin Leroy (Nicky) Barnes, the former Mr. Untouchable of the drug world, has been telling pals he's had word he'll finally be getting out from under his life sentence without parole.

After six years of cooperating with Manhattan U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani, Barnes has been saying he thinks a presidential commutation of his sentence will soon be coming his way.

Initially, the former Harlem drug lord expected to be released "after Election Day." That was for his testimony against John Gotti's friend Mark Reiter, who was sentenced to two life terms without parole plus 60 years.

Soon after that, he was told "after Christmas," sources said.

His next deadline comes Friday, when President Reagan, who has commuted only 14 sentences in eight years, leaves office.

Giuliani, who steps down at the end of the month, declined to comment "at this time." But with Reagan and Giuliani going, and George Bush owing no favors, Barnes may be starting to sweat.

More than a few mob eyebrows were elevated recently over word that Michael **Franzese**, son of Colombo family capo John (Sonny) **Franzese**, "cooperated" with a Chicago federal grand jury that indicted talent agent **Norby Walters** on racketeering charges.

Michael **Franzese**, whose motion picture companies have produced several youth-

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gang movies, is currently serving 10 years in a California prison on a multi-million-dollar gasoline tax scam.

Sources say **Franzese** sent word to his friends that he "danced" with federal prosecutors but "gave them nothing." His lawyer, John Jacobs, says: "Michael said he knew **Norby** from when he was a kid, but Michael assures me he never said that **Walters** did anything illegal because Michael doesn't know of any illegal activities by him."

Bruce Cutler, lawyer for John Gotti, says we got it all wrong last week. He says his client did not, repeat not, throw a lavish Christmas bash.

Gotti was there, all right, along with about 1,000 reputed mobsters and mob groupies. But Howard Beach's most famous plumbing-supplies salesman was only a guest, his lawyer says.

Cutler, who was also there, says many "lawyers, doctors and other professional people, their wives and children" attended, and that the estimated \$200,000 price tag on the party was "way out of line."

So who *did* host the soiree? Cutler declined to say, but he did assert that this reporter and others are using Gotti as "a meal ticket."

"I can't believe it," said defense lawyer Frank Lopez after a client was convicted of importing 10 pounds of Pakistani heroin. "Guilty, by ring-around-the-collar."

Ahmad Rateb Popal, 35, was busted after he was videotaped picking up a package containing heroin from a courier who was cooperating with authorities.

Then the courier denied everything in court, claiming Popal didn't know about the

heroin and was expecting to get only "a religious rug and religious garments" from his mother for a Pakistani holiday roughly equivalent to Christmas.

But everyone has a mother, and in his closing arguments Brooklyn federal prosecutor Peter Ginsberg asked jurors to look at the stained clothing that was hidden with the heroin. "What mother would send a Christmas garment to her son with ring around the collar?" he asked.

The jury took 25 minutes to find Popal guilty.

Brooklyn lawyer Charles Carnesi thought "The Pizza Connection" by Shana Alexander was "interesting." But he's writing her that he told heroin supplier Gaetano Badalamenti to find a new lawyer, and not the other way around.

Giuliani assistant Peter Lieb has decided to take a third crack at another John Gotti pal, Joseph (Joe Butch) Corrao, a Gambino capo whose two trials for obstruction of justice ended with hung juries.

Corrao is charged with alerting the son of a **Mafia** boss about a sealed indictment he learned about from a source at the Foley Square courthouse. And the govern-



**Leroy (Nicky) Barnes:** He's hoping for a belated Christmas present—a presidential commutation of his sentence.

ment appears to be closing in. The jury was hung 8-4 for acquittal in his first trial; in the second, it was 10-2 for conviction.

Corrao's lawyer, Gerald Shargel, says: "As I've told two juries already, there was no crime here. Mr. Corrao heard some gossip and merely passed it along. He was under no legal obligation to keep a secret."

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