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Mafioso writes get-out-of-jail script

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Yuppie mafioso Michael Z. Franzese squealed on his crime confederates, including the mob's "Boss of Bosses," but that didn't keep him out of the slammer. So the 37-year-old crime chief figured out another way to get back on the streets.

Arguing that he could not pay off his \$10 million restitution from behind bars, Franzese, nicknamed "The White Whale," has persuaded the feds to release him from the Terminal Island, Calif., pen so he can produce cut-rate Hollywood films and turn his profits over to Uncle Sam.

It is only the latest in a series of maneuvers that at one time placed Franzese as the top moneymaker of the Colombo crime family, earning millions a week through a series of complex financial ripoffs heralded as the mark of a new type of mob. Franzese, with his three years of college and his businessman's swagger, seemed to represent a new twist on the old mob tactics of blackjacks and concrete shoes.

Franzese does have a track record as a movie producer, grinding out such B-grade flicks as "Knights of the City" and "Mausoleum." It remains to be seen whether he or his next film will be shot first. Franzese, the highest-ranked New York wise guy ever to testify as a prosecution witness, brought many mobsters down with him and might bring down even bigger fish.

He implicated top mob boss John "Dapper Don" Gotti, 48, in the Christmastime execution murders of Gotti's boss, mob chieftain Paul Castellano, and henchman Thomas Bilotti in front

of Sparks Steak House on crowded East 46th Street in New York City, a connection that the violence-prone Gotti is sure not to appreciate.

The feds hope Franzese's information, coupled with the anticipated squealing of Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno, 77, head of the Genovese family in New York and perhaps the most wealthy and powerful mobster alive, might be enough to finally build a solid case against Gotti.

Salerno, sick and imprisoned, is expected to cooperate with the government to nail Gotti on the murder rap in order to win his release.

Other Franzese testimony in Chicago helped U.S. Attorney Anton R. Valukas keep the mob from infiltrating the National Football League. Valukas rewarded Franzese by sparing him from prosecution in the celebrated racketeering case against sports agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom. This encouraged him to keep cooperating with the feds.

Before Franzese expends too much energy on Wilshire Boulevard celebrating his newfound freedom, he would do well to consider the story of another mobster who was a movie producer and stool pigeon, John "Mr. Hollywood" Roselli.

Like Franzese, Roselli blended a mob career, as its Las Vegas connection, with work in Hollywood, ironically producing crime-doesn't-pay B movies.

He, too, won quick parole by using his Hollywood ties. He, too, went before investigators and named names.

And he ended up sealed in a 55-gallon drum off the coast of Florida.

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