



John (Junior) Franzese (above, r.) testifies against dad, John (Sonny) Franzese. Junior's mom, Christina (r.), backed son, shown with older Franzese in undated photo. Sketch by Jane Rosenberg; photo by Jesse Ward



"John, if anybody tells you that I'm the boss, tell them, 'No my father ain't the boss. 'Cause the same c----- that talk to you'd be the first guys to rat you out.'"

John (Sonny) Franzese, May 10, 2005



"He's not testifying against his father, he's testifying against this [mob] life," she said.

"I'm on my son's side. John was not happy with that life, that's why he did drugs."

The mobster's wife also denied Lind's claims she abused the man she lived with for half a century before they parted two years ago.

"I would not slap him, maybe stab him," she said. "I used to say sleep with your eyes open, or I'll stab you."

John Jr.'s brother Michael, 59, a one-time Colombo capo, wasn't nearly as kind, even as he said he still loves John Jr.

"I don't agree with anything he's doing, I'm surprised at what I'm hearing," he said. "I feel worse for my father. I know he's very hurt by it."

Cousin John Coppolino, a reputed Colombo associate who's also a defendant in the case, shredded the younger Franzese.

"He's a liar, he's a piece of s--- drug addict," Coppolino ranted.

"I used to throw \$10 bills at him so he could buy crack and get away from me."

With Jose Martinez

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Ultimate in Mafia betrayals

THE LAST standup mafioso and his son were having quality time when the son recounted seeing a tough guy named Albert Gallo berating a minion.

"It was horrible, dad," said the son, John Franzese Jr.

"That's because he was a mutt, John," said the father, who is also named John, John (Sonny) Franzese.

"Albert?" the son asked.

"Well, naturally, John," the father said.

"I gotta tell you, it was horrible," the son said again.

"Would I do that to you, John?" the father asked.

The question required no answer. The father was known to put dismembered enemies in garbage disposals, but he was not one to abuse his son, even verbally.

That made the recording deeply disturbing to hear in Brooklyn Federal Court yesterday, for this was not a tape from a bug planted by the FBI.

The recording was made by the very son to whom the gangster was speaking with gruff tenderness, the son who was now up on the witness stand, testifying against father in an epic betrayal.

Even as he wore an FBI recording device whose sole purpose was to put the father in prison, the 50-year-old son was calling him "dad."

A moment such as none other in the long history of organized crime had come just before 10 a.m. when the clerk in this 10th-floor courtroom announced the first witness of the day.

"The government calls John Franzese Jr."

The long decline of the mob has been marked by underlings ratting out bosses and even bosses ratting out everybody, but never before had a son taken the witness stand against his dad.

The betrayal was all the more remarkable because the son had no compelling reason for being up there with his left hand in his pocket and his right hand raised to take the oath.

The younger Franzese was not



Michael Daly

working off a prison term or eluding prosecution. He did not even harbor manifest anger toward the 93-year-old father he pointed out at the defense table.

The father wore a face of weathered brick, but his hurt was still clear to his older son.

"This is very hard for him," said 59-year-old Michael Franzese, who has also been on a witness stand, but never against his father or a fellow mobster. "My father always had a soft spot for his kids."

Perhaps the father had been too soft. Fledgling tough guys start out stealing cars and wearing swag. Young John Franzese was given a new car every year until he was 26 and spent what he calls "exorbitant amounts" on clothes.

As a result, the son never progressed much beyond carrying cryptic messages for his father to other gangsters. He no doubt started out excited to be muttering missives such as, "That thing in Brooklyn we talked about isn't gonna happen because of that other thing."

The problem was he was never told exactly what the thing was.

And before he could rise to a position of trust, he became addicted to cocaine, stealing even from his grandparents when they were hospitalized.

He is finally sober, but the character of "The Godfather" movie most like him was still Fredo, the dim son who betrays his brother and laments, "I'm smart, too!"

Not that John Franzese Jr. is dumb. He is just not very street-smart. The tapes repeatedly have the father tutoring his son on how to conduct a shakedown and how to be discreet.

"Learn how to learn how to be evasive," the father can be heard advising. "Whisper."

At another moment, the father said, "I'm letting you know because you're my son."

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