

Questioning son's role

■ Testimony under scrutiny vs. accused mobster dad

■ Family differences magnified outside court

BY KEITH HERBERT

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Defense attorneys began cross-examining government witness John Franzese Jr. yesterday, portraying the former crack-cocaine addict as someone who never really had an insider's view of New York's Colombo crime family.

Franzese, 50, who grew up in Roslyn, is the federal government's star witness in its racketeering conspiracy trial that has cast him as chief accuser of his father, John "Sonny" Franzese Sr., 93, of Brooklyn, reputed under-boss of the Colombo crime family; Joseph DiGorga of Ocean-side, and two other men.

On Tuesday, John Franzese Jr. testified about audio recordings of conversations he had with his father during which crime family business was discussed, including those that allegedly caught his dad plotting to extort strip joints and discussing political arrangements for a club in Babylon.

But there was drama outside the courtroom when testimony ended. Sonny Franzese's estranged wife, Christine Capobianco Franzese, 75, of Selden, and John Jr.'s mother, was issued a citation for disorderly conduct.

Timothy E. Hogan, chief deputy with the U.S. Marshal Service in Brooklyn, said Capobianco pushed a family member in the hallway outside the



John Franzese Jr.

courtroom. Outside the courthouse, Capobianco Franzese said that Lorraine Scorsone, of Brooklyn, pushed her in the arm, "and I pushed back."

She said she urged her husband to plead guilty.

"I went to tell Sonny to plead guilty and let him [John Jr.] get off the stand," Capobianco Franzese said. She spoke to Sonny Franzese when he was taken to the men's room.

Scorsone left the courthouse without comment.

In court yesterday, defense lawyer Richard Lind questioned Franzese about his past crimes, which included several robberies, that weren't conducted with the blessing of mob bosses.

"That's what a junkie like me does," Franzese testified, referring to his putting a gun to the head of one of his friends and taking \$40 to buy drugs.

It came out in court that Franzese, who said he drove a Mercedes-Benz while in high school, was diagnosed as HIV positive in 1990. Lind pressed Franzese on whether payments



John "Sonny" Franzese Sr. arrives at federal court in Brooklyn yesterday for his racketeering trial.

made to him by the police in Los Angeles were for medication to treat his disease.

Franzese, who testified he got HIV from drug use, also testified that the payments, "maybe \$100 a week," were for expenses incurred while working as a police informant while in California.

Outside of court, Michael Franzese, John Jr.'s brother,

said his brother's testimony about having intimate knowledge of his father's crime business — and his own work as a deliverer of mob messages for his father — wasn't true.

"My father never instructed him to get into this life," Michael Franzese said. "It was through me. I was a made guy at the time. Our father was in

prison for 30 years. We essentially grew up without a father."

Michael Franzese, now a born-again Christian who says he's no longer part of the mob, said he wished his younger brother had "got involved with the Lord" because then he would "never have been in this mess."

Students get a severe dressing-down

BY JENNIFER MALONEY

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A group of students cross-dressing as a senior prank at Westbury High School yesterday were warned by their principal that he would suspend them for two days if they didn't change the way they were dressed.

The students complied, but some are complaining the principal's edict was unfair and discriminatory, and the district is investigating the complaints.

Several students interviewed yesterday said about seven boys and at least 10 girls arrived at school in fashion more commonly seen on the opposite sex: The boys wore tank tops, dresses,

skirts and Ugg boots. The girls wore baseball caps and baggy shorts or pants slung low to reveal boxer shorts.

Not long after the first bell, principal Manuel Arias announced on the school's public address system that cross-dressing students were to change clothes or they would be sent home and suspended, students said.

Nicholas Arevalo, 18, who came to school in skinny jeans and a tight tank top with a pink-and-black zebra print, said Arias confronted him and a classmate in a hallway.

"He said if we didn't take it off, that there was a chance that we might not go to prom," Arevalo said. "I really want to go to

prom, so of course I took it off."

He changed into a black T-shirt, but kept on the skinny jeans. "I think we should have a choice in what we wear," he said.

A person in Arias' office said the principal had no comment.

Students said the boys changed their clothes, while girls pulled up their baggy pants to comply with the school dress code, which they said prohibits revealing clothes and the showing of underwear, but doesn't specifically prohibit cross-dressing.

Bianca Parker, 16, a sophomore who said she wanted to join in until the principal's warning, called the ban unfair. "I dress kind of tomboyish,"

she said. "I usually wear baggy jeans. I wear hoodies. Everyone has their own expression. Today it made me feel like I can't be myself. It makes me feel discriminated against."

District spokeswoman Andrea Morale said superintendent Constance Clark-Snead will investigate complaints that the principal's threat of discipline was discriminatory.

School board member Larry Wornum said he supports the principal.

"Schools are not places of democracy," he said. "You cannot wear what you want. Mr. Arias has done a wonderful job."

But, Wornum added: "I think the children were great for trying to pull a prank."



Nicholas Arevalo changed into a black T-shirt but kept on the skinny jeans.