

Franzese Jr.: I'm not writing a tell-all



John "Sonny" Franzese Jr. arrives at federal court in Brooklyn yesterday for more testimony against him by his son John Jr.

BY JOHN RILEY
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Colombo family informant John Franzese Jr. admitted yesterday that he worked on a 2002 book project on his life as the son of legendary reputed enforcer and underboss John "Sonny" Franzese — but said he had to agree not to cash in on his criminal past as part of the federal witness protection program.

Franzese Jr., 50, in his third and last day testifying against his 93-year-old father in federal court in Brooklyn, said the tentative title of his mob memoir — which portrayed Sonny as a "great father" who attended all of his baseball games growing up in Roslyn — was "Family, Crime, Drugs and Redemption."

Defense lawyers accused the younger Franzese of trying to "cash in on your father's coat-tails" and "write one more chapter" by wearing a wire and testifying against his dad, but he surprised them by revealing his deal with the U.S. Marshal's

Service in 2008.

"I signed an agreement never to write a book," Franzese said.

Sonny Franzese, one of Long Island's most notorious gangsters in his heyday, and three other men are charged with racketeering that included robbery, loan-sharking and extortion of strip clubs and an Albertson pizzeria.

But the charges so far have taken a backseat to a wrenching Soprano-style family drama, as Franzese Jr. — a former cocaine addict who is HIV positive — has repeatedly defended betraying his father's mob life as a necessary part of redeeming himself while his mother, Christina, and his more celebrated brother Michael, a former Colombo capo, watched and took sides.

In cross-examination, defense lawyers attacked Franzese Jr. for abandoning his own wife — who he said was an unreformed drug addict — to enter witness protection, and accused him of selling one of his sisters the cocaine that led to her death from an overdose

in Florida in 1990.

Franzese Jr. denied that, but said his sister had called him the night she OD'd and wanted to talk. "I was getting high," he testified. "I said I'd call her back. . . . I never did."

When it was over, Michael Franzese, who has himself written two books about his life in the mob, said he was convinced his half brother had betrayed family for the more than \$400,000 he has received from the government as a cooperating witness.

"I'm so hurt and so angry," said the sibling, who now makes his living as a motivational speaker. "I can't believe he did something like this."

But Franzese's mother, Christina, 75, who was banished from the courtroom last week after an altercation, continued to back her son over her estranged husband, Sonny, and the "horrible life" she said he forced his family to accept.

"I feel bad for him," she said. "He's the father of my children. But I feel worse for my children."

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