

Vincent Gigante, firmly established as the bathrobe-clad boss of the Genovese family, was well into his mental illness scam before the Dec. 15, 1985, mob hit on fellow boss "Big Paul" Castellano of the Gambinos.

The Chin suddenly found himself facing an unexpected nemesis: John Gotti.

This excerpt from "Chin: The Life and Crimes of Mob Boss Vincent Gigante" (Kensington Books, on sale Tuesday, written by veteran Daily News reporter Larry McShane, recounts their testy relationship.

BY LARRY McSHANE

IF THE Chin was not too well versed about the outer borough thug who had just whacked his pal Castellano, Gotti was fully in the know about his Genovese family counterpart.

John and his brother Gene Gotti told a confidential informant in 1984 that Gigante was used by the Commission during the 1970s to execute Mafiosi caught violating the ban on dealing heroin.

An FBI agent summed up the Gottis' beliefs this way: "Those apprehended and/or convicted . . . normally met with individuals associated with Gigante, and these meetings were usually their last."

The Gotti brothers specifically referred to Carmine Consalvo, tossed from the roof of a 24-story building in Fort Lee, N.J., while facing a heroin trial in 1975. His brother Frank suffered the same fate three months later after a shorter fall: Five stories from a building in Little Italy.

Gotti's renegade crew not only feared the Chin — they respected him. Charlie Carneglia, one of Gotti's most trusted contract killers, was caught on another bug calling Gigante "smart" for his ongoing mental health

routine. (Proof of Chin's high-quality act: Carneglia was convicted in 2009 after prosecutors said he unsuccessfully pulled the same stunt.)

To Bill Bonanno, former Bonanno family boss and son of Mafia founder Joseph Bonanno, Gotti and his ilk were hardly men of honor.

"They're a product of 'the opera generation' — me, me, me," scoffed Bill Bonanno. "It is a different mob."

The Chin was a padrone, taking care of local problems in a low-key fashion reminiscent of "Godfather" Don Corleone on the day of his daughter's wedding. Gotti, in a typically showy move, hosted a massive Fourth of July party in Howard Beach — complete with illegal pyrotechnics.

The annual event was held despite Gotti's unknown past as a draft-dodger; the Dapper Don avoided wearing olive drab by blowing off his draft board on the very day that President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

Gotti, a guy from Queens, was hardly part of the mob's upper echelon; his base of operations was in far-flung Ozone Park at the Bergin Hunt & Fish Club, where the rods came equipped with silencers. Hijackings at Kennedy International Airport were their bread and butter. Gotti was hard-

ly a subtle guy; when the threat of violence wasn't enough, he simply turned to violence.

To a made man with Chin's mob pedigree, Gotti was an outsider and unworthy of respect — even after the Castellano hit. Gigante was unappeased by Gotti's public denials of the murder or his immediate "election" by Gambino captains as the family's new leader.

Gotti's disregard for both mob management and his late boss was captured on a particularly bilious recording made in an apartment above the Ravenite Social Club after the Castellano assassi-

nation.

"Hate, really hate Paul," Gotti ranted. "He sold the Borgata (family) out for a construction company. He was a piece of s---. Rat, rat c---sucker. Yellow dog!"

His feelings toward Gigante, while not as colorful, were equally dismissive. Gotti sneered at the Chin's bread and butter, the crazy act: "I would rather be doing life than be like him," the mobster once told his son John (Junior) Gotti.

Gotti was a guy who nursed a grudge, like the one he held toward Castellano, and he cared — a lot — about making money. Gi-

gante took a more benevolent approach to the cash generated by his illegal operations and his loyal staff.

"Chin was very well-liked by his crew because he didn't ask for a lot of money from his capos, his soldiers," said federal prosecutor Greg O'Connell.

Gambino underboss Salvatore (Sammy Bull) Gravano agreed: "He ain't that interested in the money. He already had a ton of money. His biggest problem was where to hide it. He didn't take money from most of his captains."

Three different law enforce-

ment sources said the murderous Gambino boss was petrified of the ruthless Chin.

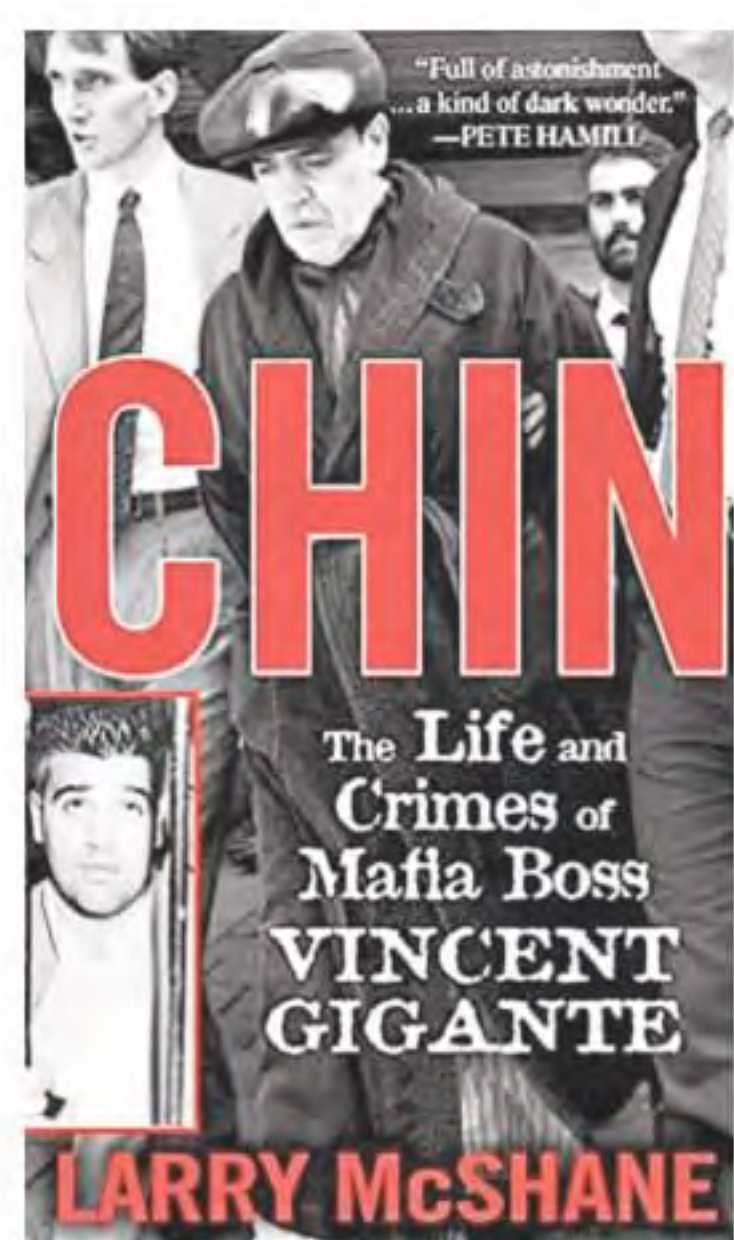
"John Gotti was terrified of Gigante," said FBI Agent Bruce Mouw, once the head of the agency's Gambino Squad. "He knew that the Genovese were the most powerful family, very tough, a vicious family."

"I'm sure he was," agreed O'Connell, noting the Chin was apparently afraid of nothing.

Former Bonanno capo Michael Franzese echoed the law enforcement assessment.

"I believe everybody feared Chin, even when Fat Tony (Saler-

THE DON TOOK IT ON CHIN



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John Gotti (right) was heard dissing mob management, in particular assassinated boss Paul (Big Paul) Castellano, in recording made at an apartment atop the Ravenite Social Club (above) in Little Italy.



‘Crazy’ Gigante got under Gotti’s skin

Vincent Gigante (main photo), famed for his mental illness scam, faced a new nemesis, Gotti, after Castellano (inset) was rubbed out. Slaying outraged Gigante. Gigante (second from right in photo right), doesn't look so crazy as he leaves gal pal's pad on the Upper East Side.



John Gotti was terrified of Gigante.

FBI AGENT
BRUCE MOUW

● New book tells of mob disdain and fear

no) was the boss," said the born-again gangster. "It was pretty much common knowledge that Chin was no fan of Gotti's."

While the Chin's gambling was now limited to fixed card games with his Greenwich Village cohorts, Gotti was a wild bettor who couldn't get out of his own way. Secretly recorded tapes found the Dapper Don bemoaning his lead-enough touch while betting football, including a \$53,000 beating in a single weekend.

"I bet the Buffalo Bills for six dimes (\$6,000), they're getting killed 10-0," he griped on a wire-tapped Nov. 11, 1981, conversa-

tion. "I bet New England for six dimes, I'm getting killed with New England. I bet six dimes on Chicago, they're losing. I bet three dimes on KC, they're winning. Maybe they'll lose, those motherf-----s."

The Chin, despite decades of federal pursuit, was never heard discussing his multi-million business or any other matters of organized crime. Gotti talked his way into a life sentence after the Castellano hit.

Yet when the feds secretly planted a bug in an apartment upstairs from the Ravenite, they captured nary a bad word from

Gotti about Gigante.

"All the conversations in the Ravenite, John Gotti bad-mouthed everybody — the Colombos, the Lucheses," said Mouw, who listened to hours and hours of tapes. "And every time it got around to Chin, he almost lowered his voice like the old E.F. Hutton commercial — 'Well, the Chin says...'"

Even when alone with his most trusted Gambino associates, Gotti would never admit to any complicity in the Castellano killing. He seemed haunted by the thought that somehow, somehow, word of his treachery would

reach Gigante.

Gigante was "the anti-Gotti, to the extent that Gotti brought law enforcement attention, couldn't avoid electronic surveillance, promoted people he shouldn't and created internecine warfare," said Ronald Goldstock, the former head of the New York State Organized Crime Task Force.

"Gigante was exactly the opposite. No matter how we tried, there was no electronic surveillance. People in the family respected him. He resolved problems, rather than fomenting them. The people surrounding

him were tried and true."

Mouw said Gotti yearned for the kind of reputation and respect accorded the Chin.

"I'm sure he was envious," said Mouw. "The one thing John respected was power. Power and money."

Atlantic City mobster Phil Leonetti, in a conversation with Gambino underboss Gravano, got the lowdown on the feud between the nation's two top mobsters.

"Sammy told me that John hated the Chin," Leonetti recalled. "But I think it was because John knew that he would never have the power that Chin had. I mean, the newspapers and the media made him 'The Dapper Don.' But to guys on the street, guys in the mob, they knew it was the Chin who was the real power in New York. And I think that irked Gotti, that as regal as he was, he couldn't trump this guy in a bathrobe."

When Gotti ascended as the new Gambino boss, Chin never regarded him an equal, a partner or a friend. Gigante viewed the interloper as a rule-breaking cop magnet and general pain in the ass.

Gigante, as he did when Philly boss Bruno was whacked in an unsanctioned hit, wasted no time in plotting his payback on the Castellano plotters. A murder contract was placed on Gotti's head after the Chin — accompanied by his brother Ralph — ventured to the wilds of Staten Island for a sit-down with Luchese boss Anthony (Tony Ducks) Corallo.

The men, sitting in the home of "Christie Tick" Funari, agreed that Gotti had to go.

Longtime Luchese soldier Al D'Arco recalled the Chin's initial plan was to deliberately not whack Gotti in a quick strike, the way Castellano was taken down. The fuming Gigante wanted to eradicate Gotti's friends and fellow plotters, leaving the Gambino boss with the feeling of a noose tightening around his disrespectful throat.

"Vincent Gigante wanted John Gotti," said D'Arco, who would eventually become boss of the Lucheses. "He just didn't want him killed first."

One of the things that Gigante most despised about Gotti actually kept the Gambino boss alive: Johnny Boy's constant attention from the FBI and the press wrapped him in a security blanket, making it hard to hit the new boss. The storefront Ravenite in Little Italy was tucked amid cramped and crowded streets that made a mob killing almost impossible in the neighborhood.

Gotti survived the Chin's assorted murder plots, although he couldn't escape arrest.

When his son John Jr. assumed command after the Teflon Don was busted on Dec. 11, 1990, the Genovese hierarchy — in a final slap at the elder Gotti — refused to even meet with the Mafia novice.