

PART 2

Cosa Nostra's corruption of sports, its territorial and industrial fiefdoms, its massive muscle-in on legitimate business—and the tribute it exacts from all Americans

THE MOB

The most shocking truth about organized crime in America is that all of us, one way or another, one time or another, pay tribute to the Mob. Out of ignorance, greed, easy tolerance or fear we help it grow fat with our money—whenever we deal with the Mob's businesses, its agents or those beholden to it: when a housewife buys the product of a Mob-controlled company; when a teen-ager feeds a Syndicate-owned jukebox; when a businessman negotiates a quick loan with a Mob usurer; when a slum dweller plunks down 50 cents and hopes his lucky number will come up.

Last week *LIFE* described the Mob's intricate structure, its terror tactics and how it neutralizes politicians and policemen with the Fix. This week's subject is the Mob's economic muscle—often veiled by a surface legitimacy and respectability: where it comes from and how it grows. One place it comes from is illegal sports betting (*pp.* 92–93), a weakness shared by millions of American males and a business thoroughly dominated by the Mob. Another, growing source of economic strength is “legitimate” business investment, a field in which Carlos Marcello (*pp.* 94–97), the five-foot-two Mr. Big of Louisiana, is a peerless exemplar. The Mob's other money-gathering techniques, ranging from “skimming” cash at legal gambling casinos to selling munitions to foreign governments, are chronicled in the article beginning on page 98.

There was a time when you could spot a leading gangster by the hard-eyed bodyguards on either side of him. Not today. Instead of bodyguards, the men on either side are apt to be an accountant and a lawyer. The change in image signals a change in style. The direct, bullying, pay-up-or-else method of extortion has given way, except for anachronistic exceptions, to such tactics as juggling (or stealing) stock shares and acquiring memberships on corporate directorates. The Mob has shined its boots and planted them in the marketplace. “Sophistication,” it's called—the Mob has become sophisticated. But it is important to re-

member that the boots are still caked with filth, the or-else factor is still present. For all their transparent dignity, the men who run La Cosa Nostra are still murderers and thieves. For all its superficial polish, their operating procedure still depends on violence and corruption.

The full extent of Mob involvement in legitimate business is known only to the mobsters themselves. It is at least possible that it is their major source of revenue. What is certain is that the infiltration of respectable enterprises has not decreased their sway over the less reputable variety. The Mob may venture into new and stimulating realms, but it also stays with what it knows.

More than from any other source, far more than from dope, prostitution and loan-sharking combined, the Mob thrives by exploiting the almost universal human urge to gamble. Each year it handles \$20 billion in illegal bets, of which it keeps \$7 billion profit. At least half of this is the rakeoff from betting on sports events.

Every day in every city, by telephone and in person at outlaw betting centers like the roadside market at right, thousands of sports fans lay in wagers on the outcome of football, basketball and baseball games, horse races and boxing matches. On every bet made, be it \$1 or \$10,000, the Mob collects a cut of the action, called vigorish—usually 10%.

But the appetite of the Mob is boundless. Its involvement in sports has led to widespread attempts to corrupt—or at least to “use”—individual athletes and coaches of high reputation. To the extent that such corruption succeeds, it threatens the fabric of spectator sport in the U.S., which depends for its existence on public confidence in the honesty of the game.

Inside information is the lifeblood of the bookie handicappers who run sports betting—a nationwide syndicate of big and small-time operators who are protected, partly staffed and almost totally controlled by Cosa Nostra. They need specific up-to-the-minute reports on the physical and mental condition of the teams involved—the kind of information that goes deeper than that on the sports page. They use it to set the betting line—the odds or the number of points

by which one team figures to beat another. And, if they can get even more solid indications of the outcome of a sports contest—by fixing it—all the better.

Accuracy in the assessment of a contest can pay princely dividends and mobsters are skilled at prying the information they need from the sources: the college and professional coaches and players themselves. They ingratiate themselves as friends and fellow sportsmen, doers of favors and, above all, good listeners. The success of their operation depends largely on how well the mobsters are able to build and maintain these pipelines to coaches and players who, either innocently or for their own advantage, feed them information.

The biggest of the bookie-handicappers—at least until his recent gambling conviction—is one Gilbert Beckley of Miami. When the FBI nabbed Beckley on Jan. 8, 1966, his records showed that on that day alone he handled \$250,000 in bets and turned a profit of \$129,000.

Top bookies are known among themselves by numbers—just like players on the gridiron. Beckley uses No. 1 or 111; Frank Rosenthal of Miami. 3; Eugene Nolan of Baton Rouge, La., 98. This allows for quick, nameless communication and also refers to the page number in the books in which the gamblers record business dealings among themselves.

In Beckley's black book police last year found next to a phone number the word “Skiball,” the nickname for Francesco Scibelli. Scibelli, a member of the Genovese Family of Cosa Nostra, runs a

gambling syndicate in Springfield, Mass. Scribbled next to “Skiball” was the name of Bob Cousy, one of the half-dozen greatest players in basketball history. Before his retirement in 1963, Cousy helped the professional Boston Celtics to six world championships. Since then he has been a successful head coach at Boston College.

Questioned by LIFE, Cousy denied knowing Beckley but admitted that Scibelli was a friend whom he had met through an even closer friend, Andrew Pradella. Pradella, it turned out, is Scibelli's partner in bookmaking. Because they always have such excellent information, the Scibelli-Pradella ring is known as the “Scholar Group.”

Cousy admitted he knew the two were gamblers and that he often talked to them about both pro and college basketball teams and their chances of winning. “I'd be having dinner with Pradella when Scibelli would come over,” said Cousy. “They got together each night to balance the books or something.”

Did Cousy realize his friends were using what he told them to fix betting lines and to make smart bets of their own?

“No,” said Cousy. “I thought they figured the betting line with mathematics. But it doesn't surprise me. I'm pretty cynical. I think most people who approach me want to use me in some way.”

Cousy conceded he had been warned about his associates by Boston police as long ago as 1963. But he refused to end the relationship,



When police arrested bigtime bookie Gil Beckley (*above*), they found in his notebook the name of Bob Cousy (*right*), former basketball great, now coach at Boston College. Cousy admitted his friendship with gamblers.



even after an experience that shook him up a bit. Pradella, he said, invited him to a banquet in Hartford that turned out to be a gangster conclave. "Police were watching the place," said Cousy, "and the whole Mob was there."

Cousy still defends his actions. "In this hypocritical world we live in," he said, "I don't see why I should stop seeing my friends just because they are gamblers. How can I tell Andy when he calls and asks about a team that I won't talk to him about that?"

The arrest of Beckley also led to the disclosure that as recently as last season he had been secretly feeding information about suspected fixing of pro football games and betting by players to the office of pro football commissioner Pete Rozelle. In return, Rozelle's chief investigator, William G. Hundley (a former head of the Justice Department's Organized Crime Divi-

sion), wrote a letter to the U.S. Probation Office seeking leniency for Beckley on grounds that he had "cooperated" with the league on "certain matters."

The "certain matters" presumably included investigation of the relationship between a star American Football League quarterback and two bookies, Carmello Cocca and Philip Cali. The inquiries were stepped up after the player's teammates were overheard in the locker room angrily accusing him of "throwing" the game they had just lost. But no public accusation has yet been made.

Another potentially explosive situation involves the strange affinity that several members of the Boston Patriots pro football team

have for a ramshackle roadside farm in suburban Revere, Mass. named Arthur's Farm. Behind its unimpressive humdrum front, Arthur's farm turns out to be a beehive of mob activities. It does a fast business in sports betting and the exchange of stolen property, and doubles as an informal conference hall where gangsters can get together with people who are of use to them. The proprietor is Arthur Ventola, a convicted fence. Among the regular habitués are Arthur's kinsmen—Nicholas (Junior) Ventola and Richard Castucci, both active bookies. Another is Henry Tameleo, a lieutenant of New England Cosa Nostra Boss Raymond Maranca who, with Tameleo, is now awaiting trial for an interstate

gambling-and-murder conspiracy.

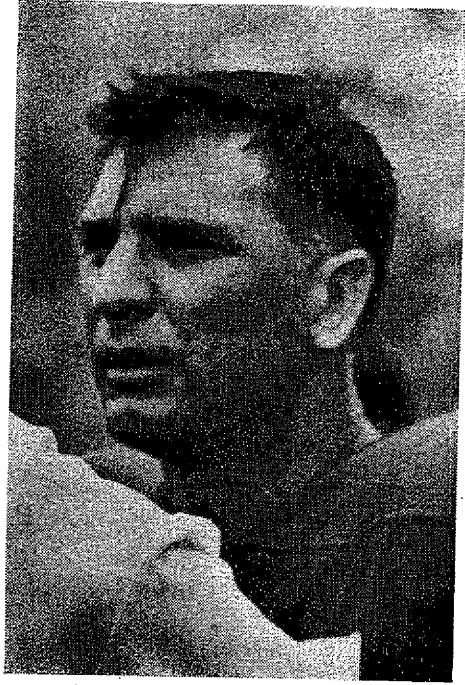
Another regular at the farm, it turns out, is Babe Parilli, quarterback of the Boston Patriots. "Half the team goes out there," Parilli told LIFE. "One of the coaches, too. But we're not doing anything wrong." Parilli admitted knowing Arthur and "Junior" and to having met Tameleo. He insisted he did not know they were mobsters, or that they used information garnered from Parilli and the other Patriots to make a killing on "informed" bets.

Why, then, do Parilli and his teammates visit Arthur's Farm so often? "We stop on the way home from practice," says Parilli, "to buy toys, razor blades and things we get at wholesale prices."



ARTHURS FARM
WHOLESALE & RETAIL





To passersby in Revere, Mass., "Arthur's Farm" appears no more sinister than any roadside store. But it is a gangster hangout, a thieves' market and sports betting center—and has such diverse customers as Boston Patriots' quarterback Babe Parilli (*left*) and mobster Henry Tameleo (*below*).



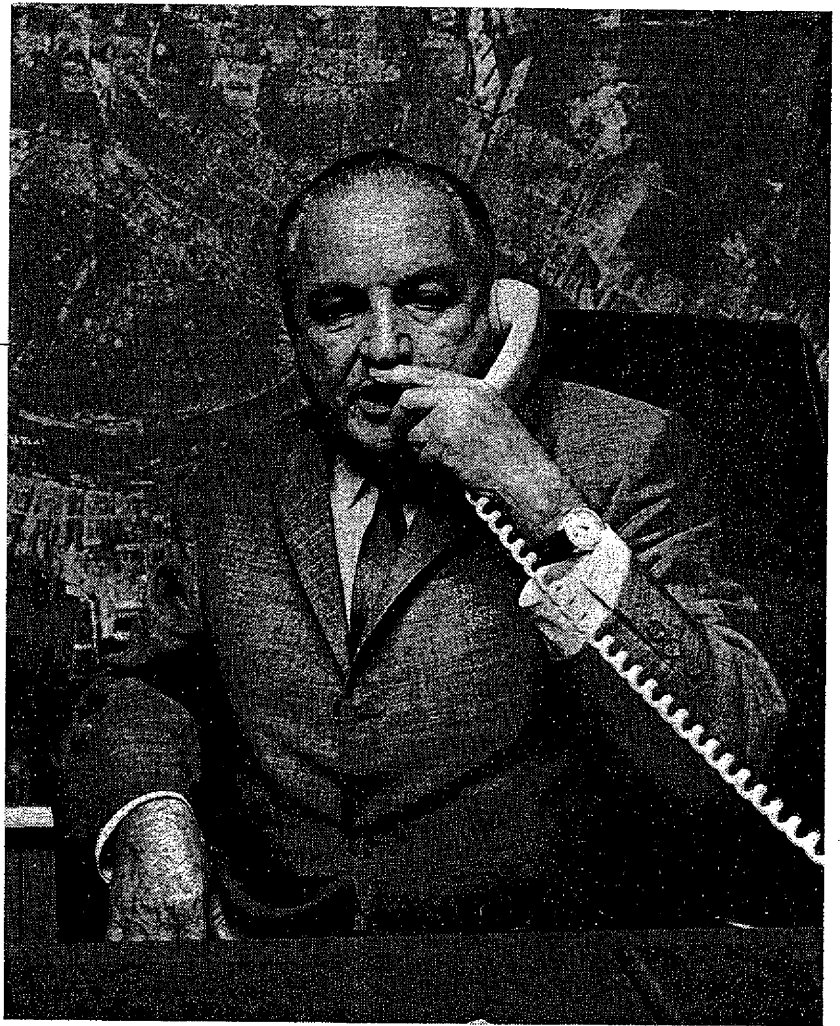
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Ask for Carlos Marcello in Louisiana and you will immediately be recognized as an outlander. Ask for the "Little Man" and, even though you won't get him, a lot of natives will at least know whom you're after. At a barrel-chested 5-foot-2, Marcello is undeniably short. But he's not little. He is so potent, in fact, that Cosa Nostra mobsters in the east—as was reported in last week's LIFE—gave him the contract to try to spring Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa from prison, and put \$2 million at his disposal to take care of whatever fixing might be entailed.

Marcello is one of Louisiana's wealthiest men. His total worth has been estimated at \$40 million and more. He owns motels, a jukebox and vending machine company, a sightseeing bus line and a 6,500-acre estate in Jefferson Parish outside New Orleans. His clothes are well-tailored, his cigars imported, and when he gave his daughter in marriage, the bridesmaids all received mink stoles. He contributed \$100,000 to agencies helping victims of Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and has plunked down \$10,000 for the Girl Scouts. He is also a hoodlum and the lord of one of the richest and most corrupt criminal fiefdoms in the land.

Marcello's realm extends from the Ozark foothills to the Mississippi River Delta, and within that realm his power is majestic. He operates through a complex of political fixes which enable him to control or influence the makers and enforcers of law at every level of state government. When he's out of his realm, though, he's apt to get nervous.

Marcello and several other Cosa Nostra hoods were arrested last year after a lunch in a New York restaurant. Posting bail promptly, he flew back to New Orleans. To his chagrin, he was greeted at the airport by a horde of federal agents, policemen and reporters.



Carlos Marcello, the Mob's man in Louisiana, directs his criminal empire from this office at the Town and Country, a motel he owns near New Orleans. An aerial map of the city covers the wall in back of his desk.

This was too much for the Little Man. "I'm the boss around here!" he shouted, pushing his way through the crowd. "There'll be no more of this. Are you looking for trouble?" Then he took a roundhouse swing at the nearest offender. It happened to be FBI agent Patrick Collins, and the next day found the Little Man charged with assaulting a federal officer.

State authorities, for the most part, take the view that Marcello and his gang aren't there. "I'm thankful we haven't had any racketeering to speak of in this state," says Governor John McKeithen. To McKeithen, Marcello is noth-

ing but a "thug" without influence or power.

Marcello tries hard to encourage this dreamy notion. Few of the companies he controls are in his name, and he stays discreetly behind the scenes in the illegal but wide-open gambling casinos he controls in Jennings, Lafayette, Bossier City, West Baton Rouge and Morgan City. He is screened by his brothers and his son, Joe, who operates a motel. One brother, Pete, is the proprietor of a strip-tease bar in New Orleans. Another, Joe, runs the family restaurant, Elmwood Plantation. Brother Pasquale runs a bar, brother Vincent heads the jukebox company and brother Sammy is in charge of bookmaking. Home base, the \$22 million estate named Churchill Farms, is a corporation. The majority interest is controlled by Carlos, his son and his brother Joe.

The Fix seems to weave through Louisiana like a muddy creek. Associations and alliances that would cause scandals elsewhere are amiably tolerated there. Political and economic leverage is often a matter of friendship or social connection, and there is no neat line to separate the good guys and the baddies. Aaron Kohn, who came from Chicago in 1953 to head the Metropolitan Crime Commission in New Orleans, was astonished at this. "After about a year," he recalls, "I began to realize something about the system down here. In Chicago, people were generally on

one side of the fence or the other—honest or crooked. But in Louisiana there just isn't any fence."

McKeithen will order the state police into action against gambling, but only when it becomes "flagrant or notorious"—in effect, when someone important complains or news of the gambling gets into print or is railed against from the pulpit. He knows it doesn't pay to be overzealous. "Look at Grevemberg," he says, referring to ex-State Police Superintendent Francis Grevemberg. "He cracked down on gambling. He was tough. He went around with a flashlight and an ax, busting up little honky-tonk places. Do you know where he placed when he ran for governor? FIFTH!"

In this atmosphere the Little Man can maneuver as freely and happily as a pig in a wallow. He was convicted in 1930 of assault and robbery (he received a full pardon in 1935 from Governor O. K. Allen) and in 1938 of selling marijuana, for which he served nine months in the federal prison at Atlanta. Since then there has been sporadic court action against him—most of it initiated by the federal government—but no convictions.

In Orleans Parish, the chief law officer is the celebrated Jim Garrison. Garrison is friendly with

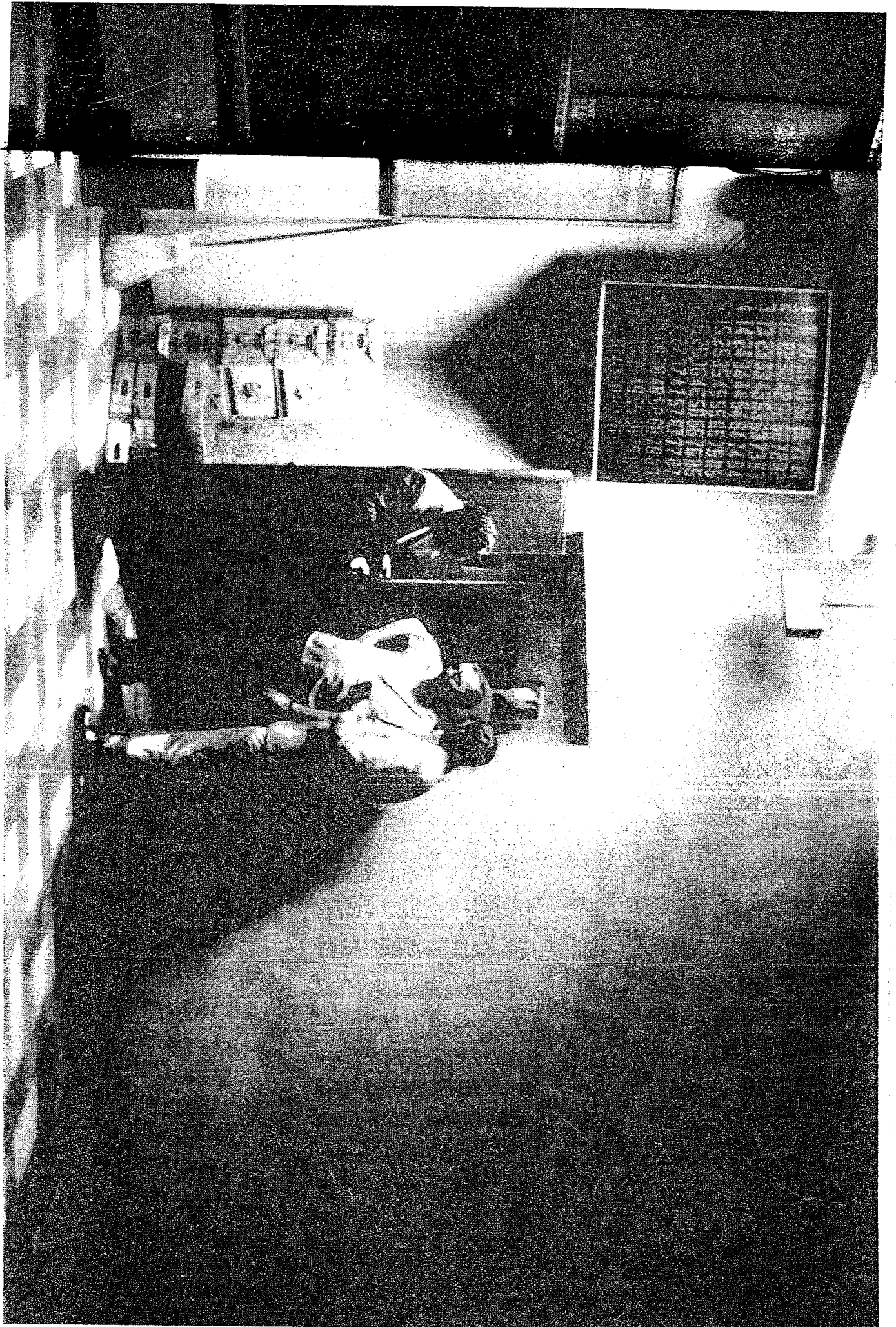
some Marcello henchmen, but that, says the district attorney, is a coincidence without significance. "It doesn't mean anything," Garrison told LIFE, "because I have no connection with Marcello. I don't have to worry about things like that. I've cleaned up the rackets in this town."

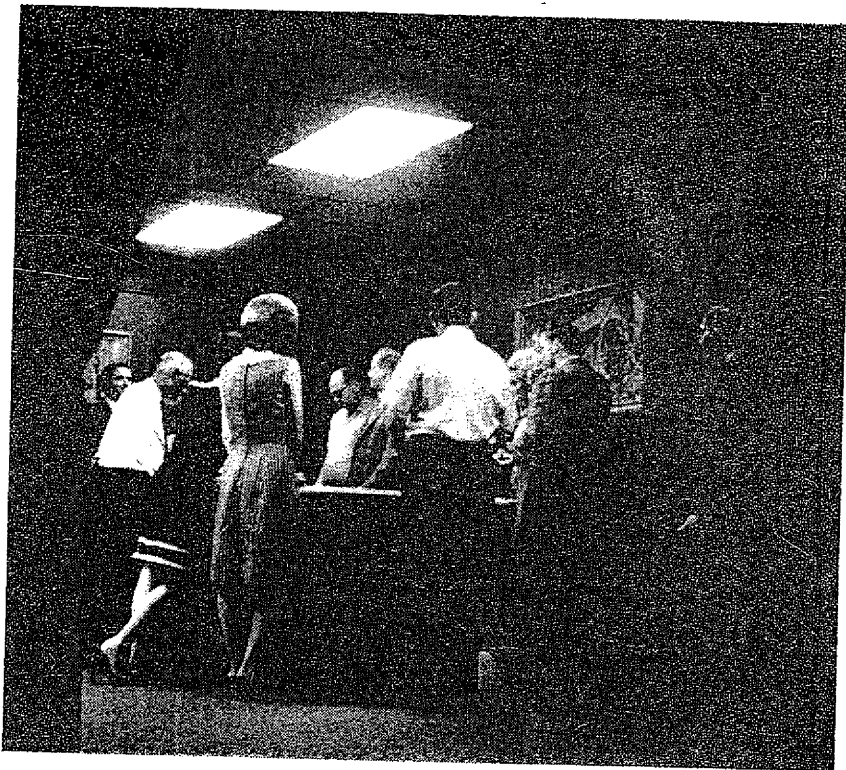
Garrison says he knows Marcello's bookmaking brother Sammy—"I've seen him at the New Orleans Athletic Club and Moran's Restaurant"—but denies knowing that he is a bookie. Also among his acquaintances is Mario Marino, a Marcello lieutenant who moved from New Orleans to the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas 10 years ago. When Garrison goes to Las Vegas, he is the guest of the Sands and Marino makes the arrangements.

Three times since 1963, the

Sands has paid Garrison's hotel bill. On his last visit in March the tab was signed by Marino himself. Garrison was also granted a \$1,000 credit in the cashier's cage, which meant he could gamble up to that amount without putting his own money on the table. At that time the Sands operated one of four Las Vegas gambling halls controlled by Cosa Nostra Bosses. Garrison contends that he didn't gamble and that Marino gave him the credit so he could cash checks. "If I'm unable, he told LIFE, to see anything wrong with a prosecutor loading at a Mob-controlled casino. He said he felt it was customary for casinos to pick up the hotel tabs of public officials. "I might be naive—this is my first public office—but I don't see what's wrong with it," he said. "I imagine the D.A. would have a good credit

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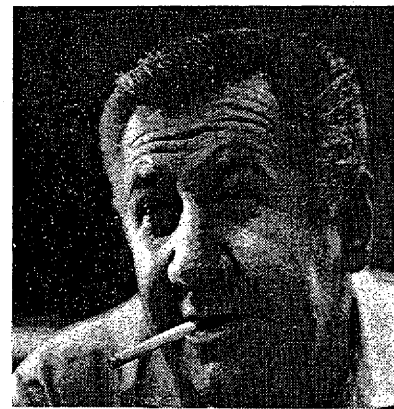


Marcello's interests include sports betting parlors such as the Bank Club (*above*), the Speakeasy restaurant-casino (*below, left*), and the Sho-Bar, a strip joint in New Orleans.



JIM GARRISON

The well-known New Orleans district attorney was the guest of Marcello mobster Mario Marino at a Las Vegas hotel. Garrison denies knowledge of Marino's connection with Marcello.



PERSHING GERVAIS

Garrison's former chief investigator, who admits frequent meetings with Marcello, Gervais now calls himself a "counselor for people who get arrested." He arranges settlements for a fee.



FRANK LANGRIDGE

Langridge has been district attorney of Jefferson Parish, Marcello's home territory, for 18 years. In all that time he has failed to prosecute Marcello or any of his top-echelon mobsters.



JOSEPH "ZIP" CHIMENTO

Langridge's chief investigator, Chimento was convicted in 1943 of bribing a witness to help two Cosa Nostra mobsters. He formerly worked as a collector for Marcello's music firm.

rating [in a casino]." He also denied knowing about Marino's involvement with Marcello, though he insisted it made no difference—"I have no connection with Carlos Marcello."

Judge Andrew Bucaro, a municipal court judge in New Orleans, freely discusses his friendship with Marcello, an old pal and a remote relative by marriage. He admits that he attends frequent parties at Churchill Farms, but says his visits have nothing to do with judicial discretion. "We don't discuss cases," he says, "we just barbecue goats on a spit. There is nothing sinister about our relationship. Carlos Marcello needs a Fix in the municipal court as much as Rockefeller needs to steal pennies."

Jefferson Parish, south and west of New Orleans, is far more vital to Marcello than the city itself. Within it are his headquarters, the Town and Country Motel; his vending machine-jukebox firm, the Jefferson Music Company; and a bookmaking ring. And since Jefferson Parish is Marcello's home base, the fixing that goes on there is as visible as it is flagrant (see pictures at right). Marcello has prospered without noticeable interference by Jefferson's District Attorney Frank Langridge—whose chief investigator, Joseph "Zip" Chimento, was convicted in 1943 of bribing a witness to help two Mafia chieftains. Chimento was a collector for Marcello's jukebox firm before he joined the district attorney's staff.

But Marcello's interests extend far beyond Jefferson Parish. In Bossier City, an open town across the Red River from Shreveport, he owns gambling joints, B-girl bars and brothels. Many of his employees are refugees from Phenix City, Ala., who were run out of town when organized sin in that town was routed 13 years ago. In one section of east central Louisiana, Marcello controls gambling and other vice with muscle provided by the Ku Klux Klan. On Highway 190 near Baton Rouge he has a new windowless casino, officially called a bingo parlor, due to open this month. It is presided over by Frank Vuci, once personal bookie to the late Governor Earl Long.

Whenever possible, Marcello is kind to sheriffs. At a peace officers' convention in Bossier City last spring, one Louisiana sheriff was accompanied by Vuci, who paid all his expenses. When it appeared the conference was running short of cash, Marcello offered to spring for the whole meeting. Another sheriff, together with members of the Louisiana Racing Commission, was a dinner guest of Marcello at the Evangeline Downs race track last April 20.

Like all modern mobsters, Marcello has been expanding his legitimate enterprises. His Jefferson Music Company almost monopolizes vending machines and pinball games in Jefferson Parish. Each year he lends thousands of dollars to restaurant or tavern owners if



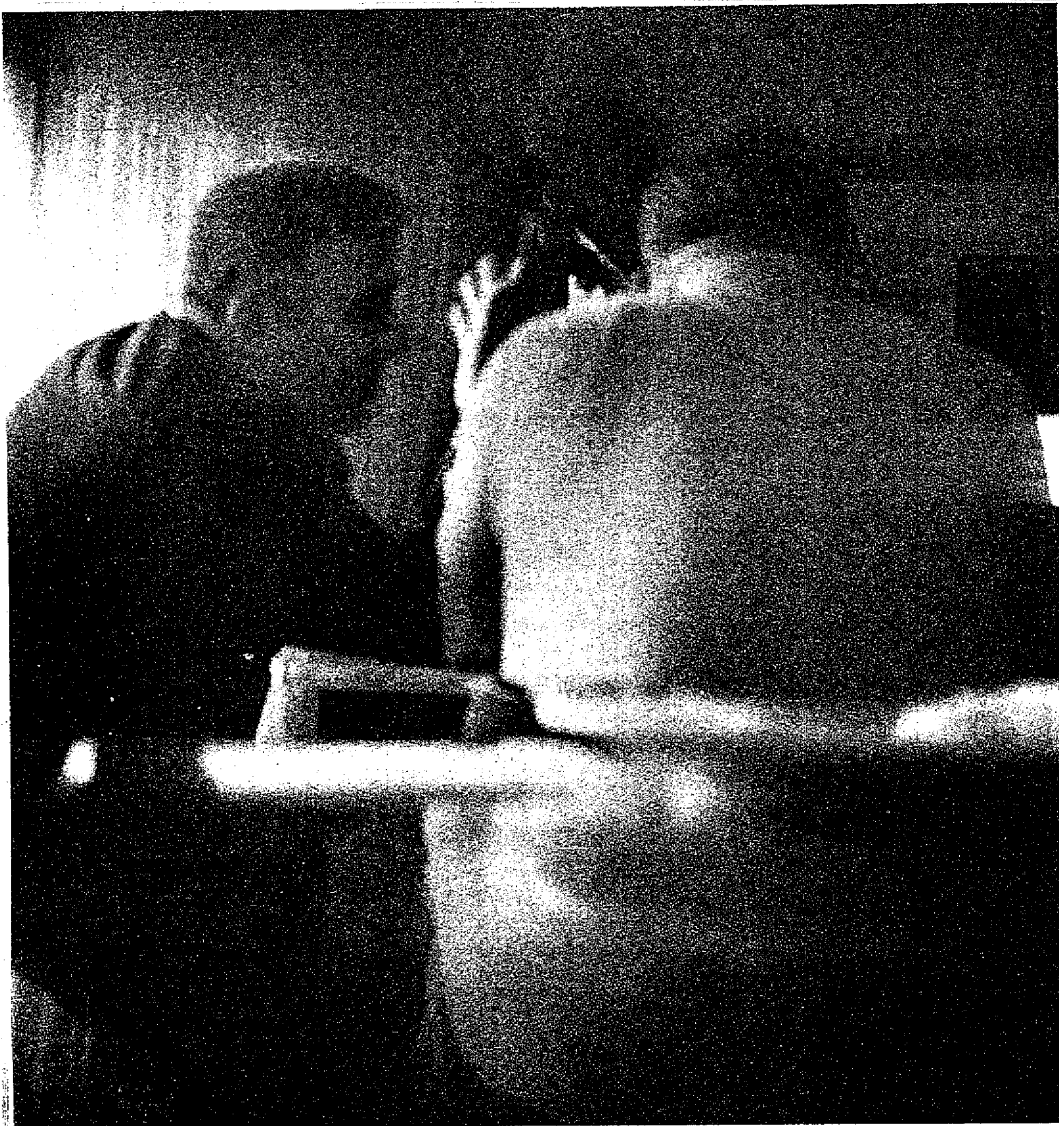
they agree to accept his jukeboxes, cigarette machines or pinball games. His bus firm, Southern Sightseeing Tours, has a near monopoly in New Orleans.

The biggest deal on his horizon, however, is the proposed domed stadium which will house New Orleans' new National Football League team, the Saints. Marcello has offered to give the city 200 acres of Churchill Farms as a site for the arena—an act of generosity at least partially motivated by the expectation of getting a \$1 million-a-year parking concession.

As his wealth, influence and infamy have increased, Marcello has become more interesting to federal lawmen. Although rarely able to prosecute him, they have managed from time to time to make him squirm. For years a deportation case has been pending against him; he was once forcibly grabbed by Justice Department agents and hustled onto a plane to Guatemala. His immigration troubles have led him to the ultimate bribe—putting the Fix on an entire nation.

Marcello was born in Tunisia of Italian parents. Because Tunisia's status has since changed—it was a French protectorate when he was born there in 1910—it will accept no responsibility for his nativity. Neither, at present, will Italy. Marcello has been paying \$25,000 a year for many years to a high-ranking official in the Italian government to ensure that Italy doesn't change its mind.

Louisiana Racing Commissioner Tom Ashy (in glasses) was host to Marcello's brother Vincent (back to camera) and Vincent's wife (next to him) at Evangeline Downs race track. During the evening, Vincent exchanged greetings with at least six state legislators and the assistant director of state police. A horse owned by Vincent's wife won the fifth race, paying \$20.40.



Place: a Jefferson Parish restaurant; Subject: how to assure defeat of a sheriff who has made trouble for the Mob. Vial Blanke (*above, left*), former Parish councilman, and Joseph Armenio, convicted murderer and Marcello ally, were discussing a fund to back candidate Vincent Ebeier (*far left*), whose incumbent opponent, Alwynn Cronvich (*left*), has frequently raided Marcello joints. Ebeier says he is unaware of any Mob support.