

A Police Informer Here Boasts He Got Away With 200 Crimes

By LESLIE MAITLAND

A 22-year-old man who has spent six years as a police informer is scheduled to go on trial today for one of the 200 crimes he claims to have committed since 1968.

But Daniel Carranza's involvement with the police as an informer has resulted in a grant of immunity that will spare him from prosecution or punishment for most of the other crimes for which he accepts responsibility. He says that he confessed to about 100 of them 15 months ago but since then he has "gone straight."

These other crimes constitute a catalogue of felonies including burglary, forgery, grand larceny, procuring, arson, armed robbery, complicity in rape and assault with intent to kill. They are crimes that have

resulted in physical and emotional scars and blighted lives and ruined businesses for New Yorkers, who have been unaware that the police knew the man who had committed the offenses and that the District Attorney did nothing to prosecute him.

Mr. Carranza's willingness to
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discuss his career as an informer sheds light on that little-known aspect of the criminal subculture—and on an aspect of the criminal justice system so sensitive that even highly reputable law enforcement authorities shy from being identified when they discuss it.

Nicholas Scoppetta, the City Investigations Commissioner, spoke openly, however:

"Informants are tremendously valuable in any criminal investigation. Of course it would be nice to have priests, nuns and rabbis provide information, but they're not involved in crime. The people who can tell you about crime are those involved in it. It's an unpleasant business."

Mr. Carranza, who began his career as an informer at the age of 16 when he called the police to tell them that a high school classmate had shot a man in Central Park, would agree.

"In making deals with crimi-

nals, the police and District Attorneys just create repeat offenders," he said.

Since August, 1973, when the Police Department began to formalize a longstanding practice, Mr. Carranza has been listed in the files of the intelligence division as a "confidential informant."

'Informant' Defined

By the Police Department's own definition, "A confidential informant is a person approved by the department, registered with the intelligence division and [one who] through a confidential relationship with a member of the service, furnishes the department with criminal information specifically requested."

Mr. Carranza said it was this confidential relationship with the police, which began when he was a teen-ager that had encouraged him in his criminal activities.

"I felt like I had an 'in' with the Police Department," he said.

In a four-hour interview
taped by The New York Times,

Mr. Carranza, whose childhood ambition was to become a policeman, described his crimes in vivid detail.

The young man, who has been working as a waiter and is praised by his employer, describes himself as "tall, dark and handsome." His tastes run to Gucci shoes, Pierre Cardin clothes and jewel-studded gold Omega wristwatches, but he says such things no longer matter to him.

According to authorities at the parochial schools that he attended until he was sent to a reformatory for truancy, his grades had always been good.

Telling his story, he spoke matter-of-factly, interrupting his narrative only to giggle at the recollection of some unusual feat.

He said he had stolen and sold guns, bogus credit cards, appliances, lumber, cigarettes, air-conditioners, typewriters, office equipment, dogs, stereo and television sets, shoes, furs, clothing, jewelry, antiques, furniture, paintings, books, cars and trucks — everything, he boasted, down to and including kitchen sinks.

He says that the informer's work he did was not really worth the freedom that it had won for him, and then adds that his information led to arrests in cases involving murder, rape, burglary, assault, grand larceny, numbers rackets, and possession of stolen property, firearms and narcotics.

'Escapades' Described

Like most informers, Mr. Carranza worked closely with one policeman—Brendan Tumulty, now of the Manhattan robbery squad, who has spent nine of his 10½ years on the police force as a detective.

The two men first met about six years ago when they were introduced by another detective whom Mr. Carranza had approached with information about the shooting in Central Park.

Before Mr. Carranza turned against Detective Tumulty and attempted, without success, to have him charged with accepting bribes, he says he provided the detective with information on a number of cases.

At the same time, he says, he told the detective about his own "escapades."

"I don't want to hear about them," he quotes Detective Tumulty as telling him.

'Wanted to Be a Cop'

Detective Tumulty said: "He gave me a couple of things of value and we acted on some of them. But 90 per cent of the things he gave me were garbage."

"When he worked for me, I

tried to protect him. But how long can I look the other way? I told him, 'You get in trouble, don't count on me.' But what he has been looking for was a license from the police to go out and steal."

Finally, the detective said: "I told everybody: 'Bury him.' I had a very annoying period with this bum."

"Carranza wanted to be a cop. He wanted to be around cops—working with them or against them."

Last year, according to police statistics, there were 49,000 burglaries and 34,600 robberies in Manhattan. Arrests made in that year, but not necessarily for current cases, describe a "clearance rate" of 11 per cent for burglaries and 21 per cent for robberies. A case qualifies for listing as "cleared" when the perpetrator is known, even

if he is not arrested. The vast majority are unsolved.

According to Mr. Carranza, he and people like him—"people who get off" through special arrangements with the police or by plea bargaining that returns them quickly to the streets—consistently make contributions to those crime statistics.

Mr. Carranza himself was eager to discuss the things he did.

All of the crimes to which he confessed during the interview by The Times he had previously confessed to the police and the District Attorney's office, Mr. Carranza says.

"On July 4, 1972," he said, "my girlfriend, a friend and I were waiting for a bus. We saw this shoestore (the Brass Boot at 1075 Third Avenue, between 63d and 64th Streets) and we saw it had no gates on it. I went over and picked the locks. There was no alarm system. No cops came or nothing."

Mr. Carranza said that he emptied out the store, and that one month later he "replanned the whole job," this time with a truck to cart away the goods.

"We piled everything into the truck," he said, "and dumped it all at a friend's house in Staten Island. We sold the shoes for \$10 a pair. The Sanitation Department was my best customer. They bought about 300 pairs."

"I confessed to the D.A.'s about this crime," Mr. Carranza said, "but they wouldn't arrest me, because it wasn't a heinous crime. Meanwhile, the guy went out of business because of that, and he lost a lot

of money."

Victim Not Informed

In an interview, Manny A. Gruber, the owner of the Brass Boot, said he had never been informed whether the people who had looted his store had been apprehended.

"Surely I would have liked to know who did it," he said. "The store was wiped out, and we closed it. The manager resigned and the other employees were fired."

An assistant district attorney said that when Mr. Carranza was brought in, following his arrest in connection with a truck hijacking in August, 1973, "the first person he spoke with gave him blanket immunity. It was agreed that whatever he told us would not be prosecuted."

Practice Is Attacked

The reason, he said, was that "initially, he came on like he was going to give up a police officer." The assistant district attorney said that finding a corrupt policeman could have been more important than convicting Mr. Carranza. "But everything he gave us to go on was completely disproved. Carranza used Tumulty to get off."

A former assistant district attorney, who is still a public official active in law enforcement, vigorously attacked the practice of granting immunity to informers. He declared:

"This is a good case, because it illustrates the dry rot that permeates the system. Judges and D.A.'s don't care. They no longer see themselves as guardians of the public welfare. They are bureaucrats administering a system, and the important thing to them is disposing of cases."

"At the police level, a good informant is given a license to continue his criminal activities. It's between the policeman and the informant. But if the informant does get arrested, he wants to negotiate."

"The whole system depends on secrecy — on concealment from the public."

One of Mr. Carranza's victims was Paul Weidell, who was unaware until approached by The Times that Mr. Carranza had confessed to burning down Mr. Weidell's dog-grooming shop in Queens two years ago.

"I had the fire inspector come," Mr. Weidell said, "and he showed me where it started. It looked like it started in the middle of the floor, and as if someone had thrown something to ignite it on the walls. The inspector said that it was strange, that it didn't look good, but I never heard anything more about it."

"I had no insurance," Mr. Weidell went on. "And I lost

everything. It was a complete disaster. But I feel worse for the landlady, who is about 86 years old and had let her insurance drop, and for the people who lived in the apartments upstairs. It was just luck that they weren't burned alive."

Mr. Carranza commented, "I told them that I did it. There's no case, though, because there's only me saying that I was paid to do it."

Among his victims were the owners of the 86th Street Moviehouse.

"Around July, 1973," said Mr. Carranza, "the 86th Street East Moviehouse was supposed to be robbed by three friends of mine, at gunpoint. I called up Detective Tumulty to tell him. It was all to my credit—the more I do for Tumulty, the more he does for me. I say it's going to happen on Sunday, but I don't know what time."

"They had a stake-out and watched the moviehouse all Sunday night. The manager of the moviehouse was informed that he would be robbed."

"Around 12:30, the movie closes up. The police go home. The manager closes up. That same night, the moviehouse is burglarized. A 1,000-pound safe is taken out, and eight paintings. And I was with them. We

stole a Volkswagen bus from 92d Street and First Avenue, and pulled up in front of the moviehouse. We got \$1,500 from the safe. That's important, because only the thief would know the amount."

"I told the police about it. But nothing happened. I had immunity because it was not a heinous crime."

The owner of the moviehouse, who asked that his name not be used, said he had "never received any notification at all" that one of the burglars had been identified.

"I certainly would have liked to know," he said. "This thing happened while the police knew it would happen. They certainly were aware that something would happen, and it still happened. That's why it's very embarrassing all around."

Asked about the moviehouse case, Detective Tumulty said that Mr. Carranza had told him there would be a robbery, but instead there was a burglary.

As for notifying the victims, an assistant district attorney said, "The victim is informed, that a suspect has been apprehended when we intend to prosecute." When no prosecu-

tion is planned, as in the case of Mr. Carranza, "there is no point in informing the victim unless we have the property," the assistant district attorney added.

Evidence from another of Mr. Carranza's crimes—the burglary of a penthouse at 87th Street and Second Avenue—is still in his apartment, he says. He said he had kept a 1904 gilt-edged leather-bound set of the works of Thackeray.

Doorman Joins in Robbery

In February, 1973, Mr. Carranza and a partner, both armed, were let into an apartment building on East 84th Street by the doorman Joseph Breksa, whose name also appears in court records as Breska.

That evening, according to testimony at pretrial hearings, Robert Sloate, owner of a restaurant, returned home and was confronted at the elevator.

"If you make any noise you're dead," he said he had been told. "I was shoved up against the wall and dragged and pushed to my apartment."

Mr. Carranza said, "I came in



The New York Times
Daniel Carranza

front of him with the gun. I put it to his head and I said, 'If you make a sound, you won't see tomorrow, you won't see tomorrow.' We got him inside, and Joey started beating the hell out of him, I cocked the gun, and I said, 'Where's your money?'"

Mr. Carranza said that he and his accomplice, Joey Long, got away with \$8,000 in cash. A week later, Mr. Breksa got the two men to provide him with a gun and a ride to the Flag Foods grocery at 64th Street and First Avenue. He planned to rob the manager when he took the day's receipts to a night bank-deposit box. Mr. Long and Mr. Carranza remained in the car while Mr. Breksa stalked the manager and a young clerk as they walked up First Avenue.

'Shoots the Kid'

When the two men became aware of Mr. Breksa, they turned around.

"But they weren't being defensive or anything," said Mr. Carranza. "The doorman pulls out the gun, shoots the kid in the stomach" and "got away clean with the money."

"I was worried," Mr. Carranza said. "I really thought the kid was dead." He said he went home and called Detective Tumulty.

Based on Mr. Carranza's information, Detective Tumulty testified:

"Breksa was positively identified as the guy that shot the kid on 66th Street that morning. That was Sunday, March 4, 1973. I arrested Joe Breksa."

Detective Tumulty said at a pretrial hearing:

"I told Carranza that I had a conversation with Breksa, and that Breksa was willing to give me information on stickups on the East Side if I got him five years."

Then, the detective testified, Mr. Carranza said he "wanted to bare his soul to me. That it was bothering him."

Last month, Joey Long was convicted of armed robbery, and he is currently awaiting sentence. Joseph Breksa was sent to the Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Mr. Sloate, the robbery victim, is suing the owner of his building for having hired a doorman who had been imprisoned for three prior felonies.

Mr. Carranza was charged for participating in the robbery of Mr. Sloate, but not for his role in the Flag Foods shooting.

Confirming Mr. Carranza's account that he had been allowed to wait a month before being put into custody, Detective Tumulty said in court that Mr.

Carranza "was arrested at his own convenience."

And although the detective said that Mr. Carranza had cooperated with him in the past, it was at this time that Mr. Carranza was first registered as a confidential police informant—"so that it would go easier for me in court," Mr. Carranza said later.

"I was booked for an arrest on a second-degree robbery, and I could have ran," Mr. Carranza said. "I went to court, I was paroled. I was out on the streets—no bail or nothing."

Free again, Mr. Carranza said he returned to crime, par-

ticipating in the savage beating and stabbing of a homosexual, who then hurled himself through a fourth-floor window to escape his tormentors and landed on a fire escape. While the victim was hospitalized, Mr. Carranza and some accomplices looted his apartment. "We ripped it apart," Mr. Carranza said.

"I confessed to it," Mr. Carranza added, "but I was not arrested because the man had moved down to Georgia and he's not available to file a complaint."

Later in 1973, Mr. Carranza also participated in the hijacking of two loaded Coca-Cola trucks, which led to the second charge pending against him.

At the time of that arrest, records indicate, he was taken from prison on Rikers Island to the District Attorney's office, where he promised to confess to everything he had ever done. And testimony indicates that he did so, but was told he would be prosecuted only on the two charges pending against him.

Kuh Explains Policy

When District Attorney Richard H. Kuh was asked to comment on Mr. Carranza's case, he said that when a defendant expressed a willingness to confess, he was told that if he implicated himself in new crimes, he would not be charged with them.

"We will not use statements or the fruits of his statements against him," the District Attorney said.

"I'm completely against crime now," Mr. Carranza said, explaining why he was willing to tell his story. "And I'm respectfully against the way they handle it. Crime was a sickness with me, and I was good at it."

It would have been better if they had put me in jail at the beginning."

When Mr. Carranza discusses what led him into crime and what set him straight, he talks about being one of 20 children and about a family in Potsdam, N.Y., that taught him "how to live." The Fresh Air Fund sent him, at 7 years of age, to visit an upstate family—Betsy and Sam Kaplan—and he still regards them as his closest friends.

Deal to Be Rejected

Mrs. Kaplan is the Republican chairman of St. Lawrence County, and Mr. Kaplan owns three department stores. Last year, while Mr. Carranza was awaiting trial, he lived with the Kaplans and their 14-year-old son.

"Would I have let him live with us, with my son," Mrs. Kaplan asked recently, "if I didn't think that Danny is basically good and that he's trying to go straight?"

When his case is called today, he says, he will reject a deal he says he has been offered—to "cop a plea" and serve four years in jail for all he has done—and instead will simply tell the court that he is guilty of all charges and will accept whatever sentence he is given.

The police and the District Attorneys who have dealt with him say flatly, "Danny Carranza is crazy."

But according to the Department of Correction, a psychiatrist who examined Mr. Carranza at the Manhattan House of Detention in June had found him sane, stable and nonsuicidal.

His stepbrother, Ricardo Cortez, who is on three years' probation because he was in temporary possession of silver stolen by Mr. Carranza, says:

"Danny is feeling guilty and depressed now, just because the holidays are coming up. This is the time for forgiveness, but come Jan. 3, he'll go right back to stealing. To be honest, I hope he gets 50 years, 75 years—I hope they throw the key away."

Mr. Carranza's arrest record prevented him from being accepted by the police force when he tried to join last year, for the second time. It is something that he still dreams about, however.

"Boy, I would have made a great cop!" he said. "And I wouldn't have been crooked, either. I can go one way or the other. I just wish I could make a second start."