

Who better to tell the shocking, top-secret story of...

HOW THE MAFIA ASSASSINATED PRESIDENT KENNEDY



By Bill Bonanno

...than the mob boss who was reportedly the model for *The Godfather's* Michael Corleone

NOBODY knows the Mafia better than Bill Bonanno. The son of crime kingpin Joseph Bonanno — ruler of one of the syndicate's infamous five "Families" — Bill himself rose to become a high-ranking captain in the mob. His exploits were allegedly the inspiration for Michael Corleone, the lead character in *The Godfather*. Now, in his new autobiography *Bound by Honor*, Bill Bonanno finally tells his own story. In this blockbuster, now-it-can-be-told excerpt, he recounts how he learned who really killed President John F. Kennedy that terrible November day in Dallas nearly 36 years ago.

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LIKE everyone else, I was shocked when I heard the news of the assassination.

That night, I had dinner with a group of people in my Family. The conversation was general, the kind people anywhere might have been having. Kennedy was by no means a favorite of ours and we were familiar enough with the ways of power to be skeptical that a lone gunman was the shooter.

Then two days later, a call came to the house. We were told to turn on the TV. Jack Ruby, right on network television, had just shot Lee Harvey Oswald in the Dallas County Jail.

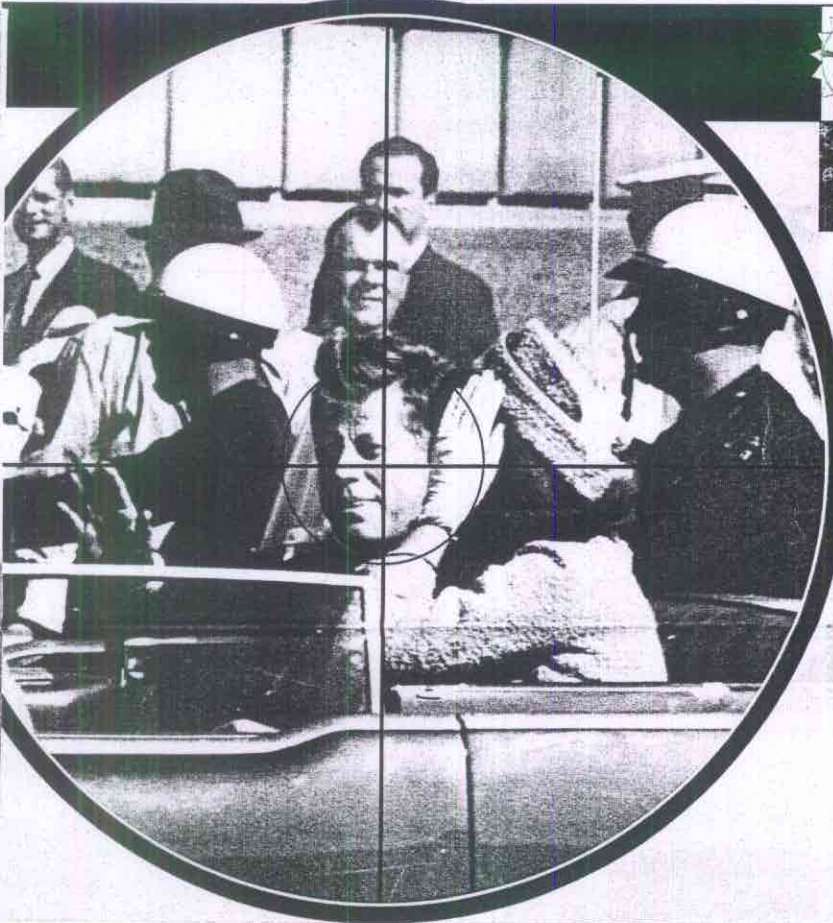
As I watched replay after replay, I could

not believe what I was seeing. Not because the prime suspect in the assassination had been killed but because of who had done the shooting.

Jack Ruby was known to everyone in our world. He was not a made member (he was Jewish), but he was a gofer, the kind of non-Family person who was always available for favors, to do some rough stuff, make a payoff.

Ruby belonged to Sam Giancana like a pinkie ring. He had been living in Texas for some time and had been running in our world for years. There could be no mistaking the meaning of his involvement.

As soon as I could collect myself, I phoned Smitty D'Angelo, who happened



SUMMER
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BOUND BY HONOR

A MAFIOSO'S STORY
BILL BONANNO

The president was in someone's gunsight in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, but former Cosa Nostra kingpin Bill Bonanno says the shooter wasn't the disgruntled ex-Marine Lee Harvey Oswald. Bonanno claims that mob hit man Johnny Roselli fired the fatal shots — and subsequently boasted to Bonanno about how he'd done it.

to be in Fort Lauderdale, and instructed him to get himself over to Tampa and find out what he could.

Tampa was the home base of Santo Trafficante; once a Kennedy supporter, Trafficante had soured on him after the Bay of Pigs when he saw all his Cuban interests go down the drain. Tampa, everyone knew, had close alliances with Texas, New Orleans and Chicago.

Trafficante wasted no time in telling Smitty all he needed to know. His Family was involved, along with Carlos Marcello's and Sam Giancana's.

"Santo said it was a local matter and that everything has been taken care of," Smitty told me the very next day, Monday,

Nov. 25. Smitty had not asked for and had not been told about any of the actual details of the killing. But Trafficante told him that Cubans were involved and that there had been a f--- up with Oswald. (After killing JFK, Oswald had shot Dallas policeman J.D. Tippit later that same day.)

"The cop Tippit was supposed to take him out," Smitty said, "but Oswald got him. Oswald was the patsy. Some patsy. That was why they used Ruby."

I did not closely question Smitty. I did not want to. Limiting information in our world is fundamental to survival.

After I debriefed him, I asked for a meeting of leaders in the New York Fami-

lies for the following evening. Smitty repeated to them less than what he had told me — only what was necessary for people to be assured of their own safety. There were few questions.

On the other hand, there was some awareness of just what it was that might have driven the people involved to assassinate the president of the United States. And that did not sit too well.

Everyone knew, for example, that Carlos Marcello, the leader of the New Orleans Family, had, within months of Kennedy's inauguration, been arrested and deported from the country by the Justice Department, headed by Robert F. Kennedy. We

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were all familiar with Marcello's troubles because he complained about them. He had re-entered the country, been re-arrested and tried for a host of crimes.

It was known that a business associate of Marcello's had been going around saying he had heard Carlos, in a drunken rage, threaten to kill Kennedy.

We also were well aware of Santo's feelings of betrayal and loss following the Bay of Pigs invasion, along with Bobby Kennedy's subsequent targeting of southern Florida for Justice Department action against drug trafficking. Trafficante was known to have boasted to friends on at least one occasion that JFK "was going to be hit" for the trouble he was causing. Everyone was also aware of Sam Giancana's bitterness toward the Kennedys.

What was also clear was the obvious involvement of the government. For instance, anyone looking at photos of the Texas School Book Depository building at the time of the assassination will notice that all the windows were wide open. The Secret Service and local police routinely sealed all windows, sewers, storm drains and other openings along the route of a presidential motorcade.

Likewise, anyone who watched the killing of Oswald by Ruby had to know that someone had made a decision to let Ruby get into the jail building, where he could then position himself in exactly the right spot to get off a point-blank shot.

We also had general knowledge that went beyond the obvious: Take the matter of the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover had been aware in the months prior to the assassination that threats had been made against Kennedy's life, including one that involved a possible trip to the Dallas area in November 1963. Hoover chose to ignore the warnings. At all times, he also personally sought to limit any inquiry into the background and possible mob contacts of Jack Ruby.

In addition, we eventually learned that Hoover blocked the investigation in yet another important way. At the time of the assassination, there was a group of elite agents finishing a training session in Quantico, Va. When news of Kennedy's death was flashed, these agents asked to be sent to Dallas. They had the specific kinds of investigative expertise that would have been crucial in developing evidence in the hours following the killing. Their request was turned down cold.

Hoover's hatred of the Kennedys was well known to us at the time of the assassination. Lewis Rosenstiel, an old bootlegger who went on to become the head of Schenley, was a close bisexual friend of Hoover. Rosenstiel was also close to people in our world. Rosenstiel had long ago passed word that Hoover had blackmailed JFK into reappointing him as director of the FBI. Rosenstiel confirmed that Hoover

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Mafia chieftain Santo Trafficante had connections to Cuban exiles — and the CIA.



Notorious Chicago godfather Sam Giancana: Was it his gunman who killed the president?

ver told Kennedy he would expose his affair with Judith Campbell if he was not allowed to continue in office. (Rosenstiel, later on, was also the likely source of another story widely circulated in our world: that on the morning of the assassination, Hoover had a telephone conversation with Lyndon Johnson in which he told him, "Your time is coming.")

Everyone in the room that night also had some general sense of the Cuban connection, the relationship of Marcello, Trafficante and Giancana to the Cuban exile community and through them to the CIA. Years before, the CIA and members of the mob had come together over a series of attempts to assassinate Cuban premier Fidel Castro. The people from our world who were involved included Giancana and his most powerful subordinate, Johnny Roselli. Giancana and Roselli had gone along, mainly in the hopes of getting the government to ease up on their Caribbean business interests.

Years later I ran into Johnny Roselli in the prison yard at Terminal Island. Roselli was around for only a few weeks before he was transferred to another facility, but what he told me in that time was a revelation.

Roselli had long been rumored to have been involved in the plot against Kennedy. Being linked to Sam Giancana made that seem almost logical. Knowing his background — he was an accomplished marksman, one of the suspected gunmen in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre — made the longstanding rumor seem even more plausible.

What was totally surprising to me was that Roselli talked about Dallas. He was almost loose-lipped about it.

One day, John and I were talking together in the yard, just the two of us.

"That @#% ^ &f always hated your father," he said, referring to Giancana.

"He never made a move against us, John."

"He don't make moves — that's his whole thing. He just lets things take care of themselves. I was supposed to have a car waiting. You think there was a car waiting? There was #@?% — and I'm coming out of the sewer holding the #@?% piece in my hand."

At first, I wasn't sure what Roselli was referring to. I assumed he was probably talking about my father. He was talking about blowing Kennedy's head off.

"Sam and I both knew I was going to be the one to make the hit," he continued. "I had the best chance. My position is in the storm drain on Elm Street, facing the route of the motorcade. The car'll be 10 feet from me.

"There were four of us including the patsy, but Sam and everyone else knew I was the one who'd have the shot. We had this safe house where all of us got togeth-



The camera doesn't lie: Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald to death but the mystery remains: Why in plain view?

er before — two different times. Sam wants to make sure I understand what to do afterward. I even did a dry run the day before.

"Three blocks to the Trinity River, the car was right there. But then it wasn't, Bill, there was no car. I'm standing there on these iron rungs. I watch the cars make the turn, see the guy's head maybe 10 feet away. How could I miss, ya know? I don't miss. I saw his head go up. And I'm thinking all the while I'm going like a rat through that tunnel. I was so close, they saw the flash of the muzzle. I'm never gonna make it. My heart's going like a

cannon. And there's no #@\$%&& backup."

The words were not careless; they were reckless. They were coming from the mouth of a man trained in our way of life, but it was as though he were a schoolgirl. But I could no more stop him than stop a freight train.

"I've just killed the #@\$%&! president and there's no backup! He says there was a slip-up, that they already took care of the goomba who was supposed to be there, but you know what? I know better because I know Sam. He don't make slips like that. He knew I'd never say anything

if I got caught." Roselli then told me that on his own he carried his rifle from the scene of the killing all the way to a farm in upstate New York, where he left it.

In the veiled manner of discourse in our world, I told John what my father and other old-timers had long ago passed on to me: that the moment you accept a confidence from someone, you bear the burden he is carrying; whether you want it that way or not, you wind up hauling the same load up the side of the mountain.

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