

A MAFIOSO CASES THE

CRAZE

The Mafia is big business. In fact, it's two industries these days. There's the one I was in. That one makes billions of dollars each year through stock thefts, loansharking, gambling, drug traffic, and other rackets. And then there's the other Mafia industry—the one that writes about what we do and puts it in bestsellers and on movie screens for the public to lap up. The funny part is that while the Mafia picks the public's pocket, the public is beating down doors to read about how it's being stolen blind. Right now I think there are more books on the Mafia floating around than Joe Namath signature footballs. Everyone's making money on the mob.

It's funny. All my adult life, since I was thirteen, I've been around Mafia people. My grandfather was a Mafia don, a crime boss in Boston in the old days. My friends were all street thieves or big Mafia people. When I was in the mob, stealing millions, I never thought about the public's interest in what my friends and I were doing. I only have a ninth-grade education, so reading

Vincent Teresa, the highest-ranking Mafia figure ever to turn state's evidence, now lives under federal protection and uses an assumed name. His autobiography, My Life in the Mafia, which he wrote with the collaboration of Thomas C. Renner, will be published by Doubleday early in March.



BY VINCENT TERESA

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anything else but numbers-racket odds or loanshark records didn't interest me. Today, though, I have nothing to do but read, because I'm not out hustling anymore. I'm an informer, something I always hated. But the mob stole my money, tried to kill my wife and one of my kids, so I talked. Now that I'm living in seclusion, I have time to think about all the things I did and read the stuff that's being written. I can't get over what I see on the newsstands these days.

If you want to know the truth, I think the American public are sadists at heart. I remember sitting in a moviehouse in Virginia watching *The Godfather*. The audience was actually cheering at times. That shocked me. You'd think that Don Corleone was the Lone Ranger and the other mob were the bad guys. Everytime a bad guy did something to hurt Corleone and his men, the people would shout: “That louse! Get the bum!” I couldn't believe it. Didn't they understand that *all* the mobsters in the movie were vicious? Just because Don Corleone didn't want to sell dope, or because his son Mike had an Irish girlfriend, that didn't make them any better than the other guys. They were still dumping stiffies around the corner like everybody else. They were still making their money off gambling and loansharking and extortion.

But the public doesn't want to know. They like seeing blood and guts, cheer-

ing for good guys and booing bad guys. Look at prizefighting in this country, or the phony wrestling matches. Millions go to see them and watch them on television. They shout their lungs out while a guy bites another guy's ear off or pounds his head on the floor. They sit there thinking: "O-o-o-o, would I love to do that to that guy." So when someone else does it, it's just like they were sitting there doing it themselves.

It's the same way when people read about the Mafia. They love to read that Joe the Boss got shot in the head or that Tony the Nut got stabbed in the chest. Let's face it: most mob guys wouldn't read this stuff or look at it in a movie. They know what the mob is like. They got to go to bed each night wondering if they'll wake up the next morning, and when they do, they're too busy hustling money to worry about what someone's writing. They don't like to see things written because that makes them too visible, brings heat on them, and they haven't time to waste reading about what they're doing.

I read *The Godfather* a few years ago, while I was waiting to be sentenced in the Baltimore County jail. You have to read something else besides the Bible in solitary. Don't misunderstand me, I enjoyed it. But if I was out on the street, I wouldn't have paid any attention to it. Believe me, I *know* what a godfather is. I don't have to read about one. The guys who read the book in the can were the underlings—the street hoods. They would always tell each other lines like, "I'll make you an offer you can't refuse"—and then laugh like they were hearing it for the first time.

It's the same in the legit world. The people that read these books are the little guys who work their tails off for \$100 or \$200 a week. They buy them, put one in their lunch box, and bring it to work. Then they nudge the guy next to them while eating a ham sandwich: "Boy, imagine that Luciano. What a life he had, huh? Lived at the Waldorf-Astoria . . . a different broad every night." Then they go home at night and dream about being in Lucky's shoes. You know why? Because they've got nice fat wives at home. They're cornered by dull and routine lives, so they long for the excitement and glamour they can never have. If they were hungry, they'd be out stealing. That's what separates honest guys from thieves. You got to be hungry—for money, for power—to be a thief.

But I'm not really that surprised by the public's curiosity about the Mafia. I've played on it in my business for many a year—that's how I beat so many suckers. I found out one thing early on: you show me a guy that's got a touch of larceny in him and I'll

show you a sucker I can beat. I don't care what anybody says—90 per cent of the public are dying to be Sicilians, to lead that kind of life. Even the *Napolitanos* are dying to be Sicilians. All most people know is that a Mafia man wears a \$350 silk suit, \$150 Italian shoes, a Borsalino hat, a silk shirt, drives around in a big Lincoln or Cadillac, and always has a good-looking girl in a mink on his arm.

The trouble is that the fellow that wants to be a Mafioso doesn't realize that the guy he saw all dressed up ten minutes ago may be going around the corner to get two bullets in the head from some snake who hates him, or that at three in the morning his doorbell rings, and when he goes to open the door the building blows up underneath him or police are there to pull him out and tailor him for stripes for the rest of his life. People don't think of that. All they think about is the romance and excitement.

The funny thing is that Mafia people sometimes get caught up in the Hollywood image of mobsters—at least years ago they did. I remember that Jerry Angiulo, who's now head of the Boston mob, used to come on like George Raft. He'd wear a silk smoking jacket with an ascot tied around his neck and patent leather shoes. Here's this bum I grew up with, and all of a sudden he started calling me "the kid." Sinatra used to impress a lot of mob guys, too. Once Ralphie Chong saw Sinatra wear those long, pointy collars in some movie, and the next day he went to a tailor and had two dozen shirts made with those same collars.

As a kid, my own movie idol was Sydney Greenstreet. He always impressed me because he had a lot of nerve, he was smart, and he had class. I was never impressed by tough guys—they're a dime a dozen. Greenstreet was big and sloppy-looking, but when the guy spoke he had tremendous diction, a great vocabulary. All my life I tried to fashion myself to have style in everything I did. I didn't want to be a common, ordinary thief. I tried to use my brains. Sometimes I used to stay in my office in Boston, turn out the lights, look out over the city, and just plan out my next move.

For the most part the Hollywood image of a mobster—back in those days as well as now—was over-romanticized. So the public has a false idea of the Mafia, which has been built up by writers and filmmakers who haven't been close enough to a mob guy to know what it's all about. They pump out a lot of garbage from newspapers and cops and informers, but they don't really know. It's a big game, the other Mafia industry. They feed the public some pabulum about a secret society, and the public eats it up. But this

secret business is over. It's secret to the extent that mobsters want to stay on the street. If you talk, of course, you're going to get hurt. Why? Because, if you talk, I'll go to the can, that's why. Not that you're giving away any big secrets about blood rites and that kind of thing.

The only time those rites are still used is when a man of pure Sicilian blood is being made a don. But that isn't the way you become an ordinary member—what we call a "made man"—of an organization today. Nowadays a mob member sponsors another guy—just like you're trying to get into a country club. It's a business. The sponsor goes to his associates and says, "Look, I got a good man here that we want to have with us; his capabilities are this, that, and the other thing. I'll vouch for him." As soon as he vouches for the applicant he puts his head on the block, too. The new guy's taken into a room with the top men, asked a few questions, told what's expected of him. Then there's a vote. But if they weren't going to vote him in, he wouldn't be there in the first place to see who else was present. You can only come out of that room two ways—a made man or feet first. I guess that's the main difference between getting into the mob and joining a country club.

I know old Joe Valachi talked about secret blood rites before a U.S. Senate committee and in the book by Peter Maas, *The Valachi Papers*, but that sort of thing went out in the Thirties. I knew Joe, and he lived in the past. All he had were his memories.

Don't get me wrong. *The Valachi Papers* was accurate, but to me the book was just a rehash of the story Joe told at the hearings. And it wasn't Joe talking in the book—not the way he talked to me at La Tuna Prison in El Paso, when we were both there a few years ago. I didn't see the movie, but from what I've heard about it Joe would have had a fit. It was all blood and guts. That's all the public wants, not the real story about how a guy like Joe had to sweat bullets to make a living from day to day, or the agony of his death in prison. The biggest score Joe ever made was \$60,000 on counterfeit ration stamps. Today that's peanuts to a mob money mover. But Joe went public. He gave the world a lot of history about the mob, and that was important.

I remember when Joe was testifying before that Senate committee back in 1963. I was sitting in Raymond Patriarca's office in Providence, Rhode Island. That was the headquarters for the New England mob. Patriarca was the don then; now he's in jail. We were all sitting there, Raymond and me and Henry Tameleo, the underboss, and some other guys, and we were watching

Joe on television. I remember Raymond saying: "This bastard's crazy. Who the hell is he?" Henry knew him. "I remember that guy," Henry said. "Vinnie and I met him in some café in Manhattan. He was a nothing." At that moment Valachi was testifying about Joseph Bruno, an old Mustache Pete who used to operate in Boston. Then he went on to talk about meeting Raymond. Raymond still didn't remember Valachi, and he was mad as hell, but everyone else in the room was getting a big kick out of the hearings.

"What the hell's the Cosa Nostra?" Henry asked.

"Is he a soldier or a button man?" someone else said, pointing to Henry.

"I'm a zipper," another guy joked.

"I'm a flipper," someone else said.

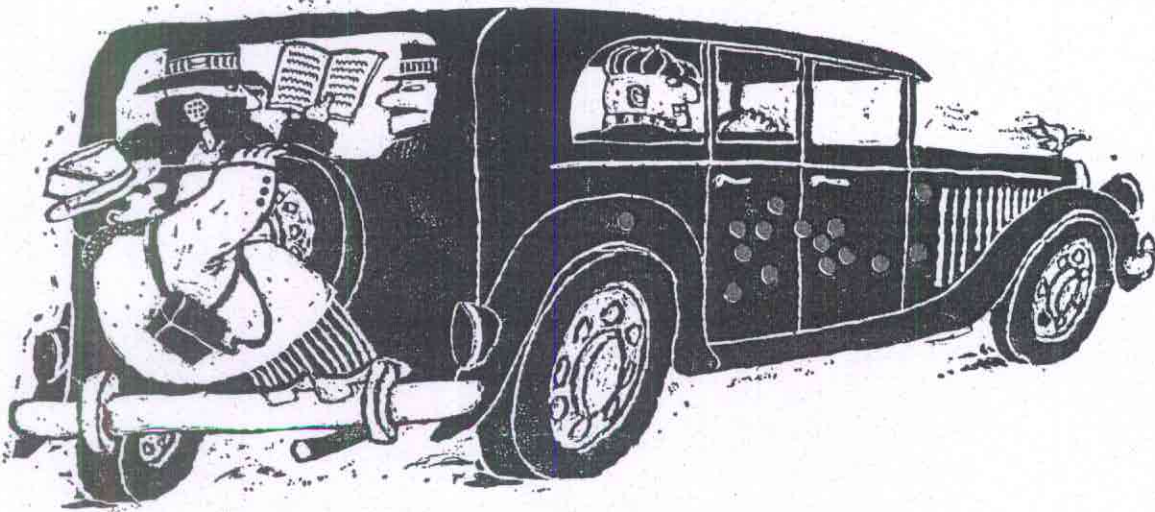
It was all a big joke to them. In New England we never used names like "soldiers" or "*caporegimes*." People in our mob were either "made men," dons, Mustache Petes, bosses, or under-bosses. Sure, we all knew about the Commission—the ruling body of the Mafia, or Cosa Nostra—and the crime families that Joe described, but we called them the Ruling Council and "the mobs." Our mob was called the

Office. In Buffalo they called it the Arm.

The Valachi Papers was really the first popular book about the mob, and it was something the public liked because it had seen old Joe on television and could identify with him. But the book that really made the mob fashionable was *The Godfather*. As far as I'm concerned, the book was far superior to the movie. What I liked about the book—and what they dropped from the movie—was that it showed how Don Corleone came over to this country intending to work and make an honest buck, but there were prejudices against Italians, so he was forced into doing things the way they were done in Sicily. I know that's accurate because it's what happened to my grandfather, Vincenzo Teresa, when he came to Boston from Sicily. The Irish politicians and the Protestant snobs looked down their noses at the Italians. They squeezed them for every dime they could and made them work like pigs in the dirtiest jobs. I'm not crying "poor Sicilian boy that couldn't make a living." Don't misunderstand me. What I'm saying is that Don Corleone, like my grandfather, showed his Sicilian temper and found another way to make

about someone in his mob, and it proves to be the truth, you'll get justice. That's what makes the dons so important in the mob. They rule fair and square. I don't know who Puzo had in mind when he made up the character of Corleone, but to me it was a little bit of Joe Profaci, who used to be the boss of Brooklyn; Carlo Gambino, who's head of the largest crime family in New York; and Three-Finger Brown, who used to be the boss of the Long Island mob. I even saw a little of Don Peppino, an old Mustache Pete I loved when I was in the New England mob. I realize Puzo didn't know about him, but he captured some of his mannerisms in the book anyway.

When I saw Marlon Brando play the Godfather on the screen, I remember thinking to myself that this guy ought to get an Academy Award. He had the mannerisms of a don, the class of a don, down to perfection. The soft, soft voice, always talking in riddles and parables. Dons are like that. They're elegant people in their own way—princes of crime, so to speak. They might look like old greaseballs. They might be little squirts, like Don Peppino, who was only five feet tall. But when they



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a buck—the way they did in Sicily when outsiders pushed them around.

The one great thing Puzo did in his book was show the Sicilian genius for organization. That's one thing about Sicilians. They might not always be educated people, but if there is one thing they know, it's organization. They know how to take four guys that are ambling around aimlessly with no place to go and make them a tight-knit unit.

Puzo also showed the compassion of a don, the fair way Corleone ruled. That's the way most dons are. I don't care what you say, if you go to a don, even if you're not a member of his mob, and you've got a legitimate beef

open their mouths, they're ten feet tall. They speak in broken English and all that, but I remember that when Don Peppino sat down and spoke in his broken English, it was like the sound of music coming from him. His speech was so nice and soft, and he never swore. If you said a four-letter word in front of him, he'd say: "Hey, what are you, a nigger, you talka lika that? Don'ta you talka lika that in front of me. I no lika that language."

Peppino was an elegant man, and so was Joe Lombardo, the old Massachusetts boss. I was a thirteen-year-old kid and a petty thief when I met him. I thought to myself, here I am, shaking

hands with Joe Lombardo, a big Mustache Pete. I'd heard about him from hanging around the North End of Boston and from my Uncle Sandy, who was connected with the mob. It was Don Lombardo this and Don Lombardo that. Hell, Lombardo looked like a banker, not a thief. He dressed very conservatively, mostly in grays. He wore a little pinky star sapphire, a gray fedora, and black shoes. I was ready to meet a big mobster who'd say in a deep gravel voice: "How are ya, kid?" But when he greeted me, it was in a soft, easy voice. "Be a nicea boy. You be a gooda boy. Soma day you goa someplace." He was an educated man, even though he spoke broken English. Clean, he smelled clean. I remember that the most, like it was yesterday. I remember that this man smelled like he'd just stepped out of a shower.

Now, while Puzo had the Sicilian don down perfectly, he went haywire in other areas. I remember both the book and movie portrayed a sitdown of the dons. Everything was fine except for one thing—Don Corleone had an Irish *consigliere*. It could never happen. An outsider, a Jew, an Irishman, a black—no one but a Sicilian could sit in on a council of the dons. I can't

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understand why Puzo, a guy who wrote such a tremendous book, so easy to read, so interesting, and so close to being true on so many things, fouls up with that.

Nobody can be an adviser to a Sicilian if he isn't a Sicilian himself. They don't trust anyone who isn't of their blood, even if they raised him from birth. Not only would a don distrust him, the rest of the mob would, too. They'd say, "What are you doing with this Irish guy here. We don't want him here."

That's the way it was in Boston. I had a black man working for me called Walter. He'd saved my life, and I trusted him, but nobody else in the mob wanted any part of him. I was told point-blank, "We don't want this guy around."

"Why?" I asked. "He's trustworthy."
"He's black," they answered. "Get rid of him."

I'll say one thing. I didn't have to tell Walter. He understood. If I went into Giro's Restaurant, he'd go in, but he'd sit way over in a corner booth all by himself and never come near the table where I was sitting with the boys. He knew that they wouldn't allow me to bring him close enough to overhear the conversation. It wouldn't have mattered if he was Irish or Indian or black—he wasn't Italian, he wasn't Sicilian. So they wouldn't trust him. He ran a small loanshark racket for me, and he'd do other things for me, but not when it involved other mob members.

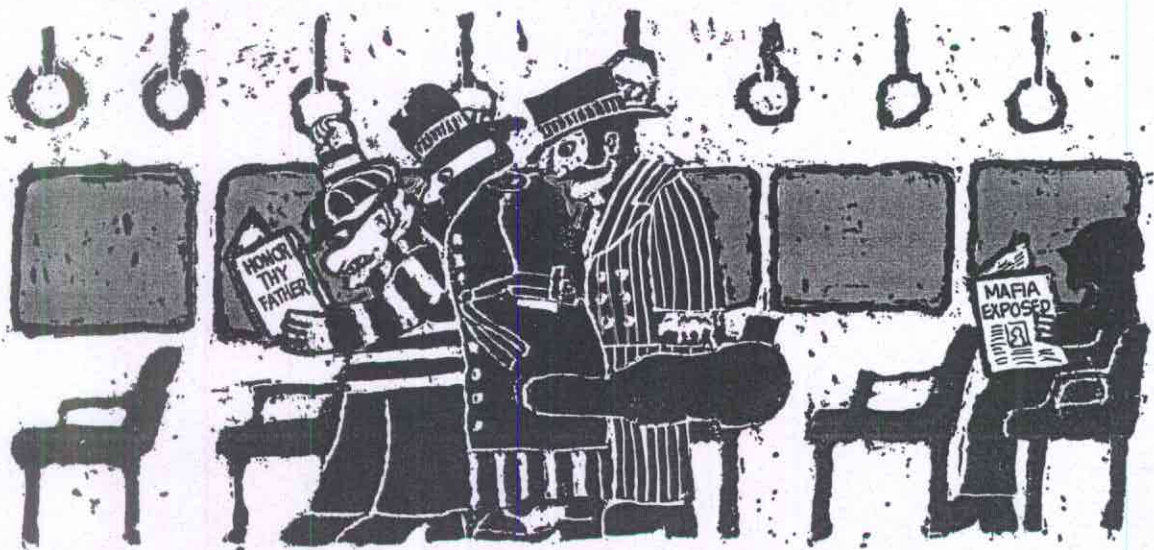
In that way, the title of Nicholas Gage's book—*The Mafia Is Not an Equal Opportunity Employer*—is perfect. Blacks, Irish, Jews, or Poles don't have equal status with Mafia members. They work for them, maybe sometimes they make more money than Mafia members, but unless they're Sicilian

they're not trusted in the inner circle.

Take Meyer Lansky, the leading Jew in organized crime. Hank Messick wrote about him in his book called *Lansky*. Now Messick has to be spellbound by Lansky. He thinks Lansky is some kind of god. Well, a guy like Lansky has a lot of power. A lot of mobsters admire him. I did myself, but from a different angle than Messick. I think of him as the great money mover, probably the greatest of all time. He had the foresight to organize Las Vegas and Cuba and Europe with casinos, then to skim off the top and wash the mob money through banks all over the world, where he has contacts.

The big trouble with Messick's book is that he makes Lansky into something he isn't—chairman of the board of organized crime. That's nonsense. The truth is that because Lansky's a Jew he can't sit in on a meeting of the Ruling Council. They don't trust him. That's why they had Jimmy Blue Eyes, a *caporegime* in Vito Genovese's family, with Lansky all the time. Jimmy Blue Eyes kept an eye on Lansky to make sure he didn't chisel, and he prevented mob punks from shaking down Lansky. Without Jimmy Blue Eyes, Lansky would have been like a toothpick standing in a forest. But Messick doesn't know that. He's even got Lansky belting Luciano in the old days. If Lansky ever laid a finger on Luciano before or after Luciano became a boss, he would have been whacked out on the spot. Big as he is, Lansky couldn't even order a guy like me around unless he got the permission of my boss. To do that, he had to go to Jimmy Blue Eyes, who would ask Patriarca if I could work with Lansky on something. Otherwise, I'd tell Lansky to take a flying leap.

When Messick overrates Lansky, it



THE GODFATHER



proves he really doesn't understand what the mob is all about. His book is all opinion—his opinion. He sure as hell never interviewed Lansky, yet he quotes conversations between Lansky and Luciano when they were young punks. How the hell can you make up quotes like that? The trouble is the public eats that stuff up and believes it.

In *The Mafia Is Not an Equal Opportunity Employer*, Nick Gage puts Lansky on the same pedestal that Messick does. In fact, that's one trouble I found with Gage's books—he's too repetitious. He's writing the same thing Messick is writing about Lansky and a dozen other guys are writing about other hoods. To be honest, the only thing I found in Gage's books that I hadn't read somewhere else was his description of a gambling junket he went on with the Eastern Sportsmen's Club. I know Eastern. In fact, I did some business with them while I was running

the Esquire Sportsman's Club and the Logan Sportsman's Club out of Boston. I'll give Gage credit—he had some brass to go on the junket, but he didn't know enough about what to look for, so he missed the real action. The action comes when the junket operator wines and dines the sucker, then knocks him out in a rigged card or dice game for \$50,000 or \$100,000 in a hotel suite away from the casino games—and then turns the victim himself into a loan-shark or a stock swindler.

Gage would never have gotten on any of my junkets unless he had the right banks to vouch for him, and even then I think I'd have found out about his real identity and bounced him. I only went after the high rollers with lots of dough in their bank accounts, and I checked each one out thoroughly. A good mob junketeer always does his homework properly. The Eastern Sportsmen's Club was strictly a fast-

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moving operation. They'd take 100 players to the Victoria Sporting Club or some other London club and pull in \$300,000. Hell, I'd take an average of thirty or forty high-rollers to the Colony Club in London, and they'd go for \$600,000, sometimes a million bucks—not to mention what I'd make in rigged games in hotel suites. If any of my players were as cheap as Gage was, as careful about spending his \$1,000 advance fee for chips as he said he was—it took him a whole week—he'd have been bounced on his ear. He couldn't understand why they kept telling him

"I remember watching Joe Valachi on TV testifying before that Senate committee back in 1963. It was at the headquarters of the New England mob in Providence, and at one point Raymond Patriarca, the don, said: 'This bastard's crazy. Who the hell is he?'"

they didn't have those special rare wines that he ordered in the club's restaurant in London. I guess he thought it was all phony. The truth is that they treated him that way because he was a small-potato man, a cheapskate. If I had walked into that joint with him—and I've been there—they would have run out and started squeezing the grapes for me. Any guy that's a big spender gets what he wants. If he nurses his \$1,000 in chips, he gets zip.

Frankly, I'm disappointed with books like Messick's and Gage's. For the most part, they're ancient history. They repeat what everyone and his brother has written about—the Mafia wars of the Thirties, Prohibition, the Gallo wars, the Purple Gang. What about the mob today? The only book where a writer really talked to the mob guy he's writing about is *Honor Thy Father* by Gay Talese.

Now there is one of the best written books I've ever read. Talese is a real artist with words. And he got close to the mob. He spent a lot of time talking to Bill Bonanno and other people in the Bonanno mob. I'd say he gave a pretty good picture of mob life, the strains on the family, the problems of survival. He did one thing I didn't like, though: he got too close to Bill Bonanno and because of that he didn't see Bill for what he really was. He made Bill out to be a tough guy, a loyal son, a courageous leader—as though Bill got into the

mob only to help out his poor old dad, Joe "Bananas." Let me tell you something: Joe Bananas don't need his kid's help to get out of a jam. He never did and never will. Where Talese went wrong—and don't take my word for it, ask any mob guy—is that he took a punk and glamorized him. I think Talese wrote what he believed was a true story. But in plain English, he was conned.

I remember Bill Bonanno. He was a little over six feet, a nice-looking kid. When I first met him, he reminded me of one of those college joes you see on the football field. But he was a jerk who didn't know what time of day it was unless someone shook him and said it's nine in the morning. He was irresponsible and had a loud, sassy mouth. Believe me, the only reason someone didn't whack him out years ago was out of respect for his old man. When I was in La Tuna Prison, a kid named Rinky, who'd been in jail with Bill for a while, told me that if it wasn't for the reputation of Joe Bananas, Bill would have been thrown from a prison tier a dozen times.

I was on the street when the so-called Banana Wars were taking place. The whole mob was buzzing about the way Joe Bananas had tried to whack out Carlo Gambino, Steve Magaddino, and Three-Finger Brown in order to put himself in the chair as the boss of bosses. So what Talese writes about is



pretty accurate, except maybe it wasn't the big gang war he makes it out to be. It was really small potatoes. Only about six or seven guys got hit. Hell, in Boston they once whacked out more than fifty in a gang war.

Talese doesn't really say it, but the reason why the mob didn't put Joe Bananas to sleep was because of the loyalty of a lot of his friends, people like Patriarca and Tameleo. Gambino and Magaddino wanted him hit, but the old Mustache Petes who started the mob with guys like Joe Bananas felt different. I remember the Boston mob sent Tameleo, Don Peppino, and Don Nene to Buffalo. I drove them. They met with Magaddino in a restaurant, and it was there that Joe Bananas's life was saved. Tameleo came out after the meeting and said to me: "I think Joe Bananas will be all right now. Everything is going to be okay." And it was. They banished Bananas as a boss, but they let him live.

Talese saw a dying mob in the Bonannos, and so now he thinks the whole Mafia is dying and unimportant. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. It's big, it makes billions of dollars each year, it still corrupts cops and politicians and judges, and it's getting bigger now that so many Sicilians are being smuggled into this country as reinforcement. Go to Chicago or Detroit or New Orleans and see how big they are. Or just look at New York. Carlo Gambino is more powerful than ever. He's doing what Joe Bananas couldn't. He's making the five New York crime families into one, and he'll boss them all.

Both Talese and Puzo fell into another trap in their books. They've got the dons grooming their kids to be in the rackets. That's just fantasy. No mobster—especially a boss—wants his kids to follow in his footsteps. To tell the truth, of all the mob people I knew, I can think of only two whose kids got involved, Bill Bonanno and Anthony Zerilli, the son of old Joe Zerilli, the boss of Detroit. And you can bet they never wanted it to happen, it just did. Even Lansky has tried to keep his two kids on the straight and narrow. Look at Gambino or Luchese. Their kids are in legitimate businesses. Sure, their old man helped them get set up. What father wouldn't? But they're not made members of the mob, and that's a fact. I got sons of my own. I'd break my kids' legs rather than see them involved with the mob. I'd like to see them go to college and become, say, attorneys—anything, really, so long as it's straight and on the up. So when Puzo pictures the sons of Corleone taking over his mob with his approval, he's dead wrong.

I don't know how close Talese got to Joe Bananas, but he was right about one piece of advice that Joe gave his

son—never let anyone know how you feel. That's a story I had pounded into my head by Tameleo day after day, and it's a lesson he learned from Bananas. In his younger days Tameleo used to lose his temper a lot, and Bananas pulled him aside one day and gave him a little lecture. "Don't ever forget," Bananas told him, "that when you get mad at a guy, smile at him, look him right in the eye, walk over and pat him on the shoulder. Keep patting him there. Eventually you're going to look down and see a big hole where you were patting him." What he meant was that if you keep on your enemy's good side, he's going to trust you like a brother and then you can whack him out whenever you feel like it.

I met Bananas a couple of times, first at the old Red Devil Restaurant in New York with Tameleo and later at the Dream Bar in Miami. I was very impressed with him. He was a very stern man, good-looking, well-built, with hard features. He had those snake eyes—it's a trait of all the old Mustache Petes—eyes that can look right through you. He was a tough piece of work.

Books like Talese's and Puzo's, even Maas's, give the public at least a half-way decent picture of mob life. I think Puzo and Talese got caught up in the excitement and made heroes out of bums, and that's wrong. Maas plays it pretty straight, but he doesn't have the style that gets you interested the way Puzo and Talese do.

Personally, I wish more writers would get close to mob guys and find out what they're really like, what they really do, before they sit down and write books about them. Talese did it. I think Puzo did. It's the only way they could know some of the things they write about. I realize it isn't easy. Mob guys don't like writers or reporters. The writers may get hurt trying to get too close. But if more would really do it, then the public might stop thinking about the Mafia like it was Robin Hood and his Merrie Men.

Not that mobsters are all bad. There are plenty of good things about them the public might be interested in. For instance, does the public know whether mob guys are patriotic or not? The truth is, most are. We don't think about undermining the government. We corrupt politicians, but that's only so we can do business. We cheat on taxes, but let's face it, there isn't a damn business executive who doesn't. If you want to know the truth, I think everyone's entitled to swindle a little on taxes because they're too high and the politicians spend like drunken sailors on all their pet deals to help out their buddies anyhow.

Mob people aren't stupid. We know that none of us could get away with

the things we get away with in some other country. It's a land of opportunity for us. Don't forget, most of us grew up with holes in our shoes. What do you think would happen to me or Lansky or any other mob guy in Russia, or Haiti, or Brazil, or some European country? It would be, empty your pockets, stand up against the wall, and boom—that's the end of it. This is the greatest country in the world—particularly for a mob guy. You are a free man. As bad as your reputation may be, you'll normally get a fair trial. That doesn't happen in a lot of countries.

I was against a guy like that George McGovern, and I'll bet most mob guys were, too. Not that I love Nixon. But any guy who wants to give amnesty to a bunch of draft dodgers, to a bunch of cowards who ran away, shouldn't be President. I don't want to see my sons go to war. It would rip my heart out to see them go. But if they get their notices, I'll drive them to the draft board center. Why? They owe it to their country. It's as simple as that.

Another thing I'd like to see is writers paying more attention to the rackets that mob people operate, instead of always talking about the murders they're behind. Anyone can write about a bunch of gangland murders. All you have to do is read a police file. But how about the millions that are swindled in stocks, and how big corporations are taken over, and how the mob washes its money through corrupt bankers? What about how a mob guy with a ninth-grade education outwits big, educated business executives—the larceny that's in a lot of millionaires that makes them easy game for a mob swindler?

That kind of information is interesting, and it also does the public some good. There is one thing that all these books and movies and newspaper articles have already done: they've put heat on the Mafia, made it more visible. A few years ago we were all stealing Wall Street blind and nobody was doing much about it. Then there was a lot of publicity about the mob, and guys like myself were busted one after another. Now it isn't so easy to swipe millions in stocks and use them for collateral to take over companies. People are beginning to wise up. So that's a plus.

I just hope that people who write about the Mafia will wise up more. I hope they start pinning down what the mob is doing now, not what it did twenty or thirty years ago. If they do that, if they wake the public up and stop making the mob look like it's romantic and exciting and a treasure house of easy riches, maybe then they'll contribute something. Otherwise, they're only picking the public's pocket just like the mob does. □