

## investigations

# Roselli's Body 'Surfaces'

A RAID on the refrigerator had taken 67-year-old Sam "Momo" Giancana from his bed to the basement kitchen of his sprawling, suburban Chicago home on the night of June 19, 1975.

The balding, once-handsome Giancana had been recovering — slowly — from major surgery, and apparently had been well protected in the fortress-like house; a live-in caretaker was upstairs, and the lower floor was guarded from unwarranted entry by a steel, fire-proof door, with peephole for scrutinizing callers.

Giancana, retired from his position as powerful Chicago gangland boss, presumably had been untouchable, except by the unreckoning hand of ill health. Yet police, summoned to his house the next day, found him face-up, in a pool of blood, with a cluster of .22 calibre bullet wounds around and about his mouth.

Authorities surmised that the placement of the bullets was a subtle reference to Giancana's recent testimony before a federal grand jury on alleged mob investments in Mexico and other foreign countries, though the style of the slaying did not conform strictly to Mafia practices. Giancana had been forced to end his years-long exile in Mexico, and reputedly had been trying to muscle his way back into the Chicago-area gambling rackets.

He had been scheduled to appear again before a Senate intelligence committee only days after his murder — a deed whose perpetrator authorities had been unable to identify.

Five days after Giancana's death, John Roselli — identified in FBI files as "a top Mafia figure" — testified before a Senate Intelligence Committee panel that he and "Momo" had been asked by the CIA to join in a plot to poison Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in 1961. Roselli said he had accepted the offer, though refusing, out of "patriotism," the \$100,000 that accompanied the request.

His refusal was scoffed at,

### *He was just a 'retired' man on Social Security*

later, by those who recalled the Mafia's unhappiness at losing their lucrative gambling operations when Castro took over Cuba.

The Roselli testimony was backed up in part by Robert Maheu, onetime top aide to the late billionaire, Howard Hughes. Maheu told reporters that, at the request of CIA official James O'Connell, he had contacted the two mobsters as ideal men for the job, because of their prior contacts in Cuba in pre-Castro years.

The poison plot, Maheu said, had been concocted to coincide with the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of April, 1961 — a caper he said was "always subject to a 'go' signal which, to my knowledge, never came."

Last week John Roselli's remains were identified as those found in a 55-gallon oil drum, wrapped in heavy chains, floated to the surface by gases from the decomposing body and washed by currents into Dumbfoundling Bay, Fla.

Two fishermen plying the waters — an arm of Biscayne Bay, between North Miami and Miami Beach — had spotted the drum, and, noting human limbs through holes chopped in the barrel (presumably so it would sink), had called police. Preliminary autopsy work indicated the 70-year-old Roselli had suffered "a circular wound on the lower abdomen," and had died of asphyxiation.

He had been missing since July 28, when he had put his golf clubs into the trunk of his silver-colored, 1975 Chevrolet Impala and left his sister's Plantation home in Broward county. His car was found later at Miami International Airport, and the body still wore the golf clothes in which he had left.

Washington attorney Leslie Scherr, a Roselli associate who had accompanied him to Senate committee appearances shortly after Giancana's death



AP Wirephoto

ROSELLI

and again last spring, described Roselli as a "retired, 71-year-old man living on Social Security, with an interest in a Las Vegas gift shop (at the Frontier Hotel). I can't see why anybody would want to bother him."

Roselli's long association with reputed gangland connections had included a stint in Las Vegas in the 1950s. Allegedly, he had been entrusted to run the mob's rackets in the Nevada outpost, though under supervision from Chicago.

In the early part of the next decade, he had been stationed in Los Angeles, and was there when the Castro takeover of Cuba eliminated lucrative interests in gambling and other crimes.

In 1967, the Immigration and Naturalization Service had discovered that Roselli's U.S. citizenship contained a flaw: He had been born in Italy, had come to this country as a child, and somewhere along the line, had had birth records falsified to indicate his supposed origin in this country.



AP Wirephoto

GIANCANA

He was indicted both for violating the alien registration law and also for interstate gambling.

He had been convicted in Los Angeles the following year, and was ordered deported to Italy in January, 1975. The process of removing him from the country came to a pause when he began testifying before the Senate committee and federal grand jury.

Because Roselli had been "still under the protection of the (Senate) committee," Scherr said, he had notified Senator Howard Baker (Rep-Tenn.), a member of the now-defunct committee, a week before the discovery of the grisly oil drum. Baker in turn had called Senator Daniel K. Inouye (Dem-Hawaii), chairman of the new, permanent Senate Intelligence Committee.

Inouye, informed of the find, said it was too early to determine whether a congressional investigation would be initiated regarding the murder.