

Marcello's Life: Twenty Years of Ups and Downs

By DALE CURRY

After 20 years of attempts to oust Carlos Marcello from the United States, the government still is probably years away from actual deportation if, in fact, it ever comes.

Eleven years ago, the New Orleans news media was reporting an end to a nine-year battle by the federal government to rid Jefferson Parish of rackets figure Carlos Marcello.

Marcello was deported to Guatemala, safely away from his New Orleans area territory where the alleged "Godfather" of illicit gambling activities based his operations.

TWO MONTHS later Marcello was back.

At age 62, the battle still wages for Marcello and yesterday he lost another round.

U.S. District Judge Charles Richey of Washington, D.C., ruled that Marcello must make application for a passport to Italy, the birthplace of his parents.

To the reading public, the hodgepodge of court activity surrounding Marcello's possible ouster is, to say the least, confusing.

TO THE IMAGINATIVE mind, the Marcello history is as colorful as it is confusing.

There are many sympathizers on the streets, driving taxi cabs or in professional circles, who say, "Why don't they leave him alone, anyway? If they can't get him on any-

thing worthwhile, maybe he's not all that bad."

These comments stem from the fact that his only imprisonment over a couple of decades resulted from the slugging of an FBI agent at the airport, not the alleged gambling connections for which he is famous. And, the fact that his only deportation — to Guatemala in 1961 — failed to hold up.

ON THE OTHER hand, Marcello obviously is more unpopular than not since his constant appearance before investigating committees of all he is branded as a Mafia mobster, which can hardly be interpreted as anything good by the reading public.

Explanation of Marcello's current deportation situation necessitates some background.

Born in Tunis, North Africa, Marcello was brought as a child by Italian-born parents to the United States.

IN 1961, immigration authorities placed Marcello on a plane to Guatemala, where a second record of his birth was found. Deportation was based on a 1939 conviction as a big-time trafficker in marijuana.

Marcello claimed he was "kidnapped" and that the Guatemalan birth record was a forgery.

He was deported from Guatemala and during a month's interval before slipping back

into the United States, he shuffled back and forth between three Latin American countries — Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

DURING THE interval, Marcello claimed he was forced to walk 17 miles through mountains, falling several times and breaking two ribs, that he was robbed by bandits and was refused admittance to several countries.

The legality of his re-entry to the United States has remained in question since. Most court action has been halted during the years, pending the outcome of criminal cases against him.

According to Marcello's attorney, Jack Wasserman of Washington, Italy is the only country which might accept Marcello today.

"I KNOW OF no other country that will accept him," Wasserman said.

Whether Italy will accept him is subject to Marcello's application for acceptance.

Yesterday's order to make such application is still subject to appeals to the U.S. Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Wasserman said he will definitely exhaust all possible appeals.

Meanwhile, Marcello continues to testify in a series of hearings before U.S. Immigration Special Inquiry Officer William Fliegelman, whose job it is to decide

whether Marcello should be deported.

MARCELLO IS attempting to prove he spent the last 10 years in good moral character.

Should Fliegelman rule against him, he could be deported only if another country will accept him.

In addition Fliegelman ruling is subject to appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court.

"I would estimate the appeals open to us would take a matter of years," Wasserman stated.

He also noted that "the mere fact that he signs it (an Italian passport) doesn't mean that Italy will accept him."

As the court battles wage, Marcello grows older.

SOME VETERAN Marcello reporters have recently noted a relaxation on his part.

To and from the courtrooms he smiles, chats and is generally at ease. In very recent years, his dashes to courthouse elevators in attempts to avoid the press were accompanied by stark silence and frowns.

It would appear that Marcello has softened or perhaps grown calloused to the ups and downs of his controversial life. For Marcello, it is just as well for a final chapter in Marcello's story is no closer than ever.