

The Anatomy of A Fix That Failed



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NEW ORLEANS Mafia king Carlos Marcello once tried to get Representative John Dowdy (Dem.-Texas), to fix his immigration case for him. Dowdy refused to intervene.

The anatomy of the fix that failed, however, remains an intriguing story of gangland's ways in Washington. The irrepressible Dowdy, who was recently convicted for taking a \$25,000 bribe in an unrelated case, recalls the tale with wry humor:

"If I'd been willing to help him and if I'd been so inclined, I guess I could have gotten most anything I wanted," he opined from his home in Athens, Tex.

The scheme was hatched six years ago. Marcello was being hounded by federal immigration agents to leave the United States.

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ONLY CONGRESS, he decided, could give him permanent status. To handle his congressional liaison, the racket boss selected lobbyist Jimmy Day of Houston and Washington, D.C.

As Day recalls it, he met Marcello at the Town and Country Motel in New Orleans. The Mafia don poured out his tale of federal harassment and his wish to spend his last days in New Orleans where he could be happy ever after amid his alleged vice and gambling operations.

Day's soft Texas heart quickly melted, he recalls, and in his head danced

thoughts of a sugar-plum fee of \$25,000 if he could push through a bill to keep Marcello in the United States.

"I never mention a figure," Day told us, "until I am successful . . . there was no need to mention it, but I planned to get a fee just like I would on anyone else . . . \$25,000 including expenses."

Next time he was in Washington, Day dropped in on his good friend, congressman Dowdy. Day was a contributor to Dowdy's campaigns.

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DAY UNFOLDED the story of Marcello's woes to the sympathetic Dowdy, who as a senior member of the House Judiciary Committee had considerable power over what private immigration bills get through Congress.

The Texas congressman promised to consider the request for friendship's sake; both Day and Dowdy insist no talk of money sullied the conversation between these two old cronies.

A few days later, Dowdy called Day to say he couldn't help out the New Orleans mobster. "I told him it was something I couldn't have anything to do with," recalled Dowdy. "When I checked into it, I found out what he (Marcello) had done. I said I couldn't do it."

Day, his hopes of a fat fee dead, relayed the sad word to Marcello. The gangster gave up his hope of a quick congressional solution to his immigration problem and is still battling the case in the courts.