

This Week in
GANG LAND
 The Online Column

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By Jerry Capeci

Bad To Worse For Peter Gotti



It's been a hell of a month for Peter Gotti.

His longtime paramour, who had remained anonymous despite her daily attendance at his racketeering trial last year, publicly championed her love for him, then committed suicide after he dressed her down for causing such a big stir.

His angry wife threw a monkey wrench into his divorce plans and asked a Brooklyn Federal Court judge to lock him up and throw away the key as punishment for labor racketeering on the Brooklyn waterfront.

The [judge](#) gave the 64-year-old convicted mob boss nine years and four months. In Manhattan, more crimes – construction industry extortion and plotting to kill turncoat gangster Salvatore ([Sammy Bull](#)) Gravano – now threaten to send him away for life.



What's more, while an underling codefendant in the Manhattan case, capo Louis ([Big Lou](#)) Vallario, who was charged with taking part in a 1989 murder for

then-high-flying Dapper Don John Gotti, just wangled a sweet plea deal, sources say the feds intend to play hardball with Peter and four other defendants.

“We’re really not interested in resuming plea discussions with any of the remaining defendants; we’re preparing for trial,” one member of the prosecution team told Gang Land yesterday.

[Vallario](#), (left) whose sentencing guidelines called for 24 to 30 years, faces a maximum of 13 years, according to an agreement worked out last week by defense lawyer James DiPietro and federal prosecutors under U.S. Attorney David Kelley. Vallario, 62, should be released in nine years.

In addition, a recent move by the former schlepalong garbage man to get out from under a dark prejudicial cloud created by a long history of certified violence by his late brother – John ordered two murders that three of Peter’s codefendants allegedly committed in 1989 and 1990 – went nowhere.

Citing what his lawyers said were “unique” circumstances, Gotti asked that he be tried separately from the three wiseguys. Peter is accused of taking part in construction industry extortion with them, but they will also be on trial for carrying out murders for John Gotti that Peter is not charged with, and has never been associated with.

“No rational jury will be able to properly parse such evidence,” say lawyers Joseph Bondy and Joseph Di Benedetto. Overcoming his brother’s “judicially noticeable notoriety” as Mafia boss, is hard enough, they say. To saddle Peter with “multiple murders allegedly ordered by John Gotti ...rules out any possibility of a fair trial.”

Manhattan Judge Richard Conway Casey disagreed, however, and the jurist seems determined to move the case to trial in five weeks. Despite disqualifications of two defense lawyers in the case in the last two weeks, trial is still set for June 1.

Last week, Casey called an attorney who has represented organized crime figures, Jerry D. Tritz, and had him waiting in court even before he bounced lawyer Valerie Amsterdam from the case after her indictment for fraud and other charges. Casey appointed Tritz to represent her client, mobster Thomas (Huck) Carbonaro, (right) with instructions to report back by next week if he couldn’t be ready for trial by June 1.



A week earlier, Casey appointed lawyer Richard F.X. Guay to replace lawyer Michael Rosen as attorney for defendant Edward [Garafola](#), who like Carbonaro, is charged with conspiring with Peter Gotti to kill Gravano three years ago.



Carbonaro, 56, Garafola, 66, (left) and soldier Frank (Frankie Fapp) Fappiano, 41, are charged in the killing of contractor Edward Garofalo in 1990. Garafola, a relative of the slain Garofalo, and Fappiano, are also charged with the 1989 murder of Fred Weiss, the slaying for which Vallario pleaded guilty to last week.

Carbonaro and the fifth defendant, mob associate John Matera, 33, are charged in the 1998 murder of Frank Hydell, a mob associate suspected of giving information to authorities about the beating death of a mob connected union official a year earlier.

Chickie's In The Picture

At first glance, it looks like Colombo soldier Vincent (Chickie) DeMartino and his friends had a rollicking good time at his sister Doreen's wedding reception in 1995.

A closer look however, reveals that DeMartino appears a bit one-dimensional and washed out in the photo with late Colombo capo William (Wild Bill) Cutolo, his son Bill Jr. and other wedding guests.



DeMartino was in prison at the time – a gun rap stemming from the bloody 1991-'93 Colombo war – so his relatives and friends brought along a life-size cardboard cutout like the ones of celebrities you might see at fun houses on the boardwalk in Coney Island.

Despite DeMartino's incarceration, 1995 was Happy Days for the crime family. The war was over, and in December 1994, Wild Bill, Chickie and five other members of Cutolo's crew were acquitted of murder and racketeering charges stemming from the war.

The photo, attesting to crime family ties among DeMartino, the Cutolos and other family wiseguys and associates, was placed into evidence this week at the trial



of DeMartino, 48, and associate Giovanni (John the Barber) Florida, 28. They are charged with the attempted rubout of Colombo soldier Joseph (Joe Campy) [Campanella](#) on July 16, 2001.

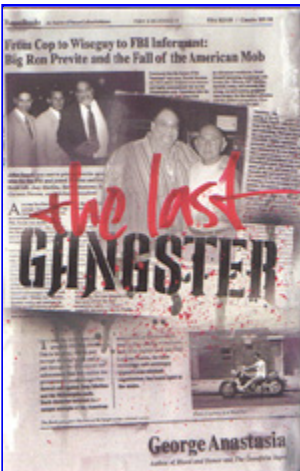
In his debut as a prosecution witness, Campanella (left) described how he heard [DeMartino](#), (right) a passenger in a green van driven by Florida, call out his name and shoot him, hitting him in the arm and foot, as he walked along West 32d Street in Coney Island after sunning himself at the beach.



Under questioning by defense lawyers James LaRossa and Jeffrey Lichtman, Campanella testified that he believed that DeMartino was involved in the 1999 "kidnapping and murder" of Cutolo, a close friend and ally of Joe Campy's, but he denied that he falsely identified DeMartino as the gunman because of a longstanding hatred for him.

Any personal animus Joe Campy had for Chickie, he testified, he developed "after he came to kill me."

The Last Gangster



Award-winning Philadelphia crime reporter George Anastasia serves up a fascinating insider's account of what he calls "the most dysfunctional mob family in America" in his latest book, ["The Last Gangster."](#) The book revolves around the life and times of Big Ron Previte, a 6-foot, 300-pound capo who was a corrupt Philly cop in an earlier life .

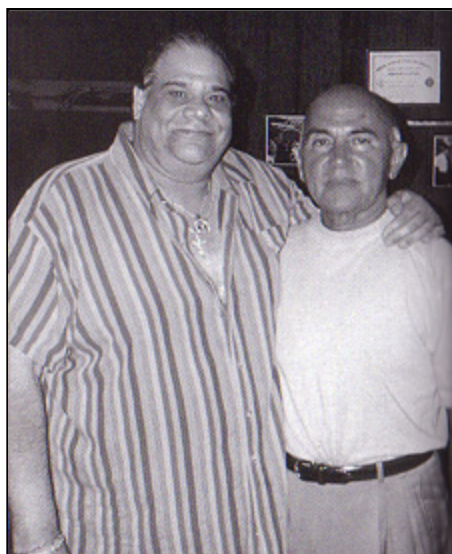
Anastasia paints Previte as an "underworld mercenary" whose only loyalty was to the person he saw staring back at him in the mirror each morning. Even as he rose the ladder from mob associate to soldier to capo, Previte kept an "insurance policy" – his agreement to work as an informer for law enforcement.

By 1997 he had upped the stakes, strapping on a body wire and recording conversations for the FBI for two years. Those discussions with crime family leaders like Ralph Natale (right) and Skinny Joey Merlino were the basis for a big racketeering case and the backdrop for "The Last Gangster."

Natale is described as a mob boss who "talked a better game than he played."

"He thought he was Don Corleone," Anastasia writes, "but he was really Uncle Junior."

Merlino is depicted as a younger and hipper John Gotti, a South Philadelphia celebrity gangster who epitomized the MTV generation of the mob.



Jerry Capeci

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