20 — DAILY EVENING ITEM, Lynn, Mass., Saturday, June 17, 1989

Botched mob hit triggered manhunt

■ FROM PAGE ONE

The weapon was a Russian-made AK-47 assault rifle and live bullets and spent .223 caliber shell casings were found at the scene, sources said.

Salemme, clutching his stomach, ran around the corner to a Papa Gino's where he calmly walked into the pizza parlor and toward the men's room, witnesses said. Minutes later, he emerged and took a seat by the door, leaving no trail of blood. A waitress called the police.

"He was very calm. He looked like a man who had been shot before," she said.

By noon, the reputed gangland leader was undergoing surgery at AtlantiCare Medical Center. Dr. Hubert Johnson found two bullets and three wounds — chest, stomach and lower leg. One bullet entered his chest near the heart and exited his stomach.

The late-morning gunplay sent bullets ringing over the crowded parking lot, shattering car windows and penetrating the pancake house walls where, a slug sliced through a padded bench in the lobby.

A waitress yelled to the customers to hit the deck. Mothers pulled children to the floor and elderly customers scrambled for cover. At least 40 people were inside, waitresses said.

When police arrived, Salemme's beige BMW 325i was still parked facing Route 1. Two cardboard boxes in the back seat remained unopened. Investigators were still speculating whether the contents of those boxes are linked to the shooting.

Police said the gunmen drove wildly through the parking lot of the adjacent Service Merchandise catalog store and out onto Route 1. The car was abandoned with a flat tire in a parking lot next to The Palace nightclub less then a mile away.

Within a half hour, state police dogs were sniffing the woods behind The Palace and detectives were knocking on doors of neighboring homes. The blue Dodge had been stolen early yesterday from Alamo Rental Car at Logan International Airport.

Law enforcement sources said Salemme was marked for death by a jealous Ferrara because, in the past year, Salemme had been given the blessing and go-ahead by Patriarca to take over Boston's syndicate.

Salemme was spotted recently by law enforcement authorities visiting Patriarca in Rhode Island and was also seen at underworld hangouts in Boston's North End, East Boston's Maverick Square, and in Revere.

Sixteen months ago, Salemme was released from prison after serving 15 years for the attempted murder of a lawyer who was then defending mob turncoat and notorious hitman Joseph Barboza Baron.

Barboza, formerly of Swampscott, incurred the mob's wrath when he testified about underworld activities before the United States Senate in 1968. His words put Patriarca's father, the late Raymond L.S. Patriarca, behind bars for tax evasion. As it turned out, Barboza had written his own death sentence.

On Jan. 30, 1968, Salemme, then of Everett, planted a dynamite bomb in a car owned by Barboza's attorney, John E. Fitzgerald Jr., also of Everett. The explosion tore off a piece of Fitzgerald's leg and sent a message to other anti-organized crime attorneys.

Salemme went underground after the bombing but was captured by the FBI in 1972. Convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 30 years, he was released after 15 because of good conduct. He was held at prisons in Walpole, Concord and Lancaster, but he never talked. The Patriarca's were indebted, sources said.

Barboza went into the Witness Protection Program after testifying to the Senate, but he was slain in San Francisco in 1976, allegedly by Russo, 57, whom the FBI has listed as equal in rank to Ferrara and Salemme.

The Barboza hit allegedly was orchestrated by Ilario M.A. Zannino of Swampscott, now imprisoned for racketeering. At his trial in federal court two years ago, Zannino described the hit in a secretly-recorded FBI tape.

The death of Barboza supposedly put Zannino and Russo in good standing with both Patriarcas, and helped give rise to Salemme who was not only Zannino's close associate but the man who blew up Fitzgerald's car.

That relationship apparently has soured because Russo is suspected of plotting the Patriarca's overthrow, sources said. Grasso, Patriarca's No. 2 man, was found floating in the river near Weathersfield, Conn., approximately 20 miles south of Hartford. Connecticut police received a tip and dragged the water until the body was found at 5 p.m., a bullet lodged in the back of the head.

Since the imprisonment of Angiulo and his brothers, a Salemme associate — Charles Quintana, 73, of Revere — allegedly has assumed the important role of counselor to Patriarca. This, too, reportedly has helped Salemme move closer to the mob's center of power.

Salemme's brother, John J. "Jackie" Salemme, visited Lynn hospital last night. He has been identified as an Angiulo associate and in 1983 stood trial for the murder of an Angiulo enemy, convicted cocaine dealer George A. Pappas of Braintree. Pappas was shot to death inside a restaurant in Boston's Chinatown.

State Police K-9 specialist Cleve Coats charges his dog with scent of suspects who abandoned stolen vehicle off Route 99 near the Melrose/Saugus line.

Ferrara ■ FROM PAGE ONE

The nickname "Vinnie the Nip" stuck to Ferrara during a mini-war which plagued the Italian neighborhood in the late '70s when he was 29. At the time, Ferrara wore flashy clothes and admirers compared him to John Travolta whose acting career was skyrocketing. A few even called him "the elegant enforcer."

Ferrara's ascension through the ranks of La Cosa Nostra was preceded by his reputation for violence, which, according to Boston Police Det. William Dwyer, included word on the street he would "blow away any police officer that tried to stop him."

Dwyer's assessment is contained in Suffolk Superior Court documents left behind by Ferrara's attempt to beat an arrest for illegally carrying a handgun. Couched in legalize, a prosecutor's affidavit says Ferrara "demonstrates antagonism toward law enforcement personnel."

Fresh out of Boston College in 1971 with a degree in business administration, Ferrara had two key ingredients which would, during the course of the next seven years, bring him to the attention of Boston's underworld recruiters — namely, brains, and a willingness to take on assignments requiring violence.

The North End blood bath was a stepping stone and netted Ferrara his first and only jail sentence — a year in the Deer Island House of Correction. On the night of August 28, 1978, Ferrara was cruising the streets looking to stop the young toughs of his generation who were ripping off the businesses and disrupting the way of life established by the elders.

The young studs of Endicott Street, led by Ferrara, were doing battle with those of Fleet Street, and the Endicott Street gang was soon under investigation for eight murders.

The Fleet Street guys were a bunch of hoodlums doing angel dust, and they were violating certain traditional lines," said a lawman who, for his own protection, asked to remain anonymous. "They were doing housebreaks, ripping off the bookies, the card games, and in general stealing from their own. When the powers that be tried to tell them to stop, they just laughed and told them what they could do."

Ferrara supposedly was asked to resolve the situation.

"The elders tried again and again to get these guys to stop what they were doing. Then the elders started making arrangements to knock them off," the lawman said.

Among the first to die were Angelo "Jack" DiFronzo, ringleader of the Fleet Street gang, and his brother, Joseph.

"Jack stuck up an Angiulo card game," the lawman recalled. "The knew it was him and they told him, 'Don't do it.' The next night they asked him to play cards with them. Like a fool he showed up and they put a bullet in his head."

Next, a contract went out on Joseph DeFronzo. "There were three attempts to kill Joey. They stabbed him, shot him, and finally gunned him down because he threatened to retaliate. Eventually they killed them all off. The older guys eliminated the younger hoodlums," the lawman recalled.

Anthony "Dapper" Corlito soon joined the list of dead, and before the guns went silent, two of Ferrara's associates — Vincent Federico and Thomas Casale were charged with murder.

Ferrara was eager to impress Angiulo, primarily because Angiulo had expressed interest in the young man as a potential manager of the syndicate's legitimate businesses, sources told The Item.

The night Ferrara was arrested in 1978, a snitch told two Boston police detectives — Dwyer and his partner, Det. Mark Molloy that Ferrara was carrying a Saturday night special. The cops called it a snubbie because of its short barrel.

"I just saw Vinnie the Nip and he's got a gun on him," the informant said, based on a statement of facts outlined in Ferrara's appeal of the conviction.

The detectives searched the North End and soon spotted Ferrara driving along North Washington Street toward Charlestown —

"The police knew that Ferrara was the main trigger guy," one investigator recalled. "Him and Casale."

Dwyer radioed for assistance and sounded the siren. He noticed Ferrara drop his left shoulder as if to reach toward the floor of the car, which had been favored over on the Charlestown Bridge.

Dwyer pulled his service revolver and ordered Ferrara to place his hands on the steering wheel. Patrolmen Anthony Pezzulo and Patrick McDonough arrived as back-up. Pezzulo rousted Ferrara from the car. Dwyer patted him down and found an empty holster inside his belt. Then Pezzulo saw the butt end of a .38 caliber snub-nosed revolver protruding from beneath the front seat. It was loaded. Ferrara didn't have a permit. He was arrested on the spot.

The following April, Ferrara attempted to suppress the evidence, arguing the cops had violated his Constitutional rights But a judge disagreed and Ferrara was convicted of illegal weapons possession.

"They tried to move mountains in that case," said an attorney who took part in the proceedings. "That case went all the way to the state Supreme Court, but he did the year in Deer Island anyway.

Attorney Sharon D. Meyers of Lynn was then an appellate lawyer for the Suffolk County district attorney's office. She and Assistant District Attorney Robert J. McKenna Jr. penned the argument that ensured Ferrara would go to jail.

Ferrara's wife and three daughters were then living in Nashua, N.H. Upon his release, he rejoined the gaggle of "rising star" underworld figures in the North End. As often happens in such circles, the stint behind bars earned him a special status and boosted him up the ladder of organized criminals.

But times have changed since Angiulo's conviction, as has Ferrara's lifestyle. With Angiulo gone, Ferrara moved to take over the well-structured sports betting and loan sharking network, according to law enforcement sources. They said he hoped to consolidate power as boss of Boston and increase his share of the profits by "shaking down" the book makers. Ferrara handled the talks himself, they said. He was even seen at Brother's Deli on Market Street in Lynn, holding morning conferences near the water cooler with suspected bookies.

The shake downs were a major mistake because they made enemies and brought the attention of the law, The Item was told.

Other changes became evident. Ferrara had traded his natty clothes and high profile for a low-key existence. He was frequently seen in a sweatsuit visiting the North End, or hanging around in Duxbury and Revere, where he'd rented half a duplex at 19 Herman St.

Revere, however, was under the FBI's magnifying glass. A favorite haunt — Fasad's nightclub in Revere — had been closed after federal agents busted the place for loan sharking in 1987. Several close associates had been indicted as a result. By then, Ferrara's wife and children were gone, fallout from a divorce.

The Fasad's case brought news that the FBI had wire-tapped two other Ferrara hangouts — Heller's Cafe in Chelsea, and Vanessa's Italian Food Shoppe in Boston's Prudential Center. Although girlfriends were still in the picture, everyone had become suspect since Ferrara learned an associate was secretly taping his conversations for the FBI.

A few months ago, it became clear that Daniel Forte, former manager of Peabody's Golden Banana strip joint, had turned state's evidence and strapped a tape recorder to his body. The heat on Ferrara was turned up, and law enforcement sources are convinced he has been removed from the position of ranking mafioso in Boston.

On the street, rumors that Ferrara will soon be indicted for racketeering are running rampant. Word is, the FBI wants him out of the game. Russo, another reputed underworld lieutenant or capo regime, is expected to be indicted along with Ferrara.

When Angiulo went to jail, the mob scrambled to reorganize. Ferrara and Russo were considered rivals for the throne. Russo was well respected since he is suspected of having murdered notorious Mafia hitman Joseph Barboza Baron.

Barboza, formerly of Swampscott, testified in 1968 before a congressional subcommittee and his statements were enough to put Raymond L.S. Patriarca of Rhode Island briefly behind bars. The late Patriarca was then head all organized crime in New England, according to the FBI, and Russo was held in high esteem for killing him a few years later.

As Barboza testified, another Mafia soldier was also gaining recognition. Salemme had been accused of planting a bomb in Everett attorney John E. Fitzgerald's car. Fitzgerald was representing Barboza and the blast tore away a part of his leg.

Salemme fled, then went to prison in 1972. He was released 16 months ago and a handful of investigators believe he will assume the role of underboss, with the blessing of the late Patriarca's son, Raymond Patriarca Jr.

Others aren't so certain. They say Salemme has nutured his underworld contacts while in prison, but it's questionable whether he could consolidate enough force to become underboss in the year since his release.

State troopers Michael Conti, Cleve Coats and Saugus Patrolman Alfred Harris follow the scent-tracking dog along a sidewalk.

Bullets litter the parking lot of The Palace nightclub near the suspects' abandoned vehicle.