

Revere man found slain in trunk of his car

REVERE — The body of a reputed organized crime figure was found yesterday in the trunk of his car, apparently bludgeoned and stabbed to death.

Revere police Detective Lt. William Gannon said that the body of Robert A. Donati, 50, of Revere, was found in his Cadillac on Savage Street in Revere by an officer on routine patrol about 1:25 a.m.

Donati was a reputed associate of Vincent Ferrara, who is awaiting trial in Boston on federal racketeering charges.

Ferrara's codefendants include Raymond (Junior) Patriarca, the alleged former boss of the Patriarca Mafia family, and alleged underboss Joseph (J.R.) Russo.

Ferrara is an associate of Russo and a contender with Francis (Cadillac Frank) Salemme for the top spot in the Mafia family that has dominated the New England underworld for 45 years. Donati is said to have been aligned with the Russo-Ferrara faction against Salemme.

Gannon said police were called to Donati's Mountain Avenue home in Revere shortly after 2 p.m. Saturday. There they found a pool of blood and brain tissue on his porch.

"At this point we have no suspects and no witnesses, although we are following a couple of leads. Unfortunately, in this kind of case, not too many witnesses come forward," said Gannon.

Russo, according to testimony at an organized crime trial in Connecticut earlier this year, ordered a "hit" on Salemme in June 1989. The attempted assassination of Salemme, outside a Saugus restaurant, was botched.

Donati, meanwhile, was said to be making collections from bookmakers and loan-sharks on Ferrara's behalf. Originally from East Boston, Donati had a lengthy criminal record involving arson, armed robberies and the theft of securities from the Boston Stock Exchange.

Revere police confirmed he was well known to them.

Donati is credited with helping save the life of a corrections officer at MCI-Norfolk on the night of March 6, 1975. On that night an inmate shot and wounded two guards. Donati, according to reports from other inmates and prison officials, risked his life to save one of the wounded guards.

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