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High tide - 6:34 a.m., 6:48 p.m.
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THE BULGER MYSTIQUE

Law enforcement officials' lament about an elusive foe: Where was Whitey?

Five years ago, on a cloudy April morning, federal agents barreled into a cinderblock warehouse in South Boston the minute the huge garage doors blinked open like two heavy eyelids.

Daylight revealed the booty hauled from the piers a mile away: 10 tons of marijuana. Valued at \$6 million, bale upon bale was jammed into trucks gassed up and ready to go.

Not a bad haul, along with the six men nabbed inside.

But agents savoring the bust were brought up short when they learned a potential bonus prize had apparently gotten away. By 10 minutes, informants later disclosed, the agents had missed James

(Whitey) Bulger. The agents went back to look for fingerprints, but no such luck.

A GLOBE SPOTLIGHT So where was Whitey? The question has become the lament of law enforce-

REPORT

*Third in a
four-part series*

Since 1980, loca

Since 1980, local police, state troopers and feder-

al drug agents have hunkered down behind windows, squeezed into entryways, and wormed around car interiors - all in an effort to tail Bulger or conceal a tiny microphone in Bulger's car, his home or in the public telephones he frequently uses. They have resembled the soldiers in *Apocalypse Now*.

They have assembled the evidence to win court permission to monitor Bulger, but then have been repeatedly outmaneuvered before they could make the pinch. The bug goes in and suddenly Bulger stops talking.

The near-misses of Whitley Bulger have been law enforcement's most conspicuous failure in a decade of unprecedented accomplishment that saw the downfall of Howie Winter, overlord of the Winter

Hill Gang, and, bigger still, of Gennaro Angiulo, the longtime Mafia underboss of Boston. It is an elusiveness that Bulger, who served his

It is an enigma that Bulger, who served his only stretch of hard time three decades ago, has sustained throughout his life, "People all knew him, but nobody knows him," observed one long-time acquaintance. At 59, he is one of Boston's all-time mystery men and the aura of mystery fosters contradictory tales — about his ruthlessness but also about his soft spot for the South Boston that has always been his base. The result is a paradoxical portrait of a reputed killer: the legend of Whitey as a not-so-bad guy.

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