

2 linked to N.E. Mob shot in attacks; one wounded, other killed

SHOOTING

Continued from Page 1

about 15 feet away outside the House of Pancakes on Route 1, wounding him in the chest. Francis P. (Cadillac Frank) Salemme, 55, made a mad 30-yard dash for cover, a move that probably saved his life.

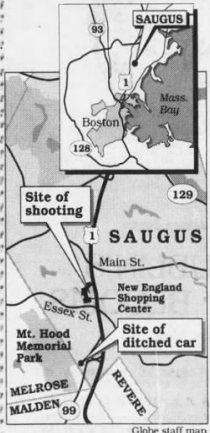
With his would-be killers in hot pursuit, and a car's wheels squealing on the shopping center parking lot, Salemme lunged into the lobby of a neighboring pizza shop, grabbing the door as a bullet pierced his left leg, according to witnesses.

Four assailants, one of whom was wielding a semiautomatic assault rifle, made two passes at Salemme, then sped away in a rental car that State Police said had been stolen from Logan Airport. About an hour after the 10:40 a.m. shooting, police found the car abandoned near the Palace nightclub on Route 99 in Saugus, about 1½ miles from the shooting scene. The gunmen eluded a dragnet and last night remained at large and unidentified.

At the scene, police found at least eight bullet casings, fired from two guns. At least one stray bullet entered the pancake house, but while customers in both restaurants were terrified by the shooting, no one was injured.

Salemme was listed in guarded but stable condition following surgery last night at AtlanticCare Hospital in Lynn.

Salemme is expected to recover from the two gunshot wounds, officials said.



Globe staff map

Much less was known about Grasso's demise. Two fishermen found his body at about 3:15 p.m. He had been killed execution-style, by at least one shot to the back of the head. Police identified him by his driver's license, which was in his pocket.

Twardy called Grasso "the single most influential organized crime figure in Connecticut."

FBI special agent Paul Cavanaugh, an FBI spokesman, said his agency was assisting local authorities in the investigations because of the victims' alleged positions in the Mafia.

Grasso's slaying and the attempt on Salemme's life marked the first hits of "made" members of the Boston Mafia in recent memory.

Since the 1986 convictions of underboss Gennaro J. Angiulo and the rest of the leadership of the Boston Mafia, and after subsequent prosecutions of the second tier of the Boston leadership, authorities had predicted that gangland deaths were inevitable as ambitious gangsters jockeyed for position.

Last year, in a speech to prosecutors that has become prophetic, Jeremiah T. O'Sullivan, former chief of the US Justice Department's New England Organized Crime Strike Force, predicted bloodshed, saying Grasso had begun to muscle in on the Springfield rackets controlled by the Genovese crime family of New York.

"We've been waiting for the first real big body to drop, and Billy's dropped," one law enforcement official said of Grasso.

Suspicion on who ordered the Salemme shooting fell immediately upon Vincent M. (The Animal) Ferrara, 40, a Boston College-educated accountant whom the FBI has publicly identified as one of a half-dozen Boston-area capo regimes. Capo regimes, or lieutenants, are leaders of small underworld fiefdoms carved out by the Patriarca crime family.

Law enforcement sources say Ferrara, who along with several other Boston Mafiosi from his regime and the regime of reputed capo Joseph (J.R.) Russo is the target of a federal grand jury sitting in Boston, does not like Salemme or Grasso. Authorities suggest that Salemme could be in line to assume control of one of the regimes whose leadership could fall vacant in the wake of indictments against Ferrara and the others.

Closest to Patriarca

One source said Grasso and Salemme "were the two closest people to Raymond J. Patriarca and the people who benefit are Vinnie



Troopers stand on the fifth tee of the Mount Hood Golf Course in Melrose after searching for the assailants of Francis P. Salemme.

and company."

But one official said that Salemme has been out of prison for just over a year. "he just became a 'made' guy, and he has a while to go before moving up the ladder, so it's kind of early for Vinnie to go whacking him."

Several investigators said they doubted Ferrara, or anyone else in the Mafia, would make an unauthorized move against someone as important as Grasso.

Officials said they also are investigating whether Salemme was still at odds with Stephen (The Rifleman) Flemmi, a reputed Mafia associate and former close friend of Salemme's. Salemme and Flemmi were both initially charged with blowing up the lawyer's car, but Flemmi remained on the run until the witness against him disappeared.

Salemme was arrested by the FBI in 1972, as he walked down a New York street, and speculation has always been that one of his underworld buddies rattled him out.

"Frankie and Stevie had a falling out years ago," said one law enforcement source. "Could Stevie

have done it? Sure, but so could have a bunch of other people. Frankie wasn't exactly Mr. Popularity. It could have been an old payback."

According to witnesses, after he was shot and stumbled into a Papa Gino's restaurant, Salemme shouted, "Call the police! Call the police!"

But in keeping with "wise guy" practice, once the authorities arrived, Salemme was uncooperative.

Saugus and State Police who initially responded to the shooting say Salemme would not tell them anything.

Would not tell his name

"He wouldn't even tell us his name," said one officer. "We asked who shot him, and he said, 'No one.'"

FBI agents rushed to the scene, and to the hospital where Salemme was under heavy guard last night. But he was not talking.

Several law enforcement agents, however, suggested that if it turns out the attempt on his life was approved by Mafia leaders, Salemme would be tempted to

"roll" and become a government informant against the men whom he allegedly joined recently as a "baptized" member of La Cosa Nostra.

"If this was sanctioned, Frankie might roll," said one law enforcement official. "If it's not sanctioned, then whoever did it better look out. This could be a stack of bodies."

Sources stressed, however, that it was too early to say whether the fallout of the attempted hit will be single or mass retribution, or what could be the beginning of the FBI cultivating its best Mafia informant since Joseph (Barboza) Baron turned against his fellow employers and testified against Mafia leaders in Boston and Providence in the 1960s.

It was Baron's lawyer, John E. Fitzgerald, whose leg was blown off in the 1968 explosion for which Salemme was convicted.

Officials said it was too early to say whether a story in The Boston Herald about Salemme's expected ascension in the Mafia, published on Tuesday, played any role in the shooting.

"It could have triggered someone," said one official. "But this probably was planned to be done before the story."

But another law enforcement source said Ferrara "is the type of guy who could go crazy over a newspaper article."

Prearranged meeting

According to sources, authorities believe Salemme drove to the parking lot for a prearranged meeting. "It had to be someone he trusted," said a source.

Salemme, who earned his nickname by his predilection for the finer things in life, including Cadillacs, drove a black BMW sedan to the "meet," as Mob sitdowns are commonly known.

Investigators are particularly interested in learning why Salemme was carrying \$14,000 in cash in a briefcase recovered from the car he was driving.

Two men are believed to have fired on Salemme yesterday, one carrying a .45 caliber semiautomatic pistol, the other a .223 caliber military assault rifle, according to Saugus Police Officer George Niviska.

About 100 people were in the pancake house when Salemme parked his car outside, got out and was set upon by the gunmen.

Linda Dooley was waiting tables said she heard what she thought was firecrackers. At the cash register, coworker Jean Fulton screamed, "Duck, they're shooting a gun."

Rounded up people

Dooley then rounded up people in the restaurant and took them to the back of the store. "There were a lot of women and kids and they were very scared," she said. Fulton said she saw the car pull into two handicapped parking spots 10 feet outside the restaurant, and that a man leaned out the passenger side with a rifle and began shooting at Salemme.

Salemme, still standing, started running, turned a corner, and ran up a small hill toward the Papa Gino's restaurant, about 30 yards from the pancake house. He stumbled into the Papa Gino's window and lunged for the door, according to Brian Collins, an 18-year-old shift manager. As he grabbed the door, the men in the car, which had reversed direction and was in pursuit, opened fire again.

Salemme ran toward the back of the pizza shop and fell to the ground near the men's room. Collins said. He then came back to the front of the store sat in the restaurant's front booth and told Collins to call police.

Salemme waited patiently and did not say much, Collins said. He said Salemme wore sweat pants, a t-shirt and a windbreaker that he used to hold to his wound while waiting for paramedics.

"He was really cool about it," said Collins. "He acted as though he had been shot before."

Police mounted a massive but futile search in the Mount Hood Golf Course, through which the gunmen are believed to have fled.

Contributing reporters Joseph Kirby and Adrian Walker assisted in the preparation of this report.

Shootings may signal start of power feud

By Elizabeth Neuffer

Globe Staff

The shootings of two reputed Mafia members yesterday could signal a feud between competing organized crime factions, sources say.

Within hours in two states yesterday, two alleged members of the Patriarca family were shot at — one killed, the other seriously wounded — in what could be the beginning of the biggest gangland war in more than two decades.

Reputed Patriarca family underboss William (Billy) Grasso, 57, was found shot in the back of the head and dumped along the Connecticut River yesterday afternoon in Wethersfield, Conn., about four hours after gunmen shot and wounded Francis P. (Cadillac Frank) Salemme in a Saugus parking lot.

The shootings left law enforcement and other sources confused and divided yesterday as to who sanctioned them. But many speculated they could be related, touched off by Mafia feuds. They predicted retaliation.

Jerry O'Sullivan said there was going to

be blood on the streets soon," said one law enforcement source, referring to comments made by Jeremiah T. O'Sullivan, former chief of the New England Organized Crime Strike Force, to law enforcement authorities at a conference last September. "It may be that he was right."

At that conference, O'Sullivan had predicted gangland violence within the Boston Mafia. He pointed to alleged Mafia lieutenant Vincent M. Ferrara as one source of friction, saying Ferrara had exacerbated instability within organized crime leadership.

He also said that a power grab by the Connecticut branch of the Patriarca crime family, headed by Grasso, was expected in Springfield, Mass. O'Sullivan said Grasso was making "new soldiers," and was expected to move in on the Scibelli faction, which controls the Springfield area rackets for the Genovese family.

Grasso is believed to have played a key role in the ascension of Raymond J. (Junior) Patriarca to the post of Mafia boss following the death of his father, Raymond L.S. Patriarca,

in July 1984. One law enforcement source told The Boston Globe in 1988 that Grasso was "the closest of friends with senior."

James F. Ahearn, head of the FBI office in Boston, identified Grasso as a Patriarca underboss in Senate testimony last year. Sources have said he received that position in return for helping Patriarca succeed his father as boss over other contenders.

Neither O'Sullivan, now in private practice, Ferrara's lawyer, Anthony M. Cardinale, nor Diane M. Kottmyer, acting strike force chief, would comment on the shootings.

It remained unclear yesterday if the shootings were somehow prompted by a power grab by Ferrara, or a war between the New York-based Genovese family and the Patriarcas.

"No one knows if it's a renegade hit or a sanctioned hit," said one source.

But several law enforcement sources said Ferrara was likely to be considered a suspect in the shooting, given his reputation for a violent temper and the fact he may see Salemme as a rival.