

18

THE BOSTON GLOBE • FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 1996

Police say past caught up with Mafia enforcer found slain

By Kevin Cullen
GLOBE STAFF

Richard F. (Vinnie The Pig) DeVincent looked like a wiseguy, and for much of his life he acted like one. In the end, he died like one.

Authorities probing DeVincent's execution-style slaying Wednesday night in Medford say his gangland past finally caught up to him, as he was killed in a hail of bullets.

A convicted loan shark and hulking enforcer, the 63-year-old DeVincent used to put money on the street for Gennaro (Jerry) Angiulo, the former Boston Mafia leader who is now imprisoned. He and Angiulo once beat a murder rap together.

Law enforcement sources say DeVincent, who last lived in Revere, was still aligned with Angiulo's associates, many of whom are just now emerging from prison, and had refused to pay tribute to the Mafia faction still loyal to Francis P. (Cadillac Frank) Salemme — more specifically, to Salemme's brother, John (Action Jackson) Salemme. John Salemme is alleged to be representing his brother's interests on the street while Frank Salemme is in jail awaiting trial on racketeering charges.

Authorities are trying to determine if defying the Salemme faction got DeVincent killed. But police acknowledge that, given his profession and his notorious past, any number of people might have wanted De-

Vincent dead.

Martin Murphy, the first assistant Middlesex district attorney, said investigators "have some leads." Other law enforcement sources said police have several witnesses who saw the gunman flee.

DeVincent's body, riddled with bullets, was found near the corner of Washington and Cross streets, just off Interstate 93, near Medford Square. He was lying about 20 feet from a black sedan he had just rented. Sources said his own car was in the shop. The passenger door was open and the hazard lights were blinking. One area resident said she heard about a dozen shots. Police say they believe he was ambushed.

There was some irony to where DeVincent fell dead, slumped before a gray slab of granite that stands as a memorial to Medford's war dead. DeVincent, who was born in Medford, served as a Marine in the Korean War. He came back home and got himself mixed up in the gang wars of the

1960s that took the lives of more than 60 gangland figures. DeVincent survived, police say, because he herded the cardinal rule: then: Kill or be killed.

DeVincent stood trial with Angiulo and two other men on charges of murdering Rocco DiSeggio, a mob associate who was one of the gang-war victims. DiSeggio, an ex-boxer, was killed in 1966 because his associates believed he had helped rivals stick up card games on Mafia turf. Joe Barboza, the Mafia hitman turned stool pigeon, was the government's star witness, saying DeVincent and two other men carried out the murder on Angiulo's orders. But a jury found Barboza less than believable and acquitted them. Eight years later, Barboza paid for his treachery when he was gunned down in San Francisco by one of DeVincent's old friends, Joe (J.R.) Russo.

Within a few months of his acquittal, DeVincent was back to work and back in trouble, sent to prison for threatening to

blow up a Malden man who owed a friend of his \$4,000. More recently, authorities said DeVincent was part of a ring that bought goods on credit, sold them out the back door, then claimed bankruptcy.

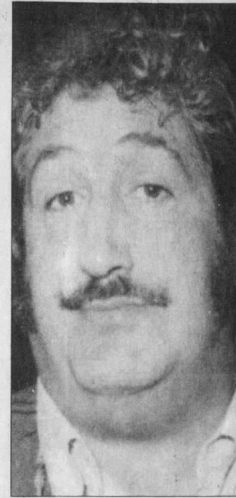
DeVincent inhabited the most venal level of organized crime, menacing those who couldn't pay bookies or loan sharks. In 1976, when DeVincent was sentenced to eight years in prison for loansharking, one of his victims, Peter Pallotta, explained from the witness stand how he had borrowed \$700 to keep his Revere Beach nightclub afloat.

But, as luck would have it, Pallotta's club got stuck up by the associates of another loan shark to whom he owed money. Not surprisingly, Pallotta couldn't pay "the vig," the outrageous 156 percent interest rate he owed DeVincent. When Pallotta fell behind on his \$28-per-week installments, DeVincent threatened to break his legs and stab him with an ice pick. Pallotta, who was so afraid he lived in his car for 19 days, did not consider these idle threats because, as he put it, DeVincent had the reputation of "a head crusher."

Alas, someone crushed DeVincent's head with a handgun at close range Wednesday night.

A detective working on the case said police weren't really surprised when they ID'd the body.

"You know what they say," he sighed. "What goes around comes around."



RICHARD F. DEVINCENT
Possible gang war victim

30%-65%

Our Lease has been extended ON LY 4 MORE WEEKS

Bring

Weld supports women's advocate