

# SEEKING A KNOCKOUT PUNCH FOR THE MOB'S NEW LEADERSHIP: [THIRD EDITION]

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pg. 1

## Seeking a knockout punch for the mob's new leadership

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It was the perfect spot. The cops couldn't tail you, and you could park your car in the underground garage, walk to a freight elevator and ride up in secrecy.

This protected, strategic route led to a storage room in an upscale sandwich shop in the Prudential plaza, an inconspicuous place where the Boston mob regrouped after the fall of the Angiulo family in 1986.

In that back room behind Vanessa's

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Italian Food Shop, said law enforcement officials, the first order of business was to call in Greater Boston bookies who had enjoyed several months of independent operation. They were put back in line and forced to resume paying tribute for the privilege of doing business in Massachusetts.

Despite the setup, Vanessa's was infiltrated by law enforcement. By late 1986,

a bug had been installed, and the talk of mobsters soon filled the air.

But about a year ago, the back room fell silent. Only recently has an explanation begun to emerge. A state trooper was charged in February with leaking information to a bookie, which wound its way to La Cosa Nostra figures.

The indictment of Trooper John Z. Naimovich did not specify who those Mafia figures were, nor what investigations were supposedly compromised.

But sources familiar with the case said that the closely guarded information

about the bug got into the eager hands of Vincent M. Ferrara of Revere, a reputed capo regime, or lieutenant, in the Boston Mafia. Last spring, Ferrara and other mobsters suddenly stopped taking the freight elevator to the back room at Vanessa's, which was subsequently swept for bugs by the mob.

When the Ferrara investigation began in late 1986, coming on the heels of the convictions of Gennaro J. Angiulo and the leaders of his Mafia operation, the back room loomed as a knockout punch for the emerging leadership.

Many in law enforcement now contend that the discovery of the bug only partially deflected that punch.

They say that the talk of gambling and shakedowns and other sorts of racketeering gleaned from the bug, and from joint FBI-State Police surveillances in a Chelsea cafe, will be enough to indict Ferrara and several of his cohorts, including reputed capo Robert (Bobby Russo) Carrozza of East Boston.

But one investigator rued what might have been. "It could have been better

SPOTLIGHT. Page 30

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## ■ SPOTLIGHT

Continued from Page 1

than Prince Street," he said, referring to the location of the 1981 bug in the North End that led to the downfall of the Angiulo family. "We'll never know how good it could have been. But it was good."

While refusing to discuss individual targets, Vanessa's or any other pending investigation, Jeremiah T. O'Sullivan, chief attorney of the US Justice Department's New England Organized Crime Strike Force, acknowledged that the new Mafia leadership has benefited from the hiatus in prosecutions.

"They're better organized today in the sense that they have had another year in which they have been out there working," said O'Sullivan, who prosecuted Angiulo. "They've reached out and organized bookmakers and more loan sharks. They're getting more money. They're a little bigger, a little fatter and sassier in that sense. It's another year they haven't faced an indictment. It's another year they've had a chance to work."

Law enforcement officials say New England mob leaders have become obsessive about security in the wake of the successful electronic surveillances that brought down the Angiulos and Mafia leaders in New York. When they meet, it is frequently in the pre-dawn hours in a motel outside the city, or in the open air of Revere Beach, or on a park bench off Broadway in Revere.

Although he remains a target, one Boston Mafioso appears to have insulated himself successfully from impending government action. Sources familiar with the investigation say Joseph (J.R.) Russo of Boston, another reputed capo regime, has kept a low profile and his distance from other Mafiosi.

While Ferrara has made his mark as the most aggressive among the emerging leaders, Russo has sipped his coffee in the Cafe Pompeii on Hanover Street, gone home to his apartment at Whittier Place and allegedly controlled the East Boston rackets with discreet aplomb.

James F. Ahearn, the special agent in charge of the FBI in Boston, hinted at impending trouble for segments of the Boston mob when he told a US Senate subcommittee on Friday: "The newly created ... leadership" is "subject to intense investigation and expecting extensive racketeering indictments."

### Leaders named

Among others, he named Ferrara, Russo and Carrozza as new capos in Boston and outlined the restructured hierarchy of the New England Mafia. For the first time in nearly three decades, no Angiulo is in the chart. None of the regional leaders lives in Boston.

In the current lineup, he named Raymond (Junior) Patriarca of Lincoln, R.I., as boss; William Grasso of West Haven, Conn., as underboss; and Ilario M. A. Zannino of Swampscott as consigliere, the title given to the so-called family lawyer, who settles disputes. Zannino is serving a 30-year sentence on gambling and loan-sharking charges in a federal prison in Springfield, Mo.

It is Ferrara, however, who has been the main focus of recent law enforcement efforts in Boston. Though he is described by law enforcement officials as the most dangerous and most active of six capo regimes in the Boston Mafia, Ferrara has been jailed for only a short time — in the Suffolk County House of Correction on Deer Island



Vincent Ferrara in a 1978 Boston Police Department mug shot.

for a gun-carrying conviction in 1979.

Ferrara, 39, has been the mob's most prominent up and comer. The only college-educated man to rise to prominence in the Boston Mafia, Ferrara's ascent has been facilitated by the disarray that followed the indictment of five Angiulo brothers in 1983 and their convictions in 1986.

"If there was a structure, he wouldn't have been tolerated," said one law enforcement official. "He's uncontrollable. Everybody's afraid of him."

The Mafia learned of Ferrara in the 1970s, said investigators, while he was leading the Endicott Street gang in the North End. During a war with the Fleet Street gang over turf, Ferrara's side is believed by police to have committed several murders, and Ferrara became a force to be reckoned with in the North End. He got the attention of the underboss at that time, Gennaro Angiulo.

"The Mafia 'made' Vinnie," said one law enforcement official, referring to the formal induction into the Mafia, "because they were afraid of him."

Perhaps most indicative of the respect, or fear, Ferrara has engendered is the change in his nicknames over the years.

"When Vinnie was younger, everybody called him Pinhead, a nickname he really hated," said one law enforcement official. "No one calls him that to his face anymore. Now they call him The Animal."

### Reputation for violence

A reputation for violence has followed Ferrara since shortly after his college days. In 1973, Boston police suspected him of shooting a man to death inside a North End barroom at the height of the Endicott-Fleet gang war. As many as 40 people were in the vicinity of the shooting, but no witnesses came forward, and no one was ever charged.

Last fall, the man who fathered the child of Ferrara's current girlfriend was told to stay away from her. The man did not, and he was shot to death as he left his North Shore home. In these cases, and

several others, the police have suspicions, but no witnesses.

"He has," one high-ranking law enforcement official said, "a taste for blood."

If Ferrara's reputation for ruthlessness made him the perfect candidate to round up dozens of bookies who went their own way in the anarchy that followed the Angiulo case, his college-trained mind makes him a logical successor to the nimble-minded Jerry Angiulo, whose remaining gambling interests Ferrara is supposedly helping to protect.

A 1971 graduate of Boston College, with a degree in business administration, Ferrara knows that gambling is the bread and butter of the Mafia. Despite the successful prosecution of the Boston Mafia, which has forced the business of the underworld even further underground, Ferrara has reputedly cashed in on the all-time popularity of sports betting.

More people than ever are putting more money than ever on professional and college athletic contests, law enforcement officials and gamblers say. And that action, say investigators, has been handled in places such as Hellers, a cafe in Chelsea that Ferrara and his associates frequented during a State Police-FBI probe in 1986.

At the corner of Chestnut and Second streets, in the shadow of the Tobin Bridge, Hellers is a blue-collar bar with a dual personality.

During the day, reputed mobsters filter in and out. Construction workers and truck drivers cash their checks there — an aspect of the investigation that officials say was related to money-laundering — and you can get a steak sub for \$4, and a good sausage sub for less.

At night, Hellers mirrors the mostly Hispanic neighborhood where it is located, a place where the crowd sitting on the luncheonette stools at the bar watching the Thursday night fights does not need the ESPN interpreter to understand Roberto Duran's comments.

### Rounded up bookmakers

Law enforcement officials, who seized records during a December 1986 raid in Hellers, say the bar was one of the places where Ferrara and others coordinated the roundup of independent-minded bookmakers who, while sports betting flourished, had stopped paying tribute to the Mafia. Ferrara and his associate, Dennis LePore, who became a "made" Mafioso in 1984 according to FBI charts, put the arm on bookies from Boston to Worcester.

Both bookies and law enforcement officials said, however, that the new rules amounted to extortion, not protection.

"The bookies are paying rent, a flat rate each week to do business," said one law enforcement official. "But they get nothing in return. They're still subject to shakedowns."

In fact, the alleged shakedown in Vanessa's of Boston's oldest and perhaps most prolific bookie — Harry (Doc) Sagansky of Brookline — could be the undoing of Ferrara and his cohorts.

Before the reputed mobsters suddenly stopped using the Prudential location, sources said, the FBI overheard Ferrara in January 1987 summon the resilient Sagansky, then 89, to the Italian food shop that the government alleges is run by Angelo (Sonny) Mercurio, a pardoned murderer and reputed Mafia soldier.

That Ferrara was attempting

to strong-arm the senior gambling figure for \$500,000 dramatically illustrates the brazen capo's disregard for the organization and his own ambitious attempt to impose a new underworld order.

Sagansky, a dentist turned bookmaker, is a legend in law enforcement circles for having risen to power in the 1930s and survived decades of underworld tumult. He was respected by older underworld leaders and, in many respects, considered untouchable.

During Angiulo's reign, Sagansky had always paid a tribute to the North End crime boss, but due to Sagansky's longevity and ties to the mob's New England leadership in Providence, Angiulo was unable to control Sagansky the way he did other Boston area bookmakers. The despotic Angiulo could not tell Sagansky how to run his show.

Last year, FBI agents made their own move on Sagansky to win his testimony against the heirs to Angiulo. Sagansky was offered limited immunity from prosecution in return for his testimony before a federal grand jury.

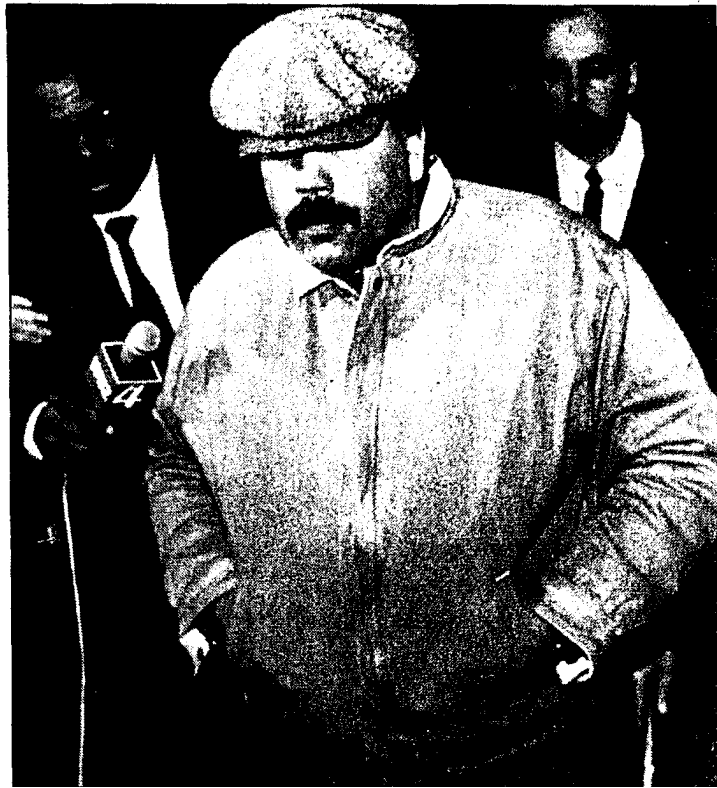
But the stubborn Sagansky so far has refused to cooperate. In January, he was found in civil contempt and incarcerated until he changed his mind. But Sagansky was released after 20 days pending appeals that have taken him to the US Supreme Court — appeals that have further prolonged law enforcement's move against the new Mafia.

Neither Sagansky's attorney, Morris M. Goldings, nor federal prosecutors would comment directly on the possible link between Sagansky and the investigation of Ferrara. But Goldings said that the pursuit of the ailing Sagansky, who is not a target in the investigation, demeans the judicial process, "particularly if he dies in confinement while the targets roam the streets."

A broader problem to emerge from the bug in the back room at Vanessa's has been the souring of relations between many in the State Police and federal law enforcement.

The recently indicted state trooper, Naimovich, has many supporters within the ranks who contend he was indicted on inconclusive evidence.

Others question why Naimo-



State trooper John Z. Naimovich at the federal courthouse.

vich was allowed to work amid the temptation and corruption of illegal gambling for 16 years as part of the Special Services Unit, the State Police's elite organized crime squad.

Even the most objective observers in both federal and state law enforcement camps acknowledge that Naimovich's arrest — in which he was handcuffed and humiliated in front of other troopers — left a bad taste in many mouths.

One prosecutor, who describes himself as neutral on the Naimovich matter, concedes that some resistance has surfaced among state law enforcement officials to further inquiries from federal authorities.

"It could be they moved too quick and are trying to get a better case after the fact," he said, referring to federal authorities. "It also could be they've got him cold and are looking for all they can get. It's just unclear right now."

The indictment, however, offers a glimpse at some of the government's case against the troop-

er, including snatches from a telephone tap of Francis J. McIntyre, an alleged Canton bookmaker who was indicted with Naimovich. In one conversation, McIntyre refers to Naimovich as "my guy."

In another instance, Naimovich purportedly informs McIntyre of his efforts to influence a bookmaking case against a third member of their alleged gambling enterprise by removing some incriminating material from a State Police storage facility.

Some of Naimovich's defenders say that McIntyre gave him information on gambling cases and that the trooper was simply exchanging information with an informant.

Naimovich's lawyer, Judd Carhart, declined comment, except to say, "He is presumed innocent, and he will be exonerated."

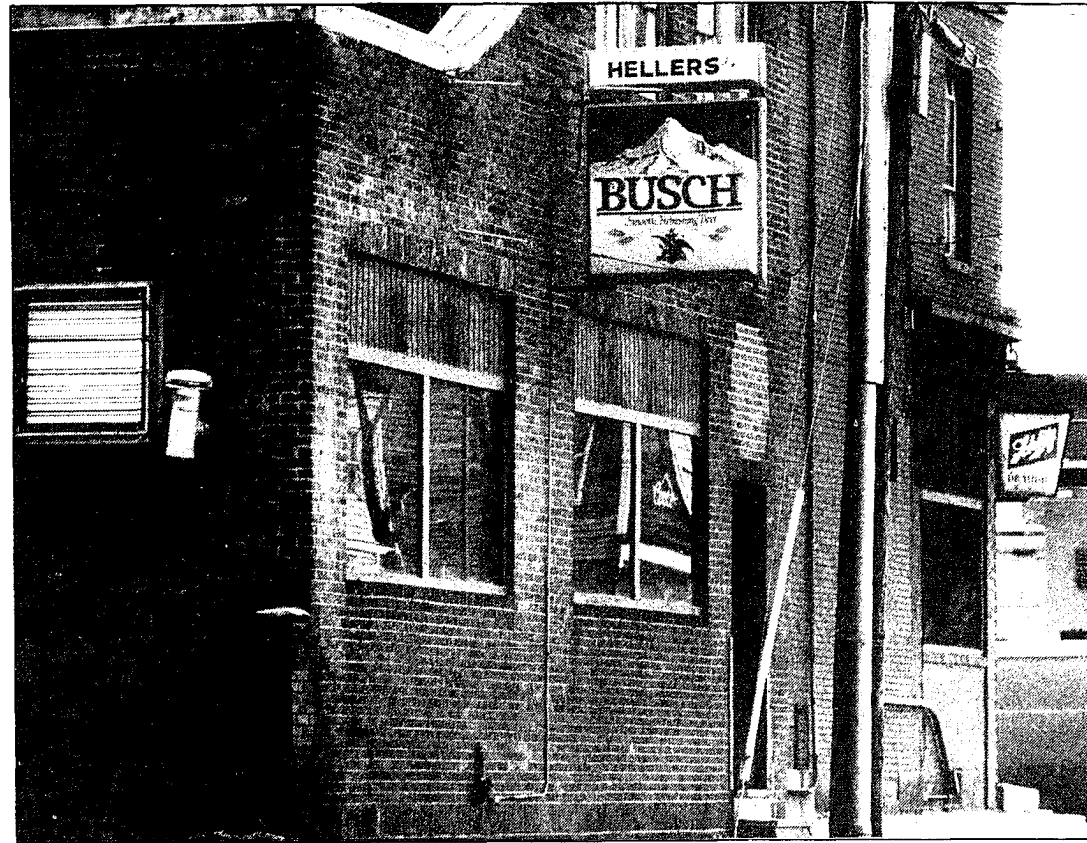
Sources familiar with the case say that another indictment against Naimovich, which will spell out more clearly his alleged role in leaking information that ended up in Ferrara's hands, is expected soon.



Vanessa's Italian Food Shop is in the shopping mall at the Prudential Center.



Harry (Doc) Sagansky speaks on the telephone in this photograph taken in 1981.



Hellers Cafe on Chestnut Street in Chelsea.

Globe staff photo/David L. Ryan