

A former mafia member is helping the FBI and rattling out other members of the mob

By Michele McPhee On 11/24/17 at 5:20 AM EST



FBI agents investigate the scene of a violent incident in New York City.

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On an October day in 1989, the head of the New England La Cosa Nostra family came to a house in suburban Boston for a secret ceremony. He was there to induct new members of the mob into his "family"—not knowing that every word he said that day would be captured on tape by the FBI, who had bugged the house.

Raymond "Junior" Patriarca thought he had taken every precaution to prevent law enforcement from spying on this secret ceremony. He had the four capos and 10 soldiers—all "made men" in the Mafia family that bore the Patriarca name—park in a nearby mall and get a ride to the Medford, Massachusetts home of the sister of wiseguy Vincent "The Animal" Ferrara. He also had his men make sure there

were no FBI agents hidden in utility trucks nearby, and frisked the four men slated to vow allegiance, or omerta, to the family.

But Patriarca didn't know that one of his soldiers, Angelo "Sonny" Mercurio, was an FBI informant. He had helped the feds break into the tidy house before the ceremony and bug the rooms. The result of that bugging operation was explosive. It was the first FBI recording of the Mafia induction ceremony, a secret ritual brought over from the old country, one that had never before been witnessed by someone who wasn't a member of the Mafia.

As Patriarca addressed his fellow mobsters, who'd driven in from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island—all of them nattily dressed and snacking on antipasto—most of his words were captured by the FBI mic.

Patriarca hoped this ceremony would bring peace to his fractured family, which was embroiled in a bloody, internecine war. Patriarca told the assembled mobsters, "bygones are bygones and a good future for all of us."

One of the four men inducted in the "family" that day was Bobby "The Cigar" DeLuca. His trigger finger was pricked with a knife, and his blood was smudged on a Catholic Saint card that was then burned as DeLuca made a sacred vow to spill blood but never secrets. His capo, Joseph Russo, then warned him that he had to be willing to do anything the family asked.

"This thing of ours, this meeting, will be among the happiest meetings you will ever attend," Russo told DeLuca. "Do you accept that?"

"Yes I do," DeLuca said. With that, he went from low-level mob hanger-on from Providence's famed Little Italy, where Patriarca commanded the entire New England mob and held meetings with the bosses of the five New York City Crime families. His nickname was "The Cigar" because of the one seemingly clenched between his meaty lips during all his waking hours.

"You will now be baptized," Russo told him as another capo took over and asked DeLuca to repeat the ancient rite in Italian.

"Lo voglio entrare in questa organizzazione, per proteggere la mia familia," DeLuca recited—"I want to enter into this organization, to protect this family." He then swore to never become a rat, to live with "di omerta," honor.

DeLuca then said, "Entro vivo...e dove uscire morto," declaring in Italian that he was inducted into his new family alive and if he didn't follow the Mafia code, he would only get out of it in a body bag.

DeLuca would eventually rise through the ranks of the Mafia to become a capo, following through with the promise he made that fall day to murder anyone who got in the way of family business.

Now, nearly 27 years after his initiation into the family, DeLuca is using that same trigger finger to point out mob graves and fellow mob murderers. He is also expected to take the stand against another Mafia leader next year, according to court records.

"Organized crime is not what it once was," says retired Massachusetts State Police Lt. Det. Bob Long, who now runs a private investigative agency. "DeLuca is doing what so many other mobsters have done, even bosses: cooperate to save his own ass. Everyone is a rat these days. DeLuca is going to testify against another boss from his own family who became an informant. Trial of 2018: Snitch versus Snitch."

DeLuca will be 73 when he takes the stand in May against his Patriarca crime family contemporary, 84-year-old [Francis "Cadillac Frank" Salemme](#). Cadillac Frank was the trusted aide of notorious Boston mobster James "Whitey" Bulger, a murderous gang leader who built a criminal empire with the help of his FBI handlers. Bulger also worked as an informant putting away his rivals, which helped his FBI handlers get headlines and accolades. In 1994, rogue FBI agent John Connolly tipped Bulger off that he was going to be indicted; Bulger, the brother of a powerful Massachusetts politician, fled.

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Bulger was on the lam for 16 years, hiding in plain sight in Santa Monica. He was captured in 2011—the same year DeLuca decided to flip and cooperate with the federal government. He became yet another mob don turncoat.

DeLuca was expected to testify against Bulger in his 2013 racketeering trial, but was not called to the stand. But Bulger's treachery is certain to come up in Salemme's trial on charges that he murdered the manager of a famed Boston rock club in 1993. DeLuca led investigators to an ancient gravesite behind a Providence nightclub, the spot, he told prosecutors, where he buried Steven DiSarro after Salemme and another mobster, Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi, strangled him to death.

This trial is good news for law enforcement, and suggests that the Mafia is dwindling as a power in the U.S. "The Mafia is breathing its last breaths," Long says. "They are so desperate for new talent they are even making undercover cops soldiers in the Mob. They might need to hire people like me to do background checks on their new recruits so they don't turn out to be police."

Long is joking there about a recent case against four Bonanno crime family associates—including an acting captain, Damiano Zummo—who welcomed an undercover police informant into their family according to a [press release](#) from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. He managed to wear a recording device during his induction ceremony in Canada in 2015. This was the first recording of a Mob initiation ceremony since DeLuca became a made man in 1989, according to court records, and this time, investigators got video.

"You're now a member of the Bonanno Crime family," Zummo told the wired informant during the ceremony. "Congratulations."

Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District Bridget Rohde celebrated the infiltration of the Bonanno family in a press release:

"The recording of a secret induction ceremony is an extraordinary achievement for law enforcement and deals a significant blow to La Cosa Nostra."

Rohde's office said the arrested mobsters were selling cocaine out of a Brooklyn gelateria. There's nothing scary about gelato. Or, apparently, the Mob.