



Quitting the Mob: How the "Yuppie Don" Left the Mafia and Lived to Tell His Story

By Michael Franzese, Dary Matera

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A former Mafia boss, who once had earned millions of dollars each week, tells of his life in the Colombo crime family and describes how he managed to escape the Mafia and live to write about it. Reprint.

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- Sales Rank: #771243 in Books
- Published on: 1992-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.75" h x 6.75" w x 1.00" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 301 pages



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Franzese grew up on Long Island as Michael Grillo, believing himself the stepson of Mafia member John "Sonny" Franzese, with six other children in the family. He worshipped "Sonny," who may have been his biological father, abandoned his plan to become a doctor and was taken into the Cosa Nostra in 1975. With the mob's blessing, he began to work on the fringes of legitimate businesses, where he was enormously successful. Among his enterprises was a partnership dealing in retail and wholesale gasoline that evaded paying taxes; from this he made millions of dollars and began to play around with the movie industry. His first marriage on the rocks, he wed a Mexican American dancer, a born-again Christian who urged him to reform, which he did by testifying against two criminals who were sent to prison. They were not Mafiosi, nor did his testimony implicate anyone in the Mafia, but both he and Matera (*Are You Lonesome Tonight?*) believe that the mob wants to kill him anyway. The so-called "Mafia Prince," according to recent newspaper accounts, has just been arrested in Los Angeles for violating federal probation and for defaulting on bank loans and defrauding the owners of various Bel-Air mansions he rented. In some respects a conventional gangster saga, and not altogether credible. Photos not seen by PW. First serial to *Cosmopolitan*.

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From Kirkus Reviews

A young mobster's progress, 1980's sizzle-style. After his powerful and feared father, a capo in N.Y.C.'s Colombo crime family, took a 50-year fall, Franzese became, at age 24, a made Colombo man. Here, with the help of former Miami Herald reporter Matera, he tells of his meteoric criminal career, which ended in 1989, at age 38, in a plea bargain taken against a 177- count Florida indictment. College-educated Franzese, disliking violence (or so he says), was apparently a businessman with a genius for operating on the fringes of laws and regulations, and here he lovingly details the schemes that caused him to become, at age 32, as financially powerful as the five New York mafia families combined. Among his coups was a gas wholesale business that took advantage of a New York law designed to return more tax dollars to the state. This complex shell game--a daisy chain that ended in a ``burnout company" in Panama--netted Franzese \$5 to \$8 million per week for three years (and incidentally lowered the price of gas to Gotham motorists). Between discussions of his craft, Franzese speaks of Manuel Noriega, who provided banking connections for the gas scam; of boxing promoter Don King--a ``tough negotiator"; of black advocate Al Sharpton--``a player...[who] offered to use the considerable black power forces he commands to assist me in any way"; and of the ``Jewish Scarface"--a kingpin in the new wave of Russian and Eastern European immigrant thugs taking over parts of Brooklyn. Throughout, Franzese's estimate of his own and others' characters gives a depth unusual for this type of memoir. On a sit- down with capo de tutti capi John Gotti: ``Who's John Gotti?" I remarked to an associate....`Remember, I came from the best.' It was a psychological edge I carried throughout my mob tenure. By comparing every opponent to my father, I could never be intimidated." Sharp and contemporary; a bullet rising. (Eight pages of b&w photos--not seen.) -- *Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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