

Jerry Capeci

Gang Land News

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This Week in Gang Land

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By Jerry Capeci

Emissaries For Chin Gigante's Son Got To The Woman Assault Victim Just In Time



A tenacious NYPD detective tried his best to nail Vincent Esposito, the then-21-year-old son of Mafia boss Vincent (Chin) Gigante, for a bloody 1989 assault in which he allegedly

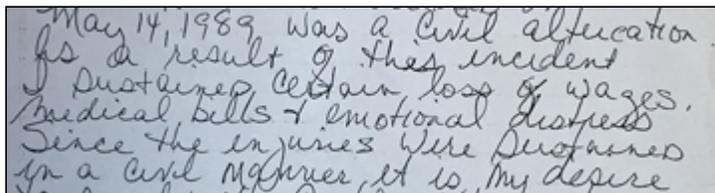
bashed an innocent woman over the head with a chair, Gang Land has learned. But by the time the detective had lined up enough information to seek an arrest, the Queens woman opted not to press charges.



Vincent Esposito GL

Her decision, as Gang Land [reported last week](#), came after an attorney and private investigator working for the Gigante family visited the woman at her home in the Rockaways. On June 4, 1989, in exchange for a \$7,000 payment, the victim was persuaded to settle the case civilly, rather than proceed with a criminal prosecution of her attacker.

But in an exclusive interview, Robert Salafia, the detective who investigated the alleged assault in a Chinatown restaurant, told Gang Land that he had obtained enough circumstantial evidence to satisfy himself that Esposito was the culprit within weeks of the May 14, 1989 incident and was set to move forward with the case when the victim told him to forget about it.



Salafia couldn't recall the exact date, but right around the time she signed the agreement, "a few weeks after I caught the case," he called the woman to update her

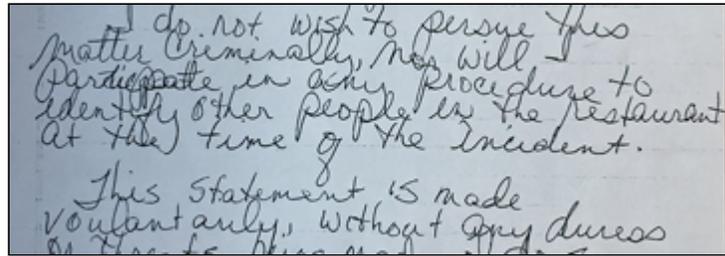
about his progress. "She didn't want to have anything to do with it anymore," he said. "She closed the case for me."

In the beginning, however, "she was mad," Salafia recalled. "She wanted a pound of flesh from the guy when I went out to the Rockaways to see her. She said she could I.D. him. At that point she was angry."

The vicious attack occurred as the woman and several friends, all in their mid-20s, were celebrating a girlfriend's birthday at Wo Hop, a legendary Chinatown eatery at 17 Mott Street. Seated at a table behind them were Esposito and his pals, who were celebrating Esposito's graduation from NYU. The men soon began

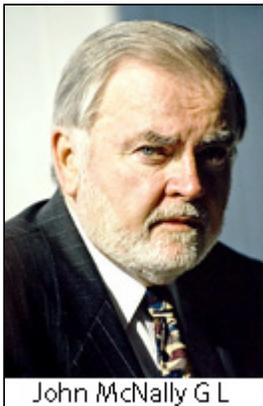
mouthed off at the women in a vain effort to flirt with the clearly disinterested women. "The girls blew them off," said a Gang Land source who spoke to the woman shortly after the incident.

"Leave me the fuck alone," said the woman, who was then allegedly struck in the head with a chair, allegedly by Esposito, according to the source who spoke to her back then.



At the time, Salafia, who joined the NYPD in 1968 and retired in 1994, was a detective in the 5th precinct, which covers the southeastern edge of Manhattan, including Chinatown. Here's what he recalls about the 29-year-old assault case.

Salafia was assigned the case when he got to work later that day, a Sunday. It was hours after the incident and long after the woman had been treated and released at Beekman Downtown Hospital, where she received 10 stitches for a gash on her forehead, the woman told a Gang Land source not long after the assault.



John McNally G L

Salafia said he identified the alleged assailant thanks to a tip from a cab driver who was parked in front of the eatery when he saw three young men race out of the restaurant. "He sees three kids run out and jump in the car and speed away and figures something looks wrong here so he writes down the plate number, and 20 seconds later this girl comes running out screaming. She's got blood on her face. He sees her and gives her the plate number."

After coming up with the name and address of the registered owner, Salafia drove uptown and "banged on the door of a beautiful brownstone" on East 77th Street looking to speak to the driver, he said. He had no idea that Esposito was the son of [Gigante](#), the notorious mob kingpin, at the time, said Salafia. He told Gang Land he doesn't recall exactly when he learned of the connection, but thinks it was after the case went south.

"I got a lot of crap from his sister and his mother," said Salafia. "They were screaming at me, 'What are you bothering us about. He's not home. Get outta here. Leave us alone.' I never saw the mother, or the sister. I never got past the vestibule. I just heard them yelling at me from upstairs. I left my business card. He never called me back."

Before walking out of the vestibule, Salafia recalled, "She passed a remark, my son is a good boy, he's graduating from college, I think she said NYU. I kept it in the back of my head. Figured there's got to be a retired cop there running security that I can check with."

The car in question, a black Audi, wasn't parked on the street. It took the detective a while, he said, but eventually he found the garage where Esposito parked his car. And a quick talk with the attendant fueled his suspicion about Esposito. "The car was in the garage," he said, "but the guy checked, and said it wasn't there in the lot at the time of the incident at Wo Hop."

"My thought process all along," Salafia said, "was to reach out to an authority at NYU, to get a year book, or log book of some kind, and make a photo array out of it and ask her if she could recognize the guy who did it."

It took a while to get there though. "You got to remember," he said, "this wasn't the only case I had. And it wasn't a homicide. It was probably a felony assault, but she didn't spend any time in the hospital. And there were other serious cases on my plate," he said.

Eventually, Salafia had his ducks in a row and called the woman. "I left her a message," he recalled. "I said I had a photo array, and if she could pick him out, I was going to lock him up. But it just never went there. She reached out to me and said no, she didn't want to go forward. And that was it. I cleared the case."

Salafia said he didn't know or speak to attorney Michael Pollack, or private investigator [John McNally](#), a retired detective who worked to settle the case for Esposito. The duo drove to the woman's house on June 4, and obtained the signed agreement that Gang Land obtained and wrote about last week.



Father & Son Following Court Appearance In June, 1997 G L

Salafia also stated that he "didn't know" that the victim in his case "had a brother who was on the job" at the time until Gang Land reported it. He said he was "surprised" that he let her take the \$7000 payoff. "I would think he would have wanted a pound of flesh for his sister," he said.



Judge Victor Marrero

Meanwhile, the argument between the government and Esposito over the 24-7 armed guard that he pays \$30,000 a month for so he can remain free on bail while he awaits his [extortion trial](#) in June, went from the ridiculous to the ludicrous one day last week. But not for Pretrial Services Officer Joshua Rothman. He's now between a rock and a hard place, and Judge Victor Marrero.

That's because after Esposito lawyer Marc Fernich wrote that Rothman "advises that the *agency* (a) has always felt guards unwarranted in the case and (b) still does not think them necessary after eight months of uneventful supervision," prosecutors countered that Rothman "has informed the Government that *he* neither opposes nor recommends the armed guard condition" that was set by Marrero and upheld by three judges on the 2d Circuit Court of Appeals.

For Rothman's sake, Gang Land hopes Marrero won't call for a hearing to find out exactly what Rothman said and what he meant each time he said it. Perhaps the judge will take the appeals court's suggestion to reconsider the "appropriateness" of the [armed guards](#) ruling since it was slated to be a six month thing but has entered its ninth month, and will last for 15 months, since the trial isn't slated to begin until June.

Wiseguy Learns Valuable Lessons In Class Behind Bars, But Keeps Them To Himself

Anthony Grado is a drug-abusing Luchese mobster with 15 convictions on a state and federal rap sheet that began in 1989. But while behind bars for his last crime

— selling 270,000 oxycodone pills — he seemed to turn his life around during a 12-week self-help class, according to the *Focus Forward Project*, a non-profit group that teaches the course in the city's two federal lockups.

In a three-page letter to his sentencing judge, the course's teachers wrote glowingly that they found Grado, 55, to be a "humble, observant and caring" man who is "focused on self-improvement" and who possesses the "desire to move forward in his life."



Anthony Grado G L

When the class began, Grado was "quiet and shy," and "struggled with speaking in front of others," wrote the teachers. But he "demonstrated effective listening skills and patience within the classroom. "By the close of the course, Grado was "exceptional" during the "two weeks of public speaking" portion, they wrote.

When called upon, they wrote, "He walked to the front of the room with assurance" and "spoke about a family member that had a major impact on him; his uncle. Mr. Grado reflected on and shared the positive influence his uncle had on him throughout his early life. He grabbed the audience's attention while speaking, and it was evident that he was speaking from his heart."



Lawrence Tranese G L

"Grado often provided comic relief and support to his classmates during moments of vulnerability or discomfort," wrote teachers Mikayla Carignan and Nandi Dozier-Lewis. "His classmates later came to describe Mr. Grado as giving, respectful, funny, cool, and shy."

The teachers also noted a letter Grado wrote in the "life skills" portion of the class reflected on the "consequences" of "decisions he's made in his past." He expressed "remorse and regret" for "his choices and actions," they wrote. "It is clear Mr. Grado is in the process of improving his decision-making skills and is motivated to continue to grow as an individual."

That good work was ready to be displayed last week when *Focus Forward* director Joel Putnam appeared in Brooklyn Federal Court to show support for Grado. The longtime mobster faced a maximum of 20 years for selling the dangerous opioid pills in a two-year long scheme with Colombo associate Lawrence (Fat Larry) Tranese and a now defrocked Brooklyn podiatrist named Enrico Caprioni.

Putnam — as well as Gang Land — heard Grado's lawyer ask Judge Carol Bagley Amon to impose a sentence of eight years, blaming the doctor as the main architect of the scheme and citing his client's addiction to oxycodone as a mitigating factor. And we heard prosecutors seek a prison term "in excess of 15 years," noting that Grado had threatened to "put a bullet into the doctor's head" during the scheme, and that a relative had stabbed Caprioni.

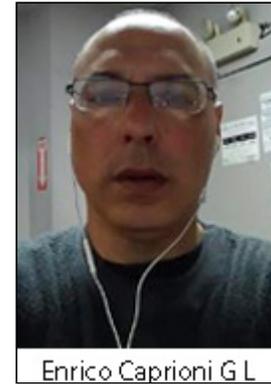
After the judge listened to the opposing lawyers, all eyes turned to [Grado](#), who was wearing a black pullover sweater over his tan prison jumpsuit, as Amon asked the *Focus Forward* September graduate if he wanted to address the Court.

"I'm good, no thank you," said Grado, who reverted to a standard mobster response like those he used in his 15 prior sentencings, including the one in 1996, when he got 63 months for extortion.

Putnam told Gang Land that *Focus Forward* "graduates usually speak at their sentencings," but he declined to speculate about Grado's decision to eschew the

public speaking skills he recently mastered. He noted that while the program is available to all inmates in the city's two federal lockups, Grado "is probably the only client we've had who would get a mention in Gang Land."

The group's website states that 200 men and women have graduated since two paralegals began the course at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan in 2012 "to address the lack of educational opportunities and reentry planning programs available to individuals in the pretrial phase of their case." Classes are also taught at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn.



Enrico Caprioni G L



Judge Carol Amon

Putnam's appearance in court wasn't unusual. Since he became the project's interim director 15 months ago, he's attended several sentencings of graduates "when their teachers were unable to," he said. He stressed that "one of the core rules about the course is no one discusses their own criminal case in class."

Amon imposed a prison term of 12 years for Grado, who stood up, smiled, blew a kiss to his daughter, father and ex-wife, and was escorted back to the MCC.

The judge also meted out a below guidelines sentence of 40 months to Tranese, whose recommended prison term was 78-to-97 months. Amon ordered the 55-year-old Colombo associate, who has been out on bail since his arrest last year, to surrender to his assigned federal prison on February 21.

As Gang Land reported in October, [Caprioni, 52](#), was prosecuted by the state's Manhattan-based Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office in 2013. He surrendered his license, copped a plea deal calling for up to three and a half years in prison and ended up serving 29 months in a New York state prison.

Detective Bounced From Federal Mob Case For Link To Prostitution Ring

An NYPD detective who was part of a joint task force in the racketeering case against acting Bonanno capo Joseph ([Joe C. Cammarano](#)) and nine other mobsters was implicated in a multimillion dollar-a-year prostitution and gambling ring, Gang Land has learned.

The ring operated in Brooklyn and Queens and was allegedly run by a retired detective who was arrested earlier this year along with seven active NYPD members.

Sources say the unidentified detective who worked on the [Cammarano](#) case is one of two police officers who were stripped of their guns and shields and placed on modified assignment following a three-year NYPD probe. It led to arrests for prostitution and other charges in September of ex-detective Ludwig Paz, along with two active detectives and five police officers.



Jos. Cammarano G L

Law enforcement sources say the detective did not play a major role in the case against [Joe C](#) and wiseguys from three crime families, and that the federal case, which was filed in January following a joint probe by Homeland Security, the

Department of Labor, the State Department, and the NYPD, will not be affected by the detective's alleged wrongdoing.



Domineck Miniero GL

Whatever his role, don't look for the unnamed detective to show up in court in February when the case is slated for trial before Manhattan Federal Judge Alvin Hellerstein. And he won't be the only one.

Last month, two ailing and aging Bonanno soldiers — Domenick Miniero and Joseph (Joey Blue Eyes) Santapaolo — bailed out of the case by copping plea deals to lesser charges, Gang Land has learned. Miniero, 86, pleaded guilty to extortion; Santapaolo, 67, to loansharking. The duo each have sentencing guidelines of 18-to-24 months.

Both wiseguys, whose court appearances have been waived consistently due to their serious medical ailments, will be permitted to seek leniency, including a non-custodial sentence, due to health issues, according to the plea agreements their lawyers worked out with prosecutors.

Cammarano and the remaining seven defendants, including Genovese soldier Ernest (Butch) Montevecchi and Luchese wiseguy Eugene ([Boobsie](#)) Castelle, face racketeering, extortion and loansharking charges that stem primarily from the cooperation of Bonanno capo [Peter \(Petey B.S.\)](#) Lovaglio.



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