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Luchese crime family scion hopes polygraph, severance from namesake dad's case can produce acquittal

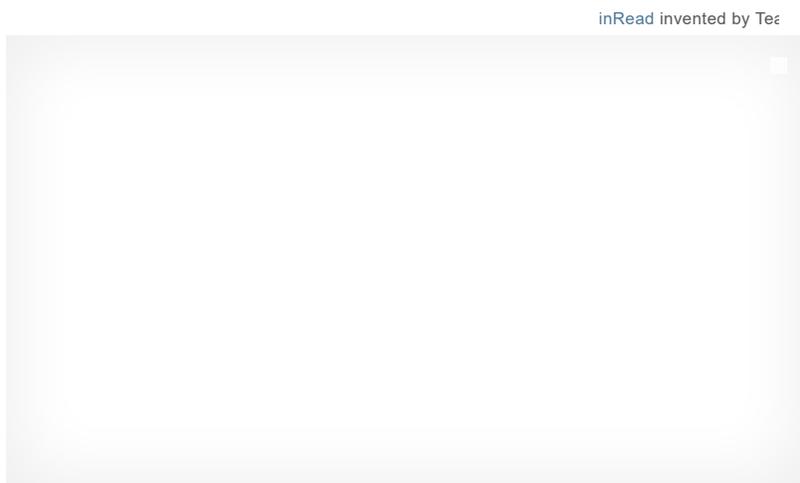
By **LARRY MCSHANE**
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | DEC 09, 2018



Steven D. Crea, the son of reputed Luchese family underboss Steven L. Crea, passed a polygraph exam administered last month by retired FBI veteran Jeremiah Hanafin (Courtesy Photo)

There's one FBI agent convinced by Steven D. Crea's denials of any role in a brutal Bronx mob hit and a second Mafia murder plot.

The son of reputed Luchese family underboss Steven L. Crea passed a polygraph exam administered last month by retired FBI veteran Jeremiah Hanafin, best known recently for conducting an August test on Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh's accuser, court documents show.

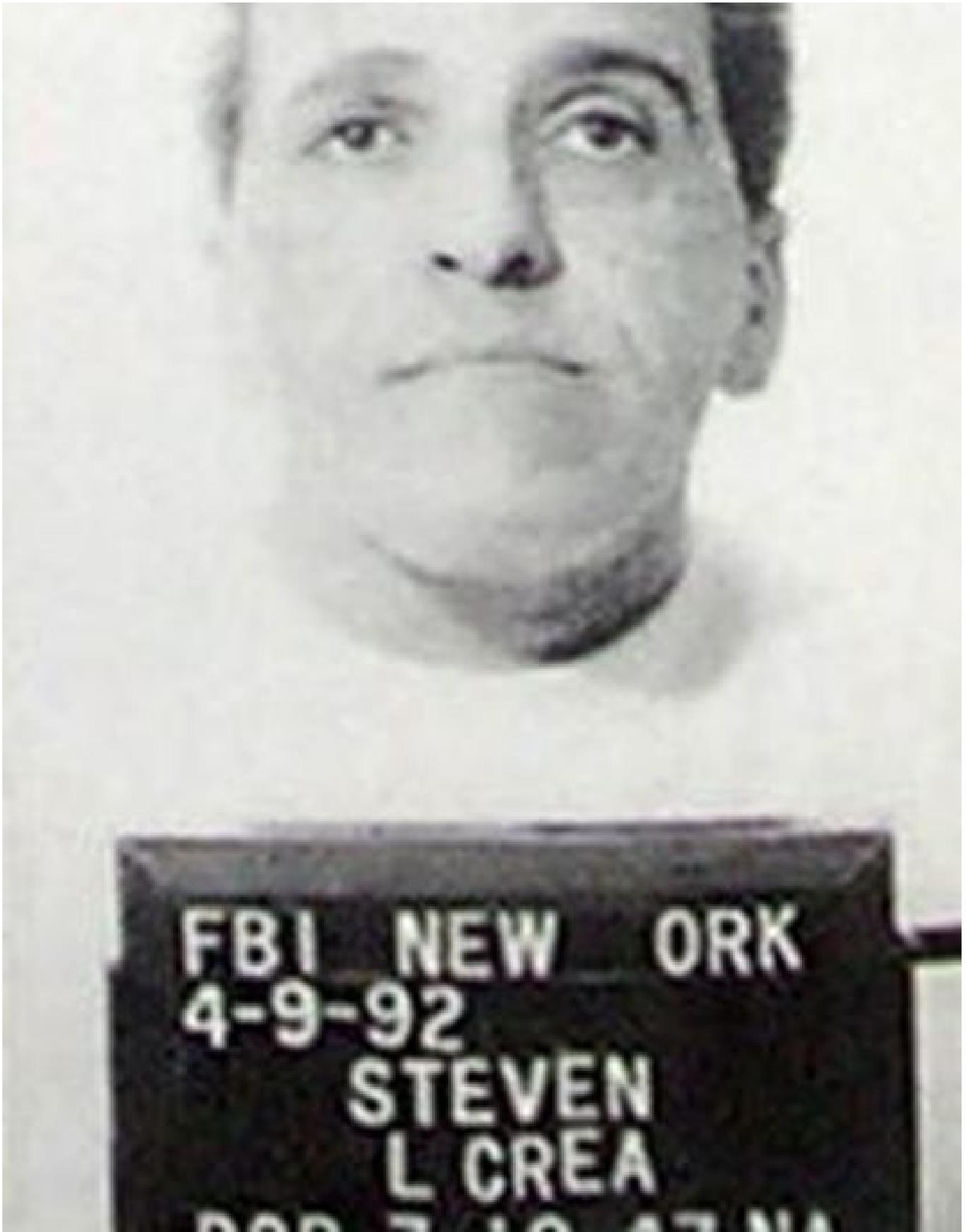


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It was the latest bit of good news for Crea, 46, who was released on \$1 million bond in August after a White Plains federal judge rebuked prosecutors in a mob trial due to start this coming March.





Reputed Luchese underboss Steven L Crea. (Handout)

Crea “has always maintained his innocence, and the polygraph was administered at the client’s urging,” said defense attorneys Joseph DiBenedetto and Seth Ginsberg in a statement to the Daily News.

The lawyers additionally hope to leverage the test findings into severing his trial from that of his four co-defendants — including his namesake dad, a mob veteran known on the street as “Wonder Boy.” The defense hopes to keep the sins of the father (and his associates) from tainting the son.

“In a multidefendant trial, the government can throw dirt in the air and hope that some of it sticks to everyone,” said the defense lawyers. “We want to ensure that any case against Mr. Crea is based solely on evidence that pertains directly to him.”

Both Creas were charged in the November 2013 execution of Michael Meldish, 62, one-time co-leader of a homicidal crew dubbed the Purple Gang. Meldish was discovered with a bullet to the head inside a parked Lincoln, its driver’s door left open on a Bronx street.

A federal indictment also accused the pair in a plot to whack Bonanno family associate Carl Ulzheimer, allegedly targeted in 2012 for dissing the elder Crea during a Bronx social club encounter.

“I’ll remember your face,” the father allegedly warned Ulzheimer.

But according to court papers filed last week, the younger Crea’s polygraph responses were “not indicative of deception” to questions about his involvement in either case. Hanafin, during his 24-year FBI career, performed more than 2,500 polygraph exams for the feds.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. attorney had no comment on the polygraph test.

The Lucheses are best known as the crime family featured in the Martin Scorsese mob classic “Goodfellas,” with infamous informant Henry Hill played by Ray Liotta. But a May 2017 federal indictment accused 19 members of the family’s current incarnation with racketeering, murder, assault, witness intimidation, robbery and extortion.

The younger Crea awaits his court date while out on bail, an unlikely circumstance for an alleged mob racketeer accused in a high-profile hit and a second murder plot.

After 14 months behind bars, the married father of three — who had no prior criminal charges — was released on Aug. 10 and placed under house arrest in his suburban home after the defense argued the evidence against him was lacking.

His 71-year-old father remains locked up in Brooklyn’s Metropolitan Detention Center pending his court date.

Court documents portray “Stevie Junior” as a man caught up to some degree in his father’s world, much like late Gambino family boss John J. Gotti and his son John A. (Junior) Gotti. Even Crea’s promotion to capo was described as done for “political reasons,” with the son immediately busted back to the rank of soldier.

Steven L. Crea passed a polygraph exam administered last month by retired FBI veteran Jeremiah Hanafin (pictured), best known recently for conducting an August test on Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh's accuser, Christine Blasey Ford (CNN)

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“There are complex dynamics in these cases, these racketeering cases, involving fathers and sons,” said previous Crea lawyer Mark Fernich. “There’s a different set of expectations in these families. . . . And look, there’s a stigma that comes with that name. It happened with (Junior) Gotti.”

White Plains Federal Judge Cathy Siebel approved the August release agreement after pointedly telling prosecutors their evidence against the mob scion was not as solid as promised.

“It would be an understatement to say that I am disappointed on how this has played out on the government’s part,” she said. “Their case for detention is certainly weaker than I was led to believe.”

Siebel disparaged cooperating government witness Frank Pasqua as “tarnished” and truth-challenged, noting that he had previously blamed the Meldish murder on his own father. And she had previously suggested that prosecutors needed to link Crea to the crimes rather than just to the crime family.

The defendant didn’t rise to the rank of Mafia capo “without understanding what mobsters do,” Siebel said at a January 2018 hearing. “But your status as a mobster is not enough to detain you on grounds of dangerousness.”

Her words were reason for optimism in the younger Crea’s camp.

“In our view, the court’s comments reflect the inescapable conclusion that the government’s case against Mr. Crea is weak,” the two lawyers said.

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