

Justice for Hero's Family

It took 33 years, but the family of Court Officer Albert Gelb finally got a measure of justice last week when Charles Carneglia, the sociopath believed to have murdered him 33 years ago, was sentenced to life behind bars.

It was a reminder of the fallacy in regarding mobsters as tough guys. Mr. Carneglia was a penny-ante punk, with or without a gun in his hand. The tough guys in this world are people like Mr. Gelb, who enforce the law honestly and don't back down when threatened by such vermin.

Mob Hitman Suspected In Officer's Killing Gets Life

Convicted of 4 Other Murders
By TOMMY HALLISSEY



The Chief-Leader/Alana Marcu 'IT'S LIKE TIME STOPS': Emily Gelb, the sister of a Court Officer who is believed to be one of the murder victims of Charles Carneglia, speaks to reporters after telling the sentencing judge in Brooklyn Federal Court of the toll the killing of her hero brother 33 years ago took on her family.

Mafia hit man Charles Carneglia, who was convicted of four murders in March, was sentenced to life in prison Sept. 17 after a heart-wrenching plea from the sister of a fifth alleged victim, Court Officer Albert Gelb, who said he belonged in "a cage, a filthy sewer," because he was full of "evil so heavy it can be felt."

In Brooklyn Federal court, family members of victim after victim told Judge Jack B. Weinstein of the horror Mr. Carneglia put them through as a Mafia killer who dissolved bodies in acid.

Murdered Armored Truck Guard

He was found guilty of the 1977 stabbing murder of Gambino family associate Michael Cotillo; the 1983 stabbing murder of Gambino family associate Salvatore Puma; the 1990 fatal shooting of Gambino family soldier Louis DiBono; and the 1990 murder of Jose Delgado Rivera, an armored truck guard whom Mr. Carneglia and others shot during a robbery at John F. Kennedy International Airport. The Gelb murder, one for which he was not convicted, was found to be relevant conduct in determining sentencing.

"When someone you love dies, time stops," an emotional Emily Gelb told the court as she held a picture of her brother with an acoustic guitar around his neck. "Everything except that immediate moment blurs for the next several days; you walk like a soldier through your own private battlefield."

Court Officer Gelb was shot to death on March 11, 1976 after working the night shift in Brooklyn with District Attorney Richard A. Brown, who was then a Judge. He had been receiving death threats for the previous 11 months after he arrested Mr. Carneglia for gun possession when the off-duty Court Officer saw the mobster hassling a waitress in a Queens diner.

The Court Officers Association put up a reward for its most-decorated officer at the time, but Mr. Carneglia remained at large until last year, when he was arrested as part of a 62-defendant takedown of the Gambino crime family.

Threatened, Killed, Then Bragged'

In March, Mr. Carneglia was acquitted of the murder of Mr. Gelb and after the jury hung on a murder conspiracy charge, prosecutors decided not to retry that matter once he was convicted of the other killings. "He was found to be a murderer, a disposer of bodies and an enforcer," U.S. Attorney Roger Burlingame said in court. "Albert Gelb had the gall to interfere with the defendant, and he tortured Gelb with threatening phone calls, murdered him and bragged about the murder."

Ms. Gelb was the first victim to address the mobster as he sat emotionless across the room in blue scrubs and an unkempt white beard. "Anyone who has lost a loved one can't been deemed as irrelevant," she told Mr. Carneglia. "Albert Gelb is not a hero for the way he died but for the way he lived. He was proud to be a Court Officer, and we were proud for him. It is natural that he died defending his principles."

When the time came for Mr. Carneglia to address the court, he remained unrepentant. "Liar upon liar testified against me, and they all had cooperation agreements," he told Judge Weinstein.

His lawyers had asked that the sentence be limited to 15 years because of Mr. Carneglia's failing health, and his advanced age of 63, but that request was denied.

'Justice Finally Served'

Court Officers Association President Dennis Quirk, who identified Mr. Gelb's body at the morgue, found a measure of relief in the fact that Mr. Carneglia would never see the light of day again.

"It's been a long road, but justice has finally been served," he said outside the court flanked by uniformed Court Officers. "And you can see from the families that they have some relief now."

Mr. Quirk, who was a fixture at the trial, said the sentencing had personal meaning for him. "For me personally, it's been a long time," he said. "I spoke to him at eight o'clock the night before he was killed. I was with him during that whole process of the threats, and I knew him and came to know his family very well.

"I think Emily Gelb said it very eloquently: he belongs caged for the rest of his life. He doesn't deserve computer training; he doesn't deserve anything. He should go to the maximum security where John Gotti was...and suffer. I hope he lives a long life."

Now that Mr. Carneglia's fate is sealed, Ms. Gelb said she would stop grieving. She plans to begin celebrating the life of her brother, and finally talk to her mother, who had been kept in the dark about the trial, "and tell her it is finally over."