

DAILY NEWS

NEWS

THE MOB PROBERS WHO FINGERED JR.

BY [JERRY CAPECI](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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They were nowhere near the courtroom in White Plains Federal Court Friday, when their personal Public Enemy No. 1 John A. (Junior) Gotti received a sentence of 77 months in prison. But if not for Ercole (Echo) Gaudio and Pasquale (Nino) Perrotta, the racketeering case against Junior would never have gotten off the ground. After numerous attempts at connecting Gotti to his father's organized crime empire, investigators were ready to give up. The turning point came on Columbus Day 1995. Gaudio, a state Organized Crime Task Force investigator, and Perrotta, then a 27-year-old rookie investigator for the Bronx district attorney, were celebrating the end of the first case they had worked together with dinner at an Italian restaurant. Gaudio, 57, was beeped with hot news from a wiretap: Gambino mobster Craig DePalma was on his way to a late-night meeting in Queens. And it sounded important. "We're in White Plains, he's in Scarsdale," Perrotta said. "We can make it. Let's go.

" They ran to their car and soon were careening down the Hutchinson River Parkway, through the Bronx, over the Whitestone Bridge and into Queens. Gaudio manned the binoculars. Perrotta was behind the wheel. Forty minutes later, at Liberty Ave. and the Van Wyck Expressway, Gaudio spotted DePalma in his silver Chevy Blazer; Perrotta eased in behind it. They watched as DePalma slowed beside a black Oldsmobile and spoke to two men. Seconds later, both cars pulled away, and there on the passenger side of the Olds, illuminated by street lights, was Junior, looking and acting like a mob boss. It was 10:40 p.

m. For about 90 minutes, Gaudio and Perrotta watched. They saw Gotti enter a commercial building owned by brother-in-law and reputed mobster Carmine Agnello, and then leave for a "walk talk" with two associates. Not long after midnight, after Gotti and the others had left, Gaudio called prosecutor Vincent Heintz and gave him details linking Gotti to DePalma. That crucial link would allow them to wiretap Gotti's phones and bug his offices. But their adventure wasn't over. As the duo drove away on Sutphin Blvd., they realized they were being tailed by a blue Suburban with three men inside. At a red light, the Suburban, registered to Agnello's junk yard business, stopped alongside the driver's side. "Hey, how's it going?

" said a brute of a man in the backseat. "His pock-marked face, cold eyes and menacing look reminded me of a guy from my old neighborhood," Gaudio said. "We called him Sally Gaga.

" Sally Gaga's hands were hidden below the open window, and Gaudio kept his eyes there, hoping not to see them emerge holding a shotgun. He pulled a police identification shield from the visor, flashed it and smiled, hoping the Sally Gaga brute in the backseat knew the mob rules against shooting cops. "Uh, okay," Sally Gaga said, as the driver made a quick U-turn and the Suburban disappeared into the night. "That was the only time during the entire investigation that I was concerned," Gaudio said. "We were going out to celebrate. My gun was in my locker.

" As for the sentencing, Gaudio said there was no reason to be there. "Our job is done," he said. "We saw him [Gotti] when it counted. Now he's going one way and we've moved on, too. I'm on another case and Nino's with the Secret Service.

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