

HONOR THY FATHER

by Gay Talese

World, 526 pp., \$10

THE MAFIA IS NOT AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

by Nicholas Gage

McGraw-Hill, 179 pp., \$5.95

Reviewed by Fred J. Cook

■ These two books on the Mafia are sharply contrasting. Gay Talese concentrates on the love life and tribulations of Salvatore (Bill) Bonanno, the son of Joseph (Joe Bananas) Bonanno, one of the five original Mafia chieftains of New York. Nicholas Gage illustrates the pervasiveness and insidious evils of organized crime.

Talese writes with his usual flair, but the effect is peculiarly one-sided. Because all his Mafia figures emerge as kindly family men who like to play with children, he creates the impression that the racketeering of the Mafiosi has been grossly exaggerated by government crime-busters who, to make themselves out as heroes, have to have menacing anti-heroes.

Most of *Honor Thy Father* pivots on the tempestuous relations between Bill Bonanno and his wife, the former Rosalie Profaci. It is like following a tale of domestic discord in *True Confessions* (we are even told how, on one occasion, Bill climbed into bed and made love with his gun on). The book also has touches reminiscent of *The Godfather*, with Bill Bonanno feeling a kinship with Michael, the son of Mario Puzo's fictional Don Corleone. It depicts little violence—only a bit of wild shooting, in which nobody even gets nicked.

Honor Thy Father is a bouillabaisse that has brought Talese a pre-publication paperback sale reportedly in excess of \$400,000, which will probably put the book on the best-seller lists. But it lacks anything that is new and vital. Major events are fuzzed, and the cruelty and unscrupulousness of the Mafia are hardly mentioned.

The mysterious kidnapping of Joe Bonanno in October 1964, his months-long disappearance and sudden re-emergence remain a mystery. Talese offers nothing more than published speculations. The Bonanno war that erupted in the streets of Brooklyn while Bill tried to keep control of the Mafia family in his father's absence is described with the same careful reticence. Though bodies were dumped all over the streets, the implication is that some wild nuts in rivaling gangs just shot each other up. Naturally, the Bonannos had nothing to do with it.



—From "The Mafia Is Not An Equal Opportunity Employer"

Mobsmen Paul Ricca, Salvatore Agoglia, "Lucky" Luciano, Meyer Lansky, John Senna, and Harry Brown in 1932—"a truer picture of the Mafia, minus the heart throbs."

Honor Thy Father, then, has the virtues of the intimate detail and characterization that can be produced only when a skilled reporter gets close to his subject, and it has the defect that comes from a writer's being so committed to his subject that he virtually adopts the subject's view of himself. In the end, Talese, with seeming approval, shows Bill Bonanno scoffing at the whole idea of a national crime menace "whose demigods were a half-dozen tired old dons trying to think big, and he could not help but speculate that the main problem of the government was not that the Mafia was alive but that it may well be dying. . . ."

Nicholas Gage presents a truer picture of the Mafia, minus the heart throbs. Perhaps because his book is mostly drawn from articles previously written for *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and various magazines, it doesn't have a really coherent theme. Nevertheless, the research is solid, the view accurate. Gage's Mafia dons, unlike Talese's, are not kindly paterfamilias but ruthless cur's who sometimes beat up their wives, inevitably sport mistresses as badges of distinction, and don't hesitate to sell diseased meat to the public, burn down supermarkets, and murder their managers for refusing to stock an inferior brand of detergent made by a mob-controlled firm.

Some of Gage's book, like the chapters on Meyer Lansky and Joseph Colombo, provide little that is new, but the one on Frank Sinatra reveals fresh details that the retired singer and his swinging coterie will hardly appreciate. Gage discloses that the one-time idol of the nation's bobby-soxers was the subject of a special Justice Department report dated August 3, 1962, which stated that Sinatra had been "in contact with about ten of the best-known gangsters in the country in the late 1950s and early 1960s."

The report indicated that the per-

former was so close to Joseph and Rocco Fischetti, the Chicago gang leaders who were cousins of Al Capone, that he made a commercial for an auto-dealer pal of theirs "as a favor without charge." Whenever Sinatra sang at the Fontainebleau in Miami Beach, he arranged to have Joe Fischetti paid as a talent scout, and the report charged that as of April 1962 the hotel had paid Fischetti \$38,340 in seventy-one talent-scout checks.

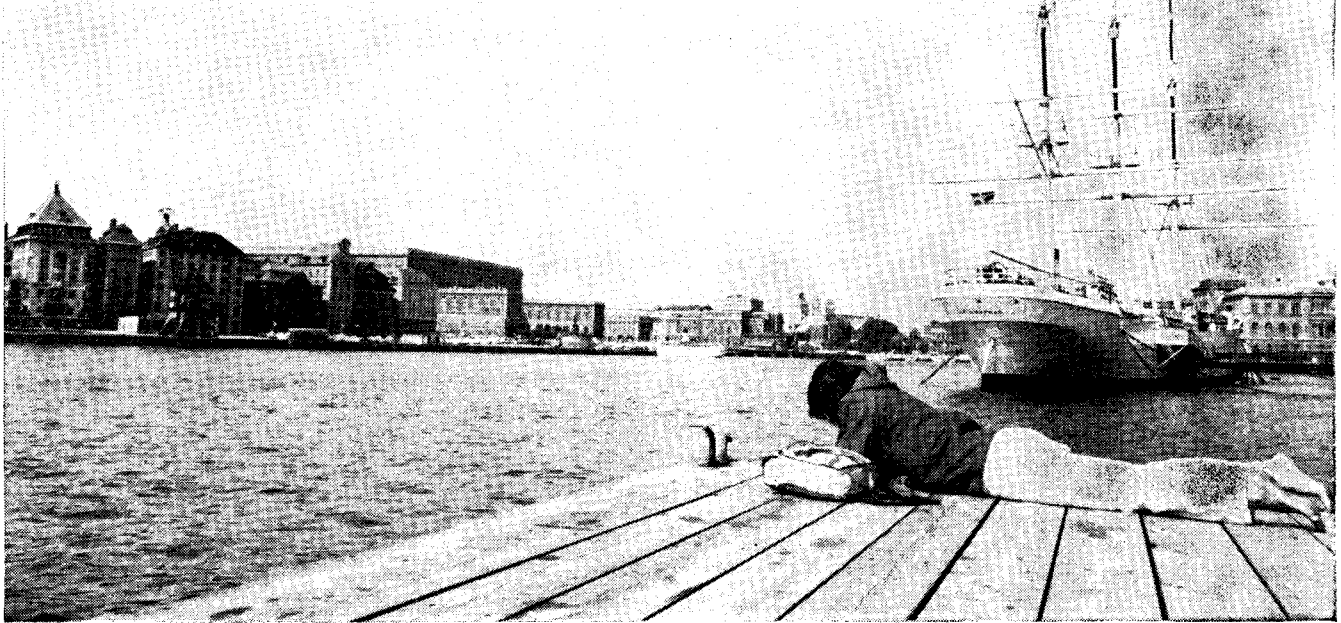
Gage links Sinatra to the late Charles (Lucky) Luciano, the brains of the international narcotics traffic; to Willie Moretti, the New Jersey mob fixer who allegedly stuck a revolver into the mouth of band leader Tommy Dorsey to free Sinatra from a binding contract early in his career; and to Sam Giancana, the Chicago mob boss whose visits to Sinatra cost the singer a Nevada gambling franchise. Such connections, Gage says, were too gamey for President John F. Kennedy, for whom Sinatra had campaigned in 1960.

Sinatra had even raised \$1.4-million for the Democratic Party's depleted war chest in a one-night, pre-inauguration gala in Washington, and he evidently anticipated closest camaraderie with the highest, even building a special wing on his Palm Springs home to accommodate the President when he came to California. But after JFK saw the special Justice Department report, he stayed instead with Bing Crosby, and Sinatra's special Presidential wing went unoccupied. Disgusted by such evidence of Democratic ingratitude, Sinatra switched allegiances and supported Ronald Reagan for re-election in California in 1970. Gage quotes Sinatra's mother as saying: "My son is like me. You cross him, he never forgets."

Fred J. Cook is the author of "The Secret Rulers," a book about the Mafia that Bill Bonanno's wife smuggled into prison for him to read.

Booked for Travel

David Butwin



—Mark Chester, ASCAP

If a Stockholmer stays in town for the weekend, you'll find her in the sun. On the right, the floating hostel "Af Chapman."

Stockholm When the Swedes Split

ONE of the hardest things to find around Stockholm on a weekend is a Swede. "Oh, you may see one or two," a last, lingering Stockholmer told me late on a Friday afternoon before he too evacuated the city. This was the last weekend in July, a month the city folk traditionally spend on holiday, whether on the Costa del Sol, at cottages beside Swedish lakes, or in the nearby Archipelago. Paris in August would be an apt comparison.

Stockholm does not close down on weekends, however, with the departure of its citizenry. Someone leaves the key behind so that an outsider can avail himself of indoor and outdoor concerts, museums, theaters, restaurants, and an assortment of Old Town nightclubs that includes Kaos (as in chaos) for folksinging; Stampen for jazz; Engelen, a pub; and Alexandra, a discotheque frequented, in season, by Stockholm's choicest social specimens.

I had visited Stockholm once before, in early December, and that time was told the streets were barren of Swedes because they prefer to hide indoors during the winter. One would presume the only way to meet the natives is to go to Spain or the Greek islands, where they like to vacation. But even that search could prove fruitless because, as a young businesswoman told me before she left for a lake in the watery

Swedish province of Värmland: "We don't travel out of the country as much as people think. Our salaries may be the highest in Europe, but the cost of living is the highest too. Who has the money to travel?"

Sweden's prices provoke awe and apprehension along the European tourist trails. Travelers on strict budgets tend to shy away from Stockholm, and touring youth, if drawn by the lure of Sweden's legendary permissiveness, tighten their money belts to survive. Yet it seemed to me, though I didn't check the price of lettuce, that costs in Stockholm and across Sweden were only moderately higher than those in other Northern European countries and certainly not in New York's league.

Thanks to its welfare society, some of the best things in Sweden are still free. On a sunken plaza at the Sergels Torg—the scene, in season, of rousing political demonstrations—is a new building that houses not only the Parliament (its sixty-year-old quarters are being remodeled) but also a first-floor cultural center fairly bulging with diversions, all free. In front is a circular desk behind which waits a group of girls ready to take a request for one of their many records. You pick one out of a register and write down the name, and while the girl makes the selection from a push-button control deck, you settle comfortably into a deep chair nearby, put the headphones in place, and wait for familiar sounds.

There are also anterooms where entire concerts can be heard. The periodical section is always aswarm with foreign visitors paging through magazines and newspapers; at sleek, Swedish-modern chess tables opponents and hangers-on respond to the action in a half-dozen languages. Just across the floor, local and tourist children, wired for music, lie on a carpet tinkering with games or looking at books.

Outside on the stone steps, a popular gathering place for international youth, I noticed a majority of Orientals. They were part of a new traveling brigade, young, independent Japanese students who cross Russia by the Trans-Siberian Railroad or come to Europe on cheap charter flights, often holding out more than a year before returning. In fact, the two I met, only twenty, said they were working their way around the world, had been gone several years, and had spent time working at Japanese restaurants in New York. They had come to Stockholm in search of the purportedly high Swedish wages but didn't seem to want to do kitchen chores, one of the few jobs open to them.

Stockholm, they said, was too expensive. And as for Stockholmers, one of the long-haired pair screwed his features into a corpse-like expression and said, "The people look like they are dying." I winced slightly and glanced back at my Stockholm friend. He looked very full of life. Swedes are