

Blood and Honor

Inside the Scarfo Mob—The Mafia's Most Violent Family

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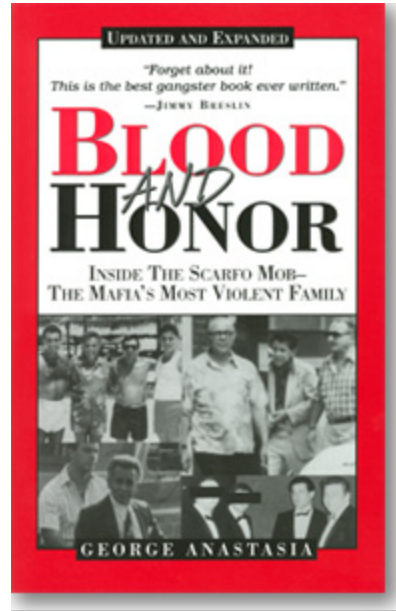
From the Prologue

Ocean City, Maryland, is a bustling seashore town three hours south of Philadelphia. It is a summer getaway for the middle class, a city that bulges from May to September with tourists who flock to the condominiums and high-rise hotels that line the Atlantic Ocean. A pristine beach. Clean, wide streets lined with shopping centers, restaurants, movie theaters, and bars. A boardwalk jammed with rides and amusements for the kids. Ocean City has it all.

It is bigger, brighter, and cleaner than Wildwood, New Jersey, more family-oriented than Atlantic City, and more sophisticated—in its own tacky way—than anything on Long Beach Island, another Jersey shore area.

In the summer of 1988, Ocean City, Maryland, was also the home of Nicholas Caramandi, mobster turned informant, hitman turned government operative, and witness extraordinaire. Caramandi, fifty-four, was preparing for the most important court appearance of his life, a federal case in which Philadelphia organized crime boss Nicodemo Scarfo and seventeen of his top associates were charged under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act with assorted counts of murder and mayhem. It was the biggest RICO case in Philadelphia history, a trial that federal authorities were predicting would bring down the notorious Scarfo organization.

Caramandi was the federal point man, the witness whose testimony would make or break the case. He was in hiding, living with teams of federal



agents who worked week-long shifts serving as his bodyguards. They had checked into a condominium in Ocean City early in the year, long before the tourist season began. Ocean City seemed ideal. It was close to Philadelphia, yet removed from the Philadelphia axis. Few Philadelphians vacationed there. When they went to the shore, it was usually in New Jersey. Ocean City attracted visitors from Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia; people who read the papers and watched the television news out of Washington and Baltimore; people who knew little and cared less about Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo and the Philadelphia mob.