

DILLINGER'S BRAIN!!!

from the Golden Age of Gangsters



MAD SLASHER CUTS CAPONE

William Balsamo is a retired New York dockworker and the great-nephew of Giuseppe "Battista" Balsamo, the first "godfather" of the Brooklyn Mafia. This kinship was enough to gain him an introduction to Frank Galluccio, an aging soldier in the

Genovese family who had made his mark in organized crime in 1917. The mark was a deep cut—three of them, actually—on the neck and left cheek of a fellow Brooklyn hoodlum named Alphonse, who would move

Galluccio: Guilty of knife fighting under the influence

to Chicago two years later and rise to notoriety as Scarface Al Capone. Balsamo met with Galluccio at Lento's Bar & Grill at 39th Street and Second Avenue in Brooklyn in the fall of 1965. He agreed not to divulge the details of their conversation until after Galluccio's death, which occurred, from natural causes, a few years later.

FRANK GALLUCCIO: One thing I want you to do for me, Bill. Whatever I tell you now, I don't want you to say nothing about it till I'm long gone.

WILLIAM BALSAMO: Mr. Galluccio, I will respect your wishes.

GALLUCCIO: I heard from Esposito and several dockworkers that you

wanted to talk to me about Al Capone.

BALSAMO: Yes, I do.

GALLUCCIO: The first thing I want to ask you, what was Battista Balsamo's son's name?

BALSAMO: Vito. He was my mother's first cousin.

GALLUCCIO: Yes, that's right. That makes you the great-nephew of Battista Balsamo from Columbia and Union Street. . . . I hope you don't mind me asking about your family, Bill, but it's for my own satisfaction.

BALSAMO: I understand. Now, about Capone, I've read books that say you are the man who cut Al Capone's face. Is that right?

GALLUCCIO: Well, I would never admit that to the detectives or anyone connected with newspapers, but the answer is yes, I did it. I had every right to do it. Nobody insults my sister the way he did. Especially in public at a dance hall, when I was with my date.

BALSAMO: When did this happen and where?

GALLUCCIO: It happened in the summer of 1917 at a dance hall that was owned by Frankie Yale. You ever heard of him?

BALSAMO: Of course. What was the name of the dance hall?

GALLUCCIO: The Harvard Inn, on the Bowery in Coney Island. Al was just a bartender-bouncer in those days.

BALSAMO: He was a nobody then. Why did you cut his face? What did he do to your sister? By the way, what was her name?

GALLUCCIO: Lena. I was with Maria Tanzio. I took both of them out that evening to dine and dance at the Harvard for

a good time. Capone was trying to put the make on Lena, and Lena ignored him every time, and every time he would pass our table he would try to talk to her. It seemed to me she didn't want to be bothered with him; she was getting mad. Whenever he passed the table, he would try to say something. I thought she knew him, so I asked her, "You know that guy?"—or something like that. My sister told me she never saw him before, and he had a lot of nerve. She said, "He won't give up, Frank. He can't take a hint. But I don't like him; he is embarrassing me. Maybe you could ask him to please stop in a nice way." Capone was passing by the table again, and I was about to ask him to leave my kid sister alone, in a nice way, of course. And he leans over and tells her that she has a nice ass.



Scarface Al: He loved one woman's rear end too much.

BALSAMO: Did you hear that or did she tell you what he said?

GALLUCCIO: You kidding? He said it loud enough that people sitting at a table next to ours overheard the insult, too.

the booze, you know. But I think I sliced him two or three times. I don't remember. It was a long time ago. But fuck him, he deserved it. I'm sure if it was the other way around, he would do the same thing



They've hung everything on me but the Chicago fire.

I've been accused of every death except the casualty list of the World War.—Al Capone

"You got a nice ass, honey, and I mean it as a compliment. Believe me." When I heard that, I jumped up from the table and said to him, "I won't take that shit from nobody. Apologize to my sister now, you hear?" He smiled and came toward me with his arms out and his palms open as if to say, Come on, buddy, I'm only joking. I shouted back that that is no fucking joke, mister. Capone wasn't smiling any more after that. He still came toward me. I called for the owner. He just kept coming toward me. So I whipped out a pocketknife and went for the son of a bitch's neck.

BALSAMO: How come you got his face instead?

GALLUCCIO: Well, I was drinking that night, and I was a little drunk. I think maybe my aim was not good because of

like I did. I mean, that was my kid sister, you know. Nobody likes to be insulted. Especially at a dance.

BALSAMO: Then what did you do after that?

GALLUCCIO: I grabbed my sister and Maria and ran out of the joint right away. Later I find out from some neighborhood guys that this big guy is looking for me.

BALSAMO: How big was he then?

GALLUCCIO: To me, he looked like at least five feet eleven or six feet. But you got to remember, I was a little under the booze. So to me he looked big and stocky, and I'm only five feet six. I must have been about 148 pounds then. This guy looked like he was 200 pounds. Hey, this guy could hurt me bad if I let him get me. I better strike first and quick, and I knew that a punch was not enough to stop him,

so fuck that. I had to use what I learned in the streets. A few days later I still keep hearing that this guy is looking for me. He's telling people that he is with Frankie Yale.

BALSAMO: What did he mean, he was with Frankie Yale?

GALLUCCIO: It means he belongs to Yale's crew. Then about a week later I went to see my friend from the East Side, Albert Alterio. He was related to Two Knife Willie in some way. I told Albert about this problem, so he takes me to see Giuseppe Masseria—"Joe the Boss"—and Charley ["Lucky"] Luciano. Albert pleaded my case and Joe the Boss and Charley agreed nobody should insult another man in front of his own family and get away with it. What happened then was a sit-down at the Harvard Inn between me,

Fisherman Al: Charley, Frankie, and Capone. You know, I was really sorry what I did to

his face. But I was a little drunk, and he insulted Lena. So I did what I thought was right at the time. The decision at the sit-down was Al Capone was ordered by Luciano and Yale not to look for revenge, and I was ordered to apologize. As a matter of fact, the look of the cuts I put on his face kind of shook me up, because I was really sorry for what I had done to him. Jesus, Bill, Capone had to go through life with those scars.

BALSAMO: Did you ask him how many stitches he got?

GALLUCCIO: No, not personally. But Charley later told me it was close to 30. Luciano said they took him to Coney Island Hospital to get patched up.

BALSAMO: How were things after that?

GALLUCCIO: The few times we saw each other face to face, he would smile like he was trying to be nice to me. He did say to me that he was wrong when he insulted my sister in public. We never associated while he was still living in Brooklyn.

BALSAMO: Would you say Luciano and Yale made Capone understand that if he went looking for you, it would be his funeral?

GALLUCCIO: You could put it that way. I guess that was the understanding. Now, remember, Bill. Don't tell anyone about this till I am long gone. Capeesh?

BALSAMO: No problem. I swear on my mother, not a word.