

# Police Reveal Motive In Gangland Killing

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 30—(AP)—Police today revealed for the first time the alleged motive in the gangland strangling of Nick De John—that the former Capone mobster from Chicago was slain because he tried to "muscle in" on a highly profitable gambling and narcotics racket.

Police also said a key witness had been threatened because a mob knew she had overheard the De John killing being plotted.

Inspector Frank Ahern said in an interview that De John was garroted because he was trying to take over a local gang of Sicilian criminals.

"He declared himself 'in' for 50 per cent of a sales company which was a front for the gang, and he wanted to take over bookies, gambling, night clubs and narcotics," Ahern said.

Ahern said De John backed up his bid for the gang leadership here with two or three of his own men.

"About a month before he was killed, he began to issue orders about operations here. The local men were afraid if he got his roots in here he would take over completely."

De John's body was found in his expensive convertible automobile on a street here May 7, 1947.

Despite a protective guard, someone made a threatening telephone call to Mrs. Anita Rocchia Venza, a key witness. But Mrs. Venza appeared before the San

Francisco county grand jury Monday night and the jury voted murder indictments against five men for the De John slaying.

They were named as Frank Scapatura, Tony Lima, Leonard Calamia, Sebastiano Nani and Mike Abati. Nani and Abati are in custody.

The FBI was expected momentarily to pick up Lima at Johnstown, Pa., where he reportedly was about to surrender.

Ahern said the telephone call to Mrs. Venza was made by a man who spoke broken English. He advised her to "break a leg or something" and not to appear before the grand jury.

The police inspector said Mrs. Venza assertedly overheard a plot to kill De John while she was in a north beach tavern writing for an employment interview.

Ahern said De John was "delivered to his killers at the tavern the following night, then was persuaded to go somewhere else for a game of pinochle—and instead was strangled."

Ahern said he learned about the eavesdropping woman shortly after the slaying and finally encountered her a month ago while he was investigating an abortion gang. This ring assertedly paid tribute to the racketeers.

Police at first were interested only in the abortion ring, Ahern explained but, by a lucky break, discovered a tie-in with the De John mystery.

Gus Oliva, a former wealthy north beach politico, called Mrs. Venza in a matter involving \$2,500, Ahern stated. Mrs. Venza was instructed to "string along" with him.

Police soon cracked down on the alleged abortion ring and arrested several persons, including Oliva. He was charged with attempted extortion in a mafia gang's planned invasion of the city's \$60,000 monthly abortion racket. Oliva denied this and said he merely was seeking a personal "loan" of \$2,500 from Mrs. Venza.

Captain of inspectors James English added that the police department "will meet any mafia threats head-on. The way to counter terroristic racketeering of this kind is to smash it, which we intend to do."

# Fire Still Burning in Portland

PORTLAND, Nov. 30—(AP)—Flames still danced along Front avenue tonight hours after an explosion tore apart a waterfront building, shattered windows in a wide area and injured one man.

The flames sprouted from gas, leaking from pipes up through cracks in the street.

The Portland dock commission building was demolished by the blast last night, apparently set off when Walter Kratt, construction engineer, smelled gas in the building and switched on an electric light.

The impact was felt ten miles away.

Kratt was rescued from the burning wreckage by longshoremen who were picketing nearby. He suffered burns, but hospital attendants said he would recover.

Investigators had not determined whether the explosion was of gas leaking from a nearby 24-inch main or another source. The main was broken today, but officials said the blast might have cracked it.

Repairmen began digging a trench around the breaks to lay by-passing pipes around the area. Meanwhile escaping gas was allowed to burn to prevent danger of another explosion.

The Portland General Electric company set patrols along its underground lines and a waterfront steam power plant as precaution against further explosions. Manhole covers in the area were removed and portable blowers put to work.

James Dillane, first assistant fire chief, was injured today while investigating the explosion. He fell 20 feet down an utility company hole and was hospitalized with a back injury.

## Savold Impressive

EASTBOURNE, England, Dec. 1—(AP)—Lee Savold, the veteran Patterson, N. J., heavyweight, fairly danced through a workout today in the presence of British boxing writers. The blond American, who meets British Empire Champion Bruce Woodcock in London, Dec. 6, impressed the scribes with his skill.

## Classified Ads

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## \$50,000 in Gifts For University

7—\$50,000 IN GIFTS —PG 8 ... PORTLAND, Nov. 30—(AP)—Gifts to state institutions of higher learning, reported at today's board meeting, totaled \$90,402.

Of this, \$50,017 was earmarked for the University of Oregon, \$30,300 for Oregon State College, \$10,290 for the University of Oregon medical school in Portland, \$200 for Eastern Oregon College of Education at La Grande and \$595 for Southern Oregon College of Education at Ashland.

Among the other gifts to the University were \$4,000 from the Research Corporation in New York to continue Dr. F. W. Paul's work in vacuum spectroscopy, and a gift of 17 volumes of the China Weekly Review, valued at \$100, from the missionary research library in New York.

## OneWorld Meeting Features Speaker

The world constitution and some of its principal problems will be the topic of a talk by Dr. E. S. Wengert, head of the political science department to be given at the One World club Wednesday at 7:30 p. m. in the YMCA.

Dr. Wengert was one of those responsible for the drawing of a world constitution in Chicago last summer.

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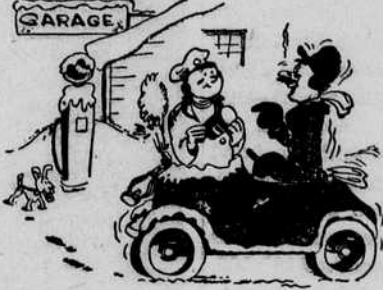
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