

CHAPTER TEN

THE CHIEF, THE CONDOS & THE MOB

Seven months after summarily wrapping up the Eduardo Tirella homicide case, Chief Joseph A. Radice retired. By then he'd spent 42 years on the job. The rumors of how he may have profited by allowing Doris Duke to walk, still rebound on the dedicated Newport Facebook Group: "We all know she did it," wrote one Newporter, "The chief retired to Key Biscayne right next to Bebe Rebozo, Nixon's buddy." ²³⁶ Another speculated that he "bought an island off the Florida keys." ²³⁷ None of that is how it happened. But like so many aspects of this story, the many half-truths may contain the full truth.

Joseph Augustus Radice was a complicated figure. Born in 1899, with only an 8th grade education, ²³⁸ he put on a badge in 1925. By 1938 when he made Sergeant, he was already well schooled in the upstairs-downstairs rules that protected the wealthy and defined the working-class officials in Newport who catered to them. Back then, a single uniform was responsible for patrolling the entire ten-mile Ocean Drive.



Chief Joseph A. Radice as a young motorcycle cop (left) and on his last day in uniform 7 months after closing the Duke-Tirella homicide case.

“In the winter,” Radice recalled, “patrolmen had to walk in the snow and the ice. You couldn’t get a cup a coffee (or) a ride. No cars. But you could get warm if you knew somebody” on one of the estates.²³⁹

“Radice was a real bulldog and an outlier,” said retired Newport Fire Capt. Paul Faerber. “An Italian who hung on for more than four decades in a department dominated by the Irish.”²⁴⁰ It took him 20 years to make chief, but long before the “unfortunate accident,” Radice was well acquainted with the reclusive heiress at Rough Point.

Ever since her father’s deathbed warning to “Trust no one,” Doris had been famously paranoid, allowing vicious German Shepherds and Akitas to roam the grounds of her estates in Newport, New Jersey, Beverly Hills and Hawaii, causing passersby to repeated get attacked and bitten.²⁴¹

In May of 1964 after two tourists on Cliff Walk were victimized in a single week, Radice ordered “the destruction or removal” of two of her dogs.²⁴² Counter-puncher that she was, Doris made front page news a month later, after she cut off the Cliff Walk with chain link fences. She’d been in a pitched battle with the City since 1958 when she put up “heavy wire fencing and thorny bushes” along the Walk, one of the top tourist attractions in Rhode Island.²⁴³

Doris was the only estate owner to block the 3 ½ mile stretch; erecting fences as recently as four months before October 7th, 1966. ²⁴⁴ But all of that ended eight days after Tirella's death when The Duke Foundation made what was described as "the first substantial pledge" to The Cliff Walk Foundation then trying to raise \$493,000 toward a goal of \$1.2 million for the pathway's restoration. It was a clear message to the City. "Newport was reminded," wrote her godson Pony Duke," that "Doris was its only hope for refurbishment." ²⁴⁵



Rough Point as seen today from CliffWalk. The dogs are long gone, but there is still a sense of foreboding about the estate. Despite dropping her lawsuit with Newport after Tirella's death and contributing to The Walk's restoration, the stretch surrounding the Duke estate remains the least passable section of the 3 ½ mile public walkway (Adam Fithers photos)

With respect to Tirella's homicide, if there *had* been a quid pro quo, nobody was in a position to benefit more than Joseph Radice. "Oh boy, the word was, 'Radice's gonna make out on this one,'" recalled Woody Ring, one of the first young police officers on the scene the night of the incident. ²⁴⁶ But did the Chief make out? And if so, for how much?

At the time he left the Newport PD in 1967, Radice's annual salary was a mere \$7,000. Four years later he bought the first of two units at The Warrenton House, a new condominium complex in Hollywood Florida. ²⁴⁷ He also owned a pair of lots near the beach in Middletown, the city adjacent to Newport. ²⁴⁸ In order to get some sense of whether any of the funds in his Florida property buys came from Doris Duke, one has to consider his tangled family connections.

MARRIED INTO THE MOB

Radice's first wife was a waitress named Ada Pollack. In 1919 they had a daughter Mary, but eight years later, Radice abandoned both of them. "He walked out," recalls his granddaughter Elayne Paranzino, a former Roman Catholic nun. ²⁴⁹ "Ada was able to get a divorce on grounds of desertion. He paid nothing to her, and she would bring my mom every day to an orphanage, then walk to her waitressing job to support the two of them."

By 1935, still a patrolman, Radice was married to Agnes O'Loughlin, a typist at The Naval Training Station. ²⁵⁰ Nine years after that, they separated. ²⁵¹ The date of their divorce is unclear, but in 1970 Radice married into a Mafia-related family when he exchanged vows in Miami with the former Mary Capochiano Flynn. ²⁵² Her brother Dominic was a bookie for Raymond Patriarca, the Cosa Nostra boss of New England, based in Providence. That's according to her grandson, Andrew Flynn who loved Radice and considered him his surrogate grandfather.

"My blood grandfather David Flynn was a real violent guy and a nasty drunk," he said in an interview for this book. ²⁵³ "Somebody told him he needed to get out of town, and he was leaving when he got hit by a train."

The details of the accident in 1955 were highly suspicious.

At the time of the crash, Flynn's car was parked on a railroad crossing with gates down and lights flashing on either side of it. After impact with the New Haven Railroad's Merchant Limited, the vehicle was hurled 150 feet (with Flynn pinned inside). ²⁵⁴

Andrew told me that he's sure it was murder.

"He'd been tied to the steering wheel at the time. Word in the family was that the Capochianos killed him." ²⁵⁵

At that point, Joe Radice had made Captain, but this was one "accident" he didn't have to investigate, since it took place in Richmond, RI., some 25 miles away from Newport.

Radice died at the age of 98 in 1997. ²⁵⁶ By then, though he and his third wife wintered in Florida, his principal home was at 22 Rhode Island Avenue in Newport. Andrew said that Mary, his grandmother, got the chief's pension, and property records show that she inherited the last of Joe's Hollywood condominiums. ²⁵⁷

Radice's granddaughter, Elayne, who long ago reconciled with him after she left The Sisters of Saint Joseph, told me that for years, she's had to live with the rumors that he'd been bought off by Doris Duke. "I was in the convent when the Tirella tragedy happened," she said. "But I confronted my grandfather one day. I said, 'Don't you lie to me.' He said 'None of these rumors are true, Elayne. I didn't get *any* money from her.' Then, when I pressed him, he chuckled. 'You think I was paid off? You can *have* it if we can find it.'" ²⁵⁸

Still, a conflict remains within the Radice/Flynn/Paranzino family over where his money went. "My grandmother Mary, Joe's wife, got his pension, the condo and their house on Rhode Island Avenue," said Andrew. ²⁵⁹ It's unclear who in the family received the proceeds from the two lots in Middletown near Easton's Beach and Elayne insists that *she* got Radice's \$25,000 life insurance policy and nothing else. ²⁶⁰

Meanwhile, property records in Broward County, Florida show that in 1971, while still maintaining his principal residence in Newport, Radice bought Unit 432 at the Warrenton House, a new four-story complex in Hollywood. The price was \$13,900 – the equivalent of \$88,588.00 today. He financed it with a down payment of \$4,780 which was 68% of his last year's salary as Chief. In 1976 he bought another apartment, Unit 433, in the same complex for \$19,000 and sold the first unit in 1977. ²⁶¹

Another Warrenton condo, Unit 428 on the same floor, was owned by Mary Radice's brother Dom (aka Donald) the mob bookie. ²⁶² His widow Betty later sold that apartment to Elayne Paranzino's parents Albert and Mary. Radice's granddaughter contends that she had no knowledge of her parent's connection to the Warrenton complex, but she acknowledges that her father Al was Dominic Capochiano's partner in Ann's Kitchen, a popular Middletown restaurant, and that he too, ran numbers for Mafia boss Patriarca.

The mob ties to the Capochianos date to 1951 when the RI State Police raided two variety stores in Newport where bets were being placed. ²⁶³ One was co-owned by Dominic, whose sister Mary later became Radice's wife. After the raid she and her then husband David posted bail of \$1,500 for two of the arrestees - equivalent to \$14,790.00 today. It was an era before credit cards were in wide use, ²⁶⁴ so it's likely that the bond was posted in cash.

David Flynn was the same man who, four years later, was apparently murdered on the railroad tracks by his in-laws in the Capochiano family. Joseph Radice was a Lieutenant at the time of the raids, which State Police conducted in secret without informing the Newport PD. ²⁶⁵

“That tells you something,” says retired NYPD Detective James Moss.

OTHER BENEFICIARIES

With his property acquisitions in The Sunshine State and his complicated family connections, the rumors continue as to whether Chief Radice’s rush-to-judgement on the Duke-Tirella homicide financed his retirement. But one thing is clear: two other Newport cops directly connected to the case, benefited. Det. George Watts who took Dee Dee’s brief bedroom statement on Sunday the 9th was promoted to Sergeant within months ²⁶⁶ and Lt. Frank Walsh succeeded Radice as chief, ²⁶⁷ though the clear heir-apparent was Capt. Paul Sullivan, then the Chief of Detectives.



Capt. Paul Sullivan (left) the heir apparent for the Newport Police Chief’s job and former Lt. Frank H. Walsh who got it, at a press conferences in October 1967 following the arrest of Stephen Robertson. (Peter Lance photo)

might have even contemplated a run for Congress one day after serving as head of the Department. ²⁶⁸

“No one was more qualified to succeed Radice,” says Tim, one of the late Sullivan’s sons. ²⁶⁹ “He was never quite right with the way the Duke case was handled.”

One of the biggest unanswered questions in my investigation was why *he* didn’t get the Chief’s job? Paul Sullivan was the effective Number Two in the department. An alumnus of USC and graduate of the FBI’s National Police Academy, he was also a civic leader. He’d been chairman of the annual March of Dimes drive and served on the Newport School Committee; a larger than life law man, who

Still, Captain Paul ended up ratifying that contrived Q&A and he testified at the civil trial that there had been “no foul play.”²⁷⁰ So, if he *had* acquiesced to Radice, I was curious as to why Lt. Walsh had beat him out for the Chief’s job. After pulling my old *Daily News* files out of storage, I found a dog-eared Reporter’s Notebook, where I’d written three cryptic lines in the fall of 1967, during my first stint on *The Daily News*:

-Robertson

-Tubley’s – Sullivan

-Doris

Those lines brought me back to an encounter I’d had with Captain Sullivan a year after they closed the Duke-Tirella case. It happened on the day of the preliminary hearing in the Stephen Robertson murder at the same Superior Court house where my mother worked as a Deputy Clerk.

On the night after the two sailors were killed, when Steve had surrendered, he’d been arraigned at Police Headquarters and ordered held without bail pending trial. Moments later, he was led out in that perp walk and driven in a State Police unit to the Adult Correctional Institution, Rhode Island’s ominous maximum-security prison in Cranston, known as the ACI.

A week later they brought him back for the prelim and when it was over, Capt. Paul went to lunch at Tubley’s Spa, a coffee shop on the corner of Spring and Touro Streets near The Superior Courthouse. I still had a number of unanswered questions, so I tracked him down there and waited until he got up from the counter to pay his bill, catching him as he was about to exit.

“Captain Sullivan,” I said.

“Yeah?” He’d stepped onto the sidewalk and was about to cross Spring Street toward where his unmarked unit was parked.

“I wanted to ask you about the night Magoo walked into Headquarters.”

“What about it?” He was moving into the street now, so I stayed with him.

“I understand that after he walked into the lobby, nobody bothered searching him for a weapon.”

At that point he stopped. We were right in the middle of Spring, just a block up from the back door of The Quality Lunch.

“Who the hell told you that?”

“I’ve got my sources.”

“Yeah, well, charges have been filed against Steve and you know I can’t comment.”

He started moving, so I called out over his shoulder, “The way I heard it, you took Goo outside where he showed you the murder weapon in his car.”

That made him stop. He turned around. The light changed on Touro Street and traffic was now approaching us, but he held up his hand, like the street cop he’d once been and stopped the line of cars.

“So what’s the question?”

“At what point did you read him his rights?”

The Chief of Detectives gritted his teeth for a moment. He looked me up and down. I was standing in the middle of the street, holding up traffic along with him in my Madras jacket, skinny tie and chinos. Finally he smiled.

“Peter, you’re a De La Salle boy. You went to school with Steve...” He nodded toward the Court House. “Your mother Albina’s a wonderful woman, so I’ll do you a favor and say only this: Someday I’ll answer *that* question, just like someday you’ll find out what *really* happened in the Duke case.”

Before I could get off another question, he walked away.

I’ve only now gotten a chance to learn what he might have been hinting at. The truth behind Tirella’s death was actually uncovered *within hours* of his DOA at Newport Hospital and the Police Department, at the highest levels, had conspired with Doris’s lawyers to cover it up.

But if Captain Paul Sullivan had fallen on his sword for Doris Duke, it didn’t help him. When he retired in 1976 after 30 years, his last assignment was as Night Watch Commander of The Patrol Division. In law enforcement terms, he ended up in Siberia.