# GREG SCARPA, LEGENDARY EVIL

# CHAPTER ONE: WHAT LIES WITHIN HIM

"The more identities a man has, the more they express the person they conceal."

John le Carré, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*

Gregory Scarpa Sr. was a family man, a husband, and a father. He wanted his children to be well educated and insisted on their 100% attendance in school. At home, he taught his eldest son the fundamentals of boxing, and they often did push-ups and sit-ups together. He liked to play touch football and softball. According to his namesake, Gregory Scarpa Jr., no one could hit a softball farther than Greg Scarpa. He was a casual sports fan who liked to root for New York's professional teams. His appearance was important to him: shower and shave every day, a sport coat and dress slacks for work. He was always on time for work, and he insisted that the men who worked for him show up every day, on time, well-dressed, and ready to work.[1] He was, in the words of the man who perhaps knew him best, "a C.E.O."[2] His manner of speaking was often stern, but he eschewed cursing. He liked to dine out, and when he did, his favorite dish was red snapper. He sipped Cutty Sark with dinner, and before he became ill, he smoked Marlboro cigarettes. He wasn't a big movie fan, but he liked the music of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Barry White.[3] Like most of us, Scarpa had his idiosyncrasies. For instance, every other day for years he went through what is best described as a complex ritualized process, identical every time, to get his hair just right. And he habitually placed his wallet and keys in the same spot whenever he came home, looking down on those who even temporarily misplaced one or the other.[4] In short, in many ways, Greg Scarpa was like millions of other American men of his generation. And in many other ways, he was not.

Greg Scarpa was a killer and a thief, a liar and a con, a traitor and a fraud. His eldest son described him as a "powerful force of nature."[5] His loyal accomplice during his most violent years called him "a vicious, violent animal… unscrupulous and treacherous… a horrible human being."[6] His mistress of more than thirty years, the mother of two of his children, admitted that Scarpa was a cold-blooded killer who left a trail of misery and death in his wake.[7] The life of those around him was one of "misery, death, and nightmares."[8] He was a crass manipulator,[9] a man in love with money more than anything else,[10] a malignant narcissist who committed murder on a whim.[11] According to NYPD Detective Tommy Dades, a man who grew up in Brooklyn and personally knew many of the mobsters he eventually arrested, "'Greg Scarpa had people petrified because of all the murders, the beatings, just a vicious animal.'"[12] A United States District Court judge and Scarpa's closest lieutenant's grandmother both referred to him as the devil.[13] Another federal judge called Scarpa's acts "worse than those of a wild animal."[14]

He was a dangerous criminal for nearly half a century. By the age of twenty-three, he had taken a blood oath of loyalty to the men in what was then America's most vicious and secretive criminal enterprise,[15] and for most of thirty years, he violated that oath by feeding the FBI a steady flow of self-serving information exposing and condemning those same men, leading to arrest and incarceration for many of them. The FBI estimated that by 1970, Scarpa had identified more than 200 Cosa Nostra members in the New York-New Jersey area.[16] In the 1,250 pages of FBI documents relating to Scarpa's activities as a Top Echelon Criminal Informant and the FBI's investigations of Scarpa's criminal activity, there are more than 290 names which Scarpa provided to the FBI. That number is both over- and underinclusive. It is overinclusive in that some of the names, such as Albert Anastasia, Joseph Profaci, Salvatore Scarpa, and Joseph Valachi, were clearly already known to the FBI before Scarpa provided them to his handlers. It is underinclusive

in the sense that in many instances, the names Scarpa gave the FBI were redacted from the documents before their release and are thus not available to the general public. Indeed, some of the names may refer to the same person but were simply spelled differently by different special agents. Finally, that number does not contain members or associates who were only mentioned by Scarpa as having been killed.

Given the number of men he exposed for doing precisely what he did for nearly all of his adult life, it is difficult to overstate the scope of his treachery. As he lay dying of AIDS at the age of sixty-six, he committed one final act of perfidy. When given the chance, he failed to absolve the men closest and most loyal to him of any of the heinous sins they committed at his command and on his behalf.[17]

Chronicling a life that in many ways tracked the aspirations and habits of millions of others while filled with treachery, violence, and deceit presents obvious challenges. Sifting through versions of horrific events that have never been subjected to the scrutiny of careful investigation or rigorous cross-examination, of tragic events whose first-hand witnesses are either dead or still living in fear, of shameful events purposely shrouded in secrecy creates significant obstacles when crafting a work of nonfiction. The public's reluctant and usually forced interaction with Greg Scarpa notwithstanding, his life was for the most part private, and the details of that life can vary wildly from one witness to the next despite anyone's best intentions. Unlike those whose fame is earned on a playing field or a movie screen, no legion of journalists reporting on every detail of Greg Scarpa's life followed him around. For an intimate look at the life of a gangster, we have to look to those closest to him. But how does a child provide an objective picture of a parent known as The Grim Reaper? How does a mistress reconcile enduring memories of love, infidelity, and murder? How does an accomplice come to terms with years of betrayal? Beyond that intimate

circle lies an official record of society's sporadic and involuntary collisions with this man. But how does a legal system that failed so many for so long repair the damage done by its myopic ineptitude? How can any of the above be rationally explained?

Legends come into being when fact and fiction intersect in a way that explains the seemingly unexplainable. While a good faith effort has been made to separate the fact of Greg Scarpa's life from the fiction surrounding it, that life as described in the following pages is the story of a legend, a story where the line between fact and fiction has been blurred by time, ignored by habit, and erased altogether out of deep emotional need.

# CHAPTER ONE

## WHAT LIES WITHIN HIM

[1] Gregory Scarpa Jr., notes, transcribed July 12, 2023. *See*, also, Kroger, John. *Convictions: A Prosecutor's Battles Against Mafia Killers, Drug Kingpins, and Enron Thieves*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009, at pp. 129-130.

[2] Phone interview with Larry Mazza on July 26, 2023.

[3] Except as otherwise noted, the above description is derived from notes provided to the author by Gregory Scarpa Jr. on July 12, 2023.

[4] Phone interview with Larry Mazza, *supra*.

[5] Lance, Peter. *Deal with the Devil: The FBI's Secret Thirty-Year Relationship with a Mafia Killer*. William Morrow Publishing, 2013, at p. 504.

[6] Harmon, Sandra. *Mafia Son: The Scarpa Mob Family, the FBI, and a Story of Betrayal*. St. Martin's Press, 2009, at p. 241. (Harmon's book is a biography of Gregory Scarpa Jr. He has described the book, without particulars, as "inaccurate and 'sensationalized'" (Lance, *supra*, at p. 496). Unless otherwise noted, this author has cited Harmon's book and all listed sources when he has found them credible. Harmon, who passed away in December of 2018, is no longer in a position to defend her account of Gregory Jr.'s life, if she so desired); Dunleavy, Steve. (November 5, 2007). "I Loved a 'Cute' Killer." *New York Post*.

[7] Scarpa, Linda. *The Mafia Hit Man's Daughter*. Kindle ed. New York. Kensington Publishing Corp., 2016, at pp. 21-23.

[8] Ibid., at p. 216.

[9] Lance, *supra,* at p. 503.

[10] Later Days Podcast with Joe Poletto, Greg Scarpa Jr. Interview Part 2, Episode 5; Mazza, Larry. *The Life: A Brooklyn Boy is Seduced into the Dark World of the Mafia*. Digital Publishing of Florida, Inc., 2017, at p. 40.

[11] Later Days Podcast with Joe Poletto, Larry Mazza - Greg Scarpa Sr. Episode 5.

[12] McGuire, Craig and Imbriale, Carmine. *Carmine and the 13th Avenue Boys: Surviving Brooklyn's Colombo Mob*. Kindle ed., WildBlue Press, 2022, at p. 191 (quoting Tommy Dades).

[13] Lance, *supra,* at p. 491; Mazza, *supra*, at p. 37. According to Lawrence Mazza Sr., Josephine Maniscalco, Mazza's maternal grandmother, called Scarpa "the fucking devil" (Mazza, *supra*, at p. 37).

[14] Lance, *supra*, at p. 357 (quoting Judge Jack B. Weinstein).

[15] Scarpa self-reported to the FBI that he earned his button in 1951 (FBI Files set 1, at pp. 33); Linda Scarpa, his daughter, claimed he earned it in 1950 (Scarpa, *supra,* at p. 20).

[16] FBI Files, set 4, at p. 28.

[17] Lance, *supra,* at pp. 372-373.