# Gotti emerges as 'goofy godfather'

NEW YORK (AP) — Once nailed as a criminal mastermind, John Gotti has emerged at his racketeering trial as a goofy godfa-ther who violated the underworld's basic rules: No drug dealers, no loose talk, no blatant tax dodging. And no losing money on your own games.

Witnesses and surveillance apes have shown Gotti surroundng himself with heroin traffickers, talking constantly about his activiies, repeatedly failing to file tax returns and losing large sums at DMas de the gambling operations that were his alleged source of income.

Gotti may be intelligent - he has been reported to have an I.Q. of around 140 - and even his critcs give him credit for a certain ow cunning. What else would explain his rise from lowly mob associate in 1977 to boss of the ighty Gambino crime family in 1985? And his acquittal in three trials in five years?

But FBI tapes, prosecution tes-

Testimony, FBI tapes cause 'Dapper Don' to seem dumb

his trial have made the Dapper Don look like a dummy. The counts in this unofficial indict-

advised courthouse reporters to take Buffalo and the points. Washington won and covered the point

The real question is why anyone would listen to Gotti. government bugs show he is not the luck-

Gotti and three partners put up \$120,000 a decade ago to start an illegal casino. But Gotti began to bet against the house, and after a few nights he was in debt for

He fared no better betting on

sports. At one point in the 1981 football season, Gotti was down

2. The Loose Talker

Gotti was slow to appreciate 1. The Gambler the quantum leap in the govern-Before the Super Bowl, Gotti ment's electronic eavesdropping skills. Many of his most damaging admissions were recorded in an apartment above the Ravenite Social Club, his hangout in Manhattan's Little Italy neighborhood.

He spent much of January 1990 expounding on the virtue of silence - as the FBI listened in. On Jan. 24, he warned his colleagues about the danger of being recorded: "From now on, I'm telling you, if a guy just so much as mentions I'm gonna strangle the guy. . . . He don't have to say, 'Cosa Nostra.' Just 'La' and they He don't have to say,

3. The Wrong Friends
Like most things in the Mafia,
the ban on drug dealing is both
traditional and practical. In recent years, it has become more the latter: narcotics convictions mean long prison terms, which sorely tempt soldiers to cut deals and testify against their bosses.

While Gotti can be heard on tapes bemoaning drug use, virtually every member of his old crew dealt heroin.

His brother Gene is serving a 50-year prison sentence, and his brother Vincent is also in prison for narcotics trafficking. Some of the people who allegedly con-spired with Gotti to kill former Gambino boss Paul Castellano were drug dealers, and several are

now serving long sentences.

Castellano, a boss from the old chool, had to be dissuaded from killing "Little Pete" Tambone for drug dealing, and wound up ban-

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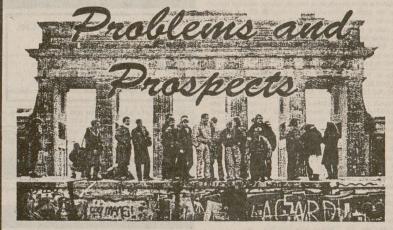
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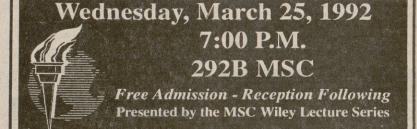
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# Perot's name

on ballot OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) -Oklahoma supporters of Dallas billionaire H. Ross Perot say

ev'll make a ly 15 petition eadline for getting his name on the presidential

AIOSE NAMES IN Supporters

GOW work to get

"We don't hink we're too ate to be startng a cam-paign," said Pat Clancy, a

H. Ross Perot

Tulsa salesman who is leading the Perot petition drive in eastern Oklahoma.

"Perot is a courageous busiessman who has made a plan,' Clancy said. "All we've heard is mudslinging from the declared

Drives are under way in every state to have Perot's name placed on November ballots as an inde-pendent candidate, said Sharon ue Holman, a Perot spokeswoman. The self-made businessman has said he will run only if his name makes all 50 states' ballot.

Perot, 61, heads a computer services company in Dallas and is known for plans to help LLS, pris-

known for plans to help U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam and for summit in & ontrol, plan two employees from an Iranian jail in 1979.

Light report In Oklahoma, Perot supporters have until July 15 to turn in a petition with 35,132 valid signature, said Lance Ward of the supporters. tures, said Lance Ward, state elecno reason wi tion board secretary.

Oklahoma volunteers have rinted about 1,500 petitions, and cietal costs at least 55 volunteers already are circulating them, Perot supporters

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economic

gel said in

They sho

ion and tree

"I'm really enthusiastic about ers and expen it," said Jamie Hurst, who is coor-dinating the Oklahoma City-area on, education effort. "The government is not beng run like a business.'

## Questions arise about autopsy; court plans exhumation hearing

LUBBOCK (AP) - Eighteen people, including 11 Lubbock and Odessa police officers, have been subpoenaed for an exhumation hearing amid questions over an autopsy performed by a Lub-

A hearing is scheduled April 2 in Canyon to determine whether the body of murder victim Hilton Raymond Merriman Sr. may be exhumed.

Five teen-agers were charged with murder for allegedly beating Merriman to death during a robbery in May 1990

One of them, Johnny Lee Ray, 18, of Amarillo, was convicted earlier this year and sentenced to

Attorney V.G. Kolius of Amarillo, who represents defendant Douglas Nathan Palmer, contends Lubbock forensic pathologist Ralph Erdmann made mistakes in his autopsy of Merriman.

Erdmann concluded Merriman died from a swelling of the brain. Kolius said another review may show Merriman had a bad heart that would

have contributed to the death. The attorney believes the police officers will buttress his motion to exhume by casting doubt on Erdmann's competency, the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal reported Sunday

A Hockley County grand jury indicted Erdmann last month for felony charges in connection with discrepancies in an autopsy issued last De-

Erdmann, on advice from attorney John Mont-

In addition, six Odessa officers had written Police Chief James Jenkins to complain about Erd-

They allege improper collection procedures that resulted in ruined specimens; detectives being asked to perform autopsies on heads; failure to take notes during autopsies and misidentification

Lubbock Police Chief Don Bridgers says he has not "heard any bizarre complaints from our detectives like those coming out of Odessa detectives." But he called the indictment against Erdmann

'We didn't worry about his autopsies until this thing (Erdmann's indictments) came up," Bridgers

"We don't want a guilty person to have an out,

The subpoena list also includes the morgue manager at Texas Tech University Health Sciences

# Five doctors sue comptroller

State owes veterinarians payment, apology, says panel

AUSTIN (AP) — Five Austin veterinarians have sued Comptroller John Sharp to force immediate payment of \$207,500 an arbitration panel says the

Sharp had balked on paying the doctors because he said the state does not have the money ear-

On March 13, he wrote one attorney for the doctors: "Although I am sympathetic to your client(s), I cannot pay this demand because there is no current appropriation available" under the applicable

That statute, Chapter 105 of the Civil Practices and Remedies Code, lets citizens recover damages for lawsuits brought by the state that a court deems unreasonable or frivolous.

The veterinarians filed suit against Sharp last week in the Texas Supreme Court.

Last year, Texas Attorney General Dan Morales

accused the veterinarians of conspiring to restrain trade. In January, the suit was ruled frivolous, and Morales' office sent vouchers to Sharp's office for payment of the judgment.

Sharp suggested the veterinarians find a sympathetic politician to present their claim in the next session of the Legislature.

'It makes you wonder whether the state's broke or simply asleep at the wheel," said lawyer John

"Now it's going to cost the taxpayers even more money," Meadows said. Meadows' client, Samuel Carter Spangler, was

outraged.
"We beat 'em fair and square," he said. 'But they play by two sets of rules. If it was me,

they'd lock my doors and haul off my goods to pay that judgment.

Also in its decision, the judge-appointed panel said the state owed all the veterinarians an apology.

# arehouse fire baffles authorities

WEATHERFORD (AP) - Authorities say nd reacts to ney are baffled by a fire that destroyed a 19th century warehouse used to store tires, old apforcement liances and memorabilia. ervice organ

The historic John L. Heartsill Store ware-ouse, northeast of downtown Weatherford, urned Saturday was skeptice "A lot of history went up in that smoke,"

said owner Mamie Ruth Heartsill The stone structure - believed built in the 80s - has housed two castor oil companies, tanning plant, a Coca-Cola bottling plant and

n American Legion Hall. It also reportedly had been used as a Ku

attending a fire certification school in Mineral Wells when the fire broke out about 2:45 p.m. Most of the firefighters returned to Weath-

efford, 29 miles west of Fort Worth, to battle the blaze, said volunteer Fire Chief Larry Dod-Heartsill and her husband, John, have owned the warehouse since 1978. They said

they do not know whether it was insured, and they had no immediate estimate of the loss. At about 12:30 p.m. Saturday, the Heartsills had closed their tire store near the warehouse.

County Fire Department about two hours later. Klux Klan meeting place, Heartsill said.

About 200 Parker County firefighters were p.m., although the blaze continued to smolder.

The fire was reported to the Weaterford-Parker

Black, oily smoke could be seen for miles. 'Old tires will burn forever," said firefighter Lenvaul Bloodworth.

"We're going to soak them in foam and let them burn themselves out." Dodson said the firefighters do not know

what started the blaze. Heartsill said she believed the warehouse had been vandalized Friday night. She said family members found old business papers scattered on the floors early Saturday.

Vandals have hit the building previously, forcing the owners to board up the windows. The Heartsills' tire store (a metal building) was undamaged.

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