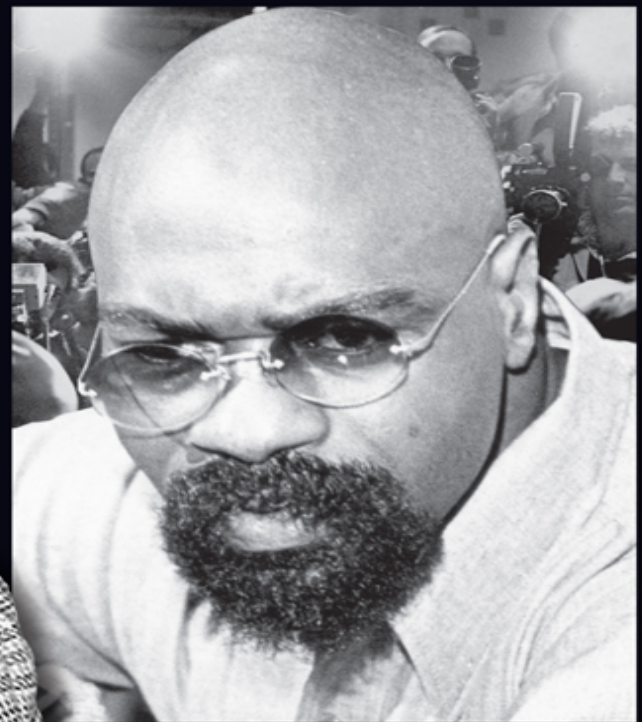
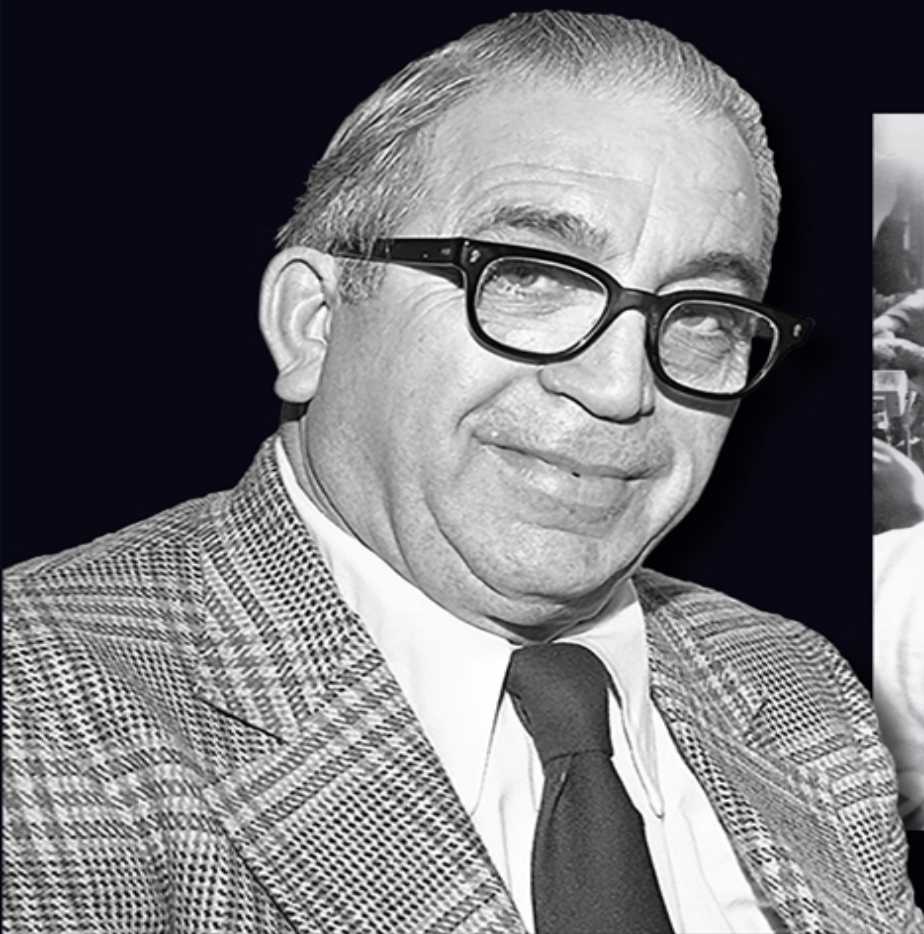


MEDIA

MEDDLERS

**THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT THE MURDER CASE
AGAINST RUBIN "HURRICANE" CARTER**



**LEAD DETECTIVE VINCENT J. DE SIMONE JR.
WITH JAMES V. DE SIMONE**

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CHAPTER ONE

*Who steals my purse steals trash;
'Tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been
slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which no enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.*

SHAKESPEARE, OTHELLO

Seconds after the jury brought in a repeat murder conviction of Rubin “Hurricane” Carter and his pal, John Artis, I rushed to the nearest telephone and called Barbara Mancuso, daughter of one of the three victims who were brutally shot down in a barroom slaughter in Paterson, New Jersey, more than ten years ago.

“We’ve redeemed your mother’s death, Barbara,” I told her as my voice trembled under the excitement. “The jury has found them both guilty.”

She began to sob, and amidst the tears I heard her say, “Vince, there’s only one place for you to go when your times comes, and that’s heaven.”

We became emotional on the telephone, Barbara because she now knew that the men who killed her mother in one of America’s most heinous triple slayings would no longer go free, and me because that was the nicest thing anyone said to me in more than two years of bitterness, disappointments, and vicious name calling.

The months that preceded the jury verdict were the most difficult of my fifty-eight years, even harsher than the agonizing times I spent recovering from a Nazi sniper bullet that pierced the left side of my face and projected out of my mouth in World War II. Physical pain diminishes after time. There is no medicine to cure the mental anguish that people perpetrate upon each other.

In the newspapers, on television, and on radio, I had been painted by the media, the defendants, uninformed politicians, and show business

celebrities as a diabolical ogre who masterminded a wild story to send two poor innocent men to prison. Barely a night passed that my wife, four daughters, and son did not flick on the television set to hear about this vindictive contriver who lived in their household. I was vilified and castigated unlike any policeman in the history of the United States, not only in the comparative privacy of the courtroom, but exposed in the open arena for all to see.

And the tragedy was that I was not allowed to answer. How badly I wanted to reply every time the public relations people tried the case in the *New York Times* or on New York City's Channel 5, or in the *Star-Ledger*, New Jersey's largest newspaper. But I was hamstrung by the law that today zealously protects defendants and not so zealously guards the prosecutors who represent the people. This law decreed that I was not to say anything in public that might prejudice the defendants' case. So, as a law enforcement officer, I was required to remain silent pending trial, never reeling once outwardly but often going down for the count inwardly.

Now it is over. The jury has vindicated me with a miraculous decision, affirming a verdict that occurred ten years ago and overcoming what seemed to be insurmountable odds.

The Carter-Artis case has an epilogue, though, and this book shall be it. In the pages to follow will be my account of how this incredible case developed into a fallacious cause célèbre. This will be my story of how they stole my purse but couldn't filch my name.

It is the nature of the species that violence and law enforcement have lived together in an unholy alliance since Cain and Abel in the land of Eden. Cain's violence, of course, was dealt with directly by the Ultimate Enforcer. Since then we earthly mortals have been acting as agents for the highest court in the history of mankind, attempting to enforce the law as written by our modern-day prophets in the chambers of our legislatures.

As one of these law enforcement agents, first as a patrolman and then as a detective, I have courted violence for more than thirty years. I have seen the throat of a small-time hood slashed from ear to ear. I have viewed the remains of a tavern owner whose head was virtually shot off by a blast from a .12-gauge shotgun, and I have investigated a case in which a man smashed his wife's face into an unrecognizable bloody pulp.

I was a violence observer in these cases. Three years before I became a policeman, I was more than an observer. I was a participant in violence that was to have a great effect on the course of my life and especially on my credibility as a law enforcement officer. The facial damage suffered as a result of this act of violence would make me a courtroom target of acquittal-hungry defense lawyers and their accused muggers, rapists, stickup artists, and murderers.

When Vince De Simone walked into the courtroom, his shot-up face made it open season for charges of brutality and harassment. On the streets, the criminal element dubbed him as “The Deacon” and “Fair Square Vince,” but once he became part of the theatrics of the courtroom his face made him the “heavy.” Vince De Simone became the Edward G. Robinson of law enforcement.

World War II, September 1944. The fortunes of the Allied forces had taken a turn for the better after two years of setbacks in the Pacific. The invasion of France on June 6, 1944, came off successfully, and American troops were now in Germany, barely across the Belgian border.

The war in Europe was to end the following April, but before victory would be achieved, the most bitter part of the encounter was yet to be fought. Paris was still under Nazi control and Belgium, where the Battle of the Bulge took so many American lives, was awaiting liberation.

As the pace of the war stepped up, the demand increased for more military manpower from the home front to replace the casualties and the combat weary. For the first two years of the war, I had been deferred because of my employment in an airplane defense factory. This deferment expired in April 1944, and I entered the Infantry, eight months after I married my childhood neighbor, Nancy Giannelli. My oldest daughter, Patricia, was born in the summer of '44, just before I was shipped overseas.

Before my arrival as a member of the Timberwolf Infantry Division, Stolberg, a quiet, residential village, was one of the first German territories to be taken by the American troops. Militarily, it was an important geographical area because it served as the gateway to Belgium where the Nazis had a viselike stranglehold. Although Stolberg was American occupied, it was not firmly secured. The Germans were still holed up in bombed out buildings and taking sniper shots at the Americans.

One of these attacks occurred along a country road as our medics were evacuating American wounded. The gunfire appeared to be coming from two adjacent houses, and it was my assignment with two other GIs to clear the enemy out of those buildings. One house was so dilapidated it looked like it was occupied by only rats, so I chose the other as my initial target.

While my buddies covered me with their gunfire, I ran across the road, hurled two grenades into the building, shielded myself from the explosions and waited for the dust to clear. Rifle poised, I then walked in cautiously and found the dead bodies of a German soldier upstairs, another downstairs.

As I walked out to signal “all clear,” I felt as if I had been struck in the nose with an axe. It was a bullet from a sniper in the next house, and it struck me in the left side of the face, penetrating the lower portion of my nose and exiting through my mouth.

My knees trembled and I heard other shots, these from my friends shooting down the sniper. I fell to the ground, spitting out teeth and gobs of blood, and then collapsed.

When I regained consciousness, I was in a German schoolhouse that had been converted into an emergency American field hospital. Although combat was over for me, difficult times were still ahead. I knew my face was shot up very badly, but I had no idea how bad it was until I peeked in a mirror. It was ghastly, something out of a Bela Lugosi horror movie where the mad doctor’s experiment goes berserk. Right then I wished the Germans had done a complete job. What would I tell my wife of one year? I was never a Cary Grant, but I wasn’t a Frankenstein monster either.

The doctors eased the mental anguish somewhat by telling me that plastic surgery could perform miracles and my appearance would eventually change. They never promised a return to my original face, but they indicated I would be acceptable in social circles.

For four months after the shooting, I made a tour of hospitals in Europe and the United States. A deep-seated infection resulted from the bullet wound, and I hovered between life and death. I underwent one operation in Europe and later nine others for plastic surgery in the United States.

The Army returned me to the states in February 1945, first to a military hospital at Camp Edwards on Massachusetts’ Cape Cod and then by mistake to the Fletcher General Hospital in Cambridge, Ohio. After a few days there, they rectified this blunder and shipped me to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. That’s where most of my facial surgery took place.

First, though, I was given a weekend pass, and I warned my wife in a letter that she might not recognize the man she married.

It was one of the most difficult times of my life, walking through the military clogged halls of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Newark, not knowing how I would be received by my family. I was so scared I wanted to turn around and hop the next train to New York City and disappear from the face of the earth.

Before I could leave, two women rushed down the hallway, threw their arms about me and crushed me in a pincer movement that would have made General Patton proud.

“My boy!” screamed my mother in the clatter of the busy station.

My wife sobbed so heavily she couldn’t speak. She just smothered me with kisses.

The scene was not uncommon during World War II, when most people commuted with joy and tragedy on a daily basis. Somewhere in the United States, in just about every railroad station, a wife, a sweetheart, a mother was rushing to meet her loved one who for the time being had escaped the violence of war and its often fatal consequences. In my case, however, this was not the face of the son/husband they had sent off to war. I wondered what kind of traumatic effect it would have on my young wife and middle-aged mother.

Later, in the quiet of our home, I told my wife that if she wished to end the marriage, I would not stand in her way.

“Don’t you ever say that again,” she admonished me. “I married you for better or worse, and you’re just as good as you ever were.”

We have been married now for thirty-five years, and my wife has grown accustomed to my face.

Before the war, the thought of becoming a policeman had never really crossed my mind. A few of my friends joined the force, but I couldn’t see myself parading around in a blue uniform. I wasn’t against regimentation or law enforcement or any of those things some of today’s youth rebel against—I just felt I didn’t fit into the scene.

I took a closer look at the life of a policeman after the Army discharged me. When I considered the pension benefits for my family, I thought a policeman’s lot might not be all that bad. I studied at length for a Civil Service examination, finished high on the list, and was appointed to the Paterson police force on October 1, 1947. I stayed there for four years

before being named a court attendant in 1951 for two years and then a county detective in the county prosecutor's office in April of 1953.

My face continued to haunt me after I was named a street patrolman. I was assigned to the toughest section of Paterson, an area replete with rundown barrooms where nightly stabbings were not uncommon. There seemed to be a street brawl on every corner, and even at that time muggings were pretty high on the hit parade list. Because of my face and my deep baritone voice, I gained a reputation for being a tough cop in a tough district. When I showed up at a tavern disturbance, everybody suddenly became as friendly as Damon and Pythias. I pride myself on the fact that in the four years that I was assigned to this tough district, not once was I required to shoot anybody.

The boys of the street gave me a nickname in my rookie days as a cop. Whenever the word got around that I was on the beat, they would tell their underworld friends that "Scarface was down the street." And when I performed school crossing duty, I could hear the kids calling me "Scarface" in cruel jest.

By this time I was used to it. The police force had given me a new lease on life. Later I was to be called other names, the most flattering of which came from a judge, shortly after the jury returned the second guilty verdict in the Carter-Artis trial. He called me the "Italian Kojak." I told him I refused to shave my hair.

Even "Hurricane" Carter got into the name-calling act in his book, *The Sixteenth Round*. He called me a "bulldog, whose face was one that only a mother could love (provided she wore blinders)."

Mr. Carter should know that I received that face fighting for democracy, the world's greatest, so people like him can receive one, two, and three trials for murdering harmless, innocent, and defenseless citizens.

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