

that hit first—a mixed perfume of fried bacon from the first floor stand-up cafeteria, shoe polish from the stand in the corner, stubbed-out cigarettes, bad cologne, and morning-after sweat from a night of booze. A cacophony of sounds—jangling keys, shuffling feet, rumbling evidence carts loaded with files and guns and drugs and the bloody detritus of crimes—echoed through the marbled halls.

Babies wail. Deputies boom: “No smoking in the halls. No hats in the courthouse. You, take your hat off. No smoking in the halls.” Defendants buttonhole men wearing suits, beseeching them for advice and representation. And cutting through the crowd are the hallway hustlers, a particular breed of defense lawyers. These are men who carry no files, who trade their talents for the surety of a defendant’s bond money—up front. They do not invest their income in well-appointed offices with a staff of paralegals and investigators. Their offices are their cars. For \$5 or \$10 slipped to a court clerk, they rifle the files of that day’s cases to find defendants with the biggest bonds and then troll the halls to sign them up. Manila folders under their arms, these men stand sentry outside courtrooms, calling out to clients they have never met. It is part of the morning dance, the parade of justice in Cook County.

Clerks broke the morning silence in the courtrooms, arriving to assemble docket sheets and files; the crimes stamped in bold block letters: MURDER, ARSON, ASSAULT, and RAPE. The spectator pews gradually filled with victims’ families sitting across from the families of the accused.

With the appearance of judges, justice was administered for those who were free on bail—burned-out dope users and angry-eyed robbers and burglars—as well as the murderers, rapists, and ghetto gangsters escorted from the jail behind the courthouse.

His left hand gripping a bulging brown leather briefcase, Iavarone took an elevator to the State’s Attorney’s Office on the second floor. On his mind was the first meeting of the day, a meeting he would run, a meeting that was the subject of an article in that morning’s *Chicago Tribune*.

A State’s Attorney’s task force Monday will begin an intensive investigation of 12 gangland-style slayings in the Chicago area during the past three years. . . .

The task force will be made up of six investigators from the Chicago Police Department, the Illinois Bureau of Investigation, and the state's attorney's office, according to assistant State's Atty. Nicholas Iavarone, who will head the unit.

"By organizing the unit, we can coordinate all the files on suspected gangland slayings in one place without having different police departments in the city and county working on them," said Iavarone, head of the organized crime unit. "We believe that two to four syndicate killers are responsible for the murders."

The reporter hadn't asked Iavarone why the task force was being assembled now. If he had, Iavarone might have told him the truth—the number of unsolved mob hits in Chicago and its surrounding suburbs embarrassed law enforcement. In the past ten years, the Chicago Crime Commission had logged no more than seven organized crime killings in any single year, a total of only thirty-two.

But 1974 marked a surge in mob violence with ten murders, followed by nine in 1975. And while there had only been six in the first nine months of 1976, mob informants were hinting that more death was to come. In particularly biting fashion, *Tribune* columnist Bob Weidrich had hammered law enforcement about the bloody toll of hoodlums. His latest blast had been particularly cynical and went so far as to suggest that Bernard Carey, the State's Attorney and Iavarone's boss, should look no further than "a social and athletic club on Taylor Street."

A second generation Italian-American, Iavarone was reared on Chicago's South Side and had, from the time he was a child, planned a career as a teacher. His plans were detoured when he was drafted by the Army in 1966 and dispatched to Vietnam as a member of the 17th Air Cavalry. After two years of fighting what ultimately seemed to him an unwinnable war, Iavarone returned to Chicago a changed man. "There were too many things wrong, as I saw it," he would later say. "I wanted to do something about it."

He began working for Zenith Radio Corporation as a computer programmer while attending Chicago-Kent College of Law at night. His final year, he became a law clerk in the Cook County State's Attorney's office and a year later, in 1974, he was sworn in as an assistant state's attorney.

Bespectacled, with a wiry build, dark eyes, and straight brown hair, the thirty-three-year-old Iavarone had a reputation for being able to handle tough and politically sensitive cases; he had successfully prosecuted a state insurance investigator who had falsified answers on the test of one of Mayor Richard J. Daley's sons, and obtained convictions in a parking concession shakedown racket at the Chicago Stadium, home of the city's professional basketball and hockey teams.

A Roman Catholic with a strong sense of right and wrong and a belief that "too many wrongs had yet to be righted," Iavarone was frustrated as he read Weidrich's latest column. It not only sarcastically suggested that investigators stop in at the Survivor's Social and Athletic Club, but also mentioned that one of the more prolific killers was thirty-seven years old and left-handed. Iavarone realized what many others in law enforcement believed as well but could not prove—that the column was referring to Harry Aleman.

Weidrich could not be easily dismissed. A veteran of more than twenty years as a reporter, columnist and mob-watcher, Weidrich had a vast network of sources within law enforcement and, perhaps more significant, a loose collection of sources from within organized crime.

"A crying need for the talents of executioners arose in recent years when scores of independent bookmakers moved to cash in," Weidrich wrote. "The gangland ruling council didn't like seeing one of their last solid revenue sources disturbed by opportunists. So they . . . hired professional killers. And the end result of their reign of terror is to be found in the grave."

Iavarone realized that tackling the mob in Chicago would be difficult. Beyond the usual conditions, such as a code of silence and the fact that witnesses often turned up dead prior to trial, Iavarone knew that more than a few Chicago police officers and judges were under the mob's control.

In many respects, Iavarone believed, the police department's organized crime unit was similar to the mob itself—a tightly controlled, insulated

group, whose responsibilities largely amounted to attempting to tail mobsters around the city in order to assemble dossiers of intelligence that, for the most part, gathered dust instead of arrests. Far too much of the “intelligence,” Iavarone suspected, flowed from the cops to the hoods. “The basic difference between the cops in the intelligence unit and the guys in the mob was that the cops were Irish and wore badges,” Iavarone would later recall. “They all carried guns.”

At Iavarone’s urging, the task force would be small—two Chicago police homicide detectives and two agents from the Illinois Bureau of Investigation. Starting small, Iavarone thought, would allow for fewer leaks of information and closer supervision.

Although Iavarone had told the papers that the task force was just beginning, the work actually began weeks earlier when Richard Law and Ronald Mudry were assigned to Iavarone’s unit. Both were veteran Chicago homicide detectives known for dogged pursuit and careful attention to detail. They had begun by criss-crossing the city and suburbs to collect investigative files relating to several unsolved murders—most of them, Iavarone believed, the work of Aleman. Now, as he arrived at his office, Iavarone found Mudry and Law waiting just outside the door. He ushered them inside, where stacks of files, resembling paper tombstones, awaited.

“I’ve gone through these in a cursory fashion,” Iavarone began. “One seems like it might have possibilities.”

“Which one?” Law asked.

“Billy Logan, shotgunned to death over on Walton Street, near Austin Boulevard in 1972. Car pulls up, Logan is walking to his car, and boom, boom, he’s down, car pulls off,” Iavarone said. He tugged at a stack of manila folders to his right and opened a file. “The police reports list a witness, a guy named Bobby Lowe. Doesn’t say what he saw. Or if he saw anything. That’s the last piece of paper in the file. Just ends there. It’s not much, but it’s a lead. Let’s try to find this guy, talk to him, show him some pictures. This is a shotgun case. Show him Aleman and Petrocelli and put a couple of Aleman’s other pals in there, too. Who knows?”

Iavarone knew it was a long shot, but that’s the way it always is in cold case investigations. Read the police reports, locate and re-interview wit-

nesses, canvass the neighborhood again. Study the autopsy. Recreate the crime scene and look for unanswered questions—leads that were ignored, witnesses who weren't questioned. It was a painstaking process, and often a fruitless one, as witnesses moved away and became difficult to find. Memories faded. Evidence was misplaced or lost. Understandably, the impetus to solve a crime begins dropping within weeks after its occurrence and, exponentially, solving it becomes more difficult. Iavarone did not kid himself: This task force was prompted by media criticism, which is not the purest motivating factor. Expectations of success were low—no one was aware of a hit-man ever being nailed for one of his murders.

Still, when he handed Law and Mudry the Logan murder file he felt a sudden whiff of optimism. He looked at the calendar on the wall. That was it. The date was September 27, four years to the day from the killing. After Law and Mudry left the room, Iavarone allowed himself to smile and lean back in his chair. When trying to catch a killer, even the smallest symbols can provide a flash of hope.

T racking down Bob was easy, even though four years had passed. Unlike most Austin residents, the Lowe family had resisted the “white flight” that had so quickly changed the neighborhood. They still lived in the corner building on Walton Street. There was no answer at Bob's home, but the officers found his father, Joe, downstairs. After some soft persuasion, he had directed them to Augustana Hospital. Fran, he said, had undergone surgery and Bob was there.

They found Bob sitting next to Fran's bed, surrounded by Tina, two days from her eighth birthday; Joey, an infant the night Logan was killed, now four; Tammy, not quite three; and, Bobby, fifteen months old.

Mudry and Law flipped out their detective shields and asked Bob to step into the hall. “We just need a minute of your time,” Law said.

“What's this about?” Bob asked, folding his arms on his chest.

“We have some photographs we want you to look at,” Law replied. “It's about the Billy Logan matter.”

“I thought that was taken care of a long time ago,” Bob said.