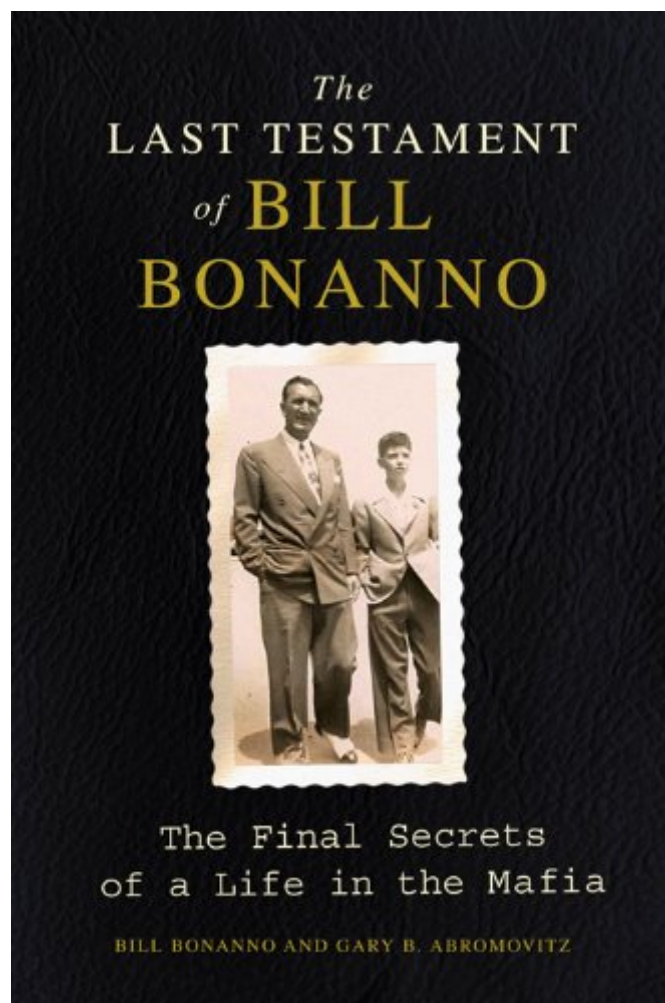




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# The Last Testament Of Bill Bonanno: The Final Secrets Of A Life In The Mafia



## Synopsis

An eye-opening look at life and death inside the Mafia, *The Last Testament of Bill Bonanno* is a stunning document written by the son of notorious crime boss Joe Bonanno. Published at the author's request after his death, *The Last Testament of Bill Bonanno* provides highly confidential secrets about the inner workings of La Cosa Nostra offering a behind-closed-doors look at the secret Commission meetings of the 1930s through the 1960s and clandestine details of the Mafia's most venerable rituals, techniques, and indoctrination ceremonies plus pages of never-before-seen photos. *Bonanno's Last Testament* stands alongside *Talese's Honor Thy Father*, *Pileggi's Wiseguys*, *Maas's The Valachi Papers* and *Underboss*, *The Good Rat* by Jimmy Breslin, and T.J. English's *Havana Nocturne* as an essential work of contemporary crime history a must-read for fans of *The Sopranos* and *The Godfather*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bill Bonanno treaded the line closely, giving me enough information to keep me turning pages. The

implicit trust shared is very complex.

Kind of long and confusing

Only in America!!!

This book was seemingly written to exploit the people's fascination with the Mafia. Clearly no one would touch it unless Bonanno was the last name of the credited writer. It's not a great book, it doesn't come close to fulfilling the claims of lots of stories the readers were not already aware of. I'm in a funny spot, I know Bill's son (Joseph) well and I respect him greatly. He is extremely proud of his family's heritage and recommended the movie that followed "Man of Honor" which has been in TV several times. He got me the Man of Honor book, which I read and loaned out. Last week I ordered another copy since the first was never returned. I have one problem with both books, that is the everyday manner in which murder is dealt with as well as loan sharking and prostitution. How honorable is murder? In my world it's a horrible act, as are the other crimes. When Bill writes about his activities that were not honest or legal, he makes no mention of victims or regret as he looks at his life in the mob. Rather he justifies and sanitizes his criminal past just as his father did in "Man of Honor". I just don't understand how these men and their illegal acts can be regarded as honorable. But that's me, maybe I'm stupid and just don't get it.

This seems like another attempt by Bill Bonanno to sanitize organized crime. The constant reference to "Our World" as if it were something more than organized crime really wore on me. I am not offended by a criminal writing a tell-all book. Most that do admit freely that they were criminals engaged in criminal activity. Bill Bonnano admits it too, but at the same time tries to cloak these criminal activities in some warped sense of honor and respect. I found the book irritating in that very little new inside information was revealed. Little bits here and there, but most of the book was a self serving regurgitation of the same old stuff. What was new was not very significant. Bill had an opportunity to expose some interesting inside information and did not. I got the impression that his main purpose was not to really tell anything new, but to use new tidbits as an excuse for another book, and a final opportunity to glorify the Bonanno legacy as one of honor, and not what it really was, a criminal enterprise just as bad as the rest of them. JT

Another reviewer has pointed out a variety of mistakes in this book, and people who have read a lot

more Mafia books may not find much new or interesting in here. It is of course mostly a self-serving whitewash; Bonanno never mentions the name Don Bolles, the Arizona reporter blown up for looking into Mafia and Bonanno family activity in the area. Nor does he actually admit to any other serious crime. What I learned from this book is that the Mafia is very much the product of American society and has changed as American society has changed. Bonanno belabors the fact that as Sicilians became Americanized they followed the traditions less. But this was inevitable; the Mafia got established in an environment where immigrants were ignorant and easily intimidated, and law enforcement was very corrupt. The Wagner Act, giving unions real legal status and protection, wasn't passed until the 30's; after that the need for unions to work with gangsters was greatly diminished. The Depression and World War II froze social change for awhile but as people became more sophisticated and mobile the old traditions had less grip on people.

A very interesting and readable story. The thing that disturbs me about the "our world" concept is the thinking that they are able to operate outside the legal world and get free rein to do so with impunity. I knew that they operated on a pay off and graft system but its hard to believe that it works if the majority of police, politicians and other officials were honest themselves. It does not give me much faith in our "democratic world".

Bill Bonanno's latest autobiography is an important contribution to the study of organized crime. Due to Bonanno's unique underworld experiences, "The Last Testament" reveals more than traditional mob 'tell-all' books. First, this is not a book about street level guys hustling for a living. Biographies about Henry Hill and Joe Valachi, while important and interesting in their own ways, fail to capture the multiple ways of seeing organized crime in America. Bill Bonanno in contrast, offers us a wider perspective as he experienced cosa nostra from the positions of soldier, capo and finally consigliere. Of course the insight he gathered from his well-known father is of enormous value to researchers too. For instance, because of his heritage, Bonanno expresses a distinctive appreciation for the mafia's socio-historical development. Bonanno and his co-author Gary Abromovitz, open the text with three important chapters describing how the mafia evolved from 19th century Sicilian protection society to contemporary American crime syndicate. Not only are these sections important in terms of contextualization, but because the author learned this history directly from second generation men of honor in the Bonanno clan---men like Joe Bonanno and Giuseppe Magaddino. As for the American mafia, the book provides fascinating descriptions of underworld politics. I'm unaware of any book on the subject offering more details about the Commission for

example. While some reviewers suspect the authors sanitized Bonanno's criminal past, I think a closer reading suggests otherwise. In terms of violent crimes, there are enough blood soaked pages in the other Bonanno autobiographies, so I suspect the authors decided against recycling mob hits described in other texts. Yet if you are looking for the sordid details, this book includes vivid descriptions of union shakedowns, political corruption and a candid discussion about the Bonanno organization's descent into drug trafficking. Overall, I highly recommend the book for anyone interested in the subject.

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