

APPENDIX J

ROSSELLI UNDER THE FBI MICROSCOPE

BY JOHN A. SANDERS

November of 1957 was a major turning point for Johnny Rosselli and his Mafia friends, and would signal the closing days of organized crime's "Golden Age."

The beginning of the end was the famous raid on the mob summit meeting in Apalachin, New York that made national headlines and forced J. Edgar Hoover's long-delayed acknowledgment of the Mafia's existence. Johnny Rosselli was not among the nearly 100 attendees, many of whom ended up in jail, and in the papers. But, his reputation in the Los Angeles underworld, and his new role as mob overseer in the burgeoning gambler's mecca, Las Vegas, made him a perfect target for the FBI's "Top Hoodlum" program, announced just days after the Apalachin conference.

By 1957, Rosselli already had a long and distinguished criminal career to look back on. An Italian immigrant who came to America with his family, Johnny grew up in the mean streets of Boston, and got a job delivering milk to support his mother and siblings after his father's death. His decision to add a few extra stops on his schedule for a local drug dealer resulted in his arrest for delivering narcotics to a snitch. When the snitch was subsequently murdered, suspicions naturally fell on Rosselli, who fled Boston under an assumed name. It was many years before he could return home, but Johnny never shirked his responsibility to his family, taking great pains to secretly send money to his mother and siblings.

After a short stint as a bootlegger in the New York area, Rosselli became one of a long line of young thugs recruited to fill the void left by the bloody Chicago Beer wars. Rosselli went to work for Al Capone, another NY alumni, who took an immediate liking to the tough, loyal and personable rookie. Seeing his innate intelligence and intuition with people, Capone decided to school him on the finer points of organized crime: in particular, cozying up to the rich and powerful, fulfilling their illicit desires, then, if needed, using the threat of exposure or violence to exert influence over them. Johnny learned his lessons well.

When Rosselli was diagnosed with early stages of tuberculosis, the doctors recommended a warmer climate. So, Capone sent him to be Chicago's "eyes and ears" in the wild west of 1920s Los Angeles. Working for bootleggers and gamblers like Tony "The Hat" Cornero and reigning Mafia boss, Jack Dragna, the talented Rosselli quickly rose to the top of LA's mob scene, eventually becoming the bookie to the stars and the studio bosses. Through the years, he cultivated the style and manners that would ultimately help him schmooze anyone from wealthy industrialists, to police chiefs, to presidents.

As the Chicago mob (now referred to as “The Outfit”) sought to regroup after Capone’s imprisonment in 1931, and the end of Prohibition, they turned to labor unions as a source of cash and power. Because the movie business was one of the few industries still making money during the Depression, Frank Nitti, now in charge in Chicago, looked west, and called Johnny. Rosselli figured prominently in the Outfit’s scheme to use the mob-run stage workers union to extort millions from the Hollywood studios, in exchange for labor tranquility. However, Rosselli’s veneer of respectability was shattered when he was implicated in the federal racketeering case that made national headlines. He was convicted and sent to prison in April 1944, along with most of the Chicago Outfit’s hierarchy, including Johnny’s mentor, Paul “The Waiter” Ricca.

Rosselli did three years in Federal lockup and returned to Hollywood, determined to pursue a movie career. However, Rosselli’s racketeering conviction made him persona non grata in the offices of studio bosses like Columbia’s Harry Cohn, who had been one of Rosselli’s closest friends. So, once he cleared parole, Rosselli was back in business with Dragna, who was solidifying his hold on the LA rackets after the death of Bugsy Siegel. However, Siegel’s second in command, Mickey Cohen, had other ideas.

The next few years would be marked with a bloody street war between Dragna and Cohen, who sought to expand his gambling operations at the expense of the Italian mob. Not even mob luminary, Meyer Lansky, would be able to broker a peace between the two antagonists.

Following Mickey Cohen’s conviction for tax evasion in 1951, and fed up with the LA mob’s weak leadership, particularly after Dragna’s death in 1956, Rosselli realigned himself with the Chicago Outfit, now under the control of Sam Giancana. Johnny’s fellow Capone-era alumni like Tony Accardo, Murray Humphries and Paul Ricca were still directing things from the sidelines, and they all wanted their share of the mountains of cash flowing out of Las Vegas. Rosselli was chosen to watch over Sin City for his Chicago overlords, and the growing list of East Coast mobsters who trusted Rosselli to keep an eye on their investments, and keep the violence to a minimum.

While Rosselli would maintain cordial relationships with Dragna’s successors, most notably Frank Desimone, who capo Jimmy Fratianno claimed stole the “big chair” from Rosselli,¹ indications are that he stayed away from the LA mob scene. FBI informants would report that, when not tending to business in Las Vegas, Rosselli’s LA stays would typically revolve around his many close contacts in the entertainment industry.

When Rosselli was placed on the FBI’s “Top Hoodlum” list in 1957, he was already fantasizing about retirement, living off his many shady businesses investments, including control of Monte Prosser productions, which provided many of the entertainers who appeared in Las Vegas casinos and at Hilton hotels world-wide, the exclusive franchise to sell ice machines to the Vegas hotels, and ownership of Nevada Concessions, which managed the gift shop and parking concessions at the Tropicana and other resorts. These ventures, along with his cut of the deluge of cash being skimmed from the mob-run casinos he helped to establish, left Johnny confident that his retirement would be a comfortable one.² But, it was not to be.

An FBI memo from December 1957³ indicated that the FBI was well aware of Rosselli’s frequent travels between LA and Vegas, and his reputation as a mob power broker, particularly in Sin City. This, and subsequent early reports were based primarily on the growing list of

confidential informants being cultivated by Special Agent Harold F. Dodge, who would lead the FBI's LA efforts to find dirt on Rosselli for ten years.

Apartment managers, hotel employees, bank tellers, and secretaries would soon be recruited to help create the growing FBI dossier on the Mafioso. Civic-minded neighbors kept track of Johnny's comings and goings at his apartment, reporting any visitors or unfamiliar cars parked in his spot. Informants at some of LA's swankiest restaurants, like Perino's and the Brown Derby, kept tabs on Rosselli and his dinner companions, which often included glamorous showgirls, Johnny's most pronounced vice.

One key informant worked at the exclusive Beverly Hills Friar's Club, a regular hangout of Rosselli when he was in LA. This informant provided valuable details on the meetings and private discussions Rosselli held with an intriguing list of associates, which included:

- Louis Lederer, a longtime friend from Chicago and a Las Vegas casino owner, until his handwriting was found on a note in Frank Costello's pocket after a failed hit. That note, which broke down the split of the skim from the new mob-owned Tropicana, led to the investigation that forced both Lederer and Rosselli out of the Tropicana's management, and cost them both millions;⁴
- Joseph Breen, a frequent companion at Friars who would facilitate some of Rosselli's low-profile film projects. Breen, also an old Chicago friend, was a major force in Hollywood running the infamous censorship office that dictated the nation's cinematic morals for over twenty years;
- Sidney Korshak, the infamous Chicago mob lawyer who became the mob's voice in Los Angeles, advising the power elite that controlled the growing entertainment conglomerates;
- Arthur "Artie" Samish, a notorious lobbyist who controlled the California Legislature, delivering favors to his mob friends, which included Mickey Cohen: called "Mr. Big" by the Kefauver Commission. Both Samish and Rosselli were close to NY mob boss Frank Costello, and reportedly were occasional companions of J. Edgar Hoover at the Del Charro resort in Del Mar, California, when the Director came to town for the horse racing season.⁵

Rosselli's closest friend and business associate in the late '50's and early '60's was Maurice Friedman, part owner of the Frontier Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Informants speculated that Friedman, who was involved in many of Rosselli's business ventures, was really serving as a front for his friend. Rosselli spent many hours with Friedman, often in high stakes gin rummy games with Hollywood luminaries (both men would eventually go to prison in Friedman's elaborate scheme to cheat their well-heeled suckers at the Friar's Club).

Hoover Turns Up The Heat

In August of 1960, right around the time Rosselli was invited by another well-placed friend, Robert Maheu, to participate in the CIA's top-secret effort to assassinate Fidel Castro,⁶ the FBI decided they needed more details about Johnny's activities. They rented an

apartment adjacent to Rosselli's, and eventually would install a microphone in the shared wall. While this mic provided more details about Rosselli's daily habits, he seldom spoke openly to visitors, unless it was about innocuous things such as sports, women, or the occasional movie deal with Hollywood friends like Frank Sinatra.

The FBI also bugged the Vegas apartment that Johnny used in 1961 and the first half of 1962, before he decided it was easier to stay at the Desert Inn on his frequent visits. This would make it very difficult for agents to gather solid intelligence on Rosselli when in Vegas, relying almost entirely on informants. As a result, reports on Johnny's activities in Nevada were sketchy, at best.

The FBI soon discovered that keeping tabs on Rosselli wasn't going to be easy. He was as careful as he was smart, and reports noted that he was clearly aware of surveillance efforts. Rosselli was always cautious in his discussions, particularly with strangers, and typically would speak in code when conversing with his inner circle. Rosselli's steady girlfriend during this time told me that he always had a pocket full of change for the frequent detours to phone booths along the highways.

It should also be noted that there were significant limitations to the FBI surveillance. I've found no evidence that Rosselli's phone lines were ever tapped. The transcripts of discernable phone conversations were all one-sided, and limited to what could be heard by the microphone in his apartment, or a nearby informant. Rosselli's practice of speaking in low tones, and with the TV or radio on in the background, further hampered surveillance efforts. In addition, the FBI's request to place a bug in Rosselli's car was denied by the Justice Department on July 8, 1963.⁷

Early surveillance efforts would uncover so little evidence of Rosselli's illegal activities that the FBI's LA office recommended discontinuing the investigation. Hoover denied the request, and for good reason. By this point, Hoover was aware of Rosselli's friendship with President Kennedy's current paramour, Judith Campbell. Given his appetite for salacious details, it's no surprise that the Director ordered surveillance on Rosselli intensified in February of 1962.

Judy Campbell

One of the more interesting aspects of Rosselli's long connection to the Kennedys (he had befriended Joe Sr. in the early '30s when the elder Kennedy was toying with the movie business) is his part in the introduction of the stunning Jackie look-alike, Judy Campbell, to candidate Jack Kennedy. Johnny had known Judy from his years in the Hollywood social scene, and allegedly instructed Frank Sinatra, her recent ex-flame, to make the introductions, presumably on the orders of Chicago boss Sam Giancana.

According to Campbell in her book, *My Story*, she met the Senator in Las Vegas on February 7, 1960 while watching the raucous Rat Pack show at Frank's table in the Sand's Copa Room.⁸ Although there was an immediate attraction, their first sexual encounter wasn't until March 7 when Campbell flew to New York to be with Jack on the eve of the New Hampshire primary. Once their romance blossomed, Sam Giancana took an interest, and arranged for an introduction to Campbell in Miami on March 27, in hopes of getting details about Kennedy's pillow talk.⁹

Campbell noted numerous calls from both Kennedy and Giancana in the following months, no doubt leading Special Agent Dodge to question Judy about her relationship

with Giancana just days before the presidential election on November 8, 1960. As Giancana played the part of a “sugar daddy,” supposedly showering her with flowers and offering extravagant gifts, Rosselli took on the role of the protective “Uncle Johnny” while Judy was in LA. Campbell would report a number of rendezvous with Jack Kennedy:

- April 7, 1960 at Kennedy’s Georgetown house;
- April 12 at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami;
- May 31 when JFK visited Judy at her LA apartment;
- July 12 during the Democratic convention in LA;
- August 4, 5 & 16 in New York;
- August 19 at Kennedy’s Georgetown house;
- April 28, 1961 in Chicago (where, according to Toni Giancana, Sam’s daughter, Kennedy and Giancana met privately in Judy’s hotel room.¹⁰ This supposedly occurred a day after Giancana escorted Judy to the mob wedding of Tony Accardo’s daughter, which drew the elite of the nation’s organized crime bosses.);
- May 4-5, in the White House (where Campbell claims they made love to the theme music from “Camelot”);
- August 8 & 24, both times in the White House;

While Campbell noted a visit to her apartment by Kennedy in mid-November, she is not as precise about her contact with the President in the fall and winter of 1961, other than to indicate that they met regularly. She also stated that she saw Kennedy in Palm Beach in late December 1961. This may well have been while the President was in town to attend to his father, who had just sustained a debilitating stroke, perhaps brought on by Hoover’s recent revelations that he knew of the President’s affairs, as well as Papa Joe’s deals with the mob.

The affair reportedly ended after a testy luncheon on March 22, 1962 between the President and Hoover, who many believe negotiated his continuation as Director in exchange for discretion regarding Kennedy’s flirtations with the mob and their girlfriends. Interestingly enough, this was right around the time that Judy caught two FBI agents in her apartment¹¹ While the President immediately cut ties with Sinatra and his shady friends, there are reports that he was in contact with Judy Campbell as late as November, 1962.¹²

I should point out that the FBI’s available files do not provide much confirmation of Campbell’s litany of contacts with Jack Kennedy, although there are mentions of phone calls from Judy to the President’s long-time secretary, Evelyn Lincoln.¹³ An FBI memo from 1964 would note two specific calls to Lincoln in November, 1961,¹⁴ making it clear that they had established informants and telephone company contacts that allowed them to track Judy’s incoming and outgoing calls. However, while FBI reports refer to Judy’s friendship with Rosselli and Giancana, and rumors of the presidential affair (overheard on FBI microphones in LA and Chicago¹⁵), they offer no details. And, it’s clear that pages of reports documenting Campbell’s activities have been removed from the record. Undoubtedly, the more tantalizing surveillance logs went straight to Hoover’s secret files.

Several reputable authors, including Richard Mahoney in *Sons and Brothers*,¹⁶ have suggested that Rosselli allowed Judy Campbell to use his apartment in Los Angeles, and that she made a number of calls to the White House on Rosselli's phone. They reference an internal FBI memo, and use this to support the notion that Rosselli, who knew the FBI were bugging his apartment, was trying to let the government know just how much power he could wield over the President.

However, after reviewing all the currently available FBI surveillance files on Rosselli, from the period between February, 1960, when Judy first met Senator John Kennedy, through 1964, well after the President's murder, I've seen no indication that she was ever at Rosselli's apartment.

It's not that allowing others to use his apartment would have been unusual. On the contrary, Johnny made a habit of allowing his close friends and their families to stay at his place in LA when he was on the road, which was often. Nor was it uncommon for Rosselli to bring girls to his apartment. Informants noted a steady stream of young beauties. And, the FBI was certainly not reticent to mention Judy's name in relation to Rosselli or Giancana. She was often included in Rosselli's reports, whether or not she actually had contact with him during the period in question. But, from my review of the available FBI logs, Judy Campbell does not appear to have visited Johnny's apartment.

I would also like to note that I've seen no evidence in the FBI surveillance files supporting the rumors that Rosselli dated or slept with Judy Campbell. It was clearly not that kind of relationship. I've seen reports of Johnny comforting Judy when she was down, getting her an attorney to help stop the FBI harassment, helping her find an apartment, and taking care of her when her despair after Kennedy's assassination took her deeper into drugs and alcohol. When Judy and Johnny traveled or dined together, Rosselli often had a girl friend with him, and if he was staying in the same hotel, he always had a separate room.

Rosselli's Disappearing Acts

While the FBI had a good handle on Rosselli's activities in LA, and generally knew about his comings and goings in Las Vegas, there were a number of critical times when he dropped off the FBI radar screens. Most of these disappearances would coincide with Rosselli's reported activities in association with the CIA and their continuing efforts to assassinate Fidel Castro.

For example, during the period from September 15 through November 14, 1960, the FBI lost track of Rosselli in Las Vegas. As it turned out, he traveled from New York to Miami to finalize his arrangement with the CIA, who were using Rosselli in their anti-Castro efforts.¹⁷ During this time, Rosselli brought Sam Giancana and Florida boss, Santo Trafficante, into the CIA's scheme, which would use mob assets already in Cuba.

It should be noted that although the FBI regularly monitored the comings and goings of mobsters in Miami, as confirmed by Washington detective Joe Shimon in his testimony to the Church committee,¹⁸ I've yet to uncover any surveillance records relating to Rosselli's many visits to Florida. Due to the nature of his CIA activities, and the national security

implications, I suspect that Rosselli's Miami reports were maintained separately, perhaps in Hoover's secret files.

Rosselli would make frequent trips to Miami, and was in place and ready for action if needed, during both the Bay of Pigs debacle, and the Cuban Missile Crisis over a year and a half later. But, while the FBI acknowledged Rosselli's association with the CIA, including his connection to legendary CIA maverick, William K. Harvey,¹⁹ Johnny's presence in Florida remained largely unreported.

The following is a list of Rosselli's absences from reported FBI surveillance from the time of his recruitment by the CIA in August 1960, through 1963. Included is a list of his activities during those times, as reported by Rosselli and others during testimony to the Church hearings investigating CIA assassination efforts, as well as additional sources:

Rosselli absences	Reported activities
<p style="text-align: center;">9/15 thru 11/14/60</p>	<p>9/14 - Rosselli flew to NY, met with Robert Maheu and James O'Connell (CIA) to discuss Castro assassination attempt.</p> <p>9/24 - Rosselli is in Miami, meeting with Maheu and O'Connell, and introducing Giancana and Santo Trafficante (using aliases) as participants in the plot.</p> <p>Early October – Rosselli escorts O'Connell to a clothing store, and takes him in the back, to Trafficante's secret hangout.</p> <p>October – Rosselli claims to have been “on ice” in Miami during the entire month, through early November, with Maheu and O'Connell, first at the Kenilworth Hotel, then at the Fontainebleau.</p> <p>11/8 Election day - Rosselli is reportedly in Chicago, helping tabulate votes from Outfit run precincts and reporting them to Giancana.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">February thru mid-March, 1961</p>	<p>3/12 – Rosselli meets with Giancana, Maheu, and O'Connell in Miami, and is given money and poison pills</p> <p>3/13 – Rosselli passes poison pills to Cuban Macho Gener for delivery to Juan Orta, reportedly close to Castro.</p> <p>3/14 – Rosselli attends the Patterson/Johansen fight in Miami</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">4/4 thru 4/23/61</p>	<p>April – Rosselli is in Miami: O'Connell gives money and poison to Rosselli, who passes them to anti-Castro leader, Tony Varona.</p> <p>4/17-20 – Bay of Pigs operation (Rosselli in Miami, waiting)</p>

Rosselli absences	Reported activities
<p>4/25 thru 5/3/61</p>	<p>4/27 – Rosselli in Chicago for wedding of Tony Accardo’s daughter. Many national Mafia leaders are in attendance. 4/30 – Rosselli in Miami, dining with Judy Campbell, Giancana, and “Skinny” D’Amato (mobster friend of Frank Sinatra).</p>
<p>9/1/61 thru 1/4/62</p>	<p>“Fall ‘61” – Rosselli reportedly meets with JFK, RFK and Joe Kennedy at Mike McLaney’s in Palm Beach. 12/6 thru 12/12 – Rosselli in Chicago, overheard via FBI microphone in several discussions with Giancana, revealing various Las Vegas casino deals in the works, and the mob’s cooperation with Kennedy’s election.</p>
<p>3/19 thru 4/17/62</p>	<p>Early April – Rosselli reported in Wash. D.C., waiting for CIA decision on his further use. 4/9 – Rosselli meets with O’Connell, Maheu and his new CIA controller, William Harvey in New York. 4/14 – Rosselli in D.C. with Harvey and O’Connell, who will be leaving the operation.</p>
<p>4/20 thru 5/5/62</p>	<p>4/21 – Rosselli meets with Harvey at Miami airport and is told that he’s still in the anti-Castro plot, but Giancana, Maheu and Trafficante are out. Late April – Harvey and Ted Shackley transfer a truckload of arms and communication equipment to Rosselli and O’Connell, who pass it to Tony Varona’s people.</p>
<p>5/25 thru 7/5/62</p>	<p>6/21 – Rosselli tells Harvey that a 3-man hit team was sent into Cuba. Late June – Rosselli, Maheu have going-away lunch in LA for O’Connell, who is leaving for a new assignment in the Far East. Rosselli is reportedly warming up to Harvey.</p>
<p>9/7 thru 9/11/62</p>	<p>9/7, 11 – Rosselli meets with Harvey in Miami; Varona is ready to send a 3-man team into Cuba; they have infiltrated Castro’s guard, and will use the poison from an earlier assassination attempt.</p>

Rosselli absences	Reported activities
10/19 thru 10/26/62	10/16-28 Cuban Missile Crisis 10/19 – Rosselli flies to Washington, DC, ordered to safe house. 10/20 – Rosselli ordered to Miami by Harvey, told to gather intelligence on what was happening on the ground in Cuba. 10/23-26 – Rosselli is in Miami.
11/14 thru 11/21/62	No reports of activities
12/18/62 thru 1/3/63	Late Dec. – Rosselli in Miami with Harvey. 12/29 – Rosselli meets with JFK at McLaney’s house in Palm Beach after Kennedy’s Orange Bowl speech honoring returning Bay of Pigs POWs in Miami.
2/29 thru 3/5/63	No reports of activities
3/9 thru 3/14/63	March – Rosselli reported to journalist Jack Anderson that he was in Miami, dispatching a 3-man hit team into Cuba (unconfirmed).
4/2 thru 4/8/63	No reports of activities (Rosselli may have been in Palm Springs, where Giancana was reported to be).
4/17 thru 4/24/63	4/18-19 – Rosselli and Harvey in Miami, charter a boat to “go fishing.” 4/20 – Rosselli and Harvey have dinner in Miami 4/21 – Rosselli flies to Chicago
5/1 thru 5/11/63	May – Rosselli meets in Bimini with Carlos Prio (Ex-President of Cuba), William Carr (J.C. King aide) and Robert Rogers (CIA), per Fabian Escalante, former head of Cuban State Security.
5/30 thru 6/9/63	No reports of activities
6/21 thru 6/24/63	No reports of activities
7/1 thru 7/7/63	No reports of activities

Rosselli absences	Reported activities
7/25 thru 7/29/63	No reports of activities
8/2 thru 8/4/63	No reports of activities
8/9 thru 8/12/63	No reports of activities
8/29 thru 9/11/63	No reports of activities
9/20 thru 10/3/63	Late Sept./Early Oct. – Unconfirmed reports of Rosselli meeting with Jack Ruby in Miami
10/4 thru 10/8/63	No reports of activities , although Rosselli told a friend on 10/8 that he had just been on the “east coast.”
10/11 thru 10/14/63	No reports of activities

Perhaps the most notable gap in Rosselli’s surveillance occurred in November of 1963, and is often used to support claims of his complicity in the Kennedy assassination. During the previous 3 months, Rosselli had spent little time in his apartment. Even when in LA, Rosselli stayed in hotels or at friends’ homes, presumably to avoid surveillance.

Early in the morning of November 16, in an unusual move, Rosselli and his friend, Maury Friedman, flew to Phoenix with two prostitutes, one of whom told the FBI that they were supposed to continue on to Washington, D.C. to meet with a congressman. The group checked into a three-room suite later that morning at the Mountain Shadows Hotel in Phoenix and checked out at noon on November 18.

During their stay, several long distance phone calls were made from Rosselli’s suite, as reported by the hotel manager:²⁰

11/16/63	10:19 PM	To Los Angeles, CA	Number Unknown
11/17/63	3:05 AM	To Los Angeles, CA	657-2320
	9:35 AM	To Miami, FL	Number Unknown
	12:32 PM	To Los Angeles, CA	Number Unknown
	1:50 PM	To Glendale, AZ	YE-32330 (Joe Breen)
	8:24 PM	To Los Angeles, CA	Number Unknown
11/18/63	Morning	To Memphis, TN	Number Unknown

Rosselli and Friedman flew to Vegas on the afternoon of the 18th, and sent their escorts home to LA.²¹ Rosselli checked in at the Desert Inn later that day and was seen having a lengthy conversation with Ruby Kolod, the Cleveland mobster who was part of the DI's management team.

Rosselli next surfaced in LA on November 20, helping get Judy Campbell settled-in at his favorite hotel, the Beverly Crest, in the heart of Beverly Hills.²² Judy, who claimed to be the subject of FBI harassment, was close to a nervous breakdown. Presumably, Rosselli, who had made Judy's reservations through his surrogate, Maury Friedman, was giving her a break from the FBI surveillance team. This is supported by reports that Rosselli was helping her fight the FBI by arranging meetings with his attorney, Jimmy Cantillon, and mob legal-eagle, Sidney Korshak.

However, those who suspect Rosselli of complicity in the assassination explain this incident by suggesting he was responsible for controlling the emotional ex-girlfriend after Kennedy's murder. Whether or not that was the plan, that is exactly what Rosselli did. The next report on Johnny's activities was by an FBI informant at the Beverly Crest Hotel on November 27. Rosselli arrived to check on the grieving Judy Campbell, who by this time was in a drunken stupor and refused to answer her phone.

Rosselli spent the following weeks comforting Judy. They were seen together during the next few days in Palm Springs, and on their return, in early December, they spent a few more days (in separate rooms) back at the Beverly Crest. Johnny took her to Las Vegas and they were seen ringing in the New Year at the Desert Inn with Moe Dalitz, the former Cleveland mobster who ran the DI.

The FBI continued to investigate Rosselli until he went to prison in 1969, noting occasional contact with Judy Campbell. But for the most part, it was business as usual for the self-proclaimed "strategist." Among other things, Rosselli would eventually orchestrate Howard Hughes' acquisition of the mob-tainted Vegas casinos through his friend, Robert Maheu, who was then running the eccentric billionaires' Summa Corporation.

THE FIVE-DAY GAP

Where was Johnny Rosselli between the afternoon of November 20 and November 27, 1963?

William "Tosh" Plumlee claims that he was a CIA pilot who picked up Rosselli at the Congress Inn in Tampa on the morning of November 21st and flew him to Dallas on a failed "abort mission" to stop the assassination of President Kennedy. While I suppose it is feasible for Rosselli to have crossed the country overnight in time for a pick-up at the hotel where he was supposedly staying, this is but one of several details in Plumlee's story that continue to trouble researchers.

James Files, a Chicago gangster currently in prison who claims that he fired the fatal headshot in Dealey Plaza, states that Rosselli was a participant in the assassination, although he doubted he was one of the shooters.²³ Files' veracity has yet to be proven.

Bill Bonnano, in his book *Bound By Honor*, tells the story of running into Rosselli in the early '70s at the Terminal Island Federal Prison near Los Angeles, where they were both serving time. According to Bonnano, Rosselli admitted to him that he was a shooter in Dealey Plaza, firing from a storm drain on Elm Street. However, it would be well-advised to view this story in light of the fact that Bonnano's father, Joe, had been ostracized by the

national “Commission” of Mafia bosses that ruled over organized crime, and reportedly blamed Rosselli for his part in bringing Bonnano’s LA aspirations to a crashing halt.²⁴ At the same time, as the heir apparent of a disgraced Mafia family, Bill Bonnano would be an unlikely person for the super-discrete Rosselli to confide in, particularly about something this inflammatory.

Yet another story regarding this five-day gap comes from Jonie Taps, a movie-producer friend of Rosselli’s who claims to have called Johnny at the Desert Inn on the afternoon of the assassination, waking him up to tell him the news. However, FBI informants regularly reported on Rosselli’s presence at the DI, and there were no such reports during the period in question.

Regardless of who you believe, Rosselli stands out among the many intriguing characters who populate current conspiracy theories. But, to be sure, the record is not complete. While I’ve reviewed thousands of pages of FBI files on Rosselli, many thousands of pages are still missing. Hopefully, new document releases will eventually shed light on this mysterious week of Rosselli’s life. If that should happen, I suspect we’ll know a lot more about the events in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

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