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New Milford CT Author Explores Mob's Birth in 19th Century New Orleans

Gang Organizer Macheca Was Betrayed by Allies, Murdered in 1891

New Milford, CT, Feb. 15, 2007 — A biography co-authored by crime historian Thomas Hunt of New Milford places the birth of the American Mafia in 19th Century New Orleans and tracks the gradual rise and precipitous fall of the man many consider its first “godfather.”

Deep Water: Joseph P. Macheca and the Birth of the American Mafia challenges the legends of the mob's earliest days and establishes the facts of the 1890 Hennessy assassination, the 1891 Crescent City lynchings and the underworld's close ties with the city's corrupt political machines. Building upon more than a decade of research into archival records, published and unpublished histories and Macheca family traditions, Mr. Hunt and Macheca descendant Martha Macheca Sheldon expose political corruption from antebellum Louisiana through the bloody Reconstruction Era, illustrate the squalor of 19th Century immigrant communities and detail the various intrigues and underworld rackets of the period. They tackle historical misrepresentations of Joseph P. Macheca as a foreign-born Mafioso, proving he was a native Louisianan, a Confederate patriot and a street warrior for the conservative Democratic cause.

“Joseph P. Macheca was a major force in the underworld of his day,” Mr. Hunt explained. “But it is important to view his crimes in an appropriate context. Gilded Age New Orleans was very much a wild, frontier town. During our research, we often encountered situations in which no substantial difference could be found between the actions of respected community leaders and the actions

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of outlaws. On occasion, the motives and methods of professional law enforcers were indistinguishable from those of lawbreakers.

“We believe Macheca, longing for acceptance from the local establishment, allowed political bosses to push him deeper and deeper into underworld conspiracies. When the bosses decided he had become more of a liability than an asset, they simply disposed of him.”

Deep Water has been positively received by experts in Louisiana history and criminal research. Peter Dale Scott, crime historian and author of numerous works including *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, says, “[*Deep Water*] will force a reassessment of a famous event in the history of American organized crime.” Louisiana historian Julie Eshelman-Lee describes *Deep Water* as a “brilliant work” and a “wonderful contribution to Louisiana... history.” Crime researcher and author Rick Mattix says it “shows a marvelous objectivity.”

Mr. Hunt publishes the American Mafia history website (www.onewal.com) and the MobNews current events blog (mob-news.blogspot.com), while also editing the Organized Crime category of the Internet’s Open Directory Project (dmoz.org). He previously served as Managing Editor of the *Putnam County (NY) Courier*, the *Bethel (CT) Beacon* and the *Pawling (NY) News-Chronicle*; as Assistant Editor of the *New Milford (CT) Times* and *Aviation Digest* magazine; and as Publisher and Editor of the *Danbury (CT) Weekly Tribune*. He is a member of the Louisiana Historical Society, the New Milford CT Historical Society and the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime. A native of the Bronx, NY, he is a 15-year resident of New Milford, where he lives with his wife and their three children.

Deep Water has been published by iUniverse, an affiliate of Barnes & Noble. It is available for sale through iUniverse.com and other major booksellers. For information visit the book’s website: www.jpmacheca.com.

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