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# Exclusive Interview: Joaquin “Jack” Garcia

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By Eddie Molina

***Jack, retired FBI undercover agent, tells the Blue Magazine about his experience infiltrating the New York Mob***

What’s your mental image of a typical FBI undercover agent? I’m thinking youthful but experienced, maybe some thinning hair, great physical condition- would you agree?

That’s not the case for one unique and wildly successful retired undercover FBI agent- Joaquin “Jack” Garcia.



Standing at 6 feet 4 inches tall and at his most, weighed nearly 400 pounds during his illustrious undercover career! His unique stature is part of what made him so effective. In fact, he was so good, he posed as an Italian gangster with roots in Sicily despite being a Cuban born American!

His most notorious operation involved infiltrating the Gambino crime family- one of New York’s most vicious mob organizations and a pillar in La Cosa Nostra- or *this thing of ours*. He made it as far as Joe Pistone, aka Donnie Brasco, in half the time and was one step away from becoming a *made guy*.

Jack's incredible undercover operation inside the mafia was brilliantly recaptured in his bestselling book, *Making Jack Falcone: An Undercover FBI Agent Takes Down a Mafia Family*. Link to the amazon page (<https://www.amazon.com/Making-Jack-Falcone-Undercover-Family/dp/1439149917>)

In an exclusive interview, *Blue Magazine* sat down with Jack and talked about his harrowing undercover journey with the mob, what mob life is like, and what sets them apart from average law-abiding citizens.

But the mafia isn't what you might think it is. It has morphed over the years compared to Hollywood's previous depiction of it. The 1990s produced multiple mafia related movies; *Goodfellas*, *Casino*, *Donnie Brasco* and others. All were set in 70s and 80s. Because of those movies, I thought the mob life was about gunning down rivals in the street.

But Jack's operation occurred in the 2000's- and a lot has changed.

Jack tells *Blue*, "They know the FBI and law enforcement is after them and they're trying to avoid getting caught. Leaving bodies on the street is bad for business. They have changed in that they are more discreet and not as brazen as they were." Jack continued, "They're still in the same business. As long as there's sports betting... book making...loan sharking and you have people out there willing to buy things that fall off the back of a truck, you're going to have the mafia."



Another common misconception is that they have bounties on law enforcement. And that's definitely bad for business.

"The mafia knows that taking out a law enforcement guy... that's like the worst thing you could do. They know that the reign of terror will fall upon them." Jack continued, "In New York they had the killing of a DEA agent by this [mafia] guy named Faracci, I think the agents name was Hatcher. He's an undercover hero working with these guys and he was found dead, slumped over in his car. Well, we tore up all of the gambling horns... we brought people in... there was constant heat. Wiretaps indicated that they [mafia] said 'find this guy Faracci, kill him and throw him outside the DEA's office.'"

Part of reality for mobsters is they often end up in prison. But unlike some convicts that manage to turn their lives around and live an honest life, mafia members don't prescribe to that ideology whatsoever.

"This is the only life they know. When you take that oath as a gangster in organized crime in the mafia, it's for life." Jack said.

And that's how Jack found Greg Depalma- a Captain with the Gambino crime family

Jack was able to sink his undercover claws into DePalma shortly after he was released from prison. Using his verbal judo and hypnotic charm, Jack eventually formed a close bond with DePalma. But the secret was more about money- and that's what fueled DePalma.

“I would say to DePalma ‘look, I’m going down to Miami, I got to take care of some business for us’. So I would go down to Florida, do what I had to do, come back then I give them [mafia] a taste. Maybe an envelope with a couple grand, or watches from the forfeiture unit. He [DePalma] saw me then as an earner.”

I wanted to dig deeper into DePalma’s mentality, persona and general outlook on the lifestyle. Jack had no shortage of stories explaining it.

“When he [DePalma] came out [of prison] he did what he did best and went back to the strip club where I was undercover and he reclaimed that club that was at one time under his umbrella. He hit the ground running and he did it the same day he got picked up from prison... *that same day* he started the shakedowns.”



Some of the gangsters are intelligent and ambitious. There's no doubt they have the capability of living a clean, honest and successful life. However, Jack feels that is sadly unrealistic.

Jack said, “As far as going clean, some of these guys would probably do quite well out there but it's in their DNA, its inside them.”

Jack recalls a scenario where DePalma and him are walking around a clothing store.



“He’s shoving ties down his jacket, socks... I’m like ‘what’re you doing...I’ll pay for that.’ He says ‘what’re you crazy, this is what we are, this is who we are’. And it’s so true.” Jack said.

In total, Jack spent 3 years undercover with the Gambino crime family. Over that span, he more than earned the trust of DePalma. He was only a few short steps of becoming a *made guy*- quite an honor in the mafia that involves a heart-felt ceremony.

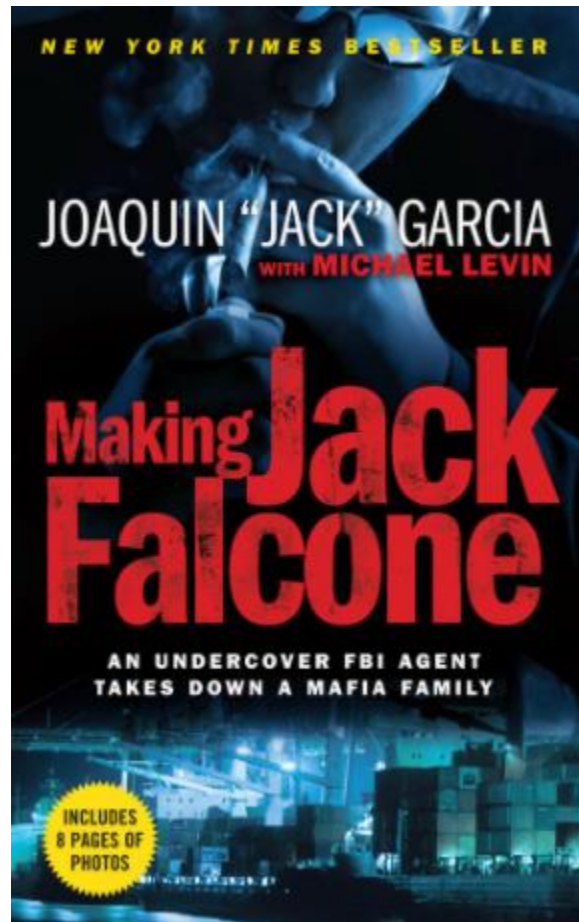
To become a *made guy*, you must be Italian and sponsored by a made man. Then in an intimate ritual, often in a basement or somewhere quiet, mafioso heritage is recited, scripted questions are asked and answered and a vow to remain loyal to the family for life is confirmed. This is the oath every made guy takes and one of the most celebrated, life-changing events there is for a mafia member.

And that’s how close Jack was. He had the trust and support of DePalma and his crew. And as far as the mob knew, he was Italian too (that still amazes me that Jack pulled it off). But he didn’t quite get there.

For reasons unknown, the case was closed just prior to Jack becoming a made guy. Jack disagreed with that decision and believes could have been the start of something enormous.

“I thought that... eventually in time I would get straightened out giving me access to the inner workings of the mob but also be able to introduce other FBI agents into other places in the U.S. like Chicago, New York. But I’m just a soldier, not management. The way it works it’s safe, that’s what they wanted done.” He continued, ““The assistant US attorney working the case, along with other agents working the case wanted it to remain open. There was no reason for this case to be closed because my life was not in danger in any way.”

But Jack is a soldier and did what all true soldiers do, follow orders.



The case ultimately took down 32 dangerous criminals and dismantled the Gambino crime family and their affiliates.

He continued on to lead a brilliant career and accomplished many other feats. After 26 years of service, he retired. He’s now enjoying the fruits of his labor, a goal many law enforcement officers are looking forward to. Jack left a standard that seems impossible to exceed. Only one question remains, can you do better?

You can pick up his book Making Jack Falcone: An Undercover FBI Agent Takes Down a Mafia Family, just don’t forget to leave a review!

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