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A rat by any other name

By Kevin Cullen

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MIAMI - So there's a murder trial going on down here, right? And it's about an FBI agent named John Connolly who sold his badge to help the South Boston gangster Whitey Bulger whack guys, right? But in the middle of all this, that noted humanitarian and etymologist, John Martorano, decided to get on the witness stand yesterday and give a seminar on the meaning of the word rat.

You see, Johnny Martorano, murderer of many, has been ratting people out now for the last 10 years, giving their names to the authorities, testifying against them in court, and putting them in prison or serious legal jeopardy, sort of like the way he used to put them in trunks, with two in the cap. But now he's using his words instead of his pistol, and, not for nothin', that's not ratting, according to Perfesser Martorano.

Johnny Martorano was deeply offended yesterday when Manny Casabielle, Connolly's lawyer, suggested that Johnny Martorano was a rat.

"You can't rat on a rat," Johnny told him.

"You don't consider yourself a rat?" Casabielle asked.

"No," Johnny replied. "I'm here to stop people I perceive as a rat."

"What," Casabielle asked, "is a rat?"

"A rat," Johnny told him, "is somebody who tells on somebody things they shouldn't tell on."

At this point, Manny Casabielle looked at Johnny Martorano the way the barber in that Aflac insurance commercial looks at Yogi Berra when Yogi says, "And they give you cash, which is just as good as money."

Casabielle asked Johnny Martorano how what he is doing now is any different than what Bulger did then.

"You can't rat on a rat," Johnny repeated. "That's how I see it."

Casabielle is a hired gun - not in the way Johnny used to be, of course - so his obvious contempt for Martorano did nothing to dissuade our Johnny from his heroic view of himself. Johnny said that he risked his life by becoming a government witness and that he didn't hurt nobody that didn't hurt his friends. It was all for his friends.

This is what Johnny did for his great friend, John Callahan, 26 years ago. He picked Callahan up at the Fort Lauderdale airport, took Callahan's bag and tossed it in the back seat of a van, let Callahan get comfortable in the front passenger's seat, then put a .22 to the back of Callahan's head and blew his brains out.

The reason? Callahan was a rat.

Well, actually, not really, at least not according to Martorano's theory of rathood. You see, Johnny Martorano murdered his friend, John Callahan, because John Connolly told Whitey that Callahan might become a rat. So it turns out that long before there was the Bush Doctrine of preemptive war, there was the Martorano Doctrine of preemptive murder.

Johnny Martorano spent a considerable amount of time explaining how swell he is. He said it would have cost the government upwards of \$50,000 each year to put him in the witness protection program, but he turned it down and has lived without subsidy since his release after serving 12 years in prison for murdering 20 people. He must have been too modest to point out the millions he saved us all in Social Security and Medicare benefits that would have been paid to those 20 people if he had not murdered them.

Johnny Martorano, a true friend of the American taxpayer.

At one point, the prosecutor, Mike Von Zampft, asked Martorano to identify a photo gallery of killers and bandits he used to run with. Johnny climbed down off the stand, but his voice kept drifting off and nobody could hear what he was saying. So the judge gave him a microphone.

It was a beautiful moment, I have to tell you, because in his blue serge suit and his Pat Cooper glasses, Johnny Martorano looked like a lounge singer.

And he's singing all right.

But that's not the same as ratting.

Capice?

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