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Retired FBI agent recalls infiltration of mafia at Y's Men meeting, in book

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Published: 01:02 a.m., Friday, February 12, 2010

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Joaquin "Jack" Garcia is not a professional actor, and yet his persuasive portrayal of a 'wise guy' led to numerous arrests of many high-level mafia soldiers in 2005.

In what the [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) describes as one of the most successful undercover operations in its history, Special Agent Garcia infiltrated

the renowned Gambino crime family for 28 months by donning the role of jewel thief, extortionist and drug dealer.

Calling himself "Jack Falcone," in honor of an Italian judge whose family was brutally killed because of his anti-corruption stance, Garcia was able to gain the trust of high level members of the mafia.

Now retired from the FBI, Garcia penned the [New York Times](#) best-selling book, [Making Jack Falcone](#), which will soon be made into a feature film by renowned director and producer Steven Soderbergh for Paramount Studios.

In introducing Garcia to the Westport Y's Men last week, Program Chairman [Jeff Hare](#) recommended the book, saying, "I read it. I liked it. It's riveting."

Although he is best known for his undercover work as part of La Cosa Nostra, Garcia spent 24 of his 26 years in law enforcement involved in undercover sting operations. He told more than 300 Y's Men gathered at Saugatuck Congregational Church Thursday morning that his first case involved posing as a customer at massage parlors frequented by a man who had killed two police officers.

As an undercover agent, Garcia also investigated Columbia and Mexican drug cartels, police corruption in Florida and crimes in Atlantic City.

However, none of the cases lasted as long as his foray into the mafia. Also, because of the danger involved, Garcia, along with his FBI colleagues, worked hard to ensure that his Jack Falcone persona was believable and that each detail was flawless.

So, how exactly did Garcia, a Cuban-American, pull off this role of lifetime?

"I went to mob school," Garcia replied, grinning broadly.

Garcia chuckled as he described learning about Italian culture by watching cooking shows on television. This was important, he said, because they spent a lot of time eating.

A former collegiate football player, Garcia is a big guy. At 6-feet 4-inches tall and about 390 pounds, he doesn't look like your stereotypical FBI agent. In fact, he looked more like, well, a "wise guy."

As "Jack Falcone," Garcia wore Italian silk suits, an expensive Presidential Rolex watch and diamond pinky ring. He spoke, of course, like a New Yorker.

Aside from his physical appearance, Garcia carried around a "wad of cash," he said, and this helped him to gain credibility and entrée into the organization.

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"I was the goose that laid the golden egg," Garcia said. "I've been asked, how do you get into the mob? Well, making money for them was important."

Garcia quickly garnered a reputation as an "earner," or someone who makes money for the organization. "We created the illusion that I was committing crimes," he explained. "Make no mistake, though, we in the FBI are in the business of preventing crimes, not committing them."

Garcia also pointed out that if he ever thought he was in danger or that his cover might be blown, there were several "escape" plans ready to be put into action.

"Undercover work is an investigative technique and you shouldn't do anything where you compromise your values and ethics to do it," he noted.

Garcia knew from a young age that he wanted to fight corruption and crime. However, he admitted that his career choice was sealed when he watched the movie, "Serpico," starring [Al Pacino](#).

In 2008 Garcia appeared on "60 Minutes" to talk about his book. The interviewer -- as well as many members of the Westport Y's Men -- wondered whether he was concerned about his safety and possible acts of retaliation from those he arrested.

Garcia replied that although he takes necessary precautions -- such as carrying a weapon and having six pit bulls at his residence -- he wasn't going to live in hiding or in fear.

"I'm one of the good guys," Garcia said. "They are the bad guys."

Garcia also has confidence now, as he did when he was undercover, that law enforcement professionals could take care of him.

"We work as a team," he noted.

Throughout his undercover operation with the Mafia, Garcia credits members of the FBI's astute surveillance squad and wire tap professionals with gathering multitudes of evidence which led to the arrests. He also added that they were responsible for looking out for him.

"If they see you going into a location, they make sure they see you coming out alive," Garcia said.

Garcia is now head of Pathfinder Consultants International, LLC. He is also finalizing plans to launch a talk radio show about crime.

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