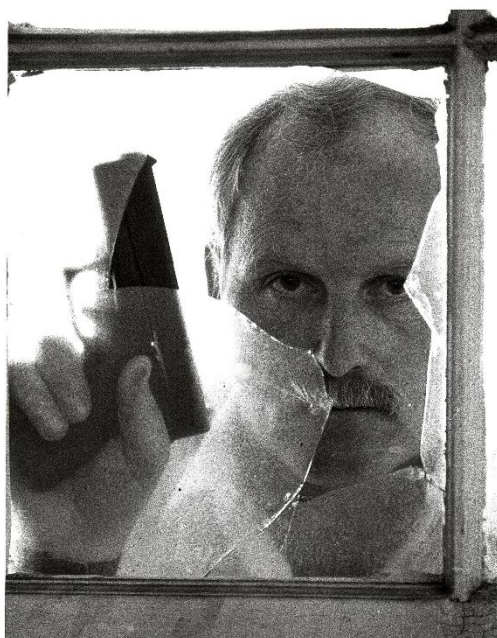


Mike McGuinness, Son of Grange and Crean, Distinguished Officer of the NYPD (Retired)

*By Tommy Hourigan (Limerick, Ireland) in Collaboration with Dianne McGuinness (New York, U.S.A.)
(July, 2018)*

Introduction

This article is predominantly about organised drug crime in New York in the 1980s and early 1990s, when Detective Michael (Mike) McGuinness of the New York Police Department was a key police officer involved in combatting such crime and in removing murdering criminals from the streets. As will be seen



Michael Mc Guinness, NYPD

from what follows, Michael McGuinness was an extraordinarily courageous and effective police officer, who was personally responsible for putting many of those criminals and murderers behind bars, some with life sentences. An impressive commendation of Michael may be read below.

Michael McGuinness is descended from the Purcell Family of Grange in South-East County Limerick, Ireland. Hence, being a Grange-man, my great interest in the subject matter of this article and my desire to compile the article in order to share the story with as many interested others as possible. My role has been to draft the article, bringing it to a final stage in collaboration with Dianne McGuinness of New York, wife of Michael. Dianne is a researcher extraordinaire, with a passion for family history and, particularly, the identification of Mike's Irish ancestry. I must say that Dianne undertook practically all of the considerable research for this article as well as providing her own recollections of events. My role has been, simply, to

compile and present. Without Dianne's initiatives, enthusiasm and collaboration, this article would have been impossible.

What follows is largely based on already published material involving many discrete documents, mostly



U.S. Army Paratrooper, Michael McGuinness

accessible on the internet. Every effort has been made to appropriately reference these source documents in the *Endnotes* to this article. Most of what follows has been taken from the said sources, albeit with minor differences in language at times. Any such differences haven't altered the original storylines. Direct quotations, faithfully re-produced from the source documents, appear here as *italicised* text.

As this article will initially be posted on an Irish website (www.grangeparish.com), I have generally adopted spelling and punctuation appropriate to Ireland as distinct from the

U.S.A. The exceptions are the *italicised* quotations, which are exactly re-produced. I hope that my friends in America and elsewhere will excuse this liberty taken by me.

Michael McGuinness^{1 2}

Detective Lieutenant and Executive Officer Michael (Mike) F. McGuinness retired from the Organized Crime Investigation Division of the New York Police Department in 1992. Michael's retirement followed an illustrious, remarkable and exemplary career in law enforcement in New York. While attached to the Crime Investigation Division, he oversaw the Task Force's involvement in drug investigations, organised crime and money laundering in conjunction with the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives) – a federal law enforcement organisation - and other federal agencies. During his policing career, Michael planned and performed lead roles in the apprehension and conviction/incarceration of some



Michael McGuinness, NYPD (First from Left)

of New York's most dangerous criminals, including drug lords and murderers. Dianne McGuinness informed me that Michael, in those days, wore a beard and long curly red hair – his street name was “Red Beard”.

The summarised profiles of a number of those criminals are set out below. In his work to remove dangerous criminals from the streets, Michael's own life was endangered, and, indeed, his life was threatened by criminals at least twice, as will be seen later on in this story.

Before becoming a police officer, Michael enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was a paratrooper in the 509 Infantry, Germany, 1963-1966.

Following his retirement from the NYPD in 1992, Michael joined The Equitable Life Assurance Society and became its Director of Corporate Security. Michael managed nationwide security for Equitable, which sold financial products such as life insurance, annuities and mutual funds. It is one of the world's leading insurance and investment management organisations. New York based Equitable had a number of locations in the metropolitan area and New Jersey, as well as sales offices throughout the country. Michael managed a team of 40 security officers.



Michael McGuinness, NYPD (Sitting - Second from Left)

Michael McGuinness has strong connections with Grange and Crean (Bruff) in South-East Co Limerick. Michael is directly descended from William Purcell (1747-1795) and his wife, Ellen Clancy of Grange Hill and from Delia (Purcell) Naughton (1882-1947). Delia was Michael's grandmother, who married James Naughton (1874-1955) of Crean, Bruff, in 1904, before they immigrated to New York. Delia was the great-granddaughter of William Purcell above. Arising from the

marriage of Johanna Purcell (1780-1841) to Michael O'Brien (*The Farm by Lough Gur*), Michael McGuinness is a 4th cousin – twice removed of Jennifer Ryan (b. 1940), descendant of Michael O'Brien.

A detailed article on the Purcell Family of Grange ([CLICK HERE](#)) is to be found in the Grange Parish Book ([CLICK HERE](#)), published in November 2015. An update to the Purcell family story may be read on the Blog of the Grange Parish Website – [CLICK HERE](#). Michael's Irish ancestry is depicted in the family tree chart that appears toward the end of this article.

I recommend that you watch (after reading this article in full) a documentary film from *The FBI Files*, in which Michael McGuinness appears himself – it is fascinating. In the recreation of events, Michael is played by an actor, a much shorter man than Michael, who is over six feet tall. Reference "*The FBI Files Season 7 – Ep 10 "Crackdown"*". [CLICK HERE](#) to access the film.



The Front Cover of New York Newsday Magazine - July 18, 1989. "Part II - True Detectives" featured in pages 8-9. The image is missing borders and some text at the bottom from the original.

The following is the text that appears in the lower left-hand quadrant of the image opposite.

Det. Sgt. Mike McGuinness, 43, joined the force in 1969 and became a detective eight years later. Before being assigned to the Queens Narcotics Division, a beat that takes him to more than his share of crack houses, he never really thought much about drug investigations as a vocation. Really, I owe any success I have to my family, the stability they provided for me. Because when you do this kind of work, it is just so crazy on the street these days that you need to balance that out.

Dianne informed me that the magazine image won a big award for the photographer.

The Arrest of Lorenzo ‘Fat Cat’ Nichols^{3 4 5 6 7}

Lorenzo ‘Fat Cat’ Nichols, born in 1958 in Birmingham, Alabama, was one of the top drug lords in New York City in the 1980s. Nichols controlled a network of deals in Queens, New York, many of the crew members being his close family. Among numerous crimes, he is responsible for the killing of his parole officer and his girlfriend. He is currently serving time in a New York State corrections facility. Nichols was arrested by Detective Sergeant Michael McGuinness and an accompanying police officer, Eddie Sullivan, when they raided offices at the rear of a grocery store/delicatessen (Big Mac’s), known to be a drug headquarters of Nichols and his associates. The raid was carried out on 29 July 1985 following a tip-off received by police.

The two officers who entered the deli – Detective Sergeant McGuinness and Detective Sullivan – were unaware of the bonanza that awaited them. As they made their way past the shelves of food, they noticed an open door, leading to a back office. The interior was well lit. There, at his desk, amid filing cabinets and a birthday card that read *WORLD’S GREATEST DADDY*, was Lorenzo Nichols. He was flanked by two soldiers. McGuinness levelled a shotgun at Nichols and ordered him to stand up and put his hands on the wall. Fat Cat did so and then motioned back towards his chair. McGuinness yelled for him to freeze. After a tense moment, Nichols obeyed. Sullivan examined the chair: Nichols had been sitting on two loaded pistols, concealed under a cloth.

He knew he was fucked – that’s why he made his move, McGuinness said. *But you don’t get two chances with something like that. If he wouldn’t have stopped, I would have shot him.* On a light note, Dianne told me that Michael’s mother took him to task from time to time for the ‘language’ that he used with the media.

A search of the premises turned up two ounces of cocaine, six ounces of high-grade heroin, several pounds of marijuana, police scanners, scales, a money-counting machine and about \$180,000 in cash. Nichols’ drawer contained a Steyr, a top-of-the-line Austrian semi-automatic.

All three were arrested, found in possession of drugs, guns and a large stash of cash.

A more detailed profile of Nichols can be found later in this article – it makes for compelling reading.

The following is the exact text of a letter dated 18 March 1988 from Warren M. Silverman, Assistant District Attorney, Major Offense Bureau, to Hon. Benjamin Ward, Commissioner of the Police Department, City of New York. The subject matter of the letter was *People v. Lorenzo ‘Fat Cat’ Nichols – Indictment No. 3945/85*.

Dear Commissioner Ward:

As the prosecutor assigned to the aforementioned case, I wish to call to your attention the extraordinary work of an individual under your command, Sgt. Michael McGuinness, of the Queens Narcotics Area (N.D/O.C.C.B.). It was my privilege to work very closely with Sgt. McGuinness for about three years in connection with the aforementioned case and other matters concerning this defendant’s drug dealing enterprise.

As I am sure you are aware, Nichols, headed one of the cities’ largest and most vicious gangs and has been linked to the death of Parole Officer Bryan Rooney and perhaps P.O. Edward Byrne. Without the assistance of Sgt. McGuinness the conviction of this defendant would have been impossible.

I have found Sgt. McGuinness to possess knowledge, expertise, and intellect far beyond the norm. At each step of this lengthy and complicated investigation, Michael McGuinness was there with thoughtful suggestions and assistance regardless of the personal and professional costs. Sgt. McGuinness is clearly not a man interested in merely making “numbers” so as to appear a successful supervisor, but one dedicated to quality arrests which result in substantial incarceratory periods to stem the tide of the drug plight upon the citizens of New York.

After careful observation, I have concluded that not only does Sgt. McGuinness possess unquestioned courage and modesty, but wisdom far beyond his years. Wisdom not only relating to his profession, but as to his ability to relate to others and to impart his knowledge, wisdom to others. No accolade can properly express my respect and appreciation.

These humble comments are offered for your consideration. It is with the utmost confidence that I can refer to Sgt. McGuinness as the “finest” of “New York’s Finest”.

Very truly yours,

*Warren M. Silverman,
Ass’t District Attorney,
Major Offense Bureau*

A Senseless Way of Life⁸

In the 1980s and early 1990s, drug-related crime in New York was at a peak. The city-run Cypress Hills Houses sprawled across 29 acres with 15 seven-story buildings, 1,444 apartments and 3,397 residents. The crack-driven wave of violence terrified tenants into submission.

Dwayne Faison, 60, the Cypress Hills Tenant Association President, said the development was so dangerous in the late 1980s, he and his wife would take the mattresses from their beds and have the family sleep on the floor for fear they would be killed by stray bullets coming through the windows at night.

There was a time when (people living in) several buildings here weren’t even able to come outside and sit on a bench because of the crime that was taking place, he said. Those were the days when you didn’t want to get up and go to work – you had to look over your shoulder.

The NYPD recorded 1,896 murders in New York City in 1988, compared with 335 in 2016. The murder frenzy driven by the crack epidemic would peak in 1990 with 2,245 killings – or six a day.

In East New York’s 75th Precinct alone, police investigated 105 murders in 1988, up from 82 in 1987, and 55 in 1986. The number of murders in the precinct peaked at 126 in 1993. In 2016, there were just 23 murders in the 75th Precinct that includes the Cypress Hills Houses.

Nowadays, people don’t understand or can’t grasp it, Detective Joseph Ponzi said. Detectives were under incredible pressure to solve murders.

Retired Detective Michael Race, then with East New York’s 75th Precinct, recalls the day when then-mayoral candidate, David Dinkins, was at an event at the Cypress Hills Houses, and a gun battle erupted on the other side of the complex.

Innocent people were being shot senselessly, caught in the middle of crossfires, Race said. It was a senseless way of life. Money meant more than life, and it didn't matter who got in the way. As a detective, you couldn't keep up with the volume. Race noted that crack drove other economies as well. It was the biggest money mover you can imagine, he said. You had 19-year olds driving brand new Mercedes. The sneakers business, clothing, the jewelry business skyrocketed. Funeral homes made a lot of money, he said.

The numbers underscore the relentless wave of violence that the city confronted in the crack years, and its subsequent transformation driven by police work, the economy, incarceration, death and communities fed up with the bloodshed.

When people ask me about this transformation, I tell them they [criminals] also wiped themselves out, Ponzi said. In addition to the policing element, an entire generation wiped themselves out, whether through overdoses, murders, or prison.

The Murder of Edward (Eddie) R. Byrne, Police Officer, New York Police Department^{9 10}

Eddie Byrne (1966-1988) was a rookie police officer in the New York Police Department. He was murdered in the line of duty. Byrne's father had also been an NYPD Officer. Eddie had joined the NYPD on 15 July 1986 and was stationed in the 103rd Precinct in Jamaica, Queens. Prior to joining the NYPD, Eddie was an NYC Transit Cop.

Around 3:30 a.m. on 26 February 1988, Byrne was sitting in his marked patrol car on 107th Avenue and Inwood Street in South Jamaica, Queens. He was assigned to keep an eye on the house of a local Guyanese immigrant named Arjune, who repeatedly called the police to report on illegal activities on his street. The house had been previously firebombed on two separate occasions, and the owner was repeatedly threatened. Byrne was assigned to this post alone.

As Byrne sat in his car, another car pulled up beside him. Two men exited, and one of them knocked on the passenger side window of Byrne's cruiser while a second man crept up on the driver's side and shot Byrne in the head five times with a .38 calibre pistol. Two other men acted as lookouts. Byrne was pronounced dead at the hospital; he had just turned 22 years old.

The murder prompted nationwide outrage. The four killers were identified as Philip Copeland, Todd Scott, Scott Cobb and David McClary, who was identified as the shooter. Cobb made a confession, and all four were sentenced to 25 years to life by Queens Supreme Court.

Cobb, in a videotaped confession which was played at trial, provided graphic details of the killing and told of the bragging of the participants in the aftermath, as well as indicating that the killing was ordered from jail by a drug dealer, Howard "Pappy" Mason.

Edward Byrne should have been turning 52 on Wednesday, 21 February 2018. The rookie cop celebrated his 22nd birthday on 21 February 1988, a few days before he was murdered, 30 years ago. *It was a turning point*, Eddie's older brother, Larry, said from the altar of St. Patrick's Cathedral where a 30th anniversary memorial Mass was held. *And the effort began to take back New York City from crack dealers and gangs.* Larry Byrne pointed out all the honours his late brother and family have received since the young cop's murder, but he said that the best legacy was the difference his brother's death made in turning the tide. *That's a life of meaning*, Larry said, *that's a life to be proud of.*

President George H.W. Bush vowed to finance a crackdown on drug gangs around the country, with his Department of Justice forming the *Byrne Justice Program*, which provides money to this day. Msgr. Robert Romano, the NYPD chaplain, said of former President George H.W. Bush: *He kept Eddie's shield on his desk all through his Presidency.*

All these years later, Larry Byrne is now a Deputy Commissioner for Legal Matters with the New York Police Department. Larry has remained committed to making sure New Yorkers never forget his brother's sacrifice, which came at a time when the homicide rate was nearing 2,000 a year in the city. John Miller, now the Deputy Commissioner for Counterterrorism and Intelligence, was a reporter back in 1988, and he covered much of the criminal activity in the city at the time. Miller has said that New York is now the safest large city in America because of *the avalanche that started that morning. It was a catalyst that morning*, Miller said, *that turned around the city.*

The following is the text of a memorandum which was copied by the Commanding Officer, Narcotics Division, NYPD, to Sergeant Michael McGuinness and his police officer colleagues. The content is self-explanatory.

Police Department, City of New York August 24, 1989
From: Chief Organized Crime To: Commanding Officer, Narcotics Division

Subject: FEDERAL RICO INDICTMENT OF HOWARD MASON CHARGING HIM WITH ORDERING THE DEATH OF POLICE OFFICER EDWARD BYRNE

I received a phone call early this morning from Mr. Matthew Byrne, father of Eddie Byrne, a personal friend, and long-time cop. He expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation for the Federal RICO Indictment of Mason announced yesterday and asked that I convey his sentiments to those members of the Narcotics Division personally involved in the investigation.

The senseless wanton slaying of Police Officer Byrne was a direct assault on what we call civilization. The righteous outrage the cowardly assassination generated played a major role in galvanizing a national commitment to turn the tide of lawlessness and violence.

Please add to the sentiments of Matt Byrne, my personal compliments for the professionalism, tenacity and outstanding results produced by those who participated.

Anthony M. Voelker
Chief
ORGANIZED CRIME CONTROL

1st Endorsement

Commanding Officer, Narcotics Division to Commanding Officer, Narcotic Borough Queens. August 25, 1989. Contents noted. Please convey to all involved Mr. Byrne's sincere gratitude and appreciation. Also, please accept and extend to your members as well, the personal compliments of Chief, Organized Crime Control and myself for outstanding performance and results in this matter. John J. Hill, Assistant Chief.

Short Profile of Drug Lord – Thomas “Tony Montana” Mickens^{11 12}

Mickens called himself “Tony Montana” – after Al Pacino’s notorious “Scarface” character.

Mickens started out life in Corona, the son of Mary Mickens and Thomas “Weasel” Harris – a big-time numbers runner. Mary remarried and moved the family to working-class Laurelton, where Mickens began showing his entrepreneurial spirit. When he was 10, he carried groceries at area markets, but realised he could make more cash with a cartel of his own. His friends who dealt drugs dressed better than him and had new sneakers instead of his ‘hand-me-downs’. So, he dropped out of school by the time he was about 15 to sell marijuana. By 17 he was dealing cocaine and living on the 30th floor of a doorman building on Queens Boulevard.

I was selling a kilo every two days, he recalled, and he now had a crew of at least 50 to help him move the product. The money really started to pour in - \$100,000 on good weeks.



Thomas "Tony Montana" Mickens

He eventually amassed a fleet of 21 luxury cars, including a Rolls Royce equipped with a TV, a Ferrari and a Lamborghini; an \$800,000 mansion in Dix Hills; a 38-foot yacht paid for in cash; a helicopter and a million-dollar smile showing off the diamonds and emeralds bonded to his teeth.

Mickens soon owned a string of businesses along Merrick and Rockaway Boulevards and Hollis Avenue, all with the “Montana” brand – Montana Dry Cleaners, Montana Sporting Goods and Montana Grocery.

Unlike major international traffickers, who have recourse to off-shore corporations and sophisticated schemes, Mickens and dealers like him, sometimes with little education and few contacts outside their neighbourhood, find ways to hide their assets. *He probably did the best job of all dealers out there of getting his money into legitimate businesses*, said Sgt. Michael McGuinness of the Queens Narcotics Division. *Tommy’s a smart kid.*

Mickens made most of his purchases in cash – sometimes carried in plastic shopping bags. Despite federal laws that required the reporting of cash transactions involving more than \$10,000, he had no trouble finding lawyers, merchants and real estate agents who would look the other way. Mickens often used a tactic called ‘Smurfing’. This involved breaking up a large cash transaction into smaller ones – usually, payments were made using cashier’s cheques [‘checks’ in USA parlance] or money orders for less than \$10,000. For example, he used 12 cheques and money orders to pay the bulk of the cost of the \$100,655 Rolls-Royce he bought in 1986. He used 69 money orders to make payments totalling \$51,700 for property on Hollis Avenue in Queens, and 159 money orders and bank cheques for \$90,000 in payments for property on Grand Central Parkway. He registered luxury cars under false names and under the names of unwitting relatives.

To curb ‘Smurfing’, Congress, in 1988, authorised the Treasury Department to require some banks and other financial institutions to report all cash transactions involving more than \$3,000.

In 1990, Mickens, a 26-year old at the time, was sentenced to 35 years in federal prison on drug, tax-evasion and money-laundering charges. Kirby Heller, the Assistant United States Attorney who prosecuted Mickens, said in an interview: *The downfall of Tommy Mickens was that he was too extravagant in his*

lifestyle. If he wasn't riding around in a Rolls and buying a fancy car every few months we still might have gotten him, but it would have been more difficult.

Very recently, Dianne McGuinness, Michael's wife, told me what she dubbed "a funny story", which goes as follows:

I [Dianne] was working for the Drug Enforcement Administration, and I would drive by Mickens' house for evidence that he was hiding in his house. I told Mike [Michael] that he was in there. So, Mike and I drove by at night. I saw a shadow go past the front door glass. "He's in there, Mike, I saw something like a shadow!" Mike looked at me and said "Are you s...ing me or what? I have a van with a periscope up on the expressway with 3 FBI Agents watching this house for 3 days. Now, OK, I am going to call a raid on the house first thing in the morning."

I went into work at 8 a.m. the next day. The agents arrived and started unlocking gun racks and taking down the shotguns. I started to pray – I prayed really hard. God, please let Mickens be in there, or Mike is going to kill me!

Later, agents called me to come over to the house. Oh no, I said, if Mike sees me, he would not like that. Later, the agents were drinking their coffee out of champagne glasses in Mickens' Rolls Royce. Mickens was in the house and had been arrested. Phew! I thought, thank you, God!

It was reported in the New York Post in 2013 that Mickens, after a 20-year stint in federal prisons, was teaching fitness classes to senior citizens. *Inside the Rain Senior Center in The Bronx last week, no one knew anything about Montana – only Tommy. After getting out of prison in 2008, he created his first non-Montana business – the "Tommy Experience" dubbed as "a premier health, exercise, and wellness" program.*

Short Profile of Lorenzo 'Fat Cat' Nichols^{13 14 15 16 17}

Lorenzo 'Fat Cat' Nichols was one of the most feared, revered and dominant criminals to go from rags to riches in recent decades in New York City. Nichols went from humble Alabamian roots (Birmingham) to the top of the drug game in New York in the 1980s, running a massive drug-dealing empire based in one of the still-rough Southeast Queens neighbourhoods that spawned rappers like influential 50 Cent, Nicki Minaj and Canibus. The Nichols organisation not only netted millions from the sale of crack, cocaine and heroin but also supplied competing crews with drugs.



Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols

Nichols, a black man, born in Birmingham in 1958, spent his early years with his grandmother but moved to Queens when he was ten, to be with his mother, living there for the remainder of his free life. He dropped out of school before ever beginning high school and was in and out of jail before being put away for decades in the early nineties.

Fat Cat, the child of a nurse's aide mother and plumber father, started out as an armed robber but eventually got into drugs, rising to the level of a true drug kingpin, earning the respect of numerous New York rappers on the way.

The first place Nichols lived in Queens was the Ozone Park neighbourhood, which made him somewhat of an outsider when he showed up on the cutthroat streets of South Jamaica. However, Fat Cat, whose nickname is a reference to his thick neck and large head, made a bold statement – administering brutal beatings with an icy, almost clinical precision.

Within a few years of his arrival in South Jamaica, Nichols established a drug empire that at one time netted \$20 million a year, selling heroin and cocaine that allegedly Nichols first got through a connection to the Italian Mafia that still ran much of the New York underworld in the 1980s. Detective Sergeant Michael McGuinness said that in fact, Nichols' real mentor was "Pretty Tony" Feurtado, who happened to be half black and half Italian. Nichols ran the drug trade in his neighbourhood with an iron fist for the better part of a decade, relying on muscle and intimidation to keep his organisation in control.

However, NYPD Officers arrested Nichols while he was at the top of his game, relying on a series of operations that eventually culminated in Nichols being incarcerated for decades. The search warrants were just one part of the case that Officer McGuinness and Queens Narcotics were building against Fat Cat's empire. The police also had confidential informants on the inside, feeding them information about nearly every aspect of Nichols' crew, from enforcers to the baggers.

Over the years, Nichols was arrested, locked up and released multiple times on various charges, but he ended up making a series of mistakes between 1985 and 1987, being arrested (by Sgt. Michael McGuinness) in a raid that found him in possession of heroin, cocaine, guns and a large stash of cash.

It has been reported that Nichols speaks in a soft voice, with more than a trace of a southern accent, his intelligence being evident. It is not the voice that one expects of a cold-blooded killer, nor does Nichols have the appearance of one. *If you put him in a brown corduroy jacket with patches on the elbows, he would look like a college professor*, said Warren Silverman, the Assistant D.A. in Queens who sent Nichols to state prison after the arrest at Big Mac's. *He is a soft-spoken guy – but those guys are the most dangerous. He could say 'Kill him' in a real soft voice. And there were bodies stacked up like cords of wood in Jamaica as a result.*

Following his arrest by Sergeant McGuinness at Big Mac's in July 1985, Nichols immediately posted bail and returned home. Two days later, he dropped by the office of his parole officer, Bryan Rooney. Nichols explained that he had been arrested – a misunderstanding as he had gone into the grocery store for a sandwich. Rooney telephoned Michael McGuinness and, after a conversation, he slapped handcuffs on Fat Cat for violating his parole. At a hearing later, Rooney testified against Nichols, who was remanded without bail. Two months went by as Nichols stewed in prison. On 10 October 1985, Bryan Rooney was lured to his death – on the orders of Nichols from prison; he was shot to death in his car when another vehicle pulled up and his murderer fired at close range. Dianne McGuinness told me that Michael had a paid informant who told him that there were hit contracts out on Michael and Bryan Rooney. Bryan was murdered, but, thankfully, Michael was not. The McGuinness home was under protection for over a year, with a manned police car stationed there. Years later, Central Intelligence, NYPD, informed Michael that there were hits planned on him and Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Sterling Johnson. In 1992, Nichols was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for the Rooney murder, in addition to 40 years for federal murder and drug and racketeering charges.

While Nichols initially denied ordering the Rooney murder, Fat Cat admitted to ordering the death of his girlfriend, subsequently. She was Myrtle Horsham, better known as Myseha. She was twenty-one at the time, the mother of Nichols's two-year old son and an active player in his drug operation. Her crime was skimming money and, even worse from Nichols's perspective, spending it on another man. On 20 December 1987, Horsham, with her son - T.C. - and her friend were bundled into a car and were driven

to a dead-end street where both women were shot five or six times at point blank range and left for dead. Horsham died but her friend survived. After midnight, the killers called Horsham's mother from a pay phone and told her to look in her yard – T.C. had been left there.

Fat Cat admitted to another murder. He became involved with a woman named Karolyn Tyson. When Nichols discovered that his girlfriend had a useful skill – *she could count* – Tyson was asked to assist in the treasury department. Isaac Bolden belonged to a Muslim sect and went by his 'righteous' name, 'Just Me'. Nichols said: *I grew up with him. He was the only person I ever went back to jail to visit – that's how good a friend he was.* Nichols gave money to Bolden when he got out of prison and found him a job. In 1985, a number of thugs surprised Karolyn Tyson at home, pistol-whipped her and robbed her of her money and jewellery. It did not take long for Nichols to learn that Isaac Bolden was involved. On 11 November 1986, Isaac Bolden was shot dead on the street. *I loved Just,* Nichols said, *but he gave me no choice.*

In September 1989, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Brooklyn got Nichols to sign a plea agreement in which he consented to be *fully debriefed*. Lorenzo Nichols remains behind bars to this day. If the federal-prison Inmate Locator Service is asked for the whereabouts of Nichols, the response will be that there is no record of a Lorenzo Nichols. This is because he now languishes in a federal pen under an alias, as part of the prisoner protection programme. It is the ultimate symbol of his defeat - as one wag put it, *the Cat has become a canary!*

Short Profile of Howard "Pappy" Mason^{18 19}

Howard "Pappy" Mason, born in 1959, was an American drug trafficker and organised crime figure. He was a sturdily built Rastafarian with long dreadlocks and gold teeth, one of which had a shamrock carved in it. Mason ran a smuggling gang called the Bebos in the Jamaica, Queens Neighbourhood of New York,



Howard "Pappy" Mason

having previously been the partner of Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols. Sergeant McGuinness compared the two men in this way: *Nichols was cunning and ruthless, Mason was stupid and brutal.* When Mason left the Nichols organisation, Fat Cat was probably happy to see him leave. He was beginning to find Mason a bit too wild and uncontrollable. On one occasion, according to a federal prosecutor, Mason hung his girlfriend by the legs out of a moving car and dragged her along the pavement. Nichols said of Mason: *I liked him, he was a good person, but his thinking was just....off. Things you could solve with your mind he'd rather solve with a pistol.*

When Mason made bail on one occasion, he formed an imaginary gun with his thumb and index finger, turned to the prosecutor and pulled the trigger. This must have been worrisome given that Mason had just been freed by a hung jury in a murder trial in which he was accused of killing Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols's parole officer (Bryan Rooney). The supposed motive was that the parole officer had dared to send Nichols back to prison.

It was February 1988, and Pappy was ready to terrorise the streets of Queens again. This time, however, he would be out of jail for only 10 days – just long enough to orchestrate events that would shock the nation and kick the latest version of the war on drugs into gear.

Drinking a beer on a South Jamaica street corner, Pappy was confronted by an NYPD cop, Robert Kissh, who asked Pappy not to drink beer in front of him. The stunned Pappy became verbally abusive and shoved the cop. After a brief melee, Pappy walked off in a rage. *That cop has to die*, he muttered to himself, according to *Cop Shot*, by Mike McAlary. *He dissed [disrespected] me*. A week later Mason was back in prison on a gun charge. The cop he had threatened at the beer incident was pulled off his beat after police received word that Mason had instructed his underlings, members of the Bebos gang, to send a message to the NYPD – that even from prison, Pappy was still giving the orders. Pappy sent out a chilling missive to his underlings: *We lose one. They lose one*. Pappy wanted a cop hit, and his followers were more than willing to comply. The murder of a rookie police officer, Edward Byrne, followed. Police Officer Byrne had been sitting in a patrol car, guarding the home of a Guyanese-born police informant when he was shot to death. Robert Kissh had previously been assigned to the Inwood Street post and may have been the intended target.

Mason, who got his start as Fat Cat’s enforcer, before forming his own crew, was a loose cannon. He hated cops, rebelled against authority and was prone to violence. When the South Jamaica crack wars turned New York City into a killing field, Mason held court in the streets, reigning supreme. He was the crazy guy that other crazy guys feared. He was one of the most feared men in the city’s five boroughs and had even become a part of gangster rap’s lyrical lore.

After a two-week trial (1989) in the U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, the jury deliberated for 13 hours over the course of three days. Mason was found guilty of 11 drug-related and conspiracy charges, including the murder of Police Officer Byrne. At the trial, the prosecution’s star witness, Viola Nichols – Fat Cat’s sister and former girlfriend of Mason – told the court that Pappy had arranged the officer’s murder because another cop had *disrespected [dissed]* him for drinking beer in public. Following years of legal wrangling, Mason was given a life sentence in 1994. Mason is currently serving his life sentence in Florence, Colorado.

Short Profile of Brian “Glaze” Gibbs²⁰

Gibbs rose out of the Cypress Hills Houses to peddle crack and heroin across Brooklyn to crowds of addicts lined up outside his heavily fortified drug spots. By his mid-20s, Gibbs had ordered or participated in five murders and two attempted murders as a big-time player in the violent world of the crack cocaine gangs that gripped New York during the 1980s.



Brian “Glaze” Gibbs

childhood was not difficult at all, said his younger sister. *We were raised as kids to be respectful. Our mother taught us right from wrong. He caught up with the wrong people.*

Gibbs believed that everything went wrong for him from birth – *I was born in the back of a police car and I should have known my life was doomed*. The family moved to the Cypress Hills Houses in East New York, where Gibbs made his first forays into the underworld, but he didn’t have the tortured childhood one would expect. Rather, his mother, Dorothy Gibbs worked for New York Telephone and provided a stable home. *His*

My mother was my sister and my best friend, Gibbs admits. *Anything that we wanted, she got it for us. I wasn’t angry with society. I started doing crimes to make fast money to be able to keep up with my peers*, he said. *If you want something you do what it takes to get it.*

In 1981, cops busted Gibbs for the fourth time for robbery. And so, in January 1982, at the age of just 19, Gibbs found himself imprisoned. It was only the beginning. While in the Fishkill State Correctional Facility, he was obliged to join with other black prisoners for protection in an environment where racially-charged battles between gangs erupted regularly. One day, a Hispanic prisoner tried to shank Gibbs in a hallway. Gibbs caught up to the man in the mess hall the next day and stabbed him in the chest – the man survived, and Gibbs was given 150 days solitary confinement. The Parole Board released him in 1984, and he returned to crime, jumping back into armed robbery and making inroads into the sale of cocaine and heroin. He was running with murderers, gangsters and drug dealers.

Gibbs, already selling drugs, hit on a new money-making venture – flooding the already murderous streets with weapons bought in states with soft gun laws. *I would go down south to the Carolinas and Virginia and pay people to go into pawn shops and buy guns for me*, he said. His straw buyers would buy a sub-machine gun for about \$250 and send the guns north to Gibbs, who would find easy takers for a marked-up-price of \$1,250. Gibbs estimated that he put hundreds of guns on the streets in this way.

Gibbs expanded his drug business, opening additional drug dens and spots. In February 1986, three people waded into Gibbs' Ralph Avenue drug spot and robbed it of hundreds of vials of heroin. A few days later, it happened again. He suspected an inside job. *So I took each worker out and put them in the car. I'm going to ask you the question again. I put a snub-nose .44 in their mouths. I'm going to take it out and you better tell me the truth.* Gibbs got a name – Crazy Clyde – a fellow drug player in the Cypress Hills drug scene.

In a meeting with Clyde, his girlfriend, Sybil Mims, and a man named Bronco, Gibbs offered \$5,000 to them to find the robbers, as a pretext. Clyde and Bronco left, leaving Mims with Gibbs and a friend named Amare in the car. Gibbs was armed and itching for revenge. Having driven off, he parked the car. He pulled Mims out of the car and demanded to know why Clyde robbed the drug spot. She denied everything, and Gibbs shot her in the stomach. She fell, curled in the foetal position. *I didn't mean to shoot her the first time, but then I was so enraged that I bent down and put the gun to her head and fired, and blood and brain matter splashed my face*, he said. *That's when I really went over to the dark side. I used my tongue to lick the blood from my face, and my hoodie sleeve to wipe the rest.* Later, Clyde caught up with Gibbs and tried to kill him, but he got away. *They were shooting at me with guns I had sold them*, Gibbs said. Some months later, he learned that Amare had flipped and Gibbs turned himself in. The case against him collapsed as Amare refused to testify. Gibbs claims that he paid Amare \$25,000 not to testify. Gibbs was acquitted in June 1987; only Amare went to prison. *I stole years from his life*, Gibbs said.

Having beaten the Mims case, Gibbs felt invincible. He was careful when underworld types visited him at his apartment where he plotted with his crew of ten men and stashed cash and guns in a large armoire with a hidden compartment. Underworld visitors were required to strip to their underwear for meetings.

Soon after Gibbs was acquitted, Fat Cat came calling and recruited Gibbs as an enforcer. He also delivered cash and drugs for Nichols, in addition to running his own drug operation.

In December 1987, when Fat Cat wanted his girlfriend, Horsham, killed for stealing from stashed cash, he tapped a top lieutenant, Brian "Glaze" Gibbs. *He called a hit on her and pulled me aside and told me to do it*, said Gibbs. Gibbs told two men from his crew to kill Horsham, five days before Christmas. Gibbs, then 24, watched as his henchmen fatally shot Horsham in the head on a dead-end-street in Jamaica in the early morning darkness. They shot her friend too, but she survived. It was Gibbs who dumped Horsham's toddler (Fat Cat's son), dressed in a coat with a hood, on the front lawn of Horsham's mother after the murder and then called Horsham's mother from a payphone to alert her.

Gibbs has expressed remorse for his reign of violence – he said that Horsham begged for her life. *Myrtle [Horsham] tried to offer them \$100,000 not to kill her but that wasn't going to happen*, he said. Once Fat Cat issued the order to kill, there was no turning back, no negotiating. *There wasn't much to think about*, Gibbs added, *you didn't have a heart*.

Gibbs also arranged the murder of Maurice Bellamy in December 1987. Bellamy's son, Perry, had cooperated with authorities investigating the murder of Parole Officer Bryan Rooney in 1985 and was being protected. Bellamy was working in a laundromat, and Gibbs sent a hitman there - the gunman just walked in and shot Bellamy in the head, even though he had been instructed to make it look like a robbery. Nichols ordered the hit.

Gibbs was the first suspect in the murder of Police Officer Edward Byrne in February 1988, but he was never ultimately tied to the crime – that's because he was at the Cypress Hills Houses killing a rival named Clifton Rice. *He was part of a team who robbed a guy who was part of my crew*, said Gibbs. Gibbs was charged with the murder of Rice, but the charges were eventually dismissed for lack of evidence.

In April 1998, Gibbs ordered two more murders. Keith Reedy was killed by his hitmen on April 17, because he had killed one of his crew. Gibbs went to South Carolina, and, while there, he ordered his hitmen to track down rival gangster, Arthel Benson, 24, on April 30. *Someone shouted his name. As he turned around they shot him in the head*, Gibbs said.

The end of his criminal career loomed.

The crack dealer was busted on federal drug charges and flipped, helping the federal authorities dismantle the Nichols/Mason organisation. He was also obliged to plead guilty to the five murders and two attempted murders. Gibbs agreed to cooperate with investigations in exchange for a lesser sentence. His cooperation was valuable enough that prosecutors spoke on his behalf at the sentencing. *He's the real deal*, said Joseph Ponzi, the former chief investigator for the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, who helped turn Gibbs in to a co-operator. *He was absolutely plugged into that culture, and he was as notorious as they come at the height of the crack epidemic. They were crack pioneers*. Gibbs, who displayed an extraordinary ability to recall names, addresses and details was key to investigations and subsequently became a source whom Ponzi relied upon to learn about the operations of gangsters across north Brooklyn.

Gibbs spent nearly a decade in prison for his crimes and entered the witness protection programme when he left prison in 1997. He was in the programme for 18 months, given housing, a new name, a new identity and six months of living expenses. He started working in a warehouse. He subsequently worked as a salesman at Nordstrom, a supervisor at UPS and a security guard. He has two children, and, beating the huge odds against him, he has never re-offended. He self-published a book called *Beyond Lucky*, which is available for sale online.

Gibbs, decades after his first murder, now lives in the South under an assumed name and has embarked on a self-described campaign of redemption. *I was a sick soul*, he said. *You out there and you get caught up in that life, you gotta go all the way. In order for you to be it, you have to go all the way*.

I certainly don't forgive him for what he did, but I give him credit for taking advantage of the chance he got, Ponzi said.

Conclusion

Dianne and I hope that the foregoing will have provided the reader with a glimpse of life in New York during the crack years in particular – the 1980s and early 1990s and that interest will have been sufficiently piqued to encourage reading of the full set of documents identified in the *Endnotes*, in respect of which website links have been provided for most.

For me, I have gained some understanding of the challenges that faced law enforcement in those years in the face of widespread criminality and murdering behaviour by drug lords and their underlings. Magnificent police officers such as Michael McGuinness performed heroically, at huge personal cost, in standing up to the likes of those criminals who are briefly profiled above. Police Officer Edward Byrne did not die in vain, as pointed out by his brother, Larry. His death was a catalyst for the fight back against crime by New Yorkers – a fight back led by and brought to fruition by law enforcement agencies and remarkable individuals within them, such as Michael McGuinness.

One might tend to feel that some of those criminals and murderers did not ‘get their just deserts’, having traded self-serving ‘canary’ behaviour for leniency. However, following full consideration of the facts, one must be inclined to agree that the greater good must always be a prime consideration – the greater good of New York citizens was achieved by taking those high profile scourges of society off the streets and as a direct result of their cooperation with law enforcement authorities, the criminal activities of many associated criminal gangs were closed down. The murder counts over the years in question, as enumerated earlier, clearly show that New Yorkers took back their city, and as a consequence New York became one of the safest large cities in the U.S.A.

This article was contemplated in the first place because of the ancestral links that Michael McGuinness has with Grange and Crean in County Limerick, Ireland. Grange and Crean can be very proud of you, Michael. It is a fact that Irish people and their descendants have over the centuries and decades acquitted themselves with distinction on the world stage. Michael McGuinness did so in spades in New York.

Dianne McGuinness wonders if the two murdered men, Bryan Rooney and Edward Byrne had Irish connections – the surnames certainly have an Irish ring to them. I will not be surprised if Dianne will do her investigative routine in due course!

Michael McGuinness, Junior^{21 22 23 24 25 26}

Deceased Police Officer Edward Byrne’s father, Matt, was a cop – Edward followed in his footsteps. It is notable that Michael McGuinness Junior, son of Michael Senior and Dianne followed in his father’s footsteps also by joining the NYPD. He currently holds the rank of lieutenant, attached to the Emergency Service Unit, assigned as Special Projects Coordinator. Michael is presently a city-wide Supervisor in Emergency Service.

He has already demonstrated that he is cut from the same cloth as his father – he has shown and continues to show exceptional acumen and courage in his policing work. Michael was inducted in the South Huntington Hall of Fame in 2012. In 2009, he received a Certificate of Acknowledgement from Mayor Bloomberg for actions taken along with his squad following the crash of Flight 1549 in the Hudson River. Michael also received the New York Daily News “Hero of the Month” award along with another police officer, Detective Sean Soler, for actions taken to render aid to an injured construction worker who had severed an artery after being cut with a power saw. In 2010, the Urban Search and Rescue Team, NYTF1, responded to Haiti following a devastating earthquake. The team spent 14 days on the overseas operation

and rescued six people from collapsed structures. The team received certificates of recognition from Mayor Bloomberg. Michael also received the New York State Liberty Medal, the highest medal awarded by New York State to a civilian, from New York State Senator, Carl Marcellino.

Michael was the Task Force Leader in the wake of the three hurricanes, Harvey, Irma and Maria. A fascinating report, *New York Task Force 1 Deploys to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria* by Jack Flatley, may be accessed from the *Endnotes* below.

Michael spoke in a CNN Report - *US Task Force brings aid to Puerto Rico* - and again in an ABC Report - *Puerto Rican Day Parade to honour post-hurricane responders*. Both reports may be accessed from the *Endnotes*.



Woman climbed the base of the Statue of Liberty

On 4 July 2018, just as this article was being finalised, a woman climbed up to the robes of the Statue of Liberty to protest the separation of migrant families and was taken into custody after a standoff with police. Michael was in charge of the incident. Thankfully, the woman was brought down safely. The CNN Report may be accessed from the *Endnotes*, as may other subsequent reports.

Dianne and her daughter, Keira (married to a police officer) must be very proud, indeed, of both Michael Senior and Michael Junior.



The Extended McGuinness Family, U.S.A. Michael Senior (standing) is the tall blue-shirted figure with dark glasses. To Michael's left (looking at the photo), Michael Junior is holding his son. To Michael Junior's left (looking at photo), Dianne is standing, almost hidden by those standing in front of her. Seated in the front row and holding the Grange Parish Book is Tara McGurgan Grosso, great granddaughter of Delia Purcell.

Ancestors of Michael McGuinness

William PURCELL
b: 1747 in Grange Hill, Co
Limerick, Ireland
d: 01 Aug 1795

Ellen CLANCY (OR CLANCHY)

**Patrick PURCELL Grange
Farmer**
b: 20 Mar 1783 in Grange Hill, Co
Limerick, Ireland
m: Abt 1810
d: 30 Jul 1868 in Grange Hill, Co
Limerick, Ireland

Ellen BRIEN
d: 1865

Patrick PURCELL Cooper
b: 08 Aug 1826 in Bruff, Co
Limerick, Ireland
d: 11 Jul 1893 in Bruff, Co
Limerick, Ireland

Mary BOURKE
b: 1838
d: 12 Jan 1917

James NAUGHTON
b: 09 Apr 1874 in Crean, Bruff, Co
Limerick, Ireland
m: 10 Apr 1904
d: 29 Oct 1955

Delia (Bridget) PURCELL
b: 22 Sep 1882
d: 06 Oct 1947 in 57th St,
Woodside, New York, United States
of America

Michael Farrell MCGUINNESS
b: 1905
d: 1979

Mary (Maise) NAUGHTON
b: 1908
d: 1998

Michael MCGUINNESS
b: 1945

Endnotes (Please note – access to some links may not be available world-wide or may require ‘membership’ or ‘subscription’)

- ¹ “Equitable’s Assets tightly secured – Security Camera” - <http://www.100share.com/Equitables-assets-tightly.htm>
- ² “The FBI Files Season 7 – Ep 10 ‘Crackdown’” - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXY-0LOI_i0
- ³ Article from Vanity Fair Magazine – April 1991: “The Nine Lives of Fat Cat” (Lorenzo Nichols)
- ⁴ Lorenzo Nichols Biography - <https://www.biography.com/people/lorenzo-nichols-491358>
- ⁵ “The Story of ‘Fat Cat’: Birmingham-born drug kingpin whose brutal reign inspired NYC rappers, 50 Cent, Nas” – https://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2015/06/the_story_of_fat_cat_birminghama.html
- ⁶ “Former NYC crack king reflects on life of murder, money, women and guns at height of drug epidemic” – <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/nyc-crack-king-reflects-life-murder-money-women-article-1.2988634>
- ⁷ “United States of America, Appellee, v. Lorenzo Nichols, Defendant, Howard Mason, Defendant – appellant, 56 F.3d 403 (2d Cir. 1995)” - <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F3/56/403/624582/>
- ⁸ “Former NYC crack king reflects on life of murder, money, women and guns at height of drug epidemic” – <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/nyc-crack-king-reflects-life-murder-money-women-article-1.2988634>
- ⁹ “Edward Byrne (police officer)” - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Byrne_\(police_officer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Byrne_(police_officer))
- ¹⁰ “For the love of Eddie: Brother of assassinated cop gives emotional speech” - <https://pix11.com/2018/02/21/for-the-love-of-eddie-brother-of-assassinated-cop-gives-emotional-speech/>
- ¹¹ “A Drug Dealer Finds Many Eager To Launder His Drug Money” - <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/01/24/nyregion/a-drug-dealer-finds-many-eager-to-launder-his-drug-money.html>
- ¹² “Drug lord shapes up” - <https://nypost.com/2013/04/07/drug-lord-shapes-up/>
- ¹³ Article from Vanity Fair Magazine – April 1991: “The Nine Lives of Fat Cat” (Lorenzo Nichols)
- ¹⁴ Lorenzo Nichols Biography - <https://www.biography.com/people/lorenzo-nichols-491358>
- ¹⁵ “The Story of ‘Fat Cat’: Birmingham-born drug kingpin whose brutal reign inspired NYC rappers, 50 Cent, Nas” – https://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2015/06/the_story_of_fat_cat_birminghama.html
- ¹⁶ “Former NYC crack king reflects on life of murder, money, women and guns at height of drug epidemic” – <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/nyc-crack-king-reflects-life-murder-money-women-article-1.2988634>
- ¹⁷ “United States of America, Appellee, v. Lorenzo Nichols, Defendant, Howard Mason, Defendant – appellant, 56 F.3d 403 (2d Cir. 1995)” - <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F3/56/403/624582/>
- ¹⁸ “Howard Mason” - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Mason
- ¹⁹ “The Rise and Fall of New York’s Most Feared Gangster” - <https://www.ozy.com/flashback/the-rise-and-fall-of-new-yorks-most-feared-gangster/77381>
- ²⁰ “Former NYC crack king reflects on life of murder, money, women and guns at height of drug epidemic” – <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/nyc-crack-king-reflects-life-murder-money-women-article-1.2988634>

-
- ²¹ “New York Task Force 1 Deploys to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria” by Jack Flatley - <https://www.fireengineering.com/articles/print/volume-171/issue-2/features/new-york-task-force-1-deploys-to-hurricanes-harvey-irma-and-maria.html>
- ²² CNN Report - “US Task Force brings aid to Puerto Rica” - <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/us/2017/10/01/us-task-force-1-aid-and-rescue-puerto-rico-nd-pkg-gingras.cnn>
- ²³ ABC Report – “Puerto Rican Day Parade to honour post-hurricane responders” - <http://abc7ny.com/society/puerto-rican-day-parade-to-honor-post-hurricane-responders/3578934/>
- ²⁴ CNN Report - “Woman climbs base of the Statue of Liberty” - <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/us/2018/07/05/new-york-statue-of-liberty-protest-orig-fsc.cnn>
- ²⁵ “Statue of Liberty climber’s rescue recounted by three NYPD cops” – https://www.amny.com/news/statue_of_liberty_climber_rescue_1.19654466
- ²⁶ “NYPD cops from LI recount daring rescue of Statue of Liberty climber” <https://www.newsday.com/news/new-york/statue-of-liberty-climber-rescue-19653818>