**Along New York Harbor, ˜On the Waterfront Endures - The New York Times**

On an overcast Friday morning last January, longshoremen all over New York Harbor walked off the docks, bringing the port nearly to a stop for a day. What were the longshoremens grievances? What were their demands? Many of the men seemed not to know. They hung around the food trucks and milled about the parking lots, unsure why they had stopped working and unsure what it would take for work to resume. No one knew what that was about, one recalled recently. A year later, the reason for the strike remains unclear, even as the agency tasked with ridding the waterfront of organized crime, the Waterfront Commission, has questioned dozens of longshoremen under oath. One told the commission he learned of the strike early that morning, when it was too dark to see the face of the man giving the order. It could have been anyone. It was the old D D ” Deaf and Dumb, the classic longshoremans response, popularized in the 1954 film On the Waterfront. In that movie, the longshoremen were reluctant, even frightened, to talk to the authorities, whether a priest or a detective, because the mob controlled the waterfront. In the years since, much has changed around New York Harbor the heavy lifting is done not by hand but by cranes, and human voices are scarcely heard amid the beeping of the straddle carriers, giant insectlike machines that move containers back and forth. But even as New York and New Jerseys increasingly valuable shoreline is claimed by luxury development, investigators say the mob is still present. It is where the daughter of one of the mobsters made famous in the 1997 film Donnie Brasco is up for a job where the nephew of another famous mobster pulled down more than $400, 000 in a single year because he was almost never off the clock, not even when he was at home sleeping where three consecutive presidents of a Newark longshoremens union were convicted of extortion. There is physical evidence as well, like the $51, 900 wrapped in cellophane that was discovered buried in the backyard of a longshoreman. It was, according to federal agents in a 2010 affidavit, the tribute that a group of Newark longshoremen paid the Genovese crime family each Christmas. You will need another generation or two to get the mob out of this port, because they are very well entrenched, said one longshoreman who requested anonymity because of a concern for his safety and his livelihood. Those who step out of line, he said, face being reassigned from jobs unloading container ships to the cruise ship terminals, where the work and the pay is far less. While investigators say the mob and the waterfront remain entwined, both institutions are much diminished today, pushed to the margins of New York City. The finger piers that once extended from much of Manhattan and Brooklyn are mostly gone. These days the most famous shipping line in the city is the Circle Line, which does sightseeing tours. Container ships generally head across the harbor to New Jersey, toward the ports of Elizabeth, Newark and Bayonne. They unload at a number of terminals, one of which is owned by a Canadian teachers pension fund. The pay is pretty good on the docks ” plenty of longshoremen make well over $100, 000 ” but the work is often dreary and dangerous. Its a funny thing about this port, a hiring agent at Port Newark named Pasquale Pontoriero was overheard saying in a 2009 wiretap, a few years before his license was revoked because he had associated with organized crime figures. I call it the Broadway of broken dreams. Perhaps the starkest difference at the port today is in how many machines there are, and how few people. A century ago New York Harbor employed 40, 000 longshoremen, who unloaded ships with hook and sling and brawn. Today, the entire workforce is just under 3, 400 longshoremen, many perched behind the controls of cranes and straddle carriers. Yet amid all the transformation, some investigators say, racketeers and mobsters are still as present as the barnacles attached to the piers. In the view of Walter M. Arsenault, the executive director of the Waterfront Commission, the fundamental relationship between the waterfront and the mob remains unchanged since On the Waterfront. The only difference is now, its in color, Mr. Arsenault said. He based that assessment on several indicators, such as the number of relatives of figures who continue to hold choice jobs, many of which involve little work and pay unusually high salaries, like the union shop steward position held by Ralph Gigante, the nephew of the boss of the Genovese family, the late Vincent (Chin) Gigante. Ralph Gigante earned $419, 000 in 2014, and has said he believes he holds the union office for life ” until death do us part. There is also the fact that some of the same New York and New Jersey union officials whom federal prosecutors have in the past accused of racketeering have since risen to the top ranks of the East Coast waterfront union, the International Longshoremens Association. One is Harold J. Daggett, the garrulous president, who owns a yacht, the Obsession, and has been spotted by his members riding in a Bentley. One longshoreman said he had been surprised to catch sight of a holster strapped to Mr. Daggetts ankle during a meeting. The Justice Department, which has lost two cases against Mr. Daggett, has described him as an associate of the Genovese crime family whose rise through the union ranks was part of the mobs plan. A good portion of the Justice Departments evidence against him came from the testimony of an aged mob turncoat, George Barone, who had once been a waterfront enforcer for the Genovese family and who described Mr. Daggett as thoroughly under the mobs control. But Mr. Daggett, on trial in 2005, took the witness stand and portrayed himself as a mob target, describing a 1980 episode in which Mr. Barone had put a gun to his head and threatened to kill him and his family ” an incident that so terrified Mr. Daggett he urinated in his pants, according to news accounts. During that trial, one of Mr. Daggetts a reputed mobster named Lawrence Ricci, went missing. Several weeks after the men were acquitted, Mr. Riccis decomposing body was found in the trunk of a car outside a New Jersey diner. The murder, which Mr. Arsenault said is the last known waterfront killing, remains unsolved. Mr. Daggett declined, through the longshoremens associations spokesman, to be interviewed. But alluding to his brushes with the Justice Department, Mr. Daggett joked at a union conference in Puerto Rico in 2015 that when he was invited to the White House for a labor meeting, I thought I might have a better chance ending up in the big house, but there I was, your I. L. A. president, at the White House. But Mr. Daggetts lawyer in that 2005 trial, George Daggett (his cousin) said in a recent interview that the mob on the waterfront is a myth ” something that has not been true for half a century. Mr. Daggett, who frequently represents longshoremen in litigation with the Waterfront Commission, said that the agency prefers to pretend were still in the 50s. They cant say, ˜We got rid of the mob, because then theres no reason for them to be in existence, George Daggett said. I challenge them to prove mob influence on the piers. What have they come up with? A couple of guys here and a stray guy there? The mobs grip over the New York waterfront began nearly a century ago and was predicated on a few simple facts: The work was uneven, depending on a ships arrival time, and yet the cargo needed to be unloaded quickly, so that produce did not spoil and the shelves of Americas stores could remain stocked. Gangsters quickly realized that the piers were the choke point of the economy, and that a dizzying array of rackets were available to them. They pilfered cargo as it came ashore and extorted truckers who had come to collect cargo or drop it off. And, most cruelly, the mob controlled which of the longshoreman would be selected to work. Theirs was some of the most dangerous work in the country, but longshoremen had to beg to get it. At the on the piers, where longshoremen would gather each morning in the hope of joining the group that would work on an arriving ship, it was common for a man to place a toothpick behind his ear, a signal that he would kick back some of his pay. All this began to change with containerization, as goods were no longer shipped loose but packed into containers that stacked efficiently, and transferred easily between ships and trucks and trains. With cranes doing the lifting, the number of longshoremen plummeted by more than 90 percent. Today, advances in automation threaten to reduce the number of longshoremen even further. As the workforce dwindled, the remaining jobs became well paid. This was a result of a shrewd move by the longshoremens association: The union negotiated a flat fee, today roughly $5 a ton, that the shipping industry would pay into various funds to provide an income for longshoremen and supplement the benefits and income of those who would work fewer hours as a result. As global trade has soared, the few longshoremen who remain have seen their paychecks grow. The waterfront today has largely receded from the citys consciousness and even its geography. And to some extent, so has the mob. Decimated by mass prosecutions over the last three decades, New Yorks five crime families have struggled to adapt. While there have been some new, profitable ventures, like online gambling, the waterfront still exerts its own pull. Mr. Arsenault referred to the waterfront as the mobs last candy jar. In recent years, the union has brazenly recommended friends or relatives of organized crime figures for jobs on the docks, said Phoebe S. Sorial, the general counsel for the Waterfront Commission. She said the union has sought waterfront jobs for people who posted bail for organized figures and people who are in business with organized crime figures, along with any number of relatives. In 2014, for instance, the union recommended the daughter of one of New Yorks most famous mobsters, Benjamin (Lefty) Ruggiero (played by Al Pacino in the film Donnie Brasco) Mr. Arsenault said, adding that other such cases abound. You cant throw a rock on either side of the waterfront without hitting a brother, son or daughter of a made member, Mr. Arsenault said, using the terminology for someone who has been inducted into a crime family. The Waterfront Commission was formed in 1953 to fight organized crime on the docks. For many years, before it came under new leadership in 2008, it was a and sleepy agency. Since then it has focused on extensive background checks, mapping the familial relationships between mobsters and longshoremen ” an elaborate genealogy project. The Gigantes, for instance, have 10 relatives ” mostly nephews, and grandsons ” working on the waterfront, according to the commission. This kind of blatant nepotism was impressive if not especially unusual. And yet Mr. Daggett, the union president, objects to the assumption that these sorts of arrangements necessarily signal corruption. There is an old saying, he once proclaimed at a public hearing, slightly stretching the degree of kinship in the adage, ˜The son or a nephew should not carry the sins of a father or an uncle. Many of those with relatives in organized crime say the insinuation that they themselves are mixed up in racketeering is hurtful, untrue and yet maybe inescapable. When I started out, people were a little standoffish because of fear, because of my ancestors, James Anastasio said. His fathers uncle was Albert Anastasia, once the head of what the press called Murder, Inc. he was Lord High Executioner, as his 1957 obituary in The Daily News put it. Although once they got to know me and realized I had nothing to do with that, they treated me as a normal person. Mr. Anastasio, who runs a training institute for longshoremen and is also an executive at a crane company, said that in his long career on the waterfront, Ive never really come across the mob. As far as I know, no, the mob is no longer on the waterfront, he added. I cant say there are not small pockets of bad people, but as far as big influence ” not that Ive seen in my lifetime. George Daggett, the lawyer and cousin of the union president, said that the Waterfront Commission has taken to harassing some longshoremen with relatives reputed to be organized crime figures. He cited a lawsuit he had brought on behalf of a longshoreman in New Jersey named Pasquale Falcetti Jr. Mr. Falcetti, he said, was denied a port registration card by the Waterfront Commission for no other reason, apparently, than who this kids father is ” Pasquale (Uncle Patty) Falcetti, a convicted racketeer and reputed leader in the Genovese family, currently finishing a federal prison sentence. The union has complained about such aggressive tactics, and the longstanding antipathy between the longshoremens association and the Waterfront Commission may have been the driving force behind the strike last year. And yet a spokesman for the longshoremens association, James McNamara, said the union did not give the order for the strike and urged the longshoremen to return to work. What we had heard, Mr. McNamara said, was the men were seemingly protesting against the Waterfront Commission and what was perceived as harassment. As for the presence of organized crime along the waterfront, Mr. McNamara said the mob had no influence anymore. They just dont, he said. Its a highly automated, highly sophisticated industry. He added, You just dont hear about that at all anymore. But another viewpoint was offered two years ago by Sabato (Sal) Catucci, a legendary waterfront figure who operated the stevedoring company that ran the Red Hook docks in Brooklyn until 2011. At a public hearing before the Waterfront Commission in 2010, he protested investigators insinuation that the ports were under mob control. He was so wary of being tarred as a mobster that he even chose what to wear with care. I didnt come in here with a black shirt today, because I dont feel that I wanted to be stereotyped, he said. Yet just a few years later, Mr. Catucci, now locked in a battle over a contract to operate the Red Hook port, accused the longshoremens union of threatening him during negotiations. He had been told he would be taken out in a box, according to a lawsuit he filed. One vice president of the union shoved me and threatened to knock me out, Mr. Catucci said in a 2014 affidavit, in which he claimed that some of the waterfronts most powerful figures are, or are associated with, thugs who get their way by intimidation and force. Investigators insist that the same rackets that gave life to On the Waterfront continue today. Mr. Arsenault checked off the various forms of thievery and extortion, both big and small, that he learned of through his investigations. containers occasionally disappear, most likely the result of theft. Truckers, in order to be allowed to retrieve their container and leave the port, have been encouraged to buy overpriced bottles of water, or even Girl Scout cookies from the longshoremen, he said. Robert Stewart, a longtime anticorruption prosecutor who until last year had worked in a role for 13 years to rid a longshoremens local in Bayonne of organized crime, said that mob influence on the waterfront was a tad better than in the past. You dont have bodies showing up, he said. But he said he wondered whether the mob had not simply directed its attention to a different source of income. For years, investigators have suspected that the mobs most lucrative targets on the waterfront are the longshoremen benefit funds, including what is known as the container royalty fund, the fund that pays extra wages to longshoremen each year as compensation for the diminished work that came with containerization. The funds are worth a great deal of money one received more than $95 million in 2014. They also tend to be rather opaque. It is an awfully inviting target, and knowing the cast of characters involved here, to think theyre not getting a piece of this is unrealistic, Mr. Stewart said. The list of employees at the benefits fund, said one law enforcement official, include an accountant and a director of operations who are the children of dead organized crime figures. But John Nardi, the president of the New York Shipping Association, a trade group that has a role in managing the funds, said he had seen no evidence of misconduct. Based on peoples names you can make a lot of assumptions, he said. However, he said, All monies are accounted for.

**Joseph Goldstein**

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