

TRUE-LIFE NOIR

THE CHICAGO WAY

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How the Mob and the movie studios sold out the Hollywood labor movement and set the stage for the Blacklist

In the early 1930s, Hollywood created an indelible image of the urban gangster. It is a pungent irony that, less than a decade later, the film industry would struggle to escape the vise-like grip of actual gangsters who threatened to bring the movie studios under its sinister control.

Criminal fiefdoms, created by an unholy trinity of Prohibition-era gangsters, ward-heeling politicians, and

crooked law enforcement, infected numerous American metropolises—but Chicago was singularly venal. Everything and everybody in the Windy City was seemingly for sale. Al Capone's 1931 federal tax case conviction may have ended his reign as "Mr. Big," but his Outfit continued to grow, exerting its dominion over various trade unions. Mobsters siphoned off workers' dues, set up their cohorts with no-show jobs, and

shook down businesses to maintain labor peace. Resistance by union officials was futile and sometimes fatal. At least 13 prominent Chicago labor leaders were killed; and not a single conviction for any criminals involved. Willie Bioff and George Browne were ambitious wannabes who vied for a place at the union trough. Russian-born Bioff was a thug who served the mob as a union slugger, pimp, and whorehouse operator.

The hard-drinking Browne was vice president of the Local 2 Stagehands Union, operated under the umbrella of IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts, hereafter referred to as the IA). He had run unsuccessfully for the IA presidency in 1932. Bioff and Browne recognized in each other a kindred spirit; they partnered up for a big score.



A quartet of notables who orchestrated the Hollywood payola scheme, clockwise from top left: former pimp and bouncer Willie Bioff, corrupt union boss George E. Browne, and the Outfit powerhouses Paul "The Waiter" Ricca (pictured center in an unaccustomed police lineup) and Frank "The Enforcer" Nitti

Their gravy train would arrive when Local 2's contract with Paramount's Balaban-Katz theater chain expired. The contract had included a temporary Depression-induced salary reduction, but wages were to be restored under a new agreement. Barney Balaban bridled at any such hike, claiming it would open the floodgates for raises to other employees. As he was already bribing the head of the corrupt Projectionist's Union, Balaban offered a similar deal to Browne, putting him on the company's payroll. Bioff then told the theater magnate it would cost \$50,000 to guarantee no raises and labor peace. Balaban, who became president of Paramount Pictures in 1936, negotiated them down to \$20,000 and paid with a company check recorded as a donation to the Stagehand Union's soup kitchen.

Bioff and Browne boasted about their extortion coup during an evening of drinking and gambling at Club 100, a popular Chicago nightspot that Al Capone's cousin Nick Circella ran for the Outfit. Circella informed his superiors. Two days later, Browne and Bioff were frog-marched to a meeting with a pair of the Outfit's key leaders: Frank "The Enforcer" Nitti and Paul "the Waiter" Ricca.

Nitti asked if Browne intended to run for the IA presidency again in 1934. Getting a "Yes," Nitti made the mob's prototypical offer, the one that couldn't be refused:

"In this world, if I scratch your back, I expect you to scratch mine. If you can win by yourself, you don't need us. But if you want our help, we'll expect you to cooperate. Fair enough?"

Browne and Bioff bought in and the Outfit's plan to subvert the movie business was underway.

The motion picture industry had always deployed a "divide and conquer" strategy to counter the emerging union movement. In 1927, the studios formed a company-sponsored union, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), specifically to curb the spread of unionism from technical crafts to the ranks of actors, writers, and other "creatives." The Studio Basic Agreement (SBA) set salaries for craft workers. Each studio controlled seniority among its own employees making it difficult for unions to recruit new members. Many rank and file workers had dual memberships in the IA and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) or the Carpenters Union.

The July 1933 strike by Sound Local 695 against Columbia Pictures was a disaster for the IA. When Columbia mogul Harry Cohn wouldn't budge, the other Hollywood IA locals walked out in support. The studios responded by locking out the strikers, dropping the IA from the Basic Studio Agreement and hiring IBEW and Carpenters Union members. The strike was crushed and membership in the IA plummeted.

The Outfit got a briefing on the movie capital's labor travails from Johnny Roselli, a Capone aide who'd relocated to Los Angeles in the mid-1920s. "Handsome Johnny" seamlessly insinuated himself into the realm of the Hollywood elite and the L.A. underworld. Roselli reported that the Hollywood trade unions were down, but not out. Studios remained susceptible to a strong union because of their dependence on specialized technical workers—and the vulnerability of their far-flung theater chains.



Left: 20th Century-Fox chairman Joseph Schenck (center) is flanked by cinema legends (left to right) Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Darryl F. Zanuck, Samuel Goldwyn, and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.; Right: Loew's chairman Nicholas Schenck personally delivered suitcases of studio cash to Willie Bioff and George Browne at a Waldorf Astoria hotel room

Reporters were barred from the 1934 IA Convention in Knoxville, Tennessee, where inside the hall a Who's Who of organized crime was meeting: Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel, Lucky Luciano, and Abner "Longie" Zwillman mixed with the delegates. Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, who controlled IA Local 306 in New York, was George Browne's floor manager. Overt intimidation was unnecessary as the sitting IA president had resigned in the wake of the Columbia strike fiasco. Elected by acclamation, Browne named Bioff as his deputy. The newly minted officials were immediately assigned "minders" by the Outfit. Nick Circella kept an eye on Browne, and he introduced Bioff to Roselli, who was in New York taking a periodic rest cure for his tuberculosis.

The new IA leadership quickly consolidated its position: the Outfit took over the Projectionists and the Theater Janitors unions after the leaders of both those unions were killed in two more unsolved gangland assassinations. Nick Circella was appointed president of Projectionists Local 110. A strike by projectionists against Paramount theaters cowed all the studios into restoring the IA to the Studio Basic Agreement. In no time, membership in Hollywood's IA locals began to recover.

Browne and Bioff held their coming out party on July 15, 1935, when they called a strike against the RKO theater circuit. The company handed over \$87,000 so their theaters could reopen. Next up was the Loew's chain, parent company of MGM, of which Nick Schenck was the top man. The fifth richest man in America, Schenck and his older brother Joseph were Russian-born Jews who, like most of the other movie moguls, had risen from poverty through a rough-and-tumble world. Joe had co-founded 20th Century-Fox

with Darryl F. Zanuck less than two months earlier. To the Schenck brothers, cutting backroom deals with gangsters was just another part of the business. Following the recently passed National Labor Relations Act, what studio bosses *really* feared was the rise of unionism in the motion picture business. Nick Schenck paid Bioff and Browne \$143,500. Other studios that owned theater chains weighed

in with more payoffs: Paramount anted up \$138,000 and Warner Bros. forked over \$91,000. All these machinations were cloaked by a phony projectionist strike in New York against Paramount staged on November 30, 1935. An "emergency meeting" of union leaders and studio negotiators was held the next day as a smokescreen for the press. The money changed hands; the meeting concluded with the announcement that the IA had been granted the first-ever closed shop agreement in the industry's history. Unannounced was the part of the deal in which the IA guaranteed there'd be no strikes at the studios. Wages of rank and file workers were immediately cut by 35¢ an hour. Later estimates placed the savings in labor costs, just for Loew's and RKO,

at over \$3 million in the first year of the IA deal.

Browne placed Bioff in charge of the IA's Hollywood operations with authority to assume control of any local. A member of Local 37—the industry's largest local of backlot craft workers—recalled Bioff striding through the meeting hall, flanked by thugs toting violin cases, to declare that the IA was taking over and would be appointing new officers.

The duo's insatiable greed almost got the better of them after Browne levied a 2% surcharge on all IA members' paychecks. Instead of kicking back the usual 50% to Chicago, they prepared a

Following the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, what studio bosses really feared was the rise of unionism in the motion picture business.



Left: Mobster Nick Circella overheard Bioff and Browne bragging about a shakedown and recognized his opportunity to enrich the Outfit; Right: New Jersey bootleg and vice king Abner "Longie" Zwillman provided the cash that allowed mogul Harry Cohn to become the unchallenged ruler of Columbia Pictures

second set of books and pocketed the money. The Outfit discovered the double cross and an enraged Nitti confronted a cowering George Browne who later testified, "I thought he was going to push me out the window." Nitti decreed the Outfit would, from then on, get two-thirds of the lucre rather than the previous 50-50 split. The illegal union surcharge was eventually overturned by the courts, but not before workers had been cheated out of several million dollars. For studio bosses, the worm turned in April 1936. Browne, Bioff, and Circella appeared in Nick Schenck's New York office and declared they'd close down every Loew's theatre in the country unless they were paid \$2,000,000. After conferring with Robert Kent at Fox, Schenck reconvened the meeting and said there was no way he could raise that amount. "Okay, I'll take one million," Bioff said. "With a hundred grand upfront." The payment schedule: \$50,000 per year from Fox, Warner Bros., MGM, and Paramount; \$25,000 from RKO, Columbia, and the lesser studios. Three days later, in a room at the Waldorf Astoria, Kent and Schenck delivered \$50,000 apiece in \$100 dollar bills and watched while the three gangsters counted the cash on adjoining twin beds.

Only Columbia was immune to the shakedown. Harry Cohn (who had secretly obtained an underworld loan from Longie Zwillman to purchase his controlling shares of Columbia stock) appealed to his close friend Johnny Roselli, who interceded on his behalf. Bioff protested that he had Nitti's okay to extort Columbia, but Roselli, accompanied by L.A. mob boss Jack Dragna, paid a visit one evening to Bioff's home. Columbia never had another problem with the IA. The incident revealed that the Outfit's true power didn't reside with Frank Nitti; it was Paul Ricca and Anthony "Joe Batters" Accardo (nicknamed by Capone for his enforcement skill with a baseball bat)

calling the shots from Chicago.

What started as an extortion racket became a partnership. Albert Warner told the FBI that in the spring of '36, he'd received a call from Nick Schenck saying an agreement had been made to pay Willie Bioff as a way of preventing labor difficulties at the studios. These payments, from 1937 to 1941, were disguised as commissions for raw film stock. According to the FBI, Joe Schenck told Louis B. Mayer, "He [Bioff] is all right and he is here and can do favors. It is just as well to have someone friendly." Mayer confirmed the conversation, saying that Schenck advised "to keep him [Bioff] friendly, life would be easier to operate the plant [studio]." The moguls became downright affable towards the former pimp and warehouse manager. Joe Schenck paid for ocean cruises and a tour of Europe for Bioff and his wife. At a gala send-off (paid for by the moguls), Harry Warner and his wife gave the Bioffs a floral arrangement accompanied by a telegram: "Sorry we are not on the boat with you. ... Take it easy and have a good time."

Dissidents in Local 37 sued the IA over the 2% wage surcharge and won reelection. In retaliation, the IA dissolved Local 37 and created five smaller locals comprising individual crafts. The progressives responded by forming a new union, the United Studio Technicians Guild (USTG) and petitioned the newly constituted National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for a representation election. Bioff portrayed the USTG as a putsch led by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) while George Browne made speeches condemning the progressives in the IA as Communists. Red-baiting would become a tactic repeatedly used to condemn so-called "subversives" in the union ranks.

With connivance from the studios, Bioff announced the negotia-



Under the leadership of Guild president Robert Montgomery (second from right), SAG successfully resisted pressure and physical threats from the IATSE and the studios; the 1937 SAG negotiating committee (left to right): Franchot Tone, Aubrey Blair, Montgomery, and Kenneth Thomson

tion of substantial raises for the IA's unions. The USTG lost the election. Activists were banned from rejoining their unions unless they dropped their lawsuit and signed a humiliating apology to Bioff and Browne. Studios blackballed any members who wouldn't sign the pre-printed IA apology.

After the courts upheld the constitutionality of the 1935 Wagner Act, the Federated Motion Picture Crafts (FMPC) organized some trades that were among the lowest-paid and hardest-working at the studios. Utility workers, for instance, were being paid 62¢ an hour with no minimum hours and no overtime. When the studios refused to recognize these workers, the FMPC struck. Bioff and Roselli imported Chicago Outfit muscle and forced IA members to cross FMPC picket lines. The strike became a bloody free-for-all when the FMPC enlisted San Pedro longshoremen and members of locally based CIO unions to battle the IA goons.

To prevent the Screen Actors Guild from aligning with the FMPC, the IA threatened a projectionists' strike—unless the studios recognized SAG and began negotiations. The combined efforts of the IA, the movie studios, and SAG effectively put down the strike. With the exception of the painters, the other trades returned to work at the same pay level. The Los Angeles Labor Council passed a resolution branding the IA as “a company union and a scab-herding agency.”

Although SAG finally won recognition from the studios (it took four years), its president, Robert Montgomery, warned actors not to trust the IA. His instincts were confirmed when Bioff launched a campaign to bring SAG into his fiefdom. When Montgomery resisted, Chicago-style organizing followed: SAG executive board members received death threats. Board member George Murphy was told his children would have acid thrown in their faces. A bomb

[Actor Robert Montgomery] reasoned that since the U.S. Treasury took down Al Capone, they could deal with a wannabe like Willie Bioff.

was found in another board member's car. Montgomery refused to be cowed. In public, he and other SAG officials were protected by a posse of movie stuntmen. Carey McWilliams, attorney for the Local 37 dissidents, and syndicated columnist Westbrook Pegler eventually

took the lead on exposing the IA's criminality to the public, but Robert Montgomery was the difference maker. He hired private investigators to probe Bioff's past, uncovering a \$100,000 loan that helped Bioff finance a 70-acre estate in Reseda. The mobster at that time lacked legitimate assets to purchase the property. He'd asked Joe Schenck to create a phony paper loan that he secretly paid back. This seemingly minor transgression resulted in Bioff's downfall.

Previous investigations of the IA by Los Angeles DA Buron Fitts (he called complaints about Bioff's conduct a “misunderstanding”) and the California State Assembly (key congressional officials were bribed) had gone

nowhere. Montgomery had SAG's investigative file on Bioff personally delivered to U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau on July 1, 1938. The actor reasoned that since the U.S. Treasury took down Al Capone, they could deal with a wannabe like Willie Bioff.

But when Treasury sent a criminal referral to the Justice Department, Charles Carr, the assigned prosecutor, claimed “the government was on a hopeless fishing trip,” infuriating Treasury and FBI agents who'd been actively investigating the Outfit's influence in Hollywood. It was later alleged that Carr had been offered the U.S. Attorney's position in Los Angeles in return for not pursuing the case against Bioff.

The matter would have continued to languish if not for Westbrook Pegler's columns on IA corruption, which he renewed in November 1939. Sifting through old Chicago police records, the columnist discovered that Bioff had an outstanding 1922 pandering conviction.



Left: Lawyer Sidney Korshak, fixer extraordinaire, functioned as the Outfit's hidden hand in Hollywood and Las Vegas for a half century. Right: Frank Nitti (center with mustache) couldn't cope with the prospect of hard time after his 1943 indictment so he opted for an Outfit-influenced retirement plan: suicide

tion and had skipped out on his six-month sentence. A warrant was issued for Bioff's arrest, and the story made headlines coast-to-coast. U.S. Secretary Morgenthau demanded that Robert Montgomery's investigative file be retrieved and reviewed by a different prosecutor. Pegler won a Pulitzer Prize for breaking the sensational scoop. Bioff returned to Chicago to serve his four-month sentence in the city lockup. By the time he returned to Hollywood, events had overtaken him. On January 10, 1940, Bioff was indicted for income tax evasion based on the \$100,000 "loan" from Joseph Schenck. George Browne made more speeches accusing Communists inside the IA of conspiring to take over the union, while depicting Bioff as a selfless labor leader who was "the victim of a merciless series of scurrilous attacks." In addition to the Red-baiting broadsides, Browne invited Congressman Martin Dies, Jr. (D-Texas) to probe "subversion" in the movie industry. Although Dies' most memorable achievement to that point was listing 10-year old Shirley Temple as a possible Communist dupe, his investigative committee was reconfigured in 1938 as the permanent House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC).

In a plea bargain, Joe Schenck copped to a reduced sentence for perjury in exchange for testifying against Bioff, Browne, and Circella. Schenck was convinced that if the extent of his dealings with the IA's gangsters was revealed, he might spend the rest of his life behind bars. Fortunately for his brother and the other producers, the prosecutors were solely focused on nailing Bioff and Browne. The criminal pair were indicted on federal tax evasion and racketeering charges on May 23, 1941.

Attorney Sidney Korshak was assigned as Bioff's attorney. Korshak was the Outfit's undercover front in Hollywood. He was a renowned fixer whose unprecedented power over studio bosses, union heads, and everybody else who mattered became the stuff of Tinseltown legends. Korshak instructed Bioff that he would admit

to taking Schenck's money, stay off the witness stand, and "do your time as a man." Browne received the same marching orders. Nick Circella went on the lam.

Obedience was never one of Bioff's strong points. On the stand, he accused studio bosses of bribing him to maintain labor peace—while remaining mute about the Outfit's orchestration of the scheme. It didn't work. It took the jury only two hours to return guilty verdicts. Bioff got ten years, Browne eight. On December 1, 1941, Nick Circella was arrested in Chicago. He kept his mouth shut, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to prison.

The case might have ended there but for a startling bit of testimony from Harry Warner. The eldest Warner brother had been one of a parade of movie executives testifying to the Bioff-Browne shakedowns. Under oath, Warner recalled Bioff's explanation for an increase in payments from the studios: "The boys in Chicago insist on more money." The heat came down on Bioff, Browne, and Circella to rat out their bosses.

A hideous murder in Chicago flipped the case. Police responding to reports of smoke from an Addison Street apartment on February 2, 1943, discovered the mutilated corpse of nightclub hostess Estelle Carey—Nick Circella's girlfriend. She had been beaten, stabbed repeatedly, then doused with gasoline and set on fire. Circella, who had been flirting with prosecutors about cooperating, clammed up permanently. George Browne's wife received an anonymous call threatening her with dismemberment if her husband testified. The volatile Bioff reacted in a typically contrarian manner. The doting husband and father was enraged by the Outfit's intimidation tactics. He went straight to the prosecutor and asked: "What do you want to know?"

As a result, Roselli, Nitti, Ricca, and five other Outfit members were indicted for extortion and conspiracy on March 18, 1943.



Left: While a senator, Harry S. Truman (left) intervened to get cushy treatment for his imprisoned mentor, Kansas City political boss Thomas J. Pendergast (right); Right: Roy Brewer (left) and Ronald Reagan purged suspected Communists from the IATSE and SAG and established the anti-Communist Labor League of Hollywood Voters

Roselli, who had wrangled himself a military enlistment to take the heat off, was brought into court in an Army private's uniform. The Outfit's inner circle turned on Nitti, who had initiated the scheme that now threatened to bring them down. An irate Paul Ricca reportedly insisted that Nitti needed to take the fall for the organization as Capone had done previously ... or else. Nitti was already in poor health; he'd served a previous prison stretch with difficulty. On March 19, a man clutching a whiskey bottle and a revolver was reported weaving back and forth on the tracks of the Illinois Central Railroad. It took three shots to the head for Frank Nitti to cash in his Outfit retirement plan.

Bioff ended up recanting much of his previous testimony about the studio extortion racket. He revealed the shenanigans of the studio heads, including a \$200,000 bribe from Nick Schenck to head off a federal investigation of the IA. He also declared Sidney Korshak to be "our man in Hollywood." A terrified George Browne corroborated enough of Bioff's testimony. On December 31, 1943, the Outfit's leaders were found guilty. They all received ten-year sentences and \$10,000 fines.

The aftermath was not leavened with compensating moral values. The convicted mobsters were shipped to a medieval hellhole, the Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta. The convicts kept their heads down while renowned Outfit fixer Murray "Curly" Humphreys went to work.

Humphreys reached out to Paul Dillon, a Kansas City attorney whose ties with local political boss Thomas J. Pendergast extended to the White House. The Pendergast machine had held sway in Missouri for more than two decades. One of Pendergast's political appointees was a former WWI Army officer and family friend—Harry S. Truman. After being appointed a county judge in 1922, Truman looked the other way as Pendergast and his cronies stole everything in

Kansas City that wasn't nailed down. In 1934, Truman became a Senator in an election marred by voter fraud. Senator Truman tried to block a federal investigation into Pendergast's activities, and he later intervened with prison officials to get favorable treatment for his mentor after Pendergast was convicted and sentenced for income tax evasion in 1939. "Give 'em Hell Harry" always pledged undying loyalty to his friends—a character trait the Outfit understood.

[President Harry S.] Truman personally pardoned Joe Schenck after the mogul had served only four months of his year-and-a-day sentence for income tax evasion.

The Outfit cons (less Roselli) were soon transferred from Atlanta to the friendlier confines of Leavenworth Penitentiary. Renowned trial lawyer Maury Hughes, a longtime friend of Attorney General Tom Clark, was hired by the Outfit to lobby for its imprisoned leaders. Clark was the same AG who inexplicably disbanded the FBI's Capone-Outfit squad and blocked a Federal investigation into Kansas City voter fraud. On August 5, 1947, Hughes met with the head of the federal parole board (of which three members were appointed by Clark). Less than a week later, paroles for Ricca, Roselli, and all the others were granted

over the vociferous objections of the prosecutors who'd put them away. The press cried foul, and Republicans launched a series of investigations that were stonewalled by Clark—who would soon be elevated to the Supreme Court by President Truman. Another outrage soon followed: Truman personally pardoned Joe Schenck after the mogul had served only four months of his year-and-a-day sentence for income tax evasion.

After several years of relative labor calm in Hollywood during the war, battle flared between the IA and the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), a breakaway organization comprised of USTG leftovers, the Painters Union, and IA progressives. Led by Herbert Sorrell, the CSU fought the IA and the studios from 1945-47, the most violent phase of Hollywood's long-running labor strife. On



Willie Bioff meets his Maker: the pint-sized ex-union boss was blown to bits after sharding his vehicle outside his Phoenix home in 1955; Bioff's inability to maintain a low profile made it easy for the Outfit to square accounts with him

October 5, 1945, a riot erupted when IA strike-breakers tried to storm through 800 CSU picketers outside the Warner Bros. front gate in Burbank. Autos were overturned and 50 people were injured as studio police deployed tear gas and high-pressure fire hoses. Jack Warner and his retinue observed the fray from the safety of a soundstage roof. Burbank police waded in and Sorrell and other CSU leaders were beaten and arrested. The IA had divested itself of its gangster overseers, like a snake shedding its skin, but its methods remained the same.

Roy Brewer became the IA's new Hollywood representative and partnered with the studios and SAG (now led by Ronald Reagan) to eliminate the CSU. Brewer stuck with the Browne-Bioff playbook, claiming the rival union was rife with Communists bent on subverting the labor movement. Having crushed the strike and purged the disloyal, Brewer established (with Ronald Reagan) the anti-Communist Labor League of Hollywood Voters and later succeeded John Wayne as president of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. Testifying before HUAC, Brewer named 13 actors, directors, and screenwriters as Communists. He quickly expanded his power by acting as a clearinghouse for blacklisted artists and crafts people: Brewer allowed people to work in the movie business provided they proved their allegiance by naming suspected Communists. It was a perverse brand of trade unionism, ironically more reminiscent of Joseph Stalin than Al Capone.

Other than Joe Schenck, no studio executives who used publicly

held company funds to pay off gangsters was charged with a crime. Johnny Roselli was hired by his pal Bryan Foy as a producer at Eagle-Lion Studios, where he imbued *He Walked by Night* (1948) and *Canon City* (1949) with an innate sense of criminal realism. Paul Ricca returned to Chicago to continue running the Outfit with Joe Batters. The mob's profile in Hollywood became lower, but still prominent. Labor advisor Sidney Korshak kept the town's unions and movie studios dancing to the mob's tune. After taking control of the Teamsters Union and accessing its pension fund as their personal piggy bank, the Outfit really opened up the throttle in Las Vegas, using Roselli and other front-people to skim untold millions from the casinos. Life was harder for other principals. George Browne went into hiding, finally drinking himself to death. Nick Circella served his time in prison, then fled to South America and was never seen again.

On November 4, 1955, "Al" Nelson, a close friend of Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, walked out of his house in Phoenix and started his truck. A titanic blast adorned Nelson's neighborhood with debris and body parts. William "Al" Nelson was posthumously identified as Willie Bioff. He'd been hiding for more than a decade in Arizona, until he foolishly ventured into Las Vegas working under his new name as entertainment director of the Riviera. Paul Ricca and Joe Batters didn't like loose ends. This was their finale to the mob's Hollywood story—scripted *The Chicago Way*. ■