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The Gangster in Our Midst:
Al Capone in South Florida, 1930-1947

by STEPHEN C. BOUSQUET

As the sun rose over Miami on the morning of April 20, 1930, thousands of residents were attending Easter services on Miami Beach. A few miles north, the Dixie Limited was braking to a stop at the Florida East Coast Railway station in Hollywood. Aboard the southbound train was no ordinary seasonal visitor— or “snowbird”— but one of the most notorious vacationers who ever sought a little rest and relaxation in the Florida sun: Al Capone. “Scarface Al.” “Public Enemy Number One.” Overlord of the Chicago underworld. It was quite a ride. A Miami man who was on the train south described a continuous poker game with uniformed attendants rushing around, carrying buckets of cracked ice and mixer bottles of ginger ale, each waiter trying to out-hustle the other in anticipation of \$100 tips.¹

Encased by his retinue of bodyguards, and greeted at the station by his attorneys, Vincent Giblin and J. Fritz Gordon, Capone stepped off the train and slipped into town on one of the holiest days in the Christian calendar. He then climbed inside the second of three bulletproof limousines for the drive to his two-story fourteen-room house on Palm Island, a man-made spit of land in Biscayne Bay connected by a bridge to the MacArthur Causeway which links Miami Beach with mainland Miami. So began one of the most interesting chapters in South Florida’s colorful history.²

Capone’s arrival in Miami Beach triggered a firestorm of controversy. For some of the area’s leading citizens, however, Capone’s flamboyant wealth would prove irresistible. If the people of Dade County did not want Capone for a neighbor, they certainly wanted his money and his company. “CAPONE IS HERE,” ballyhooed a

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1. *Miami Daily News*, April 21, 1930.

2. *Ibid.*, January 26, 1947.

banner headline in the *Miami Daily News*, the feisty afternoon newspaper that was a constant source of irritation to the gangster. Indeed, Capone's arrival was big news.³

During this period, Miami and Miami Beach were establishing themselves as the favored winter vacation destinations of wealthy Americans. City officials readily understood the vital importance of maintaining a positive image, and the presence of the nation's leading organized crime figure seriously compromised the cities' reputations. But the official outrage aimed at Capone had a hollow ring; Miami and Miami Beach were wide-open gambling towns with blackjack and dice tables readily available. Naturally Capone felt right at home. Still, it was decided, Capone was a civic menace. He had to go.

Alphonse Capone had been a young foot soldier in the New York mob in the early 1920s when he was recruited by up-and-coming Chicago gangster Johnny Torrio. Young Capone's first job was supplying towels to prostitutes at The Four Deuces, a southside hangout. Before long, Capone and an accomplice rubbed out crime boss "Big Jim" Colosimo, and Torrio, newly installed in Colosimo's place, appointed Capone as his chief assistant. By 1926, after Torrio had been wounded in an unsuccessful gangland hit, the boss wanted out. For ten percent of all illegal profits, Torrio stepped aside and made Capone his successor. The Capone Mob now ruled Chicago.

On the morning of February 14, 1929, in a garage on Chicago's North Side, Capone's henchmen attacked the mob of his gangland rival, George "Bugs" Moran. Capone's crew had arranged for a large delivery of bootleg whiskey to the garage that day. But when the time for the "delivery" came, no booze was to be found—only four of Capone's hit men with their trademark Tommy submachine guns, known as "Chicago choppers," concealed under their topcoats. Masquerading as police officers, wearing uniforms borrowed from cops on the take, Capone's men lined seven of Moran's men against one wall of the garage and riddled them with bullets. It remains, to this day, the bloodiest of all gangland slayings in American history. When Moran learned of the bloodbath, he remarked, "Only Capone kills like that."⁴

3. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1930.

4. William Roemer, *War of the Godfathers* (New York, 1990), 25-31; Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone* (New York, 1992), 202-203.

So brazen was the attack that came to be known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre that Capone's ironfisted control of the Chicago mob was never again seriously challenged. Capone went on to make the west Chicago suburb of Cicero his base of operations, while at the same time designating South Florida his wintertime retreat. When the inevitable questions arose about the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, Capone had the perfect alibi: On the morning of the murders, he was at his Palm Island mansion, where he soon increased his security staff from twelve to twenty bodyguards. Later in the day, he attended a previously scheduled meeting with Dade County Solicitor Robert Taylor in Taylor's downtown Miami office. The solicitor questioned Capone about an unsolved gangland hit in Manhattan, his comfortable lifestyle, and his frequent telephone calls to Chicago. Although authorities summoned Capone back to Chicago to testify about the killings before a Cook County grand jury, they never implicated him in the massacre.⁵

Capone's love of the Florida sun was well known. He had bought the Palm Island house in 1928 for \$40,000 cash and had spent more than \$100,000 on various improvements, including a swimming pool, boathouse and dock. It was not only a vacation home, but a place where Capone could lay low while the Chicago police rounded up hoodlums for questioning after the latest gangland killing.⁶

Capone's presence in Miami Beach proved deeply troubling to some of Dade County's most powerful political and business interests including State Attorney Vernon Hawthorne, Miami city commissioners, and the Miami public safety director, S. D. (Sam) McCreary, who would later testify that "complaints were being received continually" about Capone's presence. Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce president Thomas Pancoast, the city's first developer, Carl Fisher, and Roddy B. Burdine, president of Burdine's, the largest department store in the area, also protested Capone's casual presence in the community. With the support of Governor Doyle Carlton, and backed by the persistent and often strident voice of the *Miami Daily News*, these forces united in a mighty but unsuccessful campaign to send Capone back to Chicago.⁷

5. John Kobler, *Capone* (New York, 1971), 247-51; *Miami Daily News*, May 15, 1930.

6. *Miami Herald*, October 25, 1931.

7. *Miami Daily News*, May 15 and 16, 1930.

In fact, Scarface was there to stay. Capone could afford good lawyers, and he successfully portrayed himself as just another businessman seeking rest and relaxation under the Florida sun. In addition, Capone, his security entourage and assorted hangers-on helped boost the local economy in the early years of the depression.

Trouble began the morning of March 18, 1930. Capone was released from a prison outside Philadelphia after serving a ten-month sentence on a gun-possession charge. His release was shrouded in extraordinary secrecy. Prison officials refused comment on Capone's whereabouts, but it was widely assumed he was headed for Florida. His wife and son were already there, and it is still chilly and gray in Philadelphia, not to mention Chicago, in mid-March.⁸

Alerted to Capone's plans to return to his Palm Island estate, Governor Carlton sent a telegraph dispatch to all sixty-seven Florida sheriffs the next day, March 19, ordering that Capone be arrested on sight and escorted to the state line. "Arrest promptly if he comes your way and escort to state borders with instructions not to return," Carlton wired the sheriffs.⁹ Capone was determined not to leave Florida without a fight, and his lawyers quickly convinced U.S. District Judge Halstead R. Ritter to issue a temporary restraining order blocking such action by the state, leaving Governor Carlton no alternative but the bully pulpit of his office. "Florida, as a playground, in the nature of things is more liberal than other states," Carlton said in a statement from Tallahassee. "But it will not be a haven to crooks and criminals or headquarters for gangsters and gunmen . . . [Capone] will not establish headquarters in Florida. He will not take root here."¹⁰

Events soon proved the governor wrong; Capone was already headed south. Before boarding the train for Miami, Capone gave an interview to *New York Mirror* reporter George Clarke, which the *Miami Herald* reprinted on its front page. Capone said he wanted to live in Miami free from police harassment, and he criticized Dade County officials for not being more hospitable. Capone scoffed at a newspaper report that the Miami Chamber of Commerce had petitioned the Miami police to post a "Get out and stay out!" sign over the "Welcome to Sunnyland" arch at the Miami railroad station.

8. *Miami Herald* March 18, 1930.

9. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1930.

10. *New York Times*, March 23 and 25, 1930.

“Look at that,” Capone exclaimed to reporter Clarke, “and all I ever did for Miami was good! I spent money there, gave money away and now they want to keep me from my home and family. Well, they can’t do it!”¹¹

That Capone was on his way south was possibly the worst-kept secret in Dade County. Goldstrom’s Baking Company on Washington Avenue in Miami Beach received an order for a huge cake to be delivered to the Capone compound, presumably to celebrate the mob chieftain’s newfound freedom.¹² Like the neighborhood bakery, many other Miami-area merchants soon discovered the benefits of Capone’s presence. Restaurants, ice houses, haberdashers and florists all seemed to flourish when Capone and his entourage were around. His arrival was accompanied by civic outrage and by the jingle of cash registers.

Merchants and politicians alike openly solicited Capone’s business. Many expected Miami Mayor John Newton Lummas Jr. to lead a community crusade to expel Capone; however, as the vice president of a real estate agency, Lummas hoped to sell Capone a house.¹³ One of Capone’s frequent hangers-on was Parker Henderson Jr., son of a former Miami mayor. The young Henderson helped Capone acquire the Palm Island property, and he often fronted for Capone by accepting wire transfers of cash from Chicago.¹⁴

The editors of the *Miami Daily News* seized on this contradiction in a series of front-page editorials condemning Capone’s casual arrival and Greater Miami’s “indifference” to his presence. Entitled “Sinister Power of Gold,” the editorial charged that the casinos then flourishing in Miami and Miami Beach were “directly under the thumb” of Capone, and referred to the people of greater Miami as parasites. “[A] man with criminal associations, with a record known world-wide of defiance of law and public decency, is fast puncturing the very pith and fiber of our whole set-up here,” the newspaper chastised. “The power of money is known. There is nothing more persuasive, either for good or evil, than gold, and Greater Miami in her indifference has established here one of the most dangerous characters on earth, with all the power of a feudal lord.”¹⁵

11. *Miami Herald*, March 20, 1930.

12. *Miami Daily News*, March 19, 1930.

13. Kobler, *Capone*, 220-21; Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 193-94.

14. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 194-95; *Miami Daily News*, April 21, 1930.

15. *Miami Daily News*, March 18, 1930.

The *Miami Daily News* was part of the Cox newspaper chain, based in Dayton, Ohio, and owned by James M. Cox, a former Ohio governor, Democratic Party nominee for president in 1920, and himself a Florida “snowbird.” News cycles and competition with the stodgier morning paper, the *Miami Herald*, forced the *Daily News* to provide a fresh presentation of stale information. The *Daily News* was much more aggressive than the *Herald* in its coverage of organized crime and more strident in its criticism of rackets and underworld activity throughout Miami. For example, the *Daily News* devoted much of one front page to the Dade County Republican Party’s local campaign platform for 1930, the centerpiece of which was a commitment to stop the spread of gambling. The GOP platform condemned the unidentified real estate agent who helped “a notorious gangster” buy a home.¹⁶

Readers of the *Daily News* received more frequent and detailed accounts of Capone’s movements across the country, and police activity against illegal gambling in Miami received consistently prominent treatment. The paper supplemented this coverage with a series of front-page editorials condemning Capone. The day of Capone’s arrival at the railroad depot in Hollywood, the *Daily News* greeted him with a withering editorial that declared that “[t]he very circumstances of his living here and aping the forms of self-respecting life carries with it the impression that Florida is no respecter of persons.”¹⁷

In stark contrast, the *Herald* was much more respectful in its coverage of America’s most notorious hoodlum. Perhaps out of gratitude, Capone gave the *Herald* an interview, published the morning after his arrival, in which he announced, “I am here for a rest, which I think I deserve. All that I want is a fair break. I have done nothing in violation of the law in Miami and will not.” The paper dutifully noted that Capone went speedboating that Sunday afternoon with his son in Biscayne Bay. The *Herald* treated Capone more like a visiting dignitary than the country’s most notorious gangster, publishing his comments under the headline “Al Capone reaches Palm Island home for 2 weeks’ rest.”¹⁸ In an effort to discredit its competitor, the *Daily News* reprinted the *Herald* interview

16. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1930.

17. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1930.

18. *Miami Herald*, April 21, 1930.

on page one of its afternoon press run, sarcastically calling it “the official announcement” of Capone’s arrival.¹⁹

The *Daily News* often tried to soften its outrage with ridicule by referring to Capone as “Citizen Al,” listing his aliases (Al Brown, A. Acosta) alongside his name, or describing him as “the scarfaced one” and “the beer and brothel baron from Chicago.” The approach seemed to strike a chord with readers. “More power to you!” wrote G. Henderson of Miami Beach in the *Daily News*’ letters column. “If Capone’s alien murders can degrade the mighty city of Chicago, how much easier could they strike a smaller place like Miami?”²⁰ A pessimistic Ward G. Foster, president of Ask Mr. Foster Travel Service of New York, warned that “[p]eople who are desirable as citizens will not come to Miami to live and bring up families as long as this town is known as a headquarters for gambling and sporting.”²¹

With Capone safely inside his Palm Island fortress, city and county authorities quickly accelerated their efforts to evict him. After state beverage agents confiscated liquor in a raid on the mob boss’s estate, State Attorney Hawthorne of Dade County filed a court petition seeking to padlock Capone’s house on the grounds that the property was a public nuisance. At an emergency meeting, the Miami City Commission ordered law-enforcement officials to arrest Capone on sight without a warrant, an action clearly unconstitutional today and highly suspect even then, as Dade County leaders were about to discover.²²

As authorities moved ahead with their attempts to drive Capone from their midst, the *Daily News* became the anti-Capone cheering section, providing daily encouragement in its news articles and editorials. And when the paper had nothing new to say, it recycled the opinions of other papers sympathetic to the cause. Under the headline “Miami’s Redemption,” the *Daily News* republished the lead editorial from the May 9, 1930, issue of the *Birmingham News*. The Alabama paper praised Miami Mayor C. H. Reeder’s strong anti-Capone stance and noted approvingly: “Miami will not harbor Capone or Capone’s bodyguards within its gates.”²³

19. *Miami Daily News*, April 21, 1930.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1930.

22. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1930.

23. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1930.

During much of May and June 1930, Miami was treated to the spectacle of its political and business leaders trying unsuccessfully to force Capone's departure. One morning, more than one hundred spectators showed up at the Dade County courthouse to watch the padlock proceedings, but Judge Paul D. Barns disappointed them by taking testimony in his private chambers with only a few observers present. A parade of influential witnesses testified that Capone was a menace to society, even though, under sharp questioning by Capone's attorneys, many admitted they had never actually seen Capone and could not provide eyewitness accounts of illegal acts. Most witnesses, in fact, had formed their opinions of Capone based solely on news accounts.²⁴

The first of more than forty witnesses was Carl Fisher, the pioneer Miami Beach land developer, who testified that Capone's presence depressed property values. Regarding Capone's Palm Island estate, Fisher commented that "it is known from what we read, hear and see, and the police records, that it is a hangout for men of a dangerous type." When asked why Capone's presence constituted a menace to society, developer Thomas Pancoast, president of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, told the judge it was "[b]ecause he has harbored such men as 'Crane-Neck' Nugent and 'Gunner' Jack McGurn."²⁵

The fatal flaw in the state's case soon emerged. As deliberations dragged on, it became apparent that some residents had accepted invitations to eat and drink at the Capone compound, suggesting that not everyone in the area considered Capone a menace. Fred Girton, the editor of a local nightlife newspaper, testified he had "a drink of champagne on the porch" of the Capone estate at a press party following a prizefight in Miami attended by 150 to 200 people, including several Palm Island residents. A clergyman, the Reverend William Sledge of West Little River Baptist Church, testified he once tried to rent an automobile to Capone, only to discover someone else had beaten him to it. A candidate for county solicitor, Fred Pine, admitted to having accepted cases of scotch and champagne from Capone. And on and on it went, with several other witnesses failing to appear in court to testify. Even the highly respected Roddy Burdine acknowledged that he too had been to Capone's home a year earlier, though it was as a represen-

24. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1930.

25. *Ibid.*, June 11, 1930.

tative of the Community Chest to solicit a donation that was later returned.²⁶ The revelation that numerous prominent Miami Beach residents had visited the high-walled estate, sharing food and drinks with Capone, doomed the state's case.

Such was the fascination with the crusade against Capone that the developments in the padlock case— in the *Daily News*, at least—overshadowed news of the collapse of the Bank of Bay Biscayne, which closed in early June, the first major casualty of the Great Depression in South Florida. At one point the court proceedings in the Capone case had to be suspended because many of that day's scheduled witnesses were businessmen with ties to the bank.²⁷

On Saturday, June 14, 1930, Judge Barns threw out the padlock petition against Capone after concluding that nothing in state law allowed for the expulsion of someone merely because the citizenry deemed him undesirable. In his written opinion, the judge emphasized that everyone who conducted business with Capone aided his presence in one way or another. "It is apparent that the presence of the defendant, Al Capone, in Miami, even as a temporary resident, is not desired by the people of this community," Barns declared. "If a community is embarrassed by the mere presence of an individual, it certainly does not have to deal with him either socially or in business, either of which would of course encourage his residence being continued. However, to some, the smell of money is good, regardless from whence it cometh."²⁸ This was an indictment not so much of Capone as of the law-abiding people of Dade County who chose to do business with him. Capone could stay put.

Refusing to criticize the judge, the *Daily News* was surprisingly restrained, calling Barns' decision "the opinion of an honest man." The anti-Capone newspaper decided the fault lay instead in the state statute books. "If Capone were in Chicago now he would be in jail because the police there are arresting all gangsters," the *Daily News* opined in an editorial published the day after the verdict. "It seems strange that this man, branded as an overlord of the underworld, is able to live in safety in Miami when he would not live in Chicago, the place that has been the scene of most of his criminal activities. But perhaps the law is insufficient."²⁹

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., June 15, 1930.

29. Ibid.

Capone frequently tried to manipulate and improve his public image to counteract the relentless negative publicity in the *Daily News*. He held "goodwill dinners" at the Palm Island place, inviting some fifty carefully chosen socialites to the estate for an evening.³⁰ Capone also cultivated relationships with sportswriters and columnists, including the *New York Mirror's* nationally syndicated gossip columnist Walter Winchell. Winchell frequently displayed a fascination with underworld figures, spending time in Miami Beach and occasionally visiting Capone at Palm Island, as he did in October 1931.

The columnist and gang lord made an interesting pair. During one visit, Winchell watched Capone playing poker with a few of his henchmen. He was astonished to see a loaded automatic pistol not far from a pile of poker chips. "I don't understand that," Winchell told Capone. "Here you are playing a game of cards with your friends, but you keep a gun handy."

"I have no friends," Capone replied coldly.

After paying three friendly visits to Capone's compound, Winchell wrote, he received a thank-you in the form of \$16,000 in winnings at the roulette and dice tables at Miami Beach gambling joints. He also was handed a card full of winners at a local race-track.³¹

Even as Capone tried to rehabilitate his battered image, authorities were moving in on him again. Having failed to padlock Capone's estate, Miami authorities charged him with perjury, alleging he made false statements during his testimony in the previous case. Capone posted \$14,000 bond on the charges and was free once again.³² Perhaps he was tired of being harassed by the Miami authorities, or maybe he was anxious to escape the oncoming heat and humidity; whatever the reason, Capone left South Florida for Illinois in the summer of 1930.³³

Where Miami had failed, the federal government succeeded. What finally drove Capone out of Miami was his imprisonment in

30. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1930.

31. Quoted in Neal Gabler, *Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity* (New York, 1994), 119-20.

32. *Miami Daily News*, June 14, 1930.

33. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 283; Laurence Bergreen, *Capone: The Man and the Era* (New York, 1994), 386-89.

1932 for failing to pay more than \$1 million in income taxes during a five-year period, from 1924-1929. During the trial, jurors were told of Capone's lavish Miami lifestyle including his \$135 suits, \$30 shirts and cars worth \$12,500. Guards led a "snarling and ill-tempered" Capone away to a cell in handcuffs after his sentencing on October 25, 1931. The federal government sentenced him to eleven years in prison and placed liens on the Palm Island mansion totaling nearly \$52,000.³⁴

Three times, in fact, the government tried to sell the Palm Island mansion to satisfy Capone's unpaid income tax liens. But each time, his wife, Mae, and brother Ralph, known as "Bottles," found the money to satisfy the judgment, and they kept the house. In fact, while Capone was behind bars, they renovated and repainted the home and applied a fresh coat of varnish to the wooden gates.³⁵

While Capone was imprisoned at Alcatraz, the syphilis in his body began to attack his brain, and in 1938 prison doctors declared him a mental patient. He was released from prison in November 1939 after serving seven years of his sentence, the remainder of the term dropped for good behavior.³⁶

Even behind bars, Capone continued to preoccupy Miami's civic consciousness at a time when wide-open gambling rackets in South Florida stretched from Coral Gables north to Fort Lauderdale. It was widely assumed, for instance, that Walter Clark, the notorious sheriff of neighboring Broward County, accepted protection money from the operators of illegal casinos in Hollywood, Dania and Fort Lauderdale. In Dade County, the legalization of racetrack betting in 1931, and of slot machines four years later, made South Florida a mecca for gamblers.³⁷

In May 1939, six months before Capone's release from prison, the conservative columnist Westbrook Pegler published an exposé of Miami's gambling rackets that so shook up the authorities that they summoned Pegler to testify before the Dade County grand jury. Pegler wrote that "lawlessness was unbridled in Miami, that vice was awaiting the return of Al Capone to his Palm Island home to rule as its overlord; that sinister gangster control had a strangle-

34. *Miami Herald*, October 25, 1931.

35. *Ibid.*, March 21, 1940.

36. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 344-46.

37. *Ibid.*, 193; *Miami Daily News*, March 22, 1940.

hold on legalized racing, and that the situation was abetted by self-seeking legislators who accepted employment at race tracks in return for vote control.³⁸

In Tallahassee, a state senate committee began an investigation of gangster influence in the ownership of race tracks. Senator Ernest Graham, a Dade County Democrat, caused a furor when he read an anonymous telegram from a New Jersey tourist who complained that three of Dade's tracks were "run by a bunch of gorillas." In any discussion of gambling and Dade County, it was inevitable that Capone's name would come up. Questioning Parks Glover, the chairman of the state racing commission, Senator Graham asked: "Do you know Al Capone is connected with Tropical Park?"

"I do not," Glover answered, reminding the senator that the state had no authority to request a list of track stockholders.

"I contend that it is somebody's business to find out these things," Graham told Glover.³⁹

Against this backdrop, Capone was released from a federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, on November 16, 1939, after being transported secretly across the country. But the Al Capone who was released from prison was a mere shell of the menacing, barrel-chested man who had disappeared behind prison walls seven years earlier. A Miami doctor who examined him said Capone "couldn't" dominate anything, much less a gangland empire.⁴⁰ Capone was weaker than most people realized. What news reports described as a "chronic nervous system ailment" was, in fact, a form of mental illness known as paresis, a result of Capone's untreated syphilis. This information would not become public until after Capone's death.⁴¹

The gang leader spent his remaining years in Miami Beach, but his sickness rendered him a bedridden invalid. Unable to swim or sightsee, Capone spent his last days sitting in the sun and reading the newspapers. In the last week of Capone's life, amid reports of his deteriorating health, a ghoulish death watch commenced on the street outside the Palm Island estate. Newsmen gathered outside the compound reported a parade of dark, sinister-looking limousines, many with Illinois license plates. Capone by this time was

38. *Miami Herald*, May 8, 1939.

39. *Miami Daily News*, May 9, 1939.

40. *Ibid.*, January 26, 1947.

41. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 353-54.

breathing continuously through an oxygen mask, and pneumonia filled both of his lungs. A Miami respiratory specialist who treated him said, "I doubt very seriously if there's a chance of recovery."⁴²

There was no chance. At seven o'clock on Saturday evening, January 25, 1947, Capone died in an upstairs bedroom, eight days after his forty-eighth birthday. The first Associated Press dispatch, which made the front page of hundreds of Sunday newspapers across the country, identified "heart failure" as the cause of death.⁴³

In a final fusillade of outrage, the *Miami Daily News* ran a blistering editorial the day after Capone's death. Headlined "Let Us Blush," it said in part: "To the eternal disgrace of our country, he did not go to prison for the blood he spilled, the violence he perpetrated. He went to prison, the irony of it, for failing to pay his taxes on his ill-gotten gains. The man we could not crush for his robber's racket and murderous goons, we could only reach for his failure to split his profits with ourselves, the government!"⁴⁴

Al Capone helped define South Florida, in part, as a place that operated by a different set of rules, a refuge for those on the run. Capone was only the first of many organized crime leaders to find refuge in South Florida. The most notorious is probably the late Meyer Lansky, the Mafia's most trusted business manager. The Miami area, long considered open territory and under the control of no single Mafia family, has been a second home for Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo, Anthony Accetturo, Carlos Trafficante and many others.⁴⁵ Capone might feel right at home today in South Florida, an area with one of the nation's highest crime rates, yet a place that continually beckons Americans with the seductive promise that anything is possible.

42. *Miami Daily News*, January 25, 1947.

43. *New York Times*, January 26, 1947.

44. *Miami Daily News*, January 26, 1947.

45. *Miami Herald*, December 17, 1985, November 3, 1986.