For the Sins of My Father: The Legacy of a Mafia Life by Mary Jane Ross

Fascinating!

A suspenseful, emotionally charged real-life Sopranos: The son of New Yorks most notorious Mafia killer reveals the conflicted life he led being raised by a cold-blooded murderer, who was also a devoted family man, and the wrenching legacy of Mafia family life.

Al DeMeo will never forget the day in 1992 when a coworker, a fellow trader at the New York Stock Exchange, taunted him with a copy of the hot new book Murder Machine, chronicling the horrific criminal life of DeMeos father, Roy, the head of the most deadly gang in organized crime. The moment sent DeMeo into a psychological tailspin: How could he have spent his life looking up to, and loving, a vicious killer?

For the Sins of My Father recounts the chilling rise and fall of the man who led the Gambino familys most fearsome killers and thieves, through the eyes of a son who had never known any other kind of life. Coming of age in an opulent Long Island house where money is abundant but its source is unclear, Al becomes Roys confidant, sent to call in loans at age fourteen and gradually coming to understand his fathers job description--loan shark, car thief, porn purveyor and, above all, murderer. But when Al is seventeen, Roys body is found in the trunk of a car, a gangland slaying that places Al between federal prosecutors seeking his testimony and a mob crew determined to keep him quiet.
Desperate to abide by the father-son bond, but equally determined to escape his fathers dangerous and doomed life, Al Demeo embarks on a courageous quest for the truth, reconciliation, and honor. With the implacable narrative drive of a thriller and the power of a painfully honest memoir, For the Sins of My Father presents a startling and unprecedented perspective on the underworld of organized crime, exposing for the first time the cruel legacy of a Mafia life.

I bought this book on the spur of the moment. It was in the sale and I thought, What the heck, Ive nothing else to read tonight! The author Albert DeMeo pulls no punches as he chronicles not only his fathers life, the Mobster Roy DeMeo and his steady rise to power in the Mafia in New York but also his own involvement from the tender age of five in a world that was seductively charming as it was dangerous. For the Sins of my Father is a brutal, candid, violent, tender portrayal of a life in a huge glass bubble in which escape is not an option for anyone.

However Albert DeMeo is not an apologist for his fathers actions, rather he pulls the reader in a world in which corruption is at the heart of everything. Just as you cant feel sorry Roy DeMeo for the choices he made in his life you also cannot feel anything for the Police, the FBI, the Government, the Court system because they were often as corrupt as the people they claimed they were trying to bring to justice.

Alberts father knew many people and many considered themselves law abiding whilst at the same time asking and getting favours from the Mafia Capo who was their neighbour and friend.

In one chapter the young Albert helps his fathers crew to work out how wipe clean some audio tapes that could send one of their members to jail; magnets the child tells them men can wipe clean magnetic tapes of all their contents. It is a corrupt police officer who puts a magnet next to the audio tapes so that they will be blank when they are played in court.

It is also to Mafia owned drinking dens that many court officials, police officers and other city officials attend to drink, buy drugs and enjoy the company of Prostitutes.

Roy DeMeos murder in the early 1980s is a brutal wake up call for the teenage Albert and hounded by both the Mafia who want his silence and the FBI wanting him to turn States evidence, Albert somehow manages to salvage his life out of the wreckage of violence his father has left behind. This is not a fairy tale, there is certainly no happy ending but Albert DeMeo is living proof that you can walk a way from organised crime and go on to live a legitimate life, all it takes is a lot of courage, the memory of how your father, a man you loved beyond all words, died in a hail of bullets, murdered by the very people who were supposed to be his friends and associates.

This book is very different from the gratuitous Best Seller The Murder Machine which demonises Alberts father; this is a book that puts a life into perspective, warts and all. Violence, car crime, prostitution, gambling, protection rackets, corrupt officials, loan sharkiing, pornography are put on display and it is left up to the reader to judge where the line between right and wrong lies.
There is no moving away from the fact that Roy DeMeo was a murderer, a Mafia Capo and a man with a criminal mind, but the world he worked in was a world providing services and commodities that people wanted and even the law was not above the stench of death, and corruption. Read this book with an open mind and remember a fathers love can transcend even the most vile of crimes....

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