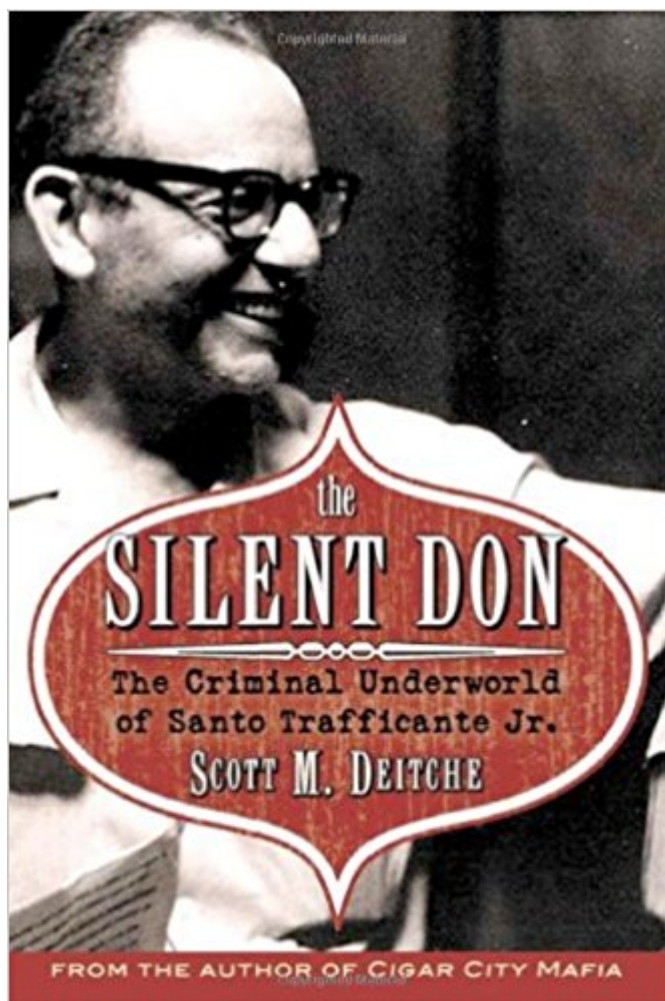


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# The Silent Don: The Criminal Underworld Of Santo Trafficante Jr.



## Synopsis

The Silent Don exposes the life and ruthless times of one of America's most powerful and feared mob bosses. With a criminal empire that stretched from the Gulf Coast throughout the Caribbean, Trafficante was linked to drug trafficking, plots to kill Fidel Castro, and the assassination of JFK. Scott M. Deitch scoured court records, law-enforcement reports, newspaper accounts, and conducted dozens of interviews to find the compelling story of this enigmatic Mafioso don.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Barricade Books (January 16, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1569803552

ISBN-13: 978-1569803554

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.6 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 29 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #438,056 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #240 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > South](#) #653 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Organized Crime](#) #1156 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Crime & Criminals](#)

## Customer Reviews

Although this sprawling, well-referenced Mob bio is nominally about Santo Trafficante Jr., Deitch necessarily starts with Santo Sr., who flew under law enforcement's radar and took advantage of his early rivals' bloody squabbling to create the organized crime empire he eventually handed over to his namesake. Both Trafficantes so adeptly dodged publicity that Deitch was hard-pressed to find significant documentation of Sr.'s activities before his 1930s emergence as the Tampa, Florida, Mafia boss. At the time when Luciano, Lansky, and Capone moved away from ethnic divisions within gangs, the Trafficante crew remained Sicilian-dominated. Maintaining close ties to New York's Five Families and Chicago's Outfit, Santo Jr.'s organization participated in most major Mob high jinks of the latter twentieth century, including leadership roles in such alleged CIA-Mob partnerships as the Bay of Pigs invasion and assassination plots involving Castro and JFK. Deitch presents the sprawling Trafficante story in luscious detail and appends a bulging bibliography of related material. This excellent gangster study handily fills a big gap in Mob literature. Mike

Eh it was a little loose with the facts and it was just okay. Having grown up in Tampa in the 60's and 70's these guys weren't your usual hoodlums.

There is something fascinating reading about mafia dons and their soldiers and associates. The crimes they commit are despicable and their character is usually missing altogether, unless you count their honor and loyalty amongst thieves. But they live by the seat of their pants and the police and FBI are usually close behind, dogging their every move, waiting for a mistake. That is what makes them so interesting to read about. Yet in *The Silent Don* we see another side of a mafia don, that of one who somehow escaped the FBI and police's interest for so long that he thought to be a minor player in the whole scheme of things. This is where *The Silent Don* shines, where it begins to show Trafficante as more of a worldly player. Admittedly it was his casinos in Cuba that gave him his power, that made him respected by the other more established and violent Families around the country, but this was one area that Trafficante excelled past his father, who ultimately set everything up for Jr. to step in and succeed. Trafficante Jr. did so well we don't really know too much about him. This is part of the reason why this loses a star because it almost feels like it is missing something, or that there isn't enough evidence to support everything that is stated. The bio itself is rather short, since it lacks in source material, which is rather strange for a mafia don who lived for so long and controlled such a large area, not to mention had the influence that he had with other mafia dons. When all is said and done it is a decent biography, one definitely worth reading, and perhaps the best bio out there on a mysterious mafia don. 4 stars.

I grew up in Tampa, and knew the Don. In fact, I was in Cuba on a "vacation" 5 days before Castro entered Havana. Santo was very kind to my little group when we dined at the Tropicana during this visit. It was interesting to read this well researched book even though it was a bit sloppy in places.

"*The Silent Don*" is the story of Santo Trafficante, longtime Mafia boss of South Florida. SD provides an endless parade of mafiadom, crime personalities and corrupt officials. Author Deitch has certainly done his homework. Like a good reporter, the author buttresses his text with piles of references and footnotes, almost to the point of overkill. SD touches many the many bases of Trafficante's line of work, but two chapters stand out: 1) Chapter 6 deals with the "good old days" in Havana before Fidel Castro overthrew the place, closed the casinos and kicked the mob out. What

a fun, free wheeling, anything goes place Havana must have been-and how profitable for the bosses like ST. One wishes this fascinating sector had been longer. 2) Chapter 15 takes us to, if not down, the slippery slope of the JFK assassination and the Mob's involvement with that treacherous act. Did Trafficante REALLY confess his role in the JFK murder to his lawyer? Deitche suggests so. Or, as the author also hints, was Carlos Marcello, Mafia boss of New Orleans, behind the JFK hit? Marcello controlled Dallas in those days. Perhaps it was that eponymous bunch of "rogue" CIA agents harboring grudges from the Bay of Pigs fiasco? Again, one wishes for more concrete evidence, however fascinating the speculation. The final call on SD makes a 5 star rating impossible. Deitche would have served his readers better had he narrowed the scope of the text rather than covering so many of ST's criminal activities. Also, the typesetting is wearying: Paragraphs need to be better spaced. Physical layout is a problem here and the footnoting is awkward. Do we need 536 of them in a 229 page book? A good stern editor with a sharp blue pencil could have tidied up the text, but those guys were laid off years ago! That kvetching aside, SD remains an entertaining 4 star story. This is only a first edition; perhaps future printings can address the housekeeping issues. That might nudge "Silent Don" up into the 5 star category.

Interesting book. I live in Tampa. I read a lot.

The companion book Cigar City Mafia are great reads.

I did find the book a bit hard to follow with so many mob names thrown out there, however it probably was necessary to relate the scope of Trafficante's influence. Interesting and frightening to realize that this stuff goes on and really controls the events in the world, while the everyday Joe tries to go to work, keep food on the table and pay taxes.

Quick and easy read. Should be of particular interest to those who have read Cigar City Mafia, the author's previous look at organized crime in Tampa.

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