

Killing just a way of life

"I was terrified of him all the time. He had this stern scowl, he wasn't comfortable among children, he didn't know how to play. He controlled people by intimidating them—Sam Giancana on his godfather, Mafia boss Sam "Mooney" Giancana.

RANDOM killing has, ironically, become a way of life for the Mafia. Its targets used to be confined to those who were a direct threat to the organisation's business interests or families.

But it seems that this brutal empire is becoming less fussy about who it hits to make a point.

The trial of New York Mafia boss John Gotti is a prime example. The shooting of a mob turncoat's sister—the only connection being that she was unfortunate enough to be a relative—during the trial is a warning to others not to break the organisation's sacred code of silence.

There's no doubt that when Mafia members turn informant to save themselves from prison, they risk a lot more in the process.

So it was a calculated risk for two relatives of former top American Mafia boss Sam "Mooney" Giancana to write an incriminating expose about him and his international Outfit, even though it is more than 15 years since he was shot dead, possibly by one of his own.

By Hannah Stephenson

Mooney's younger brother, Chuck, and nephew Sam changed their names from Giancana years ago to prevent any association with the mobster family from Chicago and to enable them to lead relatively normal lives.

In their book, *Double Cross*, taken from Mooney's conversations with Chuck—his main confidant—over the years, they not only show the violent world of the Mafia, but also an intimate portrait of a Mafia family.

Growing up in the shadow of the godfather

Fear is nothing new to Sam, who grew up in the shadow of his all-powerful godfather.

"I was terrified of him all the time. He had this stern scowl, he wasn't comfortable among children, he didn't know

how to play. He controlled people by intimidating them.

"I would shake hands with him every time I met him and I remember one time when I was about six-years-old, he started squeezing my hand, and he kept on squeezing harder and harder and never said anything. He was just testing my mettle to see if I would cry."

Sam's mother just stood by and watched it happen. "That shows how much power he wielded. You were caught up in the fear," Sam says.

Carrying the name Giancana had a terrible effect on Sam's childhood, he explains. He was ostracised not only by his schoolfriends but by their parents as well.

"I had this label on me, a name that everyone reacted to—it was a curse. I'd go to school and my uncle's name would be on the front page of the newspaper.

"Kids would ridicule you, they'd say: 'Your father's a gangster, you can't come over to my house because my parents don't want gangsters over here.'"

As a result, the young Sam faced a lonely childhood through no fault of his own. He admits that he is still paranoid about being associated with Giancana, but that it happens very rarely these days.

Now living in Florida with his wife, Betina, Sam, 37, is not how you would imagine a Mafia godson to be. Mild-mannered and quietly-spoken, he and his wife run a marketing communications company specialising in health education.

In the book, Chuck Giancana claims that Mooney's Outfit was behind the deaths of Marilyn Monroe and President Kennedy.

He says Mooney helped JFK's presidential victory through mob finance and rigged ballots—thinking it would ultimately give him greater power. He would own the president.

What actually happened was that after the Kennedy's had received all the help they needed from Mooney, Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney General, had a purge on organised crime.

This enraged his Mafia backer, who became bent on revenge.

Cover-up of the Monroe slaying

Chuck Giancana says that through phone tapping and surveillance, Mooney monitored Monroe's affairs with first Jack Kennedy and then Bobby, and set out to expose the brothers— which would have effectively ruined their careers.

Bobby went to Monroe's California home the day she died to tell her their affair was over.

That night four men hired by Mooney went to her home and killed her— using a lethal suppository of barbiturates. Mooney hoped the murder would expose the romance and implicate the Attorney General.

What he didn't bank on, Giancana says, is the huge cover-up that Kennedy's FBI aides carried out. So Mooney made arrangements to have the president assassinated.

The decision to write the book came after Chuck went through bypass surgery several years ago, and started to contemplate his mortality, Sam says.

"It was our responsibility and maybe our obligation to give this information out. It was a way to set the record straight about Sam Giancana, because he destructively and covertly altered the history of the United States."

Double Cross, by Sam and Chuck Giancana, is published by Macdonald, price £16.99.