



Up by the Bootstraps: A Story of the Life and FBI Career of the Author and His Extraordinary Battle against the American Mafia

Sean M. McWeeney

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The sensational memoir Up by the Bootstraps covers intelligence community exploits and evolutions in a crisp and vivid manner.

Sean M. McWeeney's robust, impressive memoir *Up by the Bootstraps* recounts decades spent working in the US Navy and the FBI, including six years as the chief of the organized crime division of the FBI.

This tome is rife with firsthand accounts of famed Mafia takedowns, the competitive world of international crisis response, and a life bursting with family pride. As an FBI agent, McWeeney was on the front lines of cases against La Cosa Nostra in New York City, Chicago, and Boston. He was all but immortalized when the FBI took down the Gambino family boss, Carlo Gambino; he served as the arresting agent and appeared in the most widely used photograph of that arrest.

But before the book arrives at these fascinating events, it begins with a thorough overview of McWeeney's upbringing on the West Side of Chicago. His parents were Irish immigrants, and McWeeney spent his salad days playing sports with his siblings. Reminiscences about McWeeney's large and loving family pepper the narrative, guiding its evolving understandings of his personal relationships. They are a source of intimate respites from the long shadow of McWeeney's professional life—though some such experiences are also used to foreshadow the book's true focus on the more public roles that McWeeney embodied later in life, during his work with the FBI.

Because McWeeney was front and center to some of the American Mafia's most infamous trials and to investigative innovations, his book also comments on seismic shifts in the way the FBI approached crackdowns on criminal endeavors. Via accounts of the FBI's first efforts at undercover work—including the famous Bonanno family infiltration by Agent Joe Pistone, better known to the world as Donnie Brasco—and the fledgling years of wiretaps, informant payments, pen registers and beyond, the book achieves breathless momentum. It is quieter, though, in covering McWeeney's return to the private sector as the founder and CEO of Corporate Risk International, a premier due diligence and investigative firm.

Still, whether it's covering McWeeney's ascension up the bureau ladder—from Quantico to Oklahoma to Oregon, and the myriad temporary FBI offices in between—the book's recollections are crisp and vivid, as if no time has passed. The book delivers a keen sense of McWeeney's professional imprint on the evolution of methods for combating organized crime throughout, helping to anchor its fascinating story.

The sensational memoir *Up by the Bootstraps* draws on intelligence community exploits as a blueprint for a life spent serving others.

RYAN PRADO (February 19, 2024)

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