



Rat Bastards: The South Boston Irish Mobster Who Took the Rap When Everyone Else Ran

John "Red" Shea , Mark Wahlberg (Introduction)

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You've met the Italian mob
in *The Godfather*, now welcome
to the real-life world of Irish
America's own murderous clan
of organized crime

The man who has remained silent for more than a decade finally speaks, revealing the gritty true story of his life inside the infamous South Boston Irish mob led by the elusive, Machiavellian kingpin Whitey Bulger, who to this day remains on the lam as one of the world's Ten Most Wanted criminals, second only to Osama bin Laden.

John "Red" Shea was a top lieutenant in the South Boston Irish mob, rising to this position at the age of twenty-one. Thus began his tutelage under the notorious Irish godfather James "Whitey" Bulger. An ice-cold enforcer with a legendary red-hot temper, Shea was a legend among his Southie peers in the 1980s. From the first delivery truck he robbed at thirteen to the start of his twelve-year federal sentence for drug trafficking at twenty-seven, Shea was a portrait in American crime -- a terror, brutal and ruthlessly ambitious. Drug dealer, loan shark, money launderer, and multimillion-dollar narcotics kingpin, Shea was at the pinnacle of power -- until the feds came knocking and eventually obliterated the legendary mob in a well-orchestrated sweep of arrests, fueled by insider tips to the FBI and DEA.

While Bulger's other top men turned informant to save their own hides, Shea alone kept his code of honor and his mouth shut -- loyalty that earned him a dozen years of hard time even as the man he was protecting turned out to be, himself, a rat. For in the end, in a remarkable show of betrayal, Bulger turned out to be the FBI's "main man" and top informant -- tipping off the feds for decades while still managing to operate one of the most murderous and profitable organized crime outfits of all time.

In *Rat Bastards*, Shea brings that mysterious world and gritty urban Irish American street culture into sharp focus by telling his own story -- of his fatherless upbringing, his apprenticeship on the tough streets of Southie, and his love affair with trouble, boxing, and then the gangster life. In prose that is refreshingly honest, personal, and surprisingly tender, Shea tells his harrowing, unflinching, and unapologetic story. A man who did the crime, did the time, and held fast to the Irish code of silence, which he was raised to follow at any cost, Shea remains a man of honor and in doing so has become a living legend. One of the last of a dying breed, a true stand-up guy.

Shea expects no forgiveness and makes no excuses for the life he chose. His story is intense, compelling, and in your face.

Rat Bastards: The South Boston Irish Mobster Who Took the Rap When Everyone Else Ran Details

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From Reader Review Rat Bastards: The South Boston Irish Mobster Who Took the Rap When Everyone Else Ran for online ebook

Nancy says

An awful book.

Shannon says

Some people just shouldn't bother writing books and some books just shouldn't be published. Only read half and skipped around a little in the second 1/2 before quitting. Hard to get back to reading anything after that.

Coralie says

Another book about Whitey Bulger and South Boston. This book was informative, dramatic, exciting, and hard to put down. I read it in three sittings, and read many parts out loud to Donald. However, I agree with all of the critics on line, too. John Shea was one of Whitey Bulger's top men in the Irish Mafia in Boston. After decades of having free reign, Bulger and his organization were brought down by the DEA. In the ensuing investigation, every one of Bulger's minions turned states' evidence, violating the most important rule of Southie, to remain a man by not ratting. Every one but John Shea, who refused to give law enforcement any information and served a 12 year sentence. Yes, Shea is cocky, yes he is a braggart, and I agree with everyone who says, "this guy totally contributed to the pain and suffering in his neighborhood (see "All Souls" by Michael MacDonald). Still, this was a good book.

Christopher says

The book deals with the life and times of a one time Boston Mobster. While the book is very frank in its discussions on the mob life style and in some ways seems to glamorize it even though it is firmly entrenched in illegality.

The book also has a lesson to teach, and that is one of values. Yes, it seems odd that a book that idolizes the criminal life style can teach values. But, it does pull it off.

If you are at all curious just what it is like to live and work in an organized criminal organization I would recommend this book. It is a fascinating look into an area in which most of us will never see.

Fred Vargus says

One of the New York Times' best selling books, "Rat Bastards," is an interesting and intense book. This memoir features John "Red" Shea, whom the memoir is written by and about, a young Irish man who grew up in south Boston. He joined the Irish mob scene at a young age and essentially became the protégé of Irish godfather James "Whitey" Bulger. He had worked his way up to become one of the most powerful people in the Irish mob scene, by the age of 21. This book shows the circumstances dealt with when being an Irish mobster and living in south Boston. Shea uses a first hand knowledge and experiences in order to write this fascinating story about the events that occurred in his life.

This memoir starts off with Shea being released from prison on August 7th, 2002. He has been released after being locked up due to Whitey Bulger's slandering, and release of information to an FBI agent by the name of John Connolly. He then fulfills almost all of the memoir to explain his life as he grew up in "Southie," and his apprenticeship in the mob scene. He grew up fatherless, with no guidance whatsoever; which was similar to the situation of many other Southie kids. He loved to get himself into trouble, and as he got older, he learned to love the sport of boxing. John Shea grew and became one of the best young boxers around, but when he got involved in selling drugs, he soon developed into an Irish mobster.

John Shea had started selling drugs, mostly cocaine, in order to make money, travel, and to try and promote his boxing career. However, once he had started to become even more involved in the drug trade, he soon met Whitey Bulger. After his first encounter with the infamous mob boss, Shea soon began being watched by Whitey, who had become fond of him and his tough "I don't give a damn" attitude. One really important theme that continues throughout this memoir is, in essence, not being a "rat." The people who had grown up in Southie stuck to their own civil code of not saying anything when it came to certain situations such as speaking with the police or other unwanted government officials.

This book was one of the most suspense filled works of literature I have ever read. It contains both the elements of reality, as well as fantasy. I learned about the tough life that most Southie kids had to deal with. However, Shea, as well as the other kids, realized that they couldn't change much, and they dealt with their lifestyle. I also learned about how serious and insane some of the things are when involved in groups such as the South Boston Irish mob. Fantasy-wise, you imagine just how messed up things were, and that some people believed that they could actually live a healthy, profitable life by being involved in drug trades and violence.

It makes you think a lot, and I had thought about how different my life was compared to the life of John "Red" Shea. Overall, this book was very attention-grabbing, and had grasped my interest after the first several sentences. It contains detailed descriptions of the kinds of fixations that can, and did occur. From sex, to drugs, to boxing and living the life of a gangster, this book had unbelievable content and I highly recommend reading it. John "Red" Shea accepts the life that he chose and his story is intense as well as compelling.

Ken says

Actually it was boring. He didn't say anything. No insight to Boston under world. Just a guy who was bad and went to jail. Glad I borrowed the book.

Tim says

Pompous a**hole who likes to think he was more involved with the criminal underworld of South Boston. He was a drug dealer that Whitey took "his cut" from. Nothing more!!

Jeff Dickison says

An interesting book, but a hard book to read. What becomes readily apparent is that the author is a bleeping psychopath and a liar. He claims he is an honorable man but he knows nothing about honor. While not ratting out his crooked buddies is honorable, everything else he does contradicts that, making him either a huge phony or a complete dummy. Your choice. Not recommended.

Sarah Jane says

John "Red" Shea is inarticulate, narcissistic and egotistical. His obnoxious, immature approach could rival that of Howard Stern. I could barely stomach this self-centered, self-serving book. Any man who claims that a woman couldn't have sex with him because his penis is too big, I'm inclined to believe the total opposite. Still, there's a pervert inside of me that enjoys penis-talk, poor writing and a violent mob story. Especially when Mark Wahlberg is involved.

Laura Hemingway says

Good book but this guy's ego is a bit out of control.

Paul Gaya Ochieng Simeon Juma says

Some people might say that Mr. Shea should have maintained his criminal career and let the professionals do the writing. Lets give credit where it is due, the guy made an attempt. Some of us do not have a single word to ourselves. From being an outlaw to being an abiding citizen it takes a lot. He became what he despised, a model citizen.

The biography. I realised late that the mobster 'John Red Shea' was the author of these book. He tells us his life's story and most of all the fact that he was not a 'rat bastard'. So much for the talking. As if that is not enough, we endlessly hear of his life working under Whitey Burger and his bravery in and out of prison. A role model to everyone who wishes to live by the gun. To be a man one must not snitch on his brothers. Good code when you are on the wrong side of the law.

Comparables. I got excited when I saw this book in my 'bookshop'. I thought it was going to be something like 'the Valachi Papers' or even 'Serpico'. Not even close. Left me with a bad taste. All in all, I managed to get to the end of it and am glad.

Conclusion. Good luck to all those looking forward to reading this.

Anjell Moushigian says

This book was a true account of a man who lives by the code of loyalty and respect. John Shea is a true old school gangster and paid his debt to society like a real man. Kudos John I enjoyed the book immensely. A must read if you enjoy a good gangster story.

Cate says

I can't think of a narrator I've ever found more obnoxious than Red Shea. An exception, perhaps, would be Elizabeth Gilbert of Eat/Pray/Love infamy, but Shea rivals even The Gilbert in narcissism. Shea writes about his glory days as a Boston gangster, but fails to shed any new light on Whitey Bulger's world. He laments the loss of "true loyalty," and suggests that he's one of the few stand-up guys left who would never "rat" on anyone. His sense of right and wrong is screwy and his grammar is atrocious, but I was entertained enough by Shea's bravado to see this book through to the end.

Matt Regan says

This is a good memoir and an easy read. If you enjoy stories about gangsters, fighters, drug dealers, America's most wanted fugitives, and prison violence then you are going to want to check out "Rat Bastards".

In all seriousness though this is a well written account of this guy's life as a short lived professional boxer, a cocaine dealer, and ultimately a convicted criminal and prisoner. John "Red" Shea lives his entire life by the code of the streets of Southie which basically means keep it in the neighborhood, take care of your own, an eye for an eye, and above all don't rat on anyone no matter what the consequences. He makes no apologies for the way he has chosen to live his life, quite the contrary, he embraces it. So much so in fact he ends up doing a 12 year bid (That's gangster for 12 years in prison).

I can't help but be in awe of this guy's fearlessness and toughness. He wasn't afraid of ANYONE and this is in his world a world filled with notorious ruthless gangsters, killers, and inmates with little to lose. On the one side he's callous, short tempered and dangerous, quick to bust someone's head open with a baseball bat to make an example. Then again he's loyal and extremely driven when he chooses to be, running 6 miles a day, training incessantly as a boxer and of course...finding clever ways to sell more and more drugs. The quintessential yin and yang. Love him or hate him you have to admire that he doesn't compromise his ideals. Take him or leave him he has interesting stories to share.

I put this book down with a desire to hear more about John Shea. I would especially like to hear more from someone who knew him to get a different, more objective perspective of the guy if only to see if he enormous ego is warranted. For a small town white boy who grew up listening to gangster rap this guy is my generation's John Wayne!

Matthew Jenkins says

A true telling tale of Irish mobsters growing up from Southie Mass. As being in an Irish family, I felt a weird connection the the Irish Mobster Red Shea despite having nothing in common with him. He really exposes the inner lights and unsuspected traits of the life of a mobster.
