

The tale of the murderous fish peddler named Lenny 'The Quahog' Paradiso

By: [R. Marc Kantrowitz](#) November 3, 2016



Sixteen-year-old Florence White was working the streets of Boston's Combat Zone when a car pulled up. A business transaction was consummated, and White slid in. When the stocky, pot-bellied john pulled a gun and uttered, "You're coming with me, bitch!" White knew it was not going to be an ordinary, run-of-the-mill evening.

Driven to East Boston and hauled into a third-floor apartment, she was raped, beaten and robbed by two men before she was allowed to leave. As she cried, bled and limped to a nearby police station, she thought of the bullets the stocky one showed her.

"You see these, honey? I got one waitin' here just for you. If ya sez a word to anybody, you're dead meat."

After getting an identification, the police went to the apartment where they retrieved the bullets, knife and rifle that White had described. An arrest was made.

After the stocky one returned the ring and money he had taken from her, White dropped out of sight. The case was dismissed. The stocky one learned an important lesson: leave no witnesses.

Saturday, Aug. 11, 1979

Marie Ianuzzi looked smashing in the red dress she wore to the wedding of a friend. Unfortunately, she had gotten into yet another loud argument with her drug-abusing boyfriend, David Doyle, who had angrily stomped off. Ianuzzi ended up at a bar, the Cardinal's Nest in East Boston, where she saw an acquaintance — the stocky fish peddler Lenny Paradiso, aptly monikered "The Quahog," who also earlier attended the wedding.

Known as a "deez" and "doze" kind of guy, Paradiso owned cars that somehow kept getting stolen, as well as a fishing boat called Malafemmena — Italian for "evil woman."

Paradiso convinced her to apologize to those she had drunkenly offended at a post-wedding party. So Ianuzzi left the bar, telling a friend that she'd be back in a half-hour. The half-hour never came.

The following morning fishermen angling on the Saugus marshes of the Pines River spotted a bright red form. As they inched closer, the view came tragically clearer. A now forever 20-year-old, dead with a black scarf wrapped tightly around her neck, on the shore of a river behind the Conley and Daggett Lobster Pound.

Saturday, Nov. 28, 1981

Despite the protestations of her loving New Jersey parents to drive back to Boston with her sister in the morning, Joan Webster was anxious to get back to Massachusetts. In her second year of Harvard grad school, she was immersed in a project that needed her attention. If her Thanksgiving break had to be interrupted, so be it. Work beckoned and the talented and hardworking student, as always, heeded the call.

As she got off the plane, she stepped into the night and disappeared.

Without a body there was no case. There was, however, Webster's wallet and pocketbook, found by a fisherman less than a week later — near the water, by the Lobster Pound.

Wednesday, Jan. 5, 1983

It had taken time, but a case, albeit weak, had been built against Paradiso for the murder of Ianuzzi. Not only was he the last person to be seen with her, his story was suspect as to their interaction.

The car he drove that evening was reported stolen shortly thereafter — in the commonwealth's view, to destroy evidence. He also had claimed seven other cars stolen along with his two boats over the course of three years, and collected \$40,000 in insurance. Lastly, he had a strong connection to the Conley and Daggett locale.

Against that backdrop, Paradiso would argue that the killer was the one she fought with at the wedding: her boyfriend. Paradiso's girlfriend would supply an alibi.

And then a letter arrived on Jan. 5. Addressed to the prosecutor on the case, it came from an inmate, graphically detailing Paradiso's confession to him about killing both Ianuzzi and Webster and importantly supplying small, verifiable details. Soon a second con came forward with equally damaging information.

Wednesday, July 21, 1984

Paradiso is sentenced to life for the murder of Ianuzzi. He also is given a sentence of 18 to 20 years for the sexual assault, to be served on and after the six- to 15-year sentence he was serving for the attempted rape of another young victim.

He was never tried for the murder of Webster whose body was discovered in a shallow grave in 1990, nor several other murders thought to be committed by him.

Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2008

Paradiso dies in prison of cancer. He was 65.

Devon Galvin assisted with the research for the above column, which was based on "The Paradiso Files" by Timothy M. Burke.