

## Is there more than one 'bad' Bulger? Reporter's book examines Whitey and Billy's relationship

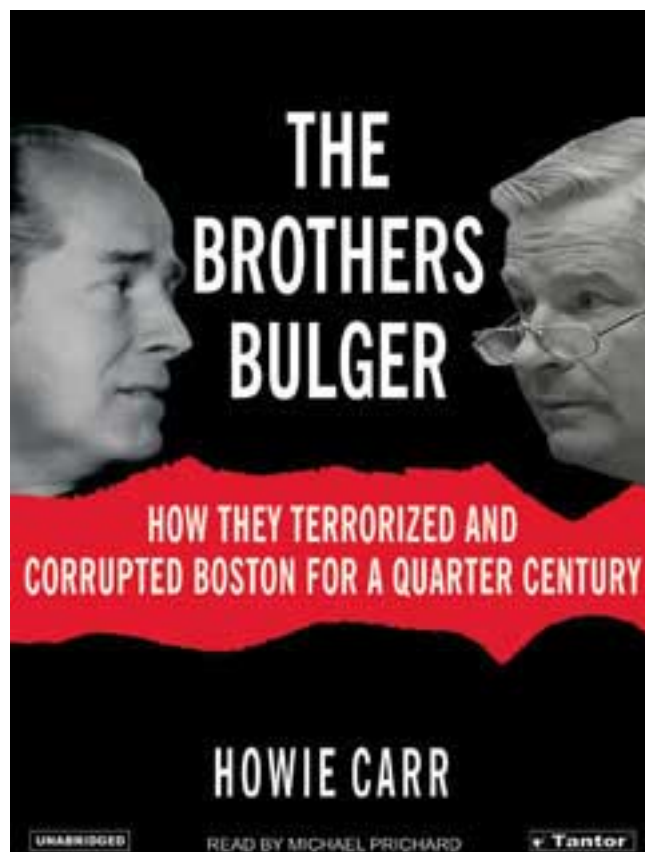
BY ERIC SEAN WELD

Two Irish brothers, born in South Boston five years apart in the 1930s, grew up and headed in opposite directions. Or did they? Two Irish brothers, born in South Boston five years apart in the 1930s, grew up and headed in opposite directions.

Or did they?

William Bulger, the younger of the two, might have you believe that scenario, he being the "good" brother, the lifelong public servant. But a fact-stuffed book, "The Brothers Bulger: How They Terrorized and Corrupted Boston for a Quarter Century," by longtime Boston Herald reporter Howie Carr, paints a different picture.

"The Brothers Bulger" (Warner Books, \$25.95) was published earlier this year and jumped on the New York Times best-seller list.



Sure, from a standpoint far outside Massachusetts politics and media, it may look like William "Billy" Bulger legitimately climbed to the pinnacle of respectable citizenry with his ascension to the state Senate presidency in the 1980s and the presidency of the University of Massachusetts, which ended only three years ago.

The good-brother-bad-brother portrayal was assisted, Carr points out, in a glowing 1992 "60 Minutes" profile on Billy Bulger by Morley Safer.

But how he climbed to power, and more importantly what he did with it, according to evidence compiled by Carr and some inference on the author's part, are highly suspect and portray him as practically a member in absentia of the Boston underside ruled by his brother.

### **Symbiotic success**

James "Whitey" Bulger, the older and more notorious of the two, made little effort to disguise his ongoing grab for power and wealth as he connived and murdered his way to the top of Boston's organized crime scene during the 1970s and '80s. Though the brothers did not associate openly in their separate public lives, it might be said that they were co-dependent in getting where they got. Carr outlines a series of incidents during the brothers' reigns in which one was assisted, sometimes unknowingly, by the other.

Many of Whitey's underlings were appointed to soft state government jobs during Billy's tenure at the state house, for instance. And it had been long suspected, if never proved, that Whitey's intimidation of political opponents assisted his little brother's early career.

The brothers had a community of mutual friends, mostly from "Southie," the south Boston neighborhood where they grew up and continued living as adults. One of the dearest was John "Zip"

Connolly, a fast-rising (now convicted and incarcerated) FBI agent from the old neighborhood. Early on, as Billy climbed the ladder toward the acme of state politics and Whitey worked his way up through the wise guy ranks, Billy assigned Zip Connolly to keep an eye out for his older brother, writes Carr.

Connolly accommodated and then some, appointing Whitey an official FBI informant and protecting him from the law for 25 years, while accepting some \$200,000 in payoffs from Whitey. Similar stories abound.

Yet for all the brothers' unseemly professional activities, they both seem to have miraculously escaped punishment. Billy Bulger, 71, was forced into retirement a few years ago with a \$200,000-a-year state pension. Whitey, now 76, remains on the lam from an ongoing worldwide search as one of the FBI's Most Wanted.

None of the Bulgers' generation-long stranglehold on Boston is news. It's all been well-documented from numerous angles, and Whitey has been the subject of a dozen "America's Most Wanted" episodes.

But Carr's book delves more deeply and comprehensively into public record than previous accounts of the Bulgers, and it effectively juxtaposes the brothers' parallel - and probably symbiotic - climbs to rare success.

As in his Boston Herald columns and his syndicated radio show, Carr drives straight ahead in "The Brothers Bulger" with a simple, skeptical style that - like any good journalist - questions everything. His wry cynicism peppers the pages, jabbing at the facades of his subjects' hypocrisy and the litany of convenient coincidences that littered Billy Bulger's political career.

On page 255, Carr includes testimony by Zip Connolly in support of

Billy Bulger in which Connolly cites a quote by the ancient Roman satirist Juvenal, a favorite of Billy's. "Zip chose not to mention what is perhaps Juvenal's most famous saying," Carr writes, "which seemed even more appropriate for the gathering of these public officials: 'Who is to guard the guards themselves?'"

Carr discloses in the books' preface that he is no friend of the Bulgers.

He's not the only Boston reporter to have received a threat or two during his scouring reportage of state and city politics, he notes. And in 2003, Carr was among Gov. Mitt Romney's appointees to the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees who supported ending Bulger's tenure. Bulger resigned from the presidency weeks later.

With his copious research, Carr pieces together a riveting story of the Bulger brothers, but also gives a peek at the underbelly of recent Massachusetts politics, crammed with familiar names, sometimes so many - and so similar - it's difficult keep track.

What the Bulger brothers share, according to Carr's account, is an unrelenting vindictiveness, and unfailing memory, both for rewarding loyalty and punishing betrayal. They also have in common dangerous charisma.

It's difficult to finish Carr's book without a shake of the head at just how far ethics and lawful control had slipped during the Bulger brothers' partnered rule of Boston.