

# Mystery Lady Claims Joe Valachi's Body and Has Him Buried in Lewiston

## Famous gangster broke code of silence and told the world about how the Mafia worked

### Who was Marie K. Jackson?

She was a mysterious woman from Niagara Falls who had a secret love affair with a Mafia hit-man for decades. Historians don't know much, but she did consent to a rare interview with the Buffalo News in 1995.

The report indicated she was a quiet, law-abiding divorcee who worked as a saleswoman in a Niagara Falls clothing store.

"We were introduced at the home of a mutual friend in Niagara Falls," she recalled of her first meeting with Valachi, who was married. Although their relationship went on for many years, including the time of Valachi's much publicized testimony before the U.S. Senate, Miss Jackson was not publicly linked to Valachi until he died. She claimed his body from a federal prison in 1971 and had him secretly buried in an unmarked grave in Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Lewiston. It was later learned that Valachi's will listed her as his executor and beneficiary.

When the best selling book, The Valachi Papers, was published it was Jackson who "made a lot of money" from the royalties. Valachi reportedly didn't make a penny. Jackson died in 1999 and is buried next to Valachi.

### Joseph Valachi Timeline

- 1904:** Born in New York City
- 1923:** Arrested after a botched robbery and serves nine months in prison.
- 1930:** Inducted into the organized crime syndicate, the Mafia, also known as Cosa Nostra ("our thing") and becomes a soldier, eventually working for Charles "Lucky" Luciano, later known as the Genovese family.
- 1932:** He marries Carmela Reina, the eldest daughter of Gaetano Reina, a crime boss who had been murdered in 1930 during a power struggle with other bosses.
- 1953:** Boss Vito Genovese orders Valachi to kill Genovese's wife's bodyguard.
- 1959:** Valachi is convicted of narcotics violations and is sentenced to 15 years in prison in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1962:** Boss Vito Genovese, now a fellow inmate, suspects (incorrectly) that Valachi is an informer, and gives him "the kiss of death," a sign that he was going to be killed. Valachi panics and kills another prisoner who he mistakenly thought was his assassin. Seeking revenge, and bargaining for a lighter sentence, Valachi agrees to cooperate with the FBI and tell them everything he knows about inter-workings of the American Mafia.
- 1963:** Valachi testifies in front of the United States Senate, and a huge television audience, becoming the first member of the Mafia to publicly acknowledge its existence. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy said his testimony was the "biggest single intelligence breakthrough yet in combating organized crime and racketeering in the United States." Investigations, indictments, and convictions followed Valachi's testimony. After his testimony, the Mafia offered a \$100,000 bounty to anyone who killed Valachi.
- 1968:** The book, The Valachi Papers, is published and becomes a best seller.
- 1971:** Valachi dies of a heart attack while serving his sentence at the federal prison in Anthony, Texas. Marie K. Jackson of Niagara Falls claims his body and buries him four days later at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Lewiston.



### A Secret No Longer

The gravestones of mob informant, Joseph Valachi, and his long-time girlfriend, Marie Jackson, at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery. The cemetery is located in the Town of Lewiston next to the Niagara Power Project. His grave was originally unmarked.

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