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Profile: Lucchese family capo "Fat Pete" Chiodo

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By David Amoruso

Never was a nickname more appropriate than the one of Lucchese crime family captain Peter Chiodo. They called him Fat Pete. Why? Well, his weight ranged from 400 to 500 pounds. Like I said, appropriate.

"Fat Pete" Chiodo was the quintessential street smart mobster. He was capable of violence, as one had to be in the Mafia, but he also saw the lighter side of "the life," approaching it with a sense of humor.

Like the time he was asked in court if he had threatened a "kid" on behalf of a friend who had discovered that this kid was a thief.

Chiodo denied the accusation, saying "I just told him he was out. I know he was stealing money and... I might have growled at him as I told him that, but for the most part, I simply said, 'You're out.'"

He was then asked: "You're physically bigger than this kid, I would imagine, right?"

"There are not too many people I'm not physically bigger than," Chiodo said with a smile while he rubbed his hand over his huge belly.

And just like Paulie in Goodfellas, Chiodo didn't have to move for anybody.

That's why other gangsters would often come to him, of the [Lucchese family](#) in general, for help in settling disputes. When Greek and Russian mobsters argued over a shopping center, Chiodo and the Luccheses helped out and interceded in a civil suit about the issue. Chiodo even stood in front of a judge to smooth things over.

Years later, he was asked whether he had told the judge he was a legitimate businessman, Chiodo replied: "I could have. I probably did. I mean, I surely didn't tell him that I was a captain in the [Lucchese family](#). What I do remember is that when it was all said and done, I had the judge convinced to give us the time we needed. We told him that we would make the repairs within a certain amount of time. We did and everybody was happy."



As is evidenced by Chiodo's lines, he has a witty comeback. One he perfected in the early 1980s when he owned the Home Bar on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

The Home Bar was a small, quiet, neighborhood watering hole. Chiodo (right) bought it as a place to call home. "I had a place to hang out," he said. "The bartender took a salary, he was happy. I had a place to hang out in, drink for free. I was happy with that."

The intimate atmosphere attracted a special kind of clientele. The Beatles star John Lennon liked coming by for a drink before he was murdered in 1980, Chiodo said. "In fact, in one of his album covers, he's wearing a T-shirt from the Home Bar," he added.

Near the bar, there was the Comic Strip, where standup comedians practiced their routine. After they finished, they'd visit Chiodo's joint for a relaxing drink. Guys like Chris Rock, Eddie Murphy, and Sam Kennison all were frequent guests.

"Eddie's my friend, and I loved him," Chiodo said. Adding, "Eddie knew my reputation and who I was, though I never involved him in any way in any of that stuff. I think the reason Eddie and I became such good friends is because I didn't want anything from him. I didn't want to be in show business, I didn't want a job, I didn't want his money, and he kind of appreciated that. He told me once, 'Petey, you the only guy that ever picks up a check for lunch around me. I'm the one always paying all the time.'"

Several years later, in 1987, he expanded his circle of friends when he became a made guy in the [Lucchese crime family](#). Unfortunately for Chiodo, not everyone there was as fond of him as Eddie Murphy was.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, power in the mob family had shifted to boss Vic Amuso and underboss Anthony Casso. The ruthless duo established their presence with intimidation and violence.

Always paranoid that someone might flip and turn government witness, Amuso and Casso [began whacking anyone](#) they deemed at risk of becoming a rat. In 1991 Chiodo had come under their deadly suspicion.

On May 8 of that year, Chiodo was at a Staten Island gas station getting his Cadillac checked when all of a sudden he heard a popping sound and saw something impact the cement floor. It was a hit! Chiodo immediately pulled out his gun and began firing shots at his two assailants.

One of the two hitmen was Joseph D'Arco, the son of Lucchese acting boss [Alphonse D'Arco](#), who was eager to please and impress his mob father with his involvement in this high-profile hit. D'Arco's shots kept coming at Chiodo as he was hit by a total of 12 bullets. Lying on the ground, a bleeding heap of 500-pound flesh, Chiodo waited for the final shot as D'Arco came closer.

Then, nothing.

D'Arco's gun jammed and the two hitmen fled the crime scene thinking they had done enough to send the mob capo to the other world. But Chiodo was a lot more resilient than one would expect from looking at his obese frame. He survived.

Two months later he became the highest ranking New York mobster to become a turncoat. He would lose that distinction to [the father](#) of the man who tried to kill him and [Gambino family](#) underboss [Salvatore "Sammy the Bull" Gravano](#) several months later.

If he thought his decision to become a turncoat would end the violence against him and his family, he was wrong. In an unprecedented move, Amuso and Casso ordered a hit on Chiodo's sister, an innocent civilian and the first female relative to be targeted for death by the [American Mafia](#). Lucchese [gangsters stalked her](#) for a month before shooting her after she arrived home from dropping her kids off at school on March 10, 1992. She too survived, but the tone was set.

It only motivated Chiodo more to do his former partners-in-crime some serious damage in court. And he succeeded, his testimony meant the end for two bosses, two underbosses, and 18 other wiseguys, who were sentenced to long prison terms. Including Vic Amuso, the man who ordered the hit on his sister, and is now spending the rest of his life in prison.

After testifying, Chiodo disappeared into the Witness Protection Program. He remained there, hidden and anonymous, somewhere in America, until his death of natural causes in January of 2016. He was 65.

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