

GOTTI: I'M DON & OUT WISEGUY

By KATI CORNELL

June 7, 2006 -- John "Junior" Gotti is crying poverty as he gears up for his third racketeering trial in a year - and has asked a federal judge to make taxpayers pick up the tab for his mounting legal bills.

In a letter to Manhattan Judge Shira Scheindlin yesterday, Gotti's attorney, Charles Carnesi, asked to be appointed to represent the formerly powerful gangster under a law that gives defendants free legal representation if they can't afford to hire a lawyer.

Carnesi also requested permission for Gotti, who owns a gated home in tony Oyster Bay Cove, to apply for a \$500,000 mortgage.

"In addition to the payment of legal fees, Gotti requests permission to use a portion of the mortgage proceeds to satisfy his and his wife's personal income-tax obligations," Carnesi wrote, noting Gotti is scheduled to meet with his accountant today.

The feds have kept a close watch over Gotti's real estate with an eye toward seizing \$25 million in alleged ill-gotten gains should he be convicted at his upcoming trial set to begin in August.

In April, Scheindlin authorized an agreement with prosecutors that allowed Gotti to sell partial ownership of two pieces of commercial property in Queens for approximately \$550,000. As part of the deal, Gotti is forbidden from selling his \$1.3 million Oyster Bay Cove home, which boasts a stable and a guesthouse, and other valuable commercial real estate, on Hempstead Avenue in Jamaica, Queens.

"Everybody knows Gotti has money. He lives in a mansion," said radio host Curtis Sliwa, the victim of a 1992 kidnapping plot allegedly orchestrated by Gotti after the talk-show personality bad-mouthed Gotti's father, the "Dapper Don," on the air.

"His father is probably turning in his grave," Sliwa said. "This is what his son is going to be known for, as a deadbeat."

Carnesi argued that the feds have failed to prove Gotti's income came from his life of crime.

"As the evidence will show at Gotti's forthcoming trial, he maintained a number of businesses that were engaged in legitimate activity," the lawyer wrote.

The feds recently piled on new charges, including money laundering and witness tampering.

Gotti faces a third trial after two previous juries failed to reach a verdict in his case.

The mob scion has admitted to running the Gambino crime family for his then-jailed father, but claims he left the mob in 1999.

This defense, which violates mob rules against acknowledging the existence of the Mafia, has resulted in death threats against Gotti, according to sources.

The FBI notified Gotti in April that his life could be in danger - immediately after the threats were secretly recorded during an investigation, sources said.

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