

Kids cutting the cord, preferring handheld devices over TV and cable

BUSINESS Inside Metro

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

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Monday, December 14, 2015

WEATHER

HIGH 79, LOW 68 Slight chance of rain

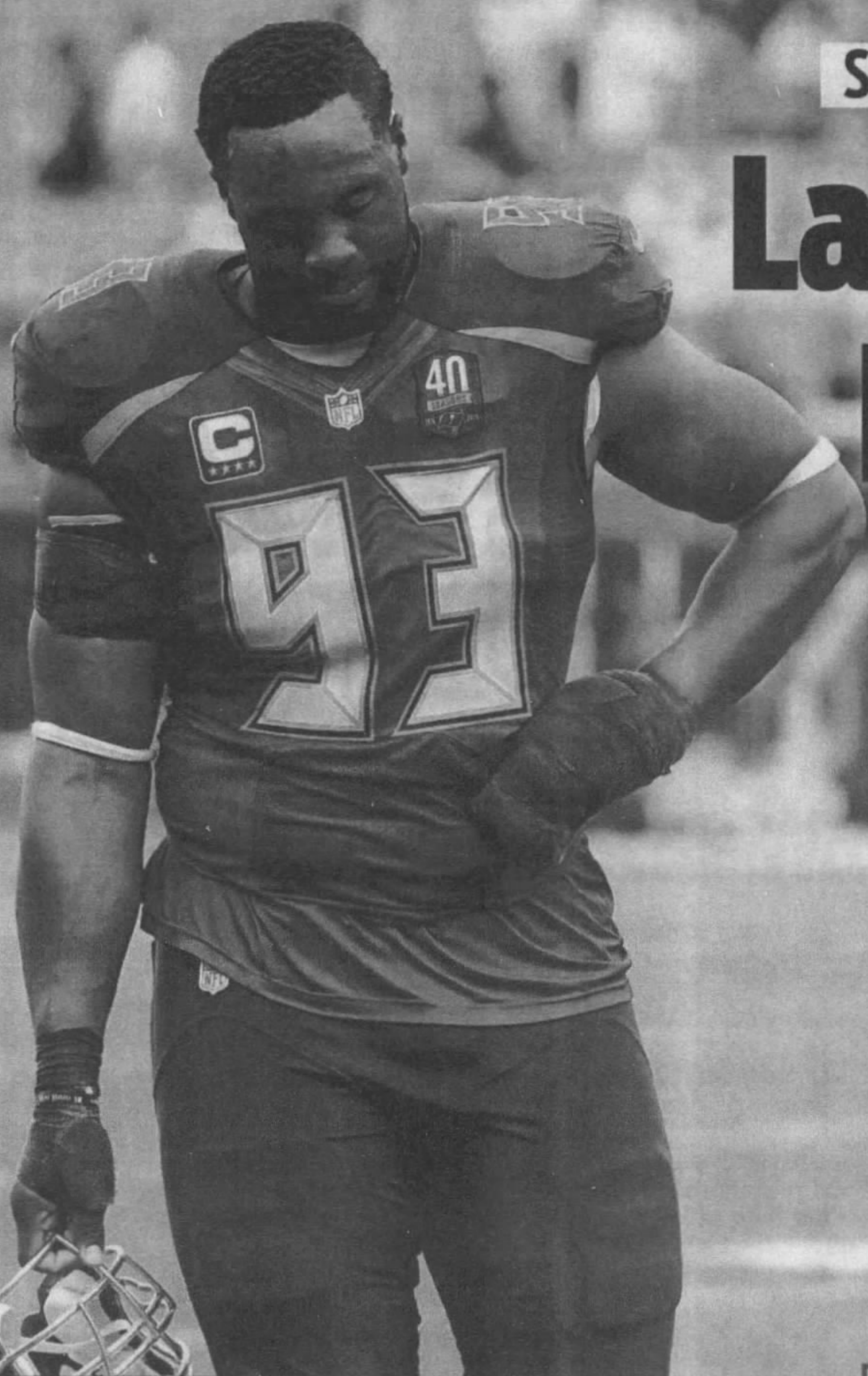
and The Tampa Times

BELOW THE FOLD

Gay parents fighting IRS's denial of tax deduction

Drug-smuggling ring brought Rubios anguish

Greco Middle reduces suspensions by getting students more involved



SAINTS 24, BUCCANEERS 17

Late-season letdown

Uninspired play by both offense and defense puts Bucs on brink of playoff elimination

Defensive tackle Gerald McCoy, who finished with two tackles, heads to the locker room after the Bucs' loss to the New Orleans Saints on Sunday.

JASON BEHNKEN/STAFF

Tribune staff

TAMPA — Playing their most important home game in years, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers saw their playoff hopes all but disappear in a dispirited 24-17 loss to the New Orleans Saints on Sunday at Raymond James Stadium. Looking to keep pace in the NFC wild-card race, the Bucs played uninspired. The offense mustered only 291 yards against the NFL's worst defense. The defense gave up big plays and struggled on third down. As a result, Tampa Bay (6-7) fell to two games behind Seattle (8-5) for the NFC's final playoff spot with three games to go.

Bucs Bonus:

- ◆ Playoff hopes all but gone as offense struggles
- ◆ Fennelly: The Bucs weren't ready for this big moment
- ◆ Defense struggles on third down

Gay parents fighting IRS's denial of tax deduction

They had twins using in-vitro fertilization and a surrogate

BY ELAINE SILVESTRINI
Tribune staff

Is being gay, in a long-term committed relationship, the same as being biologically infertile?

That's the argument being made by a Stetson law professor in a lawsuit against the federal government.

Joseph F. Morrissey, who

teaches constitutional and business law at Stetson, is seeking to overturn a ruling by the Internal Revenue Service that denied him and his partner a tax deduction. The deduction would have been for costs associated with their use of in-vitro fertilization and a surrogate who gave birth to their twin sons.

An IRS revenue agent who denied the claim said Morrissey's sexual orientation was a "choice," according to the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Tampa.

An IRS spokesman said the agency would have no comment on the lawsuit and wouldn't discuss, even in general, the tax deductions involved.

Morrissey has been in a "monogamous, loving and committed relationship with his partner for 15 years," the lawsuit says. Morrissey and his lawyers declined to discuss the case.

The partner, whose name is not given, became a Pinellas County middle school mathematics teacher after the couple

LAWSUIT, Page 10

Greco Middle reduces suspensions by getting students more involved

Principal's focus was getting them excited to be in class every day

BY ANASTASIA DAWSON
Tribune Staff

TAMPA — Elizabeth Simpson was explaining how computer coding works to her seventh-grade engineering class when two students pushed a dolly of oversized, unmarked boxes through the classroom door.

The students in her Engineering STEM Academy class at Greco Middle School knew what was inside. They burst into a chorus of gasps and chatter.

"Oh my gosh. We got a 3-D printer," the students cheered. "Oh my gosh. I'm so happy."

Simpson, a science, technology, engineering and math teacher, smiled from ear to ear. The printer, which will allow students to create

Keeping kids in class

An occasional series of in-depth reports on how one local school — Greco Middle — is working to help students spend more time learning and less time paying the price for bad behavior.



ANDY JONES/STAFF

Abigail Saddler, 11, and other sixth-grade students in a STEM class at Greco Middle School practice

three-dimensional objects, is just the latest in a string of efforts to increase student involvement at Greco Middle.

In the 11 years Simpson has worked at the Title 1 school, where 91 percent of students receive free or reduced price lunch, Greco Middle has seen its share of bad headlines.

GRECO, Page 10



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Presidential candidate Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., briefly mentions his brother-in-law's criminal activity in his memoir "An American Son."

Drug-smuggling ring brought Rubios anguish

An in-law played a central role in Miami's cocaine-cowboys era

BY MANUEL ROIG-FRANZIA
AND SCOTT HIGHAM
The Washington Post

MIAMI — On Dec. 16, 1987, a teenager named Marco Rubio arrived home from school in West Miami to find his mother in anguish.

That day, federal drug agents raided a house a few miles away that his brother-in-law,

Orlando Cicilia, shared with Rubio's older sister, Barbara.

Cicilia, a large, sturdily built Cuban immigrant, had played an intimate role in Rubio's early life. But as the future senator from Florida was finishing high school and preparing to go to college, his brother-in-law's illicit career as a cocaine dealer was exposed in a major trial. Cicilia was eventually sentenced to a lengthy prison term in one of the biggest drug cases of Miami's baroque cocaine-cowboys era.

RUBIO, Page 6

INSIDE

Saudi voters elect 20 women to local government posts

NATION & WORLD Page 4

Commission likely to vote in February on transportation tax hike

METRO Page 1

Rubio

From Page 1

Rubio, who was 16 at the time of the arrest, does not mention the ordeal as he runs for president, casting his family's Cuban-American immigrant story as the embodiment of the American Dream.

There is no evidence that Rubio or his parents were aware of Cicilia's drug dealing, and Rubio's sister was not suspected of any crime. But a deep look at those turbulent years — drawing on previously unreported Drug Enforcement Administration field reports and grand jury testimony, interviews with federal task force agents, and the senator's writings — reveals that Cicilia was a central figure in the smuggling operation at the same time that he was integrated in the life of the Rubio family.

While the case was widely covered at the time, many details of Cicilia's top-level role in the smuggling operation have not been previously reported, in part because they were stored in court files that were antiquated and difficult to access, as well as in remote archives.

Cicilia served as the "front man" in the drug ring headed by Mario Tabraue, a kingpin who ran an exotic-animals business and kept spotted leopards on the walled grounds of his mansion, according to interviews and court records. Cicilia looked and sounded the part, wearing paisley suits and rakishly calling cocaine "a pretty thing," according to court records and interviews with lead investigators.

The depiction of Cicilia's criminal activities that emerges in those interviews and records goes well beyond the brief description offered by Rubio in his 2012 memoir. In the book, "An American Son," Rubio refers vaguely to Cicilia's involvement "in a criminal enterprise" without mentioning the scope of the drug ring. Rubio, who had moved with his parents back to Miami from Las Vegas more than two years before the arrest, writes poignantly about the arrest's effect on his sister and parents. But he plays down its impact on him personally, noting that his "family's troubles didn't diminish my enthusiasm for the upcoming football season."

In discussing Cicilia, Rubio focuses primarily on happy occasions. Rubio's fondest childhood memories were formed at a Cuban-style Christmas celebration that Cicilia and his sister hosted for the extended family. Cicilia hired Rubio to wash his dogs, giving the football-obsessed teen money to buy tickets to Miami Dolphins games.

Rubio declined to be interviewed. His spokesman, Todd Harris, said Rubio "was just 16 at the time of the arrest and views this as a private family matter involving events that occurred almost 30 years ago." Initially, Rubio declined to answer written questions about whether Orlando Cicilia ever provided financial support to him or his family, or if he took any steps to help secure the early release of his brother-in-law from federal prison. Harris sent an email after this story was published online Saturday night saying that Rubio did not help Cicilia win early release. Harris did not address the financial support question.

Orlando and Barbara Cicilia did not respond to interview requests. Harris said the Cicilias are "private citizens who do not want in any way to seek the spotlight, and we are going to respect that."

In the years that followed the arrest, the Cicilia and Rubio families



Marco Rubio, left, with his mom Oria Rubio after winning his Senate bid Nov. 2, 2010, in Coral Gables. In his memoir, Rubio says Orlando Cicilia's arrest was painful for his mom.

have remained deeply intertwined — personally, financially, politically and emotionally. Rubio's staff complained vehemently when Cicilia's long-forgotten case was the subject of a 2011 report on the Spanish-language television network Univision.

Orlando and Barbara Cicilia remained married throughout his 12-year prison term. Cicilia, now 58, and his wife live in Rubio's childhood home with the senator's mother, Oriales Rubio, whom the Republican candidate mentions frequently on the campaign trail. Property records show that Rubio's parents added the names of Orlando and Barbara Cicilia to the home's deed in 2002, two years after Cicilia was released from prison.

When Rubio's Senate campaign was looking for office space, it was Cicilia, now a real estate agent, who helped to find a location, according to a friend of both men. Cicilia has had no further troubles with the law, according to a review of court records.

Rubio, now 44, is close to Cicilia's sons, Daniel and Orlando, the latter nicknamed "Landy"; like members of his immediate family, they call Rubio "Tony," an Americanized version of his middle name, Antonio. Rubio-affiliated PACs and his campaigns, including his presidential operation, have paid more than \$130,000 to his nephews over the past decade, with the bulk of that going to Landy Cicilia's video and consulting companies, according to financial disclosures and filings.

Harris said Landy Cicilia has shot some of the campaign's most popular videos, including a fantasy-football piece that has gotten 50,000 YouTube views. The Cicilia sons did not respond to requests for comment.

On the night of Rubio's greatest political triumph — his 2010 Senate victory — it was Landy Cicilia who drove Rubio to the elegant Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables for his celebration. On stage that night, with confetti cascading down, music blaring and a national television audience looking on, a graying man stood behind Rubio. He was a man with a troubled past: Orlando Cicilia.

Orlando Cicilia was born in Cuba into a family of real guajiros — Cuban country folk.

He appears to have arrived in the United States at age 15 in 1972 — 16 years after Marco Rubio's parents and maternal grandfather, according to Social Security Administration records.

Cicilia began dating Barbara Rubio in the 1970s, when they went to high school together in Miami.

As the years went on, the jovial Cicilia showed a knack for awakening nostalgic emotions in the Rubio family, the senator would later recall. His ways were the ways of the island, and being around him and his family could

transport Marco Rubio's father, Mario Rubio, back to the place of his birth.

The families shared a common heritage in the Cuban countryside. Rubio's grandfather was born in the small rural village of Jicotea in north-central Cuba.

Rubio, who was born in the United States, was just a boy when Cicilia entered his family's life. One Christmas Eve when he was a small child, he got out of bed and found Cicilia, his future brother-in-law, assembling a bicycle with his father in the living room of their home in Coral Gate, a working-class neighborhood west of Little Havana.

"You would have thought I'd walked in on two burglars," Rubio wrote in his memoir. "After a frantic attempt to cover up the evidence, my father and Orlando explained they had both been using the bathroom when Santa Claus had arrived and delivered our presents. It sounded plausible to me, and I went back to bed happy that Santa had made it to our house and been so generous."

The Miami of Rubio's youth was fast becoming the cocaine capital of the United States. Cocaine was everywhere, and the dealers who made millions of dollars selling it were becoming more brazen, as well as more violent.

"There were shootings at intersections. There were shootings in swimming pools. There were bodies everywhere," said Sam Rabin, a prosecutor in charge of a drug-homicide task force that investigated the Tabraue ring. "It was the Wild West."

Though the violence hadn't touched them directly, Rubio's parents still fretted about the "disco-centered social scene" and the "decadent lifestyle" of the city's young people, Rubio wrote.

In 1979, when Rubio was 8, his father announced they would leave the city for Las Vegas, where they had relatives and better job prospects. The move came with a complication: Rubio's sister, who would turn 20 that year, didn't want to go. She wanted to stay in Miami with Cicilia.

"Her decision terribly upset my parents," Rubio wrote, recalling "a very heated disagreement between them. If Orlando truly loved her, my mother argued, he would marry her now or follow us to Las Vegas. But more than her relationship with Orlando kept my sister in Miami. All her friends lived there. It was her home."

The family left without her. In Las Vegas, Rubio and his mother joined the Mormon Church; they were far removed from the Cuban culture that had surrounded him in Miami.

His parents had hoped Las Vegas would provide better job opportunities for Rubio's bartender father at a time when the hospitality business in Miami was sagging. But in Las Vegas, they would

again struggle financially.

But the family in Miami was prospering. Barbara had married Cicilia, and they'd bought a house with an acre of land in a suburban area west of Miami.

In 1983, when Rubio was 12, his family traveled to Miami for a memorable Christmas. Barbara Rubio treated them to tickets for the last Dolphins home game of the regular season. Her husband connected the family with its Cuban heritage.

The couple hosted the Rubios for a traditional Cuban Nochebuena — Christmas Eve. Cicilia's family joined them, slaughtering a pig and roasting it in a pit covered with palm fronds. They ate late, feasting on a traditional Cuban meal of black beans and boiled cassava, Rubio would recall. Cicilia chased Rubio's younger sister, Veronica, with the pig's head, he wrote in his memoir.

"It had been a long time since I'd seen my parents so happy," Rubio wrote. "My father had felt transported to his childhood ... my grandfather was as close to our family's rural Cuban heritage as he had been since his boyhood." The trip, Rubio wrote, "reawakened my affection for the city and the Cuban culture so prevalent there." Decades later, the Christmas at his Cicilia's remained Rubio's "fondest childhood memory."

That year was pivotal in the life of Rubio's brother-in-law. In 1983, Cicilia joined the cocaine-smuggling operation led by Tabraue, according to prosecutors, investigators and federal witnesses.

At that point, Tabraue had a booming drug business, according to law enforcement officials who tracked him. Tabraue's drug ring had been populated by thugs known for their ruthlessness; some carried pistols in briefcases. Prosecutors believed that a member of Tabraue's crew had killed Larry Nash, an undercover informant for what was then the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, in 1980 and disposed of his body by dismembering it with a circular saw and burning it in a horse trough filled with charcoal.

Nash's body was never found; a jury later decided that Tabraue had committed an act of racketeering by helping to dispose of the informant's corpse.

What began as a marijuana-import operation in the late 1970s had blossomed into the far more lucrative business of distributing kilos of cocaine smuggled into South Florida from Colombia. During the operation from 1976 to 1986, the ring moved half-a-million pounds of marijuana and 200 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated \$75 million.

"It was a very large operation," said Delbert Woodburn, a Miami-Dade narcotics detective who investigated Tabraue in

the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Planes from Colombia were coming into the Bahamas and the Keys, landing at small airports, dropping drugs into the Everglades."

Once Cicilia joined, he became the "front man," insulating Tabraue by handing over drugs to buyers and coordinating shipments around the country, according to interviews, DEA field reports and grand jury testimony obtained by The Washington Post.

As the business flourished, Cicilia took on the appearance of the quintessential Miami underworld hotshot, donning sunglasses and wearing his paisley suit sleeves rolled up. It was as if he'd walked off a "Miami Vice" TV set, Larry A. Loveless, the lead DEA agent in the investigation, said in a recent interview.

Law enforcement officials say Cicilia was getting rich.

"Mario was the kingpin, and Orlando was his second in command," said Michael Fisten, a homicide detective who worked on the case and is writing a book about it. "He always had large amounts of cash on him."

Cicilia worked out of Tabraue's business in southwest Miami, Zoological Imports Unlimited, which agents called "the pet store," DEA field reports say.

Tabraue, who has returned to the exotic animals business since being released from prison, declined to be interviewed.

"He's not interested in reliving his past," his attorney Diana L. Fitzgerald said. "Rather, he is currently living his dream along with his wife by devoting himself to the care and advocacy of endangered animals."

While Cicilia was flourishing in the drug trade, the Rubio family was going through a difficult period in Las Vegas. Finances were always a worry, and his father would eventually lose time at work because his union went on strike.

And his parents, a bartender and a hotel maid, worried that their youngest children, Marco and Veronica, would be tempted to follow them into service work rather than going to college.

Marco Rubio was failing in school and acting like "a brat," he wrote.

In 1985, his father made a big decision. He bought a modest home in West Miami, and the family packed to move back to Miami. At first, Rubio protested, preferring to stay in Las Vegas, but he soon warmed to returning to "the exciting city I saw on 'Miami Vice,'" he wrote.

The move brought Rubio back into close contact with Cicilia. While Rubio's father drove their car across country, Rubio stayed with his sister and brother-in-law for a short time until the family's new house was ready.

The transition wasn't

easy for Rubio; he felt out of place at first. Amid the upheaval in Rubio's life, one constant was his love of the Dolphins. But he didn't have the money for tickets. He turned to his sister and brother-in-law for help. Rubio has said that his first job was building animal cages for his brother-in-law.

The couple also agreed to pay Rubio \$10 a week for each of their seven Samoyed dogs he washed. He made enough to buy tickets for all eight Dolphins regular-season home games, Rubio wrote.

That same house where Rubio earned his football-ticket money would soon be under surveillance by federal agents. The suspicions of federal investigators about Tabraue's possible involvement in the disappearance of the informant had lent a note of intensity to their surveillance of the kingpin and, ultimately, Cicilia.

Detectives had noticed a man behind the wheel of a Chevy Blazer that was appearing frequently among the stream of Ferraris, Maseratis and Jaguars that flowed to and from the kingpin's pet store.

At first, the agents referred to the man in their reports as "Orlando LNU" (last name unknown). After following him around, they learned that his name was Orlando Cicilia.

Cicilia handled the inventory for Tabraue, coordinated shipments around the country and collected the money, according to DEA field reports and court records. Sometimes he would stash the cocaine at his home. During one undercover buy, Cicilia "stated that he had to go home to get the cocaine, and would return with the cocaine to the pet store," a DEA report says.

DEA agents installed a listening device at the pet store and tracked calls made to and from Cicilia's home phone. Their informant wore a wire during his conversations with Cicilia and Tabraue. As the DEA agents recorded the conversations, one thing became clear: Cicilia was the go-to man for the operation's cocaine transactions, whether they involved a few ounces or multiple kilos. In 101 pages of DEA field reports and sworn statements obtained by The Post, Cicilia is named 147 times.

Cicilia used code words for cocaine buys: "little birds" for ounces, "big birds" for kilos. He boasted that the cocaine offered by the Tabraue ring was some of the best on the street.

"Pure rock," Cicilia called it.

A pound sold for \$15,000; a kilo, or 2.2 pounds, went for as much as \$28,000.

In May 1986, Cicilia took the informant inside the pet store, according to the DEA reports and sworn statements.

"Look what I have, what a pretty thing," Cicilia said, showing him an ounce of cocaine.

RUBIO, Page 8

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Rubio

From Page 6

There was a lot of money to be made, up and down the East Coast, the informant said.

"I told him that I had friends who could buy 2 or 3 kilos a week," the informant said.

"Orlando said this was no problem."

♦ ♦ ♦

Federal agents and Miami police gathered before sunrise on Dec. 16, 1987. In the early morning, nine days before Christmas, they fanned across Miami. Cicilia was arrested at his house. Tabraue was arrested at his compound, nicknamed "the Playboy Mansion" by federal agents. On the grounds, they found two spotted leopards. Inside the mansion were four safes — including one in a child's room — an Uzi and a MAC-10 sub-machine pistol. During the frenzy of the raid, the kingpin's wife threw a \$50,000 bundle of cash out of a window.

It hit a law enforcement agent in the head.

When Marco Rubio got home from school that afternoon, the pain caused by that morning's events was etched on his mother's face.

"It was a look you expect to see when someone has been told they or someone they love is dying," Rubio wrote in his memoir. "And that's exactly how I felt when she told me that earlier that morning Orlando had been arrested on drug charges."

The case went to trial 11 months later in an ornate downtown Miami courtroom packed with local lawyers who came to gawk at the legal firepower. Cicilia was represented by a court-appointed attorney, but his co-defendants brought in star attorneys, including Roy Black, one of the nation's most promi-

nent criminal lawyers, and Richard Sharpstein, a brilliant legal mind and showy performer who entertained the jury by imitating the rumbled TV detective Colombo.

Jurors heard evidence about drug deals Cicilia was involved in during 1986, but prosecutors and witnesses said he had joined Tabraue's gang in 1983. Cicilia's attorney tried to convince jurors that he was not engaged in the drug business. They didn't buy it.

On Feb. 6, 1989, the jury convicted Tabraue, Cicilia and five other men. Tabraue got 100 years in prison but would be released early in 2003 after serving 14 years. Cicilia received 35 years, the second-longest sentence, and the jury found him responsible for \$15 million in drug sales. The money has never been found.

While the case played out, Rubio saw the corrosive effects of crime up close. His sister yearned for company. Once, she invited him for pizza and a movie, but he turned her down because he was busy socializing with high school friends — a decision he would later regret.

"Barbara was lonely, and I avoided her," Rubio wrote.

A few days later, Rubio came home late. His sister, who was pregnant, was curled up on the foldout sofa in his parents' living room with her young son, Landy.

"The image of her the night I discovered her asleep in our living room has remained with me all my life," Rubio wrote in his memoir. "I look back on that time with admiration for Barbara and my parents. I admired how tenaciously she fought when her world turned upside down, how hard she worked and how devoted she was to her family. I admired how faithfully she stuck with her marriage."

The government had

seized the home Barbara owned with Cicilia, and she had to move into a garage apartment at the Rubio family home. Four days after the home seizure, Rubio left for Tarkio College. The tiny Missouri school had given him a scholarship to play football. It wasn't long before he was the one feeling miserable; he was having a hard time adjusting to life in the small college town.

On a trip to Miami, he met his newborn nephew, Daniel. His mother reminded him about "how lonely and difficult" Barbara's life had been since Cicilia's arrest. Three years earlier, when the couple's first child had been born, his sister's hospital room "had been crowded with flowers, balloons and friends," Rubio recalled in his memoir. When she gave birth to her second son, the only flowers were sent by her parents; they were also her only visitors.

Rubio left Tarkio after one year, transferring first to a community college and then to the University of Florida, where he earned an undergraduate degree before going on to the University of Miami law school.

In the coming years, while his brother-in-law served time at a low-security federal correctional institution in Ashland, Kentucky, Rubio launched one of modern Florida history's most successful and rapid political careers.

Rubio's reputation as a young man with great promise was sealed in January 2000 when he won a special election to serve in the Florida House of Representatives after having served on the city commission in West Miami.

That November, he was re-elected for a full term.

Four days after the election, Inmate 12101-016 walked out of federal custody. Orlando Cicilia was a free man.

Deadly semitrailer crash causes railroad yard fire

Plumes of black smoke could be seen for miles

BY JONATHAN J. COOPER
The Associated Press

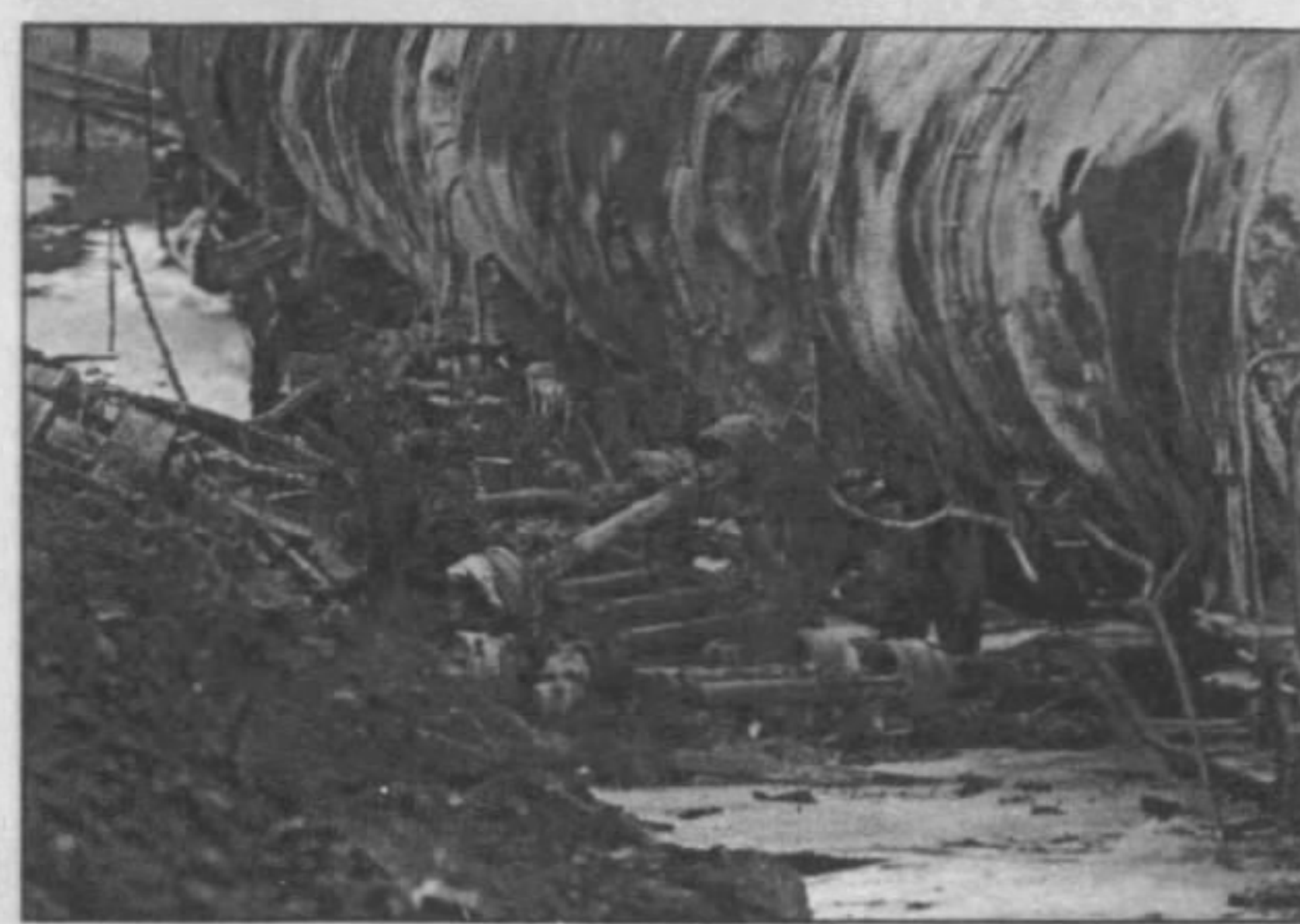
PORTLAND, Ore. — A semitrailer truck hauling fuel crashed on a roadway near a Portland railroad yard on Sunday, sparking a rail-car fire that sent up plumes of black smoke visible for miles.

The truck driver was killed, and authorities continued to investigate the cause of the crash, Portland police said.

It took firefighters several hours to extinguish the blaze, which began shortly before 9 a.m. in an industrial area along U.S. 30. It burned just south of the iconic St. Johns Bridge over the Willamette River.

Nearby businesses were evacuated, the highway was closed and a half-marathon race in the area was canceled as crews responded to the blaze.

Dozens of firefighters



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Little remains of a fuel tanker that crashed into railroad cars in Portland, Ore., Sunday. Smoke was visible for miles.

rushed to the scene from around Portland and nearby Vancouver, Washington.

When truck crashed, the unknown fuel it was carrying leaked underneath railroad tanker cars parked on the tracks, which run parallel to the highway, said Terry Foster, a spokesman for Portland Fire & Rescue.

The fuel ignited, burning eight rail cars, but none of the liquid asphalt they contained leaked out,

Foster said. "The semitruck appeared to have gone off the road and crashed into the parked rail cars," he said.

The affected rail line is owned by Portland & Western Railroad, which operates a number of short-line railways in Oregon.

The BNSF main line, which carries 30 passenger and freight trains a day nearby, was not impacted, BNSF spokesman Gus Melanos said.

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