

# Life-sentenced man free after 16 years

**United Press International**  
BOSTON — George Reissfelder says he just wants to fish and try to forget he spent 16 years of his life in prison and on the run for a murder he says he did not commit.

Reissfelder, 42, always insisted he was a victim of mistaken identity but it took the deathbed confession of his co-defendant and testimony from a former prison chaplain and six law enforcement officers to spring him from a life prison term.

"I'm overjoyed," Reissfelder said Monday after he walked out of Suffolk County Courthouse a free man. "I'm the happiest guy in the world."

He said his only regret was that his parents died before he was exonerated.

Reissfelder was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of a railway express clerk during a \$20,000 holdup at Boston's South Station. He skipped out on a furlough in 1974 and was recaptured

three years later, but never gave up hope he would be released.

"I figured someday this would all come out," said Reissfelder.

He said all he really wanted to do was take a walk alone, have lunch with his family, then fish in New Hampshire for a week before going to work at his in-law's clothing factory in Boston.

"I barely know him, but I'm going to get to know him now," his daughter Maria, 21, said.

Suffolk Superior Court Judge Paul Connolly approved a defense motion to dismiss the conviction against Reissfelder after Assistant Suffolk County District Attorney John Kiernan said it was not feasible to re-try the case 16 years after the holdup.

Witnesses testified Reissfelder took part in the Oct. 14, 1966, robbery along with William "Silky" Sullivan, but his attorneys claimed it was a case of mistaken identity. Both

were found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

The Rev. Edward D. Cowhig, a Roman Catholic priest and former prison chaplain, said Sullivan, while dying of leukemia in 1972, exonerated Reissfelder. He quoted Sullivan as saying, "I'm sorry Reissfelder was convicted of something he was not involved in."

But an embittered Reissfelder apparently refused to talk with Cowhig and the cleric left the prison without conveying the man's deathbed message.

Reissfelder did not pursue appeals for years and did not learn of Sullivan's statement until 1980. His current team of court-appointed attorneys began seeking a new trial last year after obtaining corroborating evidence from the six law officers.

The Boston police detectives and an FBI agent said street informants told them at least two other men — not Reissfelder — were involved in the robbery.

# U.S., German vets visit after 39 years

**United Press International**  
GRETNA, La. — Edward Keeton and six friends munched hotdogs, guzzled beer and laughed about the old days when they tried to kill each other.

Keeton, 60, was hardly one to hold a grudge.

As president of the 36th Infantry Division Association, a unit of U.S. Army World War II veterans, he thought it might be interesting to invite a few guests to the association's annual reunion. The guests had names like Helmit Meitzel, Gerhard Muhm and Heinz Langrock.

"The bad guys," Keeton said. A year of letter-writing through the German Consulate in New Orleans, got Keeton his guests on Sunday. Six veterans of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, the Nazi infantry unit that battled the 36th in Italy, arrived at Keeton's home for a three-day visit before the Houston reunion.

"It's a good opportunity to compare notes," said Keeton. Lounging in the sun at Jackson Barracks in St. Bernard Parish, the six men from West Ger-

many laughed and argued like old college football rivals. Medals were counted, wounds displayed and stories traded in a friendly manner that belied the horrors of war.

"Listening to us, you might think being a soldier was a funny thing," said Herbert Peiler, one of Keeton's guests. "We don't talk about the bad things and the pain. But we remember."

On Sept. 9, 1943, the 36th led the invasion on the Salerno beaches, marking the first landing of American forces in Europe.

"We had never been to combat," Keeton said of his division, which was originally the Texas National Guard. "We were green as grass. And these fellows who were waiting for us were as experienced as hell."

The 36th took the beach after several days of fighting, suffering the third highest Allied casualty rate.

"The Texans were tough," Meitzel said with a nod toward Keeton. "They were able to stand a very bad time after Salerno."

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