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Slayer of Nazi Leader Again Denied New Trial

RICHMOND, Aug. 30 (AP)—The constitutional rights of John Patler were not violated during his trial in 1967 for the murder of American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell, a federal appeals court ruled yesterday.

The Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. denying Patler a new trial.

Patler was convicted of first-degree murder in Rockwell's death Dec. 16, 1967, by an Arlington Circuit Court jury and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Rockwell was shot to death Aug. 25, 1967, as he sat in his car in an Arlington shopping center parking lot. Patler was arrested about a half-hour later about a mile from the scene of the shooting.

Patler claimed in his petition for a writ of habeas corpus that the Arlington police used illegal procedures in obtaining witnesses' identification of him as the man seen near the murder scene.

He also contended that police illegally seized spent bullets and shell casings that matched the gun identified as the murder weapon from a farm belonging to his father-in-law in Highland County.

In addition, Patler claimed that the prosecution's failure to release results of FBI tests of evidence introduced at the trial until late in the proceedings prejudiced his defense.

The appeals court acknowledged that the evidence against Patler was largely circumstantial but noted that the Virginia Supreme Court found it sufficient to uphold Patler's guilty verdict.

An appeal of the conviction was upheld by the State Supreme Court, and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case.