Patler Gets Stay of 20-Year Term in Rockwell Slaying

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JOHN PATLER
. . . a question of bond.

By Hank Burchard
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The Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals yesterday granted John Patler a stay of his 20-year sentence for the murder of American Nazi Party chief George Lincoln Rockwell, but Patler remains in the Arlington County Jail.

Patler, 30, now acting as his own attorney, sought the stay to obtain his release from jail on bond while preparing an appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court, but the Virginia court's order granting the stay passed over the question of bond.

Patler's $40,000 bond was revoked by Arlington Circuit Judge Charles S. Russell on Dec. 4, after he received notice that the Virginia court had affirmed Patler's 1967 conviction of first-degree murder in the sniper slaying.

When Patler asked him yesterday to reinstate the bond, Judge Russell said the matter "is out of my hands." Thomas J. Harrigan, Patler's former attorney and present in the courtroom only as an observer, stepped forward to suggest Patler was eligible for bond.

"My understanding is that he's not," Judge Russell said. "An application for bond must go to a higher court . . . the Supreme Court of Virginia or the U.S. Supreme Court."

While being escorted back to jail after the hearing, the manacled defendant asserted to a reporter that Judge Russell "had no business revoking my bond. . . . I'll probably go to Alexandria (Federal District Court) for a (writ of) habeas corpus."

Dressed in a stylish but rumpled blue suit, Patler, who had steadily professed his innocence, flashed a double "V" sign to a photographer.

In pressing his appeal, Patler has cited what he called "39 substantial errors" in his trial. He also claimed the Virginia Supreme Court's opinion affirming his conviction itself contains several errors of fact in its recitation of the chain of circumstantial evidence upon which Patler was convicted.