

In Memoriam: Edwin Paul Wilson 1928-2012

By Hans Sherrer

Edwin Paul Wilson [died September 10, 2012](#) at the age of 84 in Seattle, Washington. Mr. Wilson's 1983 conviction in Houston for selling explosives to Libya in 1977 without the U.S. government's permission was overturned in 2003, and he was released in 2004 after 22 years of imprisonment.

In 1999 Mr. Wilson filed a motion for a new trial based on new evidence his federal prosecutors knew at the time of his trial he wasn't guilty and they had knowingly introduced false evidence to obtain his conviction. In 2000 *Justice Denied* published the article, [Ex-CIA Agent Framed by the CIA and Federal Prosecutors](#). That article began, "The strange case of former CIA agent Edwin Wilson provides a rare proof of the legal and moral corruption pervasive throughout the U.S. Department of Justice and the shortage of compassion endemic in the federal judiciary."

Mr. Wilson's key new evidence was the CIA's third highest-ranking official provided a false affidavit during his trial at the request of the federal prosecutors. Edwin Wilson worked for the CIA until he left the agency in 1971. The affidavit introduced at trial stated that except for one instance, after Mr. Wilson left the CIA he "was not asked or requested, directly or indirectly, to perform or provide any services, directly or indirectly, for the CIA."

During his trial Mr. Wilson relied on the "CIA Defense" that after he left the agency he had an ongoing working relationship with the CIA, and that at the behest of the CIA his international companies did business deals the U.S. government thought were in the national interest but which it didn't want to be directly involved with. The affidavit by the CIA's Executive Director undermined Mr. Wilson's defense, and the jury relied



Edwin Wilson during Seattle Post-Intelligencer interview in October 2006 (Scott Eklund - Seattle Post-Intelligencer)



Edwin Paul Wilson circa 2010 (Wilson family photo)

on it to convict him. While imprisoned Mr. Wilson used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain documents proving the affidavit was false and his prosecutors concealed that information from his lawyers, the jurors, and the trial and appellate judges. U.S. District Court Judge Lynn Hughes appointed Mr. Wilson a lawyer after he received a letter from him detailing the new evidence he discovered. That lawyer, David Adler, discovered additional evidence, and the motion for a new trial he filed in 1999 identified at least 17 federal officials who concealed their knowledge of the affidavit's falseness, including three U.S. Dept. of Justice lawyers who later became federal judges. Contrary to the affidavit, between 1971 and 1978 Wilson and the CIA worked so closely together that [there were at least](#) 80 official contacts between them.

On October 27, 2003 U.S. District Court Judge Lynn Hughes' ruled in [United States vs. Edwin Paul Wilson](#), "Because the government knowingly used false evidence against him and suppressed favorable evidence, his conviction will be vacated." Judge Hughes didn't mince words in a 24-page ruling that outlined the government's failure to turn over the exculpatory documentation proving Mr. Wilson had a continuing business relationship with the CIA: "It alone lied. It alone possessed — and withheld — the information that documented the falsehoods. The government alone insisted on the affidavit rather than production of the underlying records. It alone had the underlying documents." Judge Hughes also recognized the deliberateness of the decision by federal prosecutors to use the false affidavit: "The government discussed among dozens of its officials and lawyers whether to correct the testimony. No correction was made — not after trial, not before sentencing, not on appeal, and not in this review." Judge Hughes also made the astute observation, "The truth comes hard to the government."

After Mr. Wilson's conviction was overturned *Justice Denied* published the lengthy article, [Federal Judge Tosses Conviction of Ex-CIA Agent Framed by the CIA and Federal Prosecutors](#).

Mr. Wilson was released on September 14, 2004 after 22 years of imprisonment. He



Edwin Wilson with boxes of case documents during Seattle Post-Intelligencer interview in October 2006 (Scott Eklund - Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

was 76 years old. He moved to Edmonds, Washington which is north of Seattle, and lived with his brother Bob. Mr. Wilson told interviewers he didn't make the sale of explosives to Libya that was the basis of his conviction, and that it was as much a fabrication of his prosecutors as their claim he hadn't covertly worked with the CIA after he left the agency.

During an interview with the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in 2006 [Mr. Wilson said](#), "I can't think of one thing I did that I have any guilt about. I didn't hurt anybody. I didn't get anyone killed."

Mr. Wilson filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against seven of his prosecutors and a former executive director of the CIA. On March 29, 2007 his lawsuit was dismissed on the basis all eight defendants were immune from civil liability for what they had done to Mr. Wilson.

In 2010 Mr. Wilson contacted me and asked if I would meet with him. We met at what he said was one of his favorite restaurants in Edmonds. During our extended conversation he explained he wanted me to work with him in writing his autobiography because he thought the articles I had written for *Justice Denied* were the most accurate and honest articles about his case that had appeared in print. He talked about how he became involved with the CIA and how his job evolved into working with international businesses that were fronts for CIA operatives.¹ After he left the CIA he continued working overseas by setting up his own companies that conducted business in the Middle East and Africa. Mr. Wilson covertly acted on behalf of the U.S. government when it didn't want to directly deal with those countries. He said that his international business allowed him to cultivate and maintain contacts with key people who provided him with valuable information that he passed on to the CIA. He puzzled about his

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prosecution because before he was indicted he provided the CIA with credible information he had learned about an international plot to assassinate President Ronald Reagan.

After several more conversations I told Mr. Wilson I wouldn't be able to work with him on his book project because of the extensive amount of time it would involve. However, I encouraged him to find a writer who had the time necessary to put his amazing story on paper. Mr. Wilson's life while in the CIA and after he left was as action packed with plots and subplots as any Hollywood movie, and I told him I thought his story would make even an even better movie than it would a book.

Mr. Wilson and I had several contacts after that and he kept encouraging me to work with him on his book because he wasn't having success in finding a writer. One of the problems was his wealth of tens of millions had been confiscated by the U.S. government after his convictions. He was living in the basement of his brother's house and getting by on his meager Social Security benefits, so a writer had work on the expectation a book or movie deal would materialize at some point after work was begun on the book.

Mr. Wilson was 82 when I met him and he was a gracious and vibrant man still burning with intensity. He expressed concern he was



Edwin Wilson leaving federal courthouse during his 1983 trial (AP)

running out of time to have his book written because of heart problems. He was correct in being concerned because he died on September 10, 2012 as a result of complications from heart valve replacement surgery. He was buried at the Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent, Washington.

Edwin Wilson was born in Nampa, Idaho on May 3, 1928 and he graduated from the University of Portland in 1953 with a bachelors degree in Psychology. He served in the U.S. Marines from 1953 to 1956. He began working with the CIA when he was a marine in Korea in 1955, and after leaving the service in 1956 he worked for the CIA until 1971.

In the 14 years since *Justice Denied* was founded in 1998 I've encountered a number of interesting people, and Edwin Wilson is near the top of that list. He was 6'-4" and his presence and passion made him seem larger than life.

[Click here to read Justice Denied's 2000 article, *Ex-CIA Agent Framed by the CIA and Federal Prosecutors*.](#)

[Click here to read Justice Denied's 2004 article, *Federal Judge Tosses Conviction of*](#)

[Ex-CIA Agent Framed by the CIA and Federal Prosecutors](#).

Judge Hughes' October 27, 2003 ruling in *United States vs. Edwin Paul Wilson*, can be read [by clicking here](#).

[Click here to read](#) Edwin Paul Wilson's obituary by the Columbia Funeral Home in Seattle, Washington.

Endnotes:

1 The CIA's *modus operandi* is to operate front companies as a cover for its agents overseas. For example, Valerie Plame's cover as a businesswoman was blown when she was outed as an international CIA operative in response to her husband Joseph C. Wilson's Op-Ed published in *The New York Times* on July 6, 2003, "What I Didn't Find in Africa." That article exposed there was no evidence Niger had sold nuclear materials to Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

Sources:

[Ex-CIA Agent Framed by the CIA and Federal Prosecutors](#), By Hans Sherrer, *Justice Denied*, Issue 13, September 2000

[Federal Judge Tosses Conviction of Ex-CIA Agent Framed by the CIA and Federal Prosecutors](#), By Hans Sherrer, *Justice Denied*, Issue 24, June 2004

[Former CIA spy branded a traitor wants to clear his name](#), *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 22, 2006

[Edwin Paul Wilson](#) (May 3, 1928 - September 10, 2012), Obituaries, Columbia Funeral Home

[Edwin P. Wilson](#), *The Economist*, September 29, 2012

[United States vs. Edwin Paul Wilson](#), Crim. Case H-82-139 (USDC SDTX), Opinion of Conviction, October 27, 2003



Christopher Burrowes Awarded \$15,000 Compensation For 3 Years Wrongful Imprisonment

Christopher Burrowes has been awarded \$15,000 in compensation by the State of Wisconsin for his three years of wrongful imprisonment for sexual assault.

Burrowes was 21 when arrested in 2006 for sexually assaulting 12-year-old Denise Beck. He was acquainted with her because she visited the basketball courts where he played that were near her home. She told police she had sex with Burrowes at his Milwaukee home. Burrowes denied the accusation and refused a plea deal. Although there was no physical, forensic or eyewitness evidence supporting the girl's testimony, a jury convicted Burrowes on February 7, 2007 of first-degree sexual assault of a child. He was sentenced to three years in



Christopher Burrowes after his conviction was overturned on December 16, 2009. (WISN-TV, Milwaukee, WI)

prison and lifetime registration as a sex offender.

Shortly after Burrowes was released in late 2009 Ms. Beck, who was then 16, told police while being interviewed about another matter that she falsely accused Burrowes of having sex with her to hide that she was having sex with an uncle that she was in love with. When her mother became suspicious she was sexually active, the girl blamed Burrowes to protect her uncle.

The Milwaukee County DA reopened Burrowes case. After an investigation determined the girl's recantation was credible the DA filed a Motion to Vacate Conviction and Dismiss Charges. On December 16, 2009 Burrowes conviction was vacated. The judge also ordered that Burrowes name

be removed from Wisconsin's Sex Offender Registry.

At the time of Burrowes' release a spokesperson for the DA's Office said it was being considered whether to charge Ms. Beck with perjury, but charges against her were not filed.

Burrowes filed a claim for compensation with Wisconsin's Claims Board for \$15,000. Wisconsin's wrongful conviction compensation statute permits a maximum payment of \$5,000 per year for up to 5 years of imprisonment. So Burrowes claim was for the maximum allowed for his 3 years in custody.

The Milwaukee DA didn't oppose Burrowes claim, and on October 11, 2011 the Claims Board determined there is clear and convincing evidence of Burrowes' innocence and [approved payment of](#) \$15,000 to him.

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