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## Jack Daniel McCullough, Man Charged In 1957 Murder Of Child, Returning To Illinois

[GENE JOHNSON](#) 07/20/11 05:43 PM ET Associated Press <sup>AP</sup>

SEATTLE — A former police officer accused in the 1957 slaying of an Illinois girl agreed Wednesday to return to that state to face a murder charge.

Jack Daniel McCullough, 71, waived his right to fight extradition in a brief hearing Wednesday in King County Superior Court in Seattle. Dan Donohoe, a spokesman for the county prosecutor's office, said he would be transported to DeKalb County, Ill., within 30 days.

"The sooner he gets to Illinois and gets his trial, the sooner he can come home," McCullough's stepdaughter, Janey O'Connor, said after the hearing. "He's been saying all along he wants to go to Illinois and prove he's innocent."

McCullough was arrested early this month at the Seattle retirement home where he was living and working as a night watchman after investigators said newly uncovered evidence undermined his alibi in the disappearance of 7-year-old Maria Ridulph.

McCullough, then known as John Tessier, lived near the girl in Sycamore, 50 miles west of Chicago, and matched the description of the suspect given immediately after the disappearance by Ridulph's then-8-year-old friend, Cathy Sigman, who last saw her on Dec. 3, 1957, at about 6 p.m. Sigman said she left Maria with a young man and ran home to get some mittens; when she returned 15 minutes later, the two were gone.

Thousands of people joined in the search for the missing girl, and fearful parents kept their children locked indoors. The case ultimately caught the eye of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who requested daily updates.

Maria's remains were found the following April, about 120 miles away.

In a jailhouse interview with The Associated Press on July 7, McCullough said he didn't kill the girl and maintained the same alibi he gave when first questioned by investigators when he was 18: that he could not have committed the murder because he had traveled to Chicago that day for military medical exams before enlisting in the Air Force.

He insisted his military personnel records at a National Archives repository in St. Louis would help exonerate him, but an archivist confirmed to the AP that McCullough's file was destroyed in a fire there in 1973.

Police haven't revealed why they took another look at Ridulph's case.

McCullough said he, himself, called the FBI in roughly 2008 to report that a dream prompted his recollection of another boy who lived in the neighborhood and fit the suspect's description.

Investigators started talking to McCullough's relatives and other witnesses. According to a probable cause statement filed in the case, when they spoke with his high school sweetheart last year, she pulled out a decades-old framed photo of them and found his train ticket for Chicago that day — unused.

Detectives wrote that when McCullough was questioned in 1957, he claimed he had traveled to Chicago by train.

Sigman picked McCullough's photo out of a montage detectives showed her last September, the police statement said. She said she wasn't asked to identify McCullough as the suspect immediately after the slaying.

McCullough told the AP he doesn't know how his high school sweetheart wound up with the ticket, but it was unused because his stepfather gave him a ride to Chicago for the exams, and afterward someone he met there gave him a ride to Rockford. From Rockford, a drive of more than 40 miles from Sycamore, he called home to ask his stepfather to come pick him up, he said.

Investigators say they've confirmed a collect call was made from Rockford to McCullough's home in Sycamore just before 7 p.m., slightly less than an hour after Ridulph disappeared.

But Rockford is also roughly on the way from Sycamore to where the girl's body was eventually discovered, in far northwestern Illinois. Police have suggested that even if McCullough did go to Chicago that day, he could have been back in time to commit the crime. When he was first questioned, he told investigators that his military exams had ended by noon, the affidavit said.

The police affidavit also alleged that McCullough has a history of molesting girls. One young witness told agents in 1957 that he had sexually abused her on numerous occasions, and in the early 1980s he lost his job with the Milton police department in Washington state after he was accused of sexually abusing a runaway in her early teens. He pleaded guilty in 1983 to unlawfully communicating with a minor.

McCullough declined to discuss the molestation allegations with the AP.

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