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## Breaking News

# Former fugitive 'Charlie Free' to be freed from jail



Jack Hazen, aka Charlie Free, in 1975.

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A former Florida fugitive captured last year after more than 30 years of life on the run under the assumed name "Charles Free" will walk out of Dade Correctional Institution on March 31 after the Florida Parole Commission approved his release, his lawyer announced.

Jack Hazen, aka Charlie Free, slipped away from a prison work program in North Florida in 1976 when he was 29. He was 61 and suffered from multiple sclerosis and a brain tumor when police arrested him in his Las Vegas home in January 2008.

Hazen, a Vietnam War veteran, married and raised a family in Las Vegas under the name Free, which he says he got from a student ID he found shortly after he absconded. His wife and daughters knew nothing of his other life until police knocked at their door. A Florida Department of Corrections cold-case squad tracked him down. Department officials wouldn't say what led them to the Las Vegas home.

According to the police report from the 1975 crime, Hazen robbed a Pompano Beach 7-Eleven clerk at knife point, stealing more than \$100 from the cash register. When police arrested him shortly after the crime, he told the officer: "I did it because I was hungry."

Hazen was sentenced to seven years in prison and completed about 10 months of his sentence before he walked away from a Union County prison carpentry shop.

After his re-arrest in Las Vegas, he was extradited to Florida to serve the remainder of his sentence and additional time due to escape charges.

Hazen's Florida attorney, Don Pumphrey Jr., has been working since then to win Hazen's release.

"Charlie is a good man who is suffering from several medical issues, including Alzheimer's, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and cancer," Pumphrey said in a release. "Charlie made a mistake 33 years ago, but he doesn't deserve to die in prison. I applaud Gov. Crist's office and the Florida Parole Commission for understanding this unique case and for making the right decision."

Pumphrey has arranged for Hazen to have a job and a place to live when he's released.

"It will be several months before the interstate compact paperwork is approved, and Charlie needs a place to live while that is finalized," Pumphrey said. "We are also planning to raise some money to fly Charlie's family from Las Vegas to Florida for a reunion."