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## Weld seeks clemency for convicted killer

**SALVATI**  
Continued from Page B1

by the TV reports on Salvati's case. Instead, he said, he based his article on his "intuitive" look at the case over the past few years, Salvati's conduct in prison, and the limited role of Salvati's involvement in the 1960 gangland murder.

"Certainly, if he was the triggerman, it would have been quite different," Weld said. "That he was not, he was sitting in the back of the car."

Weld said Salvati, who has been in prison since his conviction as an accessory in the slaying of Edward (Teddy) Deegan, has been "a model prisoner" who has consistently completed several furloughs.

"He's been incarcerated for 28 years now," said Weld. "It's not a threat or a risk at all."

Weld, a former US attorney, even went so far as to imply that he disagreed with the decision last year by the Supreme Judicial Court not to grant a new trial to Salvati. But when asked whether he believed Salvati is innocent, Weld sidestepped the question, saying, "It's not for me to opine on that point in the context of the clemency recommendation."

Neither Salvati's wife, Marie, nor his attorney, Victor Gian, could be reached for comment. But a writing Salvati, in a Channel 4 interview with Ron in the Bay State Correctional Center in Norfolk, said, "It's

coming to an end. The governor won't be sorry he signed those papers."

At the time of his murder, Deegan was a small-time hood who had made the mistake of crossing mob boss Joseph (The Admiral) Barbone, a notorious mob boss, man-handled the killing in Chelsea alley on the night of March 12, 1965. But no one was charged in the crime until two years later, when Barbone entered the federal witness protection program. He then told authorities that he and five other men carried out the murder, including Salvati, who Barbone claimed had driven one of the getaway cars.

Largely on the strength of Barbone's testimony, Salvati and the others were sentenced to Deegan's murder in 1968 and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

In 1995, after Ron wrote a spotlight on the case, Salvati and two others executed in the slaying, Doctor J. Linnone and Louis Grison, sought new trials. Salvati claimed that prosecutors suppressed a police report that would prove him innocent, while Linnone and Grison ar-

gued that their convictions stemmed from false testimony by Barbone, who was assigned to testify in San Francisco in 1976.

Suffolk District Attorney Ralph C. Martin III opposed the requests for a new trial, arguing that the attorney for the five was trying to "re-write history."

Then, in June 1996, the Supreme Judicial Court denied new trials for Salvati, Linnone and Grison. "There is nothing else to discuss," Martin said then. "The guilty people are behind bars."

Yesterday, Martin released a statement reiterating his view that "nothing of a constitutional nature was perhaps the wiser course" for Salvati, because the legal grounds for a new trial did not exist.

The attorneys who represented Grison, who has since died in prison, and Linnone could not be reached for comment yesterday. Members of the Deegan family could not be reached.

Weld's specific recommendation yesterday was that Salvati's prison sentence be commuted to a term of 25 years to life, which would result in Salvati being eligible for parole after serving one year in a pre-release center.

## Governor's move is victory for newsmen

**By Don Avon**  
COLUMNIST

Don Ron was literally on the edge of his seat yesterday in the Governor's Council chamber at the State House, intently watching the latest turn in a case on which he has made his professional reputation.

The wall proved solid, however, since the council voted to uphold whether convicted murderer Joseph Salvati's prison sentence should be commuted. But Ron, a reporter for WBZ-TV (Ch. 4), had already intimated a major victory when Gov. William F. Weld declared that Salvati deserved freedom.

Weld did not think that way three years ago. But then, Ron began burrowing into the Joe Salvati story, a saga in which Ron would move beyond the role of reporter to that of central player — naming both praise and criticism along the way.

"Many people questioned my motives. I know there were people who said things behind my back," acknowledged Ron, 41. "But I did my homework on this. I had a number of files through which Joe Salvati had to pass."

Ron aired more than 30 reports on Channel 4 that built a case for Salvati's innocence. He located several witnesses who contradicted the testimony of Joseph (The Admiral) Barbone, who fingered Salvati in the 1960 murder of Teddy Deegan, a small-time hood.

Some critics, including Suffolk District Attorney Ralph C. Martin III, have contended that Ron's reporting was one-sided. "He was an advocate for Salvati while he was supposed to report the story," Martin said the other day in 1994.

Ron does not deny that he came to believe passionately in Salvati's innocence, but insisted that he used only facts to make that case.

"As a lawyer and a reporter, I feel it's my obligation to bring to the attention of the public whatever justice I believe exists," said Ron, who stressed that much credit should also go to Victor Gian, the attorney who pursued Salvati's case on a pro bono basis.

Though Weld did not say yesterday that he agreed with Ron about Salvati's innocence, it is doubtful that the governor would have received a previous decision against commutation without Ron's insistence on air probing.

When Ron went to interview Salvati, possibly in prison, it was "a pretty emotional moment," he said. "There was a real sense of life and death as the Atlantic Ocean" said Ron. "It's a moment every reporter should experience."

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