

# The Last Person to Hang

From the

## Iowa State Penitentiary's Gallows at Fort Madison, Iowa



March 15, 1963

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## Victor Henry Feguer #28105

### **Federal govt.'s last execution was in Iowa in 1963**

FORT MADISON, Iowa (AP) - The next prisoner scheduled for execution by the federal government is getting far more attention than the last one - a convicted murderer who was quietly hanged 38 years ago in a state prison workshop. Timothy McVeigh, scheduled to die by injection on May 16 for bombing the federal building at Oklahoma City, will be the first federal prisoner executed since Victor Feguer went to the gallows in 1963 at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Fort Madison.

Feguer killed a doctor that he kidnapped in Dubuque and took across the state line into Illinois. He never admitted killing Dr. Edward Bartels.

Feguer's last meal was an olive. He hoped the pit of the olive would grow into an olive tree as an expression of peace.

"I sure hope I'm the last one to go," Feguer told the Rev. Bernard Brugman, the prison chaplain. He died - March 15, 1963 and has been the last person to hang from the Iowa State Penitentiary gallows at Fort Madison. The death penalty was abolished in Iowa in 1965. Iowa executed 32 people since the prison was opened in 1839.



Rev. Bernard Brugman

Rev. Bernard Brugman

stayed with Feguer on his last day.

Feguer was allowed to chew gum as he stood on the gallows. A noose was placed around his neck and a black silk hood was pulled over his face. He stood quietly as the trap door in the wooden gallows was pulled at 5:30 a.m. A doctor checked Feguer's body for a heartbeat. He was pronounced dead at 5:40 a.m.

Feguer suffered from a character disorder with psychotic episodes. Doctors said he was a sociopath with schizophrenic tendencies. His attorney described him as "weird."

On July 11, 1960, Feguer opened the phone directory and found Dr. Bartels' name listed first. He asked the doctor to help his ailing wife. The doctor went to the location that Feguer gave him directions. He kidnapped Bartels, shot him in the head and left his body in a field near Menominee, Illinois.

Feguer was arrested in Birmingham, Alabama nine days later. He was driving Bartels' car.

His conviction was appealed on the grounds he was not mentally fit for trial. [Click here to see copies of the appeal for clemency, President Kennedy's denial of clemency and Warden Bennett's telegraph announcing Feguer's death.](#)

The Gallows was built in the prison auto mechanics shop. The noose cost the federal government \$28.75.

Feguer was buried in a public cemetery in Fort Madison, Iowa. No one has reported an olive tree growing anywhere around his grave.



**Charles E. Wilkens, Supervisor of Inmate Records, heads staff of six in maintaining up-to-date files on each prisoner.**

Charles E. Wilkens, seen here in a 1965 photo.

**Charles checked Victor Feguer into ISP.**

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