

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"Did you know that I measured the separation of the uprights on our goalposts and found that they were 2.75 inches too close together, and therefore that fieldgoal attempt is being... just kidding!"

Murderers await stay of execution

United Press International

STARKE, Fla. — Two murderers waited a few paces from Florida's electric chair Wednesday to learn whether federal judges in Miami and Atlanta would block their executions this week.

The case of Ernest John Dobbert Jr., convicted of killing two of his own children, was before the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. The appeals court Tuesday granted him a stay that ends two hours before his death warrant expires at noon Friday, or sooner upon "further notice of this court."

U.S. District Judge James King in Miami was expected to rule Wednesday on an appeal by Nollie Lee Martin, who was condemned to die Thursday morning for the 1977 sexual assault and murder of a Delray Beach convenience store clerk.

Dobbert, 46, and Martin, 35, were scheduled to die at 7 a.m. Thursday in what would have been the nation's first double execution in 19 years. Both were in special holding cells in Florida State Prison's Q-wing, about 30 feet from the death chamber that holds Florida's three-legged, oaken electric chair.

Dobbert's attorneys argued damaging testimony given by the man's battered son, Ernest John Dobbert III, was the product of mind-altering drugs and hypnosis sessions given the boy after he ran away from home, scarred and nearly blinded by beatings.

On his namesake's testimony, Dobbert was convicted of strangling his frail, 9-year-old daughter, Kelly Ann, in 1971 and causing the death of 7-year-old Ryder Dobbert in 1972. Ernest Dobbert III recanted in 1981 when he learned his father was under one of two previous death warrants.

Dobbert claims that he was trying to save the girl when she suffocated and Ryder simply dropped dead two months later. He admitted secretly burying the bodies, which never were found.

Martin confessed his killing, but public defender Richard Burr said Martin was in an alcohol-induced fog at the time and, "I think the police gave to him the version of what happened and he gave it back."

Martin's appeal for a stay also contends he has suffered from brain damage since childhood and he is unable to tell right from wrong. The condemned killer Wednesday declined to hold the news conference that is a traditional pre-execution privilege of Death Row inmates.

Bite marks found on back, thigh of dead six-month-old

United Press International

EL PASO — A six-month-old baby had at least 30 bite marks on her body at the time of her death, a county medical examiner testified Wednesday in the murder trial of the baby's father.

Dr. Juan Contin testified during the first day in the trial of Armando Renteria, 23, charged with killing his daughter, Jessica.

Renteria was arrested Feb. 10, 1983, the same day he and his wife Maria brought the dead child to R.

E. Thomason General Hospital.

Mrs. Renteria was arrested along with her husband but was not charged.

Contin testified the baby girl died from peritonitis, which was caused by spillage of body waste through a cut in her small intestine.

The cut could have been caused by a blow to the stomach, he said.

Contin said the pattern of bruises on the child's body was "a classic example of child abuse. The bruises were consistent with marks made by

knuckles."

The baby had human bite marks on her left leg, he said, adding, "the baby's back was covered totally with overlapping human bite marks."

Renteria pleaded not guilty and waived a jury trial. The case is being heard by 168th District Court Judge Ward Koehler, who will decide whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. Koehler also will pass sentence on Renteria, if found guilty.

Renteria is being represented by Attorney Louis Islas.

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