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# Convicted killer seeks Ag appeal for family's sake

HUNTSVILLE (AP) — Convicted killer Robert Streetman, whose execution this week was halted by a federal appeals court, said Wednesday he would prefer to die but is pursuing appeals because of his family's wishes.

"Why stay here 10 years and still have the same thing happen in the end?" he said. "It's going to happen anyway."

Streetman, convicted of shooting to death a Kountze woman during a burglary of her home in 1982, won a stay from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals late Tuesday, about 30 hours before he was scheduled for lethal injection.

"My family wanted this chance," he said in an interview. "That's why I'm doing it now. I'm not disappointed but I'm not happy either."

Streetman, 25, of Silsbee, had indicated earlier he wanted no appeals made to save his life.

"It's just another thing," he said of Tuesday's legal victory. "I was ready for it. I know I'll be here for another 30 days."

Streetman, who has been on death row since August 1983, said he has been ready to die "since the day I got here."

"I've been here a short time," he said. "I could stay here or go quick. Most people spend 10 years here and don't even know where their case is."

Streetman was convicted of killing Christine Baker, 44.

Trial testimony indicated the woman was watching television and knitting in her rural home when she was shot once in the head with a .22-caliber rifle from outside the house. One dollar was taken in the burglary.

Nyle Henry Baker, the slain woman's husband, said, "I think one day I'd like to do him (Streetman) meanness. I say that, but I don't think I would. I don't think it would help her (his wife) no matter what happens."

Ironically, Baker, 56, is beginning concurrent five-year terms in the Texas Department of Corrections for manufacture and possession of controlled substances. He was being transferred to the Walls Unit on Wednesday, the same day Streetman

was to have been taken to the same unit for execution.

A second death row inmate scheduled for execution this week, Johnny Penry, also received a stay from the state Court of Criminal Appeals.

Penry, convicted of the rape-slay-

ing of a Livingston woman, have received lethal injection Wednesday.

Penry told fellow inmates upset that he was unable to eat a meal he requested — burger.

# Death row inmates angry about U.S. high court ruling

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (AP) — Texas death row inmates reacted angrily Wednesday to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that upheld laws excluding people who oppose the death penalty from serving on capital murder juries.

Convicted killer Billy Hughes, who has a May 29 execution date, said, "I hate the Supreme Court. I have no faith in the Supreme Court. They follow the political polls."

"I just wonder why (Justice William) Rehnquist doesn't come down and carry out the executions himself if he loves them so much."

Rehnquist wrote the high court opinion released Monday.

In the 6-3 decision in an Arkansas case, the court said the Constitution does not prevent exclusion of death-penalty opponents from juries even if the result may be a jury more inclined to convict a defendant.

The issue has been a factor in nearly every capital punishment case in Texas since last fall, when the Supreme Court agreed to consider the matter.

Death row inmate Lester Bowen said, "I thought it would have been a closer vote."

Bowen and other inmates said two recent decisions from the high court tended to favor inmate causes, leading them to believe the court would have thrown out the jury exclusions.

"The Supreme Court tends to ebb and flow," he said. "When

they get a trend, you ride the wave. But this wasn't even close," Jim Vanderbilt, another condemned inmate, added. "It was so sad that it was a generic issue and one that applied to great numbers of people. I was depressed for a few hours. It was a shock to me. They gave indications to us. They had stays before on this on the arguments."

Some inmates said the decision this week has been a major cause of conversation on the death row, which houses 230 inmates. Others said the subject dropped after five minutes.

Raymond Kinnamon, a convicted killer said, "It's a sad thing."


"It does leave you discouraged. The only thing I could figure out is they're going by public opinion."

"I don't see how in the world they ruled against us. You don't get up with a death-prone jury."

Reaction, however, was mixed among inmates on whether they believed the decision would open the floodgates to executions.

Rudy Hernandez, 36, of Antonio said, "A lot were waiting on that deal. Most of them were expecting it to be thrown out. Now all their hopes are going down the drain. It's the kind of thing that would have been wonderful. But now that we've let you go on to other issues."

"Unless they pass a rule limiting our appeal process, there's not a great number of people in jeopardy."



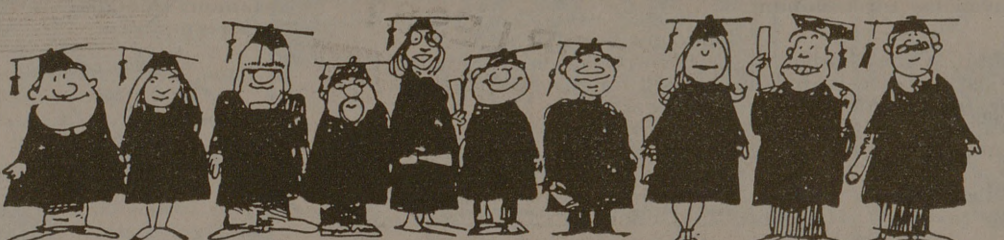
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# Mattox: Cases wrongly closed due to Lucas' false confessions

AUSTIN (AP) — Because law officers accepted dozens of bogus confessions from convicted killer Henry Lee Lucas, cases wrongly have been closed and murderers remain free, Attorney General Jim Mattox said Wednesday.

"There are murderers walking the streets today where evidence is getting much colder as a result of the unprofessional handling of the Lucas matter," he said.

Releasing the report of a year-long investigation by his office, Mattox said that except for three cases, "there is a notable lack of physical evidence" to back up Lucas' confessions.

However, he said, "We have found no evidence to prove that any members of law enforcement in Texas deliberately tried to bring about this scheme of deception."

Responding, the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety and the prosecutor who sent Lucas to death row said the report contained little new information about the one-eyed drifter who once confessed to more than 360 killings nationwide.

DPS Col. Jim Adams said authorities were aware that Lucas lied when making some confessions and said proper precautions were taken. He noted that Lucas has been convicted in several cases and said Lucas remains a legitimate prime suspect in more than two dozen killings.

Ed Walsh, who is seeking the Republican nomination to run against Mattox, challenged the Democratic attorney general's assessment.

As Williamson County district attorney, Walsh obtained a death sentence for Lucas in the 1979 slaying of

an unidentified female hitchhiker near Georgetown.

Calling Mattox's news conference "a circus," Mattox said that if Mattox truly was concerned about the cases, he should have dealt with prosecutors and officers, not summoned the news media.

Late in 1984, Lucas recanted all but three of the confessions. He now says he confessed repeatedly to the law enforcement system is inept.

Mattox said it is impossible to know how many murders Lucas committed. But he said his report shows many cases should be reopened.

Except for the killings of his mother in March 1961 and of Freida Powell and Kate Rich in Texas 1982, Mattox said, "There is a notable lack of physical evidence linking Lucas to the crimes to which he confessed. Lucas did not lead authorities to any other victims."

Lucas initially confessed to 77 homicides. While in custody in Williamson County, the tally began to crease.

"Unfortunately, when Lucas was confessing to dozens of murders, those with custody of Lucas had nothing to bring an end to this hoax," Mattox said.

"The sheer number of the confessions raises questions about whether it was physically possible for him to have been at the place and time of each murder report added."

Law enforcement officers say they believed Lucas' confessions because he knew details about crimes that only the killer would know.

But the report said Lucas sometimes used information supplied by police officers to provide such details.

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