

Grief-stricken father confronts daughter's rapist, murderer after teen sentenced to die

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — In an unusual move, a judge allowed a grief-stricken father to confront a gang member sentenced to die for raping and killing the man's daughter and another teen-ager.

"You're worse than anything I've ever seen in my life," Randy Ertman shouted to convicted killer Peter Cantu in court Wednesday. "And I hope to God, and this is wrong too, that you rot in hell."

Cantu, 19, was sentenced to die for his role in the rape and strangulation of Jennifer Ertman, 14, and Elizabeth Pena, 16.

The girls, taking a short cut home last June 24 by walking through a field and wooded area, stumbled on a group of gang members

celebrating the initiation of a new member, police said.

Both girls were raped for an hour before being strangled with shoelaces and a belt.

Cantu briefly closed his eyes when the jury's verdict was read Wednesday, and then answered "nah" when the judge asked if there was any reason he should not assess the punishment.

State District Judge William Harmon then allowed Ertman's request to speak to Cantu. Ertman and Cantu stood about 15 feet apart in the courtroom, and cameras were allowed to tape the incident.

"You're not even an animal! You're worse than that! ..." Ertman shouted. "You destroyed my life! You destroyed my wife's life! You destroyed the Penas' life!

"I haven't seen any remorse from you," he said.

Cantu showed little emotion during the trial and he even smirked at times during the proceedings.

Prosecutor Don Smyth said he has never known a Harris County judge to allow a victim's relative to address a defendant in court before. Smyth said he thought it would have been more appropriate for the meeting to take place in private.

Four other young men, all 19, are charged with capital murder in the slayings.

Defense lawyer Donald Davis, who sought a life sentence, asked jurors to consider Cantu's troubled background of emotional problems and a learning disorder that caused him to repeat three grades in school.

Slip 'n slide



Northside residents enjoy the effects of the below freezing weather as they slide down the ramp of the fifth floor of the north gate

parking garage. The alleged sliders refused to submit their names for fear of repercussions from garage management.

Blake Griggs/The Battalion

Senate

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former which is pretty much guaranteed to make money," Hartman said. "We don't care about making money, we just want to break even. However, we need to be able to cover potential losses and without that money, we won't be able to do it."

Hartman said implementing a volunteer-type program to substitute for student workers wouldn't be feasible due to the magnitude of responsibility the jobs require.

"I'm not sure a Fish Aide would have the responsibility to monitor a 29 million dollar art collection," she said. "Or be able to man a Ticketron outlet."

However Hartman said the MSC might consider implementing a volunteer-type program at the entrances of the Student Program Office.

"That's something we're looking into," she said. "We might consider asking the A.L.O.T. program of Council assistants if they might be interested in doing it, but that would be up to the chairs of the program."

Under the Senate Finance Com-

mittee's current budget review process, representatives are assigned a department to review.

Sanchez said the representatives receive the department's budget request in October and then will tour the facility, and interview the department head, as well as many students and staff involved in the department.

"That's what's been so discouraging about this all, because our recommendation is based on student opinion," she said. "It's what they want."

However Cowan said he doubted the efficiency of the process.

"It took me two years to fully

comprehend the MSC's budget," Cowan said. "We gave them a thick packet detailing the budget. You can't tell me they could understand the ideosyncrosies of a \$5 million budget in three hours or so."

Hartman said the review process should be evaluated, but the MSC will continue despite the cuts.

"The MSC will continue to exist despite all of this," she said. "But it's the students who will suffer. They will lose their jobs, they will pay more for programs and be offered a smaller number of programs to choose from."



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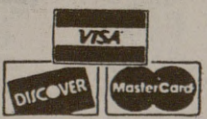
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