

"Get your ice cold Coke"



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Jubi Nair, a freshman general studies major, grabs a free Coke from Rich Penner by Fish Pond Wednesday. The free Cokes were given out to students in order to promote Coca-Cola for the upcoming spring break holiday.

Hall's fate in hand of jury

FORT WORTH (AP) — The same jury that took just 20 minutes to convict a former grocery store worker in the torture and slaying of a developmentally impaired woman now will determine if he should spend the rest of his life in prison or receive a death sentence.

Testimony in the sentencing phase for Michael Wayne Hall's capital murder trial ended this morning with defense lawyers trying to convince the jury Hall is mentally retarded and should be spared the death penalty.

Defense attorneys during three days of presentations have portrayed Hall, 20, as near mental retardation and not deserving to die. They say mental deficiencies led to Hall being susceptible to influence by people like his codefendant.

That characterization, however, contradicts Hall's taped confession after he and Robert Neville Jr. were arrested in March 1998 for the slaying of a woman with whom both had worked at an Arlington grocery store.

In separate television interviews, Hall and Neville admitted to torturing and killing Amy Robinson of Arlington. The men described using the girl as "target practice," shooting her with arrows, a pellet gun and a gun.

Hall seemed articulate and clear-headed as he described how he and Neville, now 25, lured Robinson into their car and took her to a remote field north of Arlington.

The prosecution, however, argued Hall knew when he was doing and understood the consequences of his actions when he and codefendant Robert Neville Jr. killed Amy Robinson, 19.

Robinson was shot several times with a pellet gun and a crossbow, but the injuries that killed her on Feb. 15, 1998, came from a .22-caliber rifle, authorities say.

Neville was convicted in 1998 and has been sentenced to die. Neville's execution had been scheduled for April 27. But last week he received a stay of execution to pursue an appeal that would take at least two years.

Family pleas for life

62-year-old woman to die by injection

HUNTSVILLE, (AP) — The fate of a 62-year-old woman on death row now rests with Gov. George W. Bush, a death penalty supporter who has permitted 119 executions since taking office five years ago.

The state parole board Tuesday refused to halt the planned execution of Betty Lou Beets for the shooting death of her husband, a Dallas fire captain.

Since the parole board did not recommend that Beets' sentence be commuted, Bush's only option under Texas law is to grant a one-time, 30-day stay of execution. Beets is to die by injection Thursday.

She would be only the second woman executed in Texas since the Civil War and the fourth in the nation since the Supreme Court allowed capital punishment to resume in 1976.

Death penalty opponents have said cases like Beets' are a test of Bush's "compassionate conservatism." Since Bush took office in 1995, he has spared only one prisoner, citing flimsy evidence.

Bush, who is seeking the Republican presidential nomination, was campaigning in Michigan on Tuesday. A spokeswoman has said he would not make a decision in the Beets case until all legal action was over.

The fairness of the death penalty has received renewed attention since Gov. George Ryan of Illinois suspended exe-

cutions until the state's death penalty procedures are examined. Thirteen inmates have been released from death row in that state since 1987.

Beets was convicted of murder for the 1983 shooting death of Jimmy Don Beets, her fifth husband, in what prosecutors said was a scheme to collect his life insurance and pension. She also was convicted of shooting and wounding husband

No. 2, and charged — but never tried — in the 1981 shooting death of her fourth husband.

Her lawyer, Joe Margulies, said that while there wasn't evidence of physical abuse by Jimmy Don Beets, there was severe "emotional torment" in their relationship.

"All my momma's life, she's been abused... I've seen it with my own eyes. And I know that if the jury heard the truth about my momma, she only could have done something like this if she'd been very scared or threatened."

— Faye Lane
death row inmate's daughter

she'd been very scared or threatened." The last woman executed in Texas was Karla Faye Tucker in 1998. She was put to death in the same chamber in Huntsville after being convicted of killing two people with a pickax in 1983.

Texas authorities are already preparing to execute Cornelius Goss tonight. He was convicted for the bludgeoning death of 66-year-old Carl Leevy during a house burglary in Dallas almost 13 years ago.

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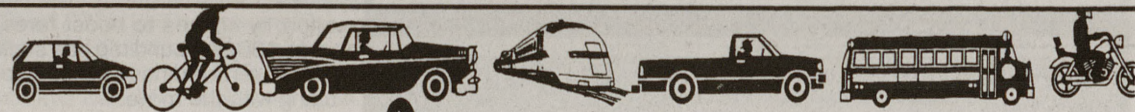
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