

Penalty...

Continued from page 1

Death penalty reserved for certain crimes

Debate continues about whether the death penalty is just punishment for certain crimes. News stories often detail the countdown to executions, condemning capital punishment as being cruel or inhumane. But where are the stories regarding the ripple effects of the heinous crimes for which these murderers are being executed? Who is counting the victims? Why do we hear so much about the killers and so little about the victims and their loved ones who are left behind to pick up the pieces?

Taking the life of another human being is the worst criminal act of all, and if it is premeditated, violent and merciless, the death penalty is not excessive punishment. Assistant State Attorney (4th Judicial Circuit) Bernie de la Rionda says, "When people ask why the death penalty is appropriate, I harken back to the times of the Bible, to the beginning of mankind."

"There always has been good and evil. Part of making sure evil does not prosper is to make sure the person who commits a

heinous, atrocious crime is held fully accountable, and the only way society can express that is by imposing the ultimate penalty, which is death."

De la Rionda, who is responsible for more murderers being on death row than any other prosecutor in the state, explained, "The death penalty is reserved for only certain types of murders. It's not automatic; it's reserved for people who commit egregious murders, usually cold, calculated, premeditated and cruel where the victim suf-

fers, and it also factors in the defendant's prior interaction with the criminal justice system.

"When an individual commits such a violent crime, or a crime involving a felony murder where he is raping somebody, com-

mitting an armed robbery, kidnapping someone or burglarizing a place and then killing a person, there has to be a greater punishment than for the usual murders and that's why the death penalty is appropriate."

Bernie de la Rionda's latest successful murder prosecution was Randall Deviney who was 18 when he slit the throat of a 65-year-old disabled woman and brutally beat her to death in 2008 because she brought up his criminal past. De-lore Futrell had been his baby sitter when he was young. After finding Deviney guilty of first-degree murder in February, the jury voted 10-2 that he receive the death penalty. Judge Mallory Cooper will formally sentence him in April.

Too long on death row

The many years that pass before a death row inmate is executed frustrate everyone - families of victims, taxpayers who fund the million or so dollars required to house them for decades, and legal professionals who must repeatedly reinforce the reason the criminals are there in the first place. De la Rionda says this is to ensure the defendant got a fair trial, that every detail was covered and the defense has had an opportu-

nity to evaluate all the evidence presented by the state.

"The defendant gets an appeal that automatically goes to the Supreme Court (that usually takes about one and a half to two years), and after that, a new defense attorney is appointed to challenge the ruling. This will usually take another two or three years, after which they try to appeal it up to a federal court. But there is no reason why it takes so long for the death

penalty to be imposed."

Laureen Edwards, late wife of Bob Edwards (who coordinates delivery of the *Victims' Advocate* on the Southside), was shot and killed in 1984 when her lingerie store on Beach Blvd. was robbed. Her murderer had just killed his girl friend in Texas and had raped women throughout the country. He pled guilty to first-degree murder and was sentenced to death. Even though

he did not fight to stay alive, he was not executed until 1990.

De la Rionda says, "Opponents of the death penalty argue that it is cruel and unjust punishment, but as I see it - and I'm a firm believer in the death penalty - the bottom line is the person needs to be held accountable. Let's say that we didn't have a death penalty and criminals are sentenced to life in prison, some would argue THAT is

cruel and unfair. So they would never stop.

"If you didn't have the death penalty it would cheapen life. You get people who plead for life because the death penalty is a possibility, so if you didn't have the death penalty, the maximum a person could get would be life. So for many criminals, life imprisonment would work out to be 30 years, 20 years; they wouldn't get as much time as they should."

Religion and the death penalty

University of Texas Professor J. Budziszewski, writing about religion and the death penalty, stated, "The normal reason for upholding capital punishment is reverence for life itself. Indeed, this is the reason why scripture and Christian tradition have upheld it, a fact which suggests that the abolition of the death penalty, not its retention, threatens to cheapen life."

A Clark County (Ind.) prosecuting attorney writes that, "...some defendants have earned the ultimate punishment our society has to offer by committing murder with aggravating circumstances present. I believe life

is sacred. It cheapens the life of an innocent murder victim to say that society has no right to keep the murderer from ever killing again. Society has not only the right, but the duty to act in self defense to protect the innocent."

Arguing against capital punishment, some cite the biblical commandment "Thou shall not kill," but the original Hebrew meaning of the word "kill" is "premeditated murder, to assassinate." God also says, "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." If a murderer chooses, without conscience or regard for the consequence, to brutally take the life of another, he forfeits his right to live.

Fully Stocked Trucks In Your Area Now! State Cert. No. CFC025597

Terry Vereen
PLUMBING INC. Since 1983

RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL

- ◆ Expert Repairs & Repiping
- ◆ Shower Pan & Tile Work
- ◆ Water Heater Service & Installation
- ◆ Under Slab Leaks Repaired - Insurance Claims
- ◆ Sewer & Drain Service
- ◆ Certified Backflow Testing & Sales
- ◆ Complete Bath & Kitchen Remodeling
- ◆ New Construction

Westside/Downtown	Orange Park
384-5661	264-6495
Mandarin	Southside/Arlington
268-0296	724-5205

RADIO DISPATCHED ~ 24 HR. EMERGENCY SERVICE
FINANCING AVAILABLE (W.A.C.)
FREE ESTIMATES
MAIN OFFICE - 2394 POST ST.
www.terryvereenplumbing.com

VISA MasterCard AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER NOVUS

A Taste of Old Florida

Cross Creek
Steakhouse & Ribs

Come in and enjoy a Great Steak,
Tender fall-off-the-bone Ribs,
Or our famous Jumbo Fried Shrimp.



Two locations to serve you in Jacksonville
Lane Ave & I-10 • 904-783-9579
Lem Turner Road & I-295 • 904-765-7420
www.crosscreeksteakhouse.com