

Killer faces death penalty for murders

DEATH, from Page 1

Anderson also rejected claims made by Robinson's attorneys that they did not have enough time to prepare an adequate defense for the case.

With the sentencing bringing an end to his trial in Kansas, Robinson is expected to stand trial for the Missouri deaths later in the spring.

The case began in March 2000, when Trouten's family notified police she was missing after coming to Kansas, purportedly to take a job caring for Robinson's father.

The investigation continued, with officials linking Robinson to the 1985 disappearance of Stasi.

He was arrested in June 2000 on charges of sexual battery. Those charged filed by two women with whom Robinson had engaged in sadomasochistic sex at Kansas City-area hotels.

The charges were amended in subsequent days from sexual battery, following the discovery of the bodies in Linn County and Missouri.

Cost creates a case for death penalty foes

TOPEKA (AP) — The cost of prosecuting — and defending — two high-profile murder cases has given capital punishment opponents another issue to raise as they push for a moratorium on death sentences in Kansas.

Capital punishment foes also are encouraged by former Illinois Gov. George Ryan's decision earlier this month, during the last days of his term, to commute the sentences of all inmates on his state's death row.

In November, Reginald and Jonathan Carr received death sentences in Sedgwick County District Court for slaying five people.

That same month, a jury recommended the death sentence for John E. Robinson Sr., who was convicted in Johnson County of the murders of three women.

Meanwhile, in Douglas County, prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against Damien Lewis, accused of killing a Lawrence couple in their home.

"We're going to be paying for

trial and litigation for years, spending millions of dollars to kill one man," Donna Schneeweis, coordinator for Kansas Death Penalty Abolition, told The Lawrence Journal-World. "Where is the common good here? Are we paying for safety or revenge?"

Like other death penalty opponents, Schneeweis argues the state has a viable alternative to execution — the "Hard 50" sentence of 50 years in prison without parole.

But Sen. Ed Pugh, R-Wamego, vice chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said while capital punishment cases might be expensive, the threat of capital punishment often can persuade a defendant to plead guilty in exchange for a life sentence.

Pugh said he is not a strong supporter of the death penalty but added, "There are some cases so shocking, so horrifying, I think it should be imposed."

Infantry gets big send-off

MANHATTAN (AP) — Some members of the 35th Infantry Division of the Army National Guard knew in late 2000 they would be called up for duty in Bosnia.

The world was a lot different back then, though, before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

Before renewed tensions with Saddam Hussein brought the U.S. to the brink of another war with Iraq.

Before a defiant North Korea dared the U.S. to do something about its renewed nuclear aspirations.

Sunday, more than 2,000 family members and friends showed up at Bramlage Coliseum to send off 1,500 of the 35th Division's troops to the war-torn Balkan nation in a mission dubbed Task Force Eagle.

"I know that, for those deploying, today means a separation from loved ones, missed birthdays, anniversaries, graduations and many other special moments," Gov. Kathleen Sebelius told the crowd. "For weathering those sacrifices and countless more, I personally thank you for answering your country's call."

The task force's scheduled six-month assignment in Bosnia is expected to begin in April or May, said public affairs officer Maj. Jeff Coverdale.

The division will train in Ger-

many, and in the spring will join units from Russia, Turkey, Denmark, Finland, Poland and elsewhere for the mission.

While tensions in Iraq could change the division's job, nothing was said about the Persian Gulf standoff at Sunday's ceremony.

"We need to be prepared for any contingency that the president may

call us up for," Coverdale said. "We realize that we are an infantry unit."

Coverdale said the peacekeeping force, which includes units from Kansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Colorado, Washington and Hawaii, will depart for Germany in stages Wednesday through Sunday.

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Critic watching Westar suit

TOPEKA (AP) — A lawyer who has been critical of Westar Energy Inc. and its former chairman says he and other lawyers are watching a shareholder lawsuit filed against the company.

The suit charges the company and its top executives with knowingly issuing false and misleading statements about the company's finances. It contends hundreds of thousands of people lost money because Westar securities sold at artificially high prices.

The attorney, Dan Lykins, of Topeka, has been a vocal critic of David Wittig, who resigned as Westar chief executive officer in November, following his indict-

ment on federal charges that he and a former Topeka banker hid the true purpose of a \$1.5 million loan to Wittig. The loan was unrelated to Westar business.

Lykins raised Wittig's management of Westar as an issue during his unsuccessful run for the 2nd Congressional District seat last year. Westar is Kansas' largest electric company.

He isn't involved in the lawsuit filed last week. The attorneys who filed it hope it will be declared a

class action, applying to anyone who bought Westar stock between March 30, 2001 and Dec. 26, 2002.

Lykins said he doesn't think the lawsuit, filed last week in U.S. District Court in Topeka, is broad enough. He believes it ought to apply to Westar's management for the past five years.

Lykins said he and other lawyers will watch this suit and hope Westar's papers are made public, making it easier to file even more class-action suits.

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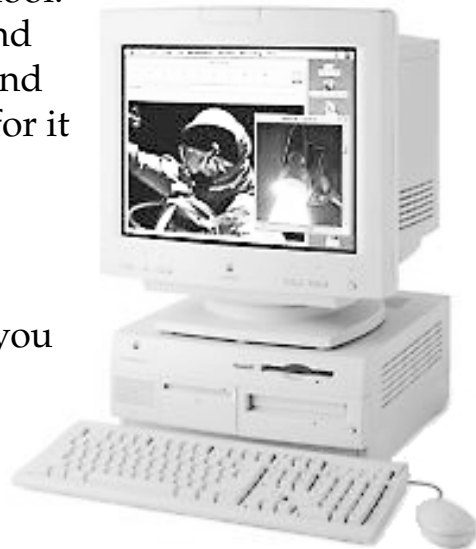
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