

Death penalty not enough

OLATHE (AP)— If she can help it, Carolyn Trouten will not be in Kansas ever again.

On Tuesday, she cried as John E. Robinson Sr. was sentenced to die for murdering her daughter and another woman, then stuffing their bodies into barrels on his rural Kansas property.

"A fair trial would be beating him over the head," she said, in reference to the fatal blow Robinson struck to kill his victims. "This is as fair as it gets. We wish everyday that we could see her."

Robinson, 59, was convicted Oct. 29 for the murders of Suzette Trouten, 27, of Michigan, and Izabela Lewicka, 21, a former Purdue University student. Both women were killed after being lured to Kansas by Robinson to engage in sadomasochistic sex.

Judge John Anderson III accepted a recommendation made by jurors on Nov. 2 that Robinson be executed. He rejected arguments from Robinson's attorneys that their client did not get a fair trial and they were ill-prepared to put on an adequate defense.

During the two-hour sentencing, Robinson sat in silence, calmly listening to the proceedings but appearing indifferent to their content.

It was only when his daughter, Christy Shipps, asked Anderson to spare his life that Robinson wavered. He wiped tears from his eyes when Shipps said Robinson's family, especially his grandchildren,

would suffer if he is executed.

"They, your honor, have done nothing wrong," Shipps said.

Robinson uttered a polite "No, your honor," when asked by Anderson if he wished to speak to the court.

Trouten and Lewicka's bodies were discovered in June 2000 on Robinson's rural property 60 miles south of Kansas City. Two days later, three more bodies were discovered in barrels in a storage locker rented by Robinson in Raymore, Mo.

Dawn Trouten, sister of Suzette, said sentencing Robinson to die meant that he would not be a threat to society.

"If he were given life (in prison) he would have created a whole little world," she said.

Johnson County District Attorney Paul Morrison said Robinson was cavalier in carrying out his crimes. He said the death penalty should be reserved to punish the worst of the worst.

"I do believe that Mr. Robinson is a sexual sadist," Morrison said. "If not John Robinson, judge, who?"

Robinson was also convicted of first-degree murder for the 1985 death of Lisa Stasi, 19. Her body was never found. Anderson sentenced Robinson to life in prison for that murder.

Anderson also sentenced Robinson to five to 20 years in prison for interference with parental custody,

a charge related to the adoption he arranged of Stasi's daughter; to 20 1/2 years for kidnapping Trouten, and seven months for the theft of sex toys.

Defense attorney Patrick Berrigan asked Anderson to emulate Kansas Sen. Edmund Ross' courage in 1868, when he voted against the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, despite public support for the impeachment.

"The death penalty is as arbitrary and capricious as the weather in Kansas City," Berrigan said. "Nothing is going to change that."

Robinson is expected to stand trial for the Missouri deaths as early as spring 2003.

Robinson will be transferred to the Kansas Department of Corrections and taken to Missouri when requested.

Carolyn Trouten said the family would take her daughter's remains and personal belongings back to Michigan, putting the past three years behind them.

"It's a pretty state and everything, but the association is very bad," she said.

Senate asked to repeal libel law

TOPEKA (AP) — A Kansas law allowing prosecutions for libel is the kind of harsh measure for which the United States condemns other nations, supporters of repealing the statute told a Senate committee Tuesday.

The criminal defamation law, under which two Wyandotte County men were convicted last year, makes it illegal to knowingly spread false information about someone.

Conviction can bring a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Only a few states still have criminal defamation laws, and last year's convictions were the first in the nation since 1974.

People who believe they have been libeled typically file civil lawsuits for monetary damages rather than pursue criminal charges.

Sen. Derek Schmidt, testifying for his bill to repeal the law, noted the United States last year urged European nations, including many in the former Soviet Union,

to abolish their criminal defamation laws and leave the matter to civil courts.

"No Kansan should ever be prosecuted by the government for expressing his or her political views, no matter how repugnant, irresponsible or outright false-in-fact those views may be," Schmidt, R-Independence, told the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Countries with poor human rights records such as Panama, China and Zimbabwe have criminal defamation laws, Schdmit said.

"This is not an association Kansas should maintain," Schmidt said.

The committee took no action and was to continue the hearing today.

Edward Seaton, editor-in-chief of The Manhattan Mercury, testified that last year's Wyandotte County prosecutions "brought ridicule to our state."

"It was an international embarrassment and it provides legal jus-

tification to repressive governments that wield their criminal defamation statutes as a means of suppressing dissent and chilling unflattering reporting," said Seaton, past president of the Inter American Press Association.

In the Wyandotte County case, two critics of Mayor Carol Marinovich were charged for incorrectly reporting in their tabloid that Marinovich lived in neighboring Johnson County.

Publisher David Carson and editor Edward H. Powers Jr., whose free publication The New Observer is published occasionally, are appealing their convictions on seven counts of misdemeanor libel.

"A society cannot be free if it criminalizes insulting government officials and institutions," Seaton said.

In other action, advocates of allowing illegal immigrants to obtain Kansas driver's licenses pressed their case with legislators and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

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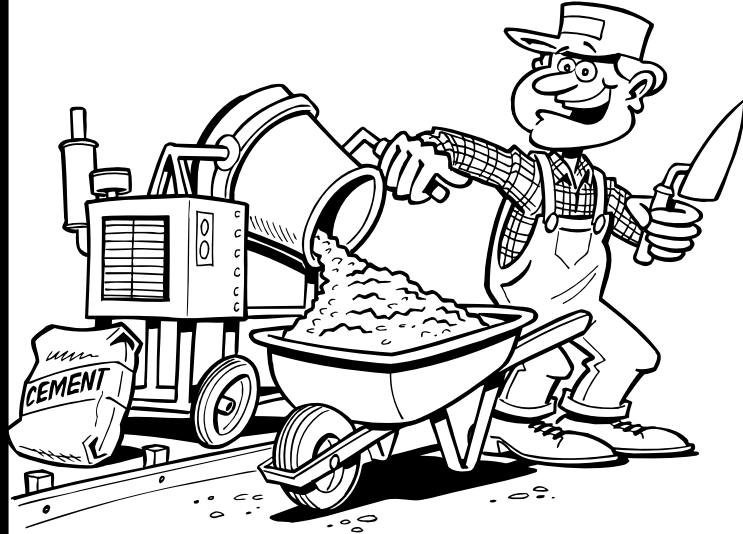
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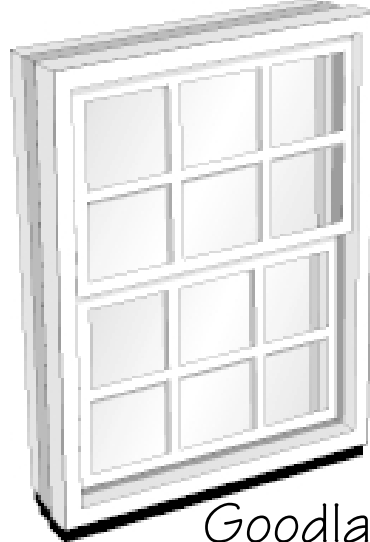
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