

Executions in Oklahoma and Texas

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John Satterwhite, 53, died by lethal injection in Huntsville, Texas at 6:29 p.m. Wednesday. He had been convicted of the 1979 murder of Mary Francis Davis, 54, at a store in San Antonio, Texas.

Satterwhite phoned the Associated Press in the hour before his execution. Expressing remorse for Mary Davis's family, he commented, "There's a possibility I could be the person that did it.... I can't say I did or didn't."

Satterwhite was the twenty-ninth inmate put to death in Texas this year. Texas carried out a double execution on August 9, putting to death Brian Keith Roberson, 36, and Oliver David Cruz, a 33-year-old mentally retarded man. There are seven executions scheduled in Texas before the November 7 presidential election. Texas Governor George W. Bush, the Republican presidential candidate, has presided over 141 executions during his term in office.

On August 10, George Kent Wallace, 59, was executed in Oklahoma for the murders of two teenage boys: William Von Eric Domer, 15, and Mark Anthony McLaughlin, 14, both from Arkansas. His execution was the thirtieth since the state resumed capital punishment in 1990 and the eleventh so far this year. The lethal injection was carried out at a new, earlier hour, 9 p.m. CDT, instead of the midnight hour that had been used since the 1930s, in an effort to impose less strain on the prison staff, according to state officials.

These two executions bring to 60 the number of people put to death nationwide this year, a pace equal to that of 1999, when 98 inmates were executed. Alexander Williams, scheduled to be put to death in Georgia on August 24, was a juvenile at the time of the crime for which he was convicted. The United States is one of only a handful of countries worldwide allowing the execution of juvenile offenders and the mentally ill.

On Tuesday, a new execution date of September 27 was set for Texas death row inmate Ricky Nolen

McGinn, 42. McGinn was granted a stay of execution by Governor Bush on June 1 in order to allow for DNA testing in his case. McGinn had been convicted of the rape and murder of his 12-year-old stepdaughter. Laboratory tests conducted by the FBI and the Texas Department of Public Safety reportedly have determined that McGinn was the source of a semen stain on the victim's shorts and a pubic hair found on the girl's body.

In another case involving DNA testing in Texas, Bush has pardoned Roy Wayne Criner, 35, who has served 10 years of a 99-year sentence for rape. Newly conducted DNA tests in Criner's case show that another person committed the crime.

Criner was charged in the 1986 rape and murder of a 16-year-old girl, but the murder charge was dropped due to lack of evidence. He was convicted of rape in 1990 based to a large degree on conflicting testimony from three witnesses, who claimed Criner discussed picking up a hitchhiker and forcing her to perform oral sex.

Despite DNA tests showing Criner was not the source of semen in the victim, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals upheld his conviction in 1998, voting five to three to keep him in jail. Judge Sharon Keller, writing for the majority, contended that it was possible the girl had engaged in consensual sex with another man and that Criner had subsequently raped her, using a condom. Texas defense lawyers rebuked this ruling as "the unindicted co-ejaculator theory."

Criner's lawyer Michael Charlton denounced the Texas appeals court, saying his long efforts to gain his client's release left him "frustrated, resentful and angry." He recently turned to the 18-member Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles after more recent DNA tests on a cigarette butt found at the crime scene showed that the cigarette had been smoked by the man whose semen was found in the victim, as well as the

girl. The board voted unanimously Monday to recommend a pardon for Criner, which was granted by Bush, finally clearing the way for his release on Wednesday.



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