

METRO & STATE Thursday, August 19, 1999 B9

Man executed for rape-slaying of grandmother

By MICHAEL GRACZYK
Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE — A man who was on parole when he committed murder was executed Wednesday for the rape-slaying of a Tarrant County grandmother during a burglary of her home more than 19 years ago.

Joe Maria Trevino Jr. was pronounced dead at 6:17 p.m., eight minutes after the flow of lethal drugs began.

When a warden asked whether he had a final statement, Trevino said, "No." He took couple of sips and then stopped speaking.

Trevino, 37, had been out of prison four months after serving less than two years of a five-year

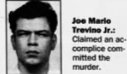
term for burglary and auto theft in Harris County when he was arrested for killing Blanche Miller, 80, at her home in Haltom City near Fort Worth.

"Blanche Miller was our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother," her family said in a statement released after Trevino's death. "She was almost an innocent, and her biggest adventure in a week was probably feeding Bible class. She has been in the cemetery 160 years."

"Her family feels that Trevino's death sentence is justified and past due."

The lethal injection was the fifth this month in Texas and 21st this year.

The execution was scheduled for



Joe Maria Trevino Jr. Gained an accomplice committed the murder.

in a 5-4 vote that returned Robison to death row about four hours before he could have gone to the death house parry.

Trevino's case carried some of the baggage associated with Robison. The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected an appeal and refused to stop the punishment.

There were no questions about Trevino's mental competence, and death penalty opponents mounted no vocal campaign on his behalf.

"He was pulling a double burglary," said Rufus Adcock, the former Tarrant County assistant district attorney who prosecuted Trevino. "He was back on drugs. That morning he had used both cocaine and heroin."

In a recent interview on death

row, Trevino acknowledged the drug use but insisted he was only a lookout and driver for an accomplice who actually killed Miller. The accomplice, he said, later was shot and killed.

"I was totally blitzed," he said. "I didn't rape and kill her. That's the whole thing I don't mind dying for my participating in it, but kill me for what I did, not for what I'm accused of doing. I was just the driver."

Adcock said witnesses and evidence all pointed to Trevino as the lone murderer and dismissed any claim of an accomplice.

"I never heard that before," said the prosecutor, now retired.

Miller, who lived alone, was out-drying clothes the afternoon of

Jan. 17, 1980, before she walked in on Trevino, who was in her house looking for valuables.

According to his confession to police, she already had surrendered jewelry and silverware and he was loading his car with stereo equipment when she grabbed a phone to call for help.

"I took the phone away from her and went crazy," Trevino said in the confession.

The woman's granddaughter found her body later that day and a witness who recognized Trevino and saw him at the house notified police.

At least seven other death row inmates in Texas have execution dates for this year, four of them next month.

Bell to Bell

OPPORTUNITIES

Connally High School Band Boosters — The organization needs donations of goods and services for its spaghetti dinner and silent auction to be held in October, which will finance a trip to Disney World for a band competition. 252-0240.

Public Project — Aug. 31, Central Texas Communities in Schools will hold an orientation for people interested in volunteering, an child abuse prevention education in local schools, as part of the organization's Public Project. 452-1771.

Communities in Schools — 8 a.m. Sept. 6, Central Texas Communities in Schools will have an orientation for people interested in volunteering as tutors, mentors, classroom assistants and literacy education for local schools. Bilingual and male volunteers are particularly needed. 452-1771.

8:30 Tuesday, curtain night for undergown to sixth grade. 454-8286.

Georgetown schools — 6:30-9 p.m. Aug. 26, in a program sponsored by the Georgetown and Georgetown ISD, guest speaker of Cal Fishback will give "The Anger of the Age: Why Kids Can't Act Bad in Adolescence." Georgetown High School Performing Arts Center, 2211 N. Austin Ave. 520-1154.

Del Valle elementary schools — 7 a.m. Aug. 30, Betty Pogman, Hilbert, Smith and Hornby-During elementary students and their parents will have the opportunity to visit their new campuses. 7:45 a.m. Aug. 31, Del Valle ISD elementary schools will begin classes. 389-1279.

Austin police re-opening old murder cases

By BOB BAURA
American-Statesman Staff

A decline in the number of homicides in Austin is giving police a chance to re-open unsolved murder cases — including the yogurt shop slayings of 1991.

At this time last year, Austin had recorded 10 homicides, so far this year, there have been 18, Austin Police Department spokesman Kevin Buchman said Wednesday.

"This decline in killings has given us more time to look at past, unsolved cases."

Buchman said no new developments have occurred in the yogurt shop case of almost eight years ago, when four teen-age girls were found slain at a Northwest Austin shop where two of them worked.

The report also says that one of the cases we will be looking at again," Buchman said.

He said six homicide detectives and one sergeant have been assigned to take a new look at unsolved cases.

Since 1987, there have been more than 100 homicides in the city for which police have not arrested anyone, Buchman said.

He said the 10 homicides in

Austin so far this year are considered solved, in that police have charged or identified suspects.

Homicides have declined in Austin in recent years, according to police. In 1997, there were 90 homicides in the city. Last year, there were 51.

The seven officers detailed to work on the unsolved cases will be available to respond to current homicides if necessary, Buchman said.

The yogurt shop case began shortly before midnight on Dec. 6, 1991, when Austin firefighters responded to a blaze at the I Can't Believe It's Yogurt at 29th W. Anderson Lane. After the fire was extinguished, a search revealed the bodies of Jennifer Harbison, 17, her 15-year-old sister, Sarah, Kiana Thomas, 17, and Amy Ayers, 13.

Two days later, Travis County Medical Examiner Roberto Bayardo said each of the four girls had been shot in the head. Police also said they had evidence that more than one person may have been involved in the slayings.

Other cases that will be re-examined include the Dec. 20, 1991, shooting death of Brenda Lee Anderson, 22, who worked in a lingerie modeling studio in North Austin. Last week, FBI agents arrested several people who, they said were involved in a nationwide prostitution ring. Of

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