

Pit Rally Denounces Execution

Members of The Campaign to End the Death Penalty asked students to sign petitions for Harvey Green.

By JAMILA VERNON
Staff Writer

In a last-ditch effort to save Harvey Lee Green from execution at 2 a.m. Friday, five people rallied in the pit Thursday while two electric chairs sat on display nearby.

Jon Wexler, a member of The Campaign to End the Death Penalty, said the chairs were used because the "starkness of it gets the point across."

It costs more money to keep someone on death row than it does to keep someone in prison for life, Wexler said.

The rally, organized by members of CEDP and People of Faith Against the Death Penalty, consisted of a loud dialogue between the participants, informing students of Green's execution while promoting their stance.

They also invited students to the candlelight vigil that took place Thursday night at Central Prison in Raleigh, where Green was being held.

Along with the electric chairs, there were posters displaying death row statistics and the governor's phone num-



DTH/JEFF POULAND

Dennis Markatos, John Johnson and Jon Wexler (left to right) staged a rally in the Pit on Wednesday against Harvey Lee Green's execution.

ber. Students were encouraged to call Gov. Jim Hunt personally, as well as sign a petition to protest the execution.

"I don't know it'll be a whole lot more effective, (Green) is supposed to die in 14 hours. But I'm definitely going to call and I encourage others to call," said Eboni Staton, a junior African & Afro-American studies major.

The organization had been planning the rally for two weeks, said John Johnson, a member of both CEDP and PFADP. Members expected a turnout of 20 to 25 people but continued the protest despite low turnout.

Some students at the rally were not convinced by the protests. "They need to get their facts straight. North Carolina only uses lethal injection, not the electric chair," said Kimberlee Dilda, a junior

biology major from Charlotte.

Nathan Miller, a freshman political science major from Boone, said, "I think it's bullshit — an eye for an eye. I don't think people should be able to kill people and live out their life in prison."

But some onlookers were in agreement with the protesters. "I don't agree with (the death penalty), especially if the majority of people on it are people of color," Staton said.

The protest went well even though there was not as much media coverage as members would have liked, Wexler said. "These events may not stop the execution, but we've done a good job of raising consciousness."

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GREEN

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DTH: There were two people killed. You only mentioned one?

Green: I don't have no recollection of ever starting beating her. I don't. During the questioning they asked me, "Was she screaming?" I said, "I don't know. She may have been." "Was it getting on your nerves?" I said, "I don't know."

DTH: How did alcohol play into that night?

Green: A guy came over to the house and we started drinking that afternoon. We had wine, got some more and smoked some dope.

I couldn't control that the way I thought. I could control the alcohol. But sometimes you just can't.

After the crime ... I'm trying to figure out in my mind did I really do this?

All I'm seeing is bits and pieces flashing through in my mind. I sat down in the chair, turned on the television, looked at the news, and they said two people got beaten to death in Bethel.

I said to myself right then, that's what I did.

Right then I wanted to go into the room and tell papa about it. But I said

'no.' I wanted to talk to the police about it but I said 'no.' I didn't know what to expect. I was fearful.

That night, I couldn't sleep and I couldn't eat. I went outside and saw a couple of guys drinking wine and liquor. They knew me and gave me a drink, and I tried to down it. But as much as I drank, I couldn't feel nothing. This thing beat me down.

And when I told them what happened, my version of it, a weight seemed like it was just lifted from me. You know I just said, just thank you God. I got locked up that night. I prayed, and I asked the Lord to forgive me and the family to forgive me.

Basically, I condemned myself. I saw when I was in my cell, a gentleman (Wes) brought back there. He was crying, and he talking to me. I see him, and I see him crying but I cannot hear his words. I cannot hear him.

And it didn't dawn on me until we got in court that that was the girl's father. And I know that hurt. To know that I was responsible for his daughter's death and that man's death and really they could have been avoided.

DTH: What went through your mind when you were first sentenced?

Green: To tell you the truth, I was expecting it. My lawyer was expecting it. I was mostly concerned for my family and how they would face it.

That whole night after I got here, I

looked around and said, "They got me on death row. Not in prison, on death row. This is something here I'm going to have to deal with."

That kept leading to the changes in my life. I could have started in here and got over to the negative, the drug scene or played the prison game, as they say. But I knew I had to change, and I knew first off the change had to come from within.

DTH: What are some other experiences on death row?

Green: Most people think that in our situation we're unloving, uncaring, unkind — it's the opposite. Although half of us at times don't get along with the other half we are still a family and try to look out for each other and try to look out for other people.

DTH: What have you done to prepare?

Green: I have a strong mother; my sisters, they pretty strong; my brother, he hanging on in there. Praying, relying on God and left it in God's hands. Asked him to intervene in some form or fashion, and we're also praying for Governor Hunt to be merciful. That's about all I can do.

DTH: How much have you thought about this day?

Green: Oh, about 16 years. Sixteen years of it from day one. You can be sent to death, and once you get here it's always in your face. I've seen about 10

VICTIM

From Page 1

DTH: What exactly do you all think of the death penalty, and whether it's warranted in this particular case?

Bruce: Well, prior to this happening, I believed in the death penalty. I always have. I think it goes back to an eye for an eye, and a life for a life. This hasn't changed that by any means. ... He did this on his own, and he should pay for it.

Margaret Barnhill: Well, I believed in capital punishment a long time before this ever happened. I've always believed in capital punishment. And my view is, you know, that he committed this murder, and like Bruce said, it was not an accident.

He took two people's lives. It was a very brutal murder, and two juries — 24 people — have sentenced him to death.

And I think justice should be carried out; that's the law. ...

And if he's been saved, that's good, but you know something? That is more opportunity than his victims got, if they had desired to seek that route — if they had needed to.

Bruce: And as you know, if you read any of the news, they're trying to make a racial issue out of this. ... This is not a political issue and this is most definitely not a racial issue — this is an issue of right and wrong, and he did two wrongs. He broke two laws — he broke man's law, and he broke God's law — and it's way past time, time that justice be carried out.

DTH: What exactly do you hope this execution tonight is going to give you, in terms of closure?

Bruce: Well, it'll never be over, for any of us. ... It'll always be there. But this should relieve some daily tension and pressure, I guess, on all of us' minds ... It won't be the closing of a book but the closing of a chapter.

Judy: And we'll know that every year or so we won't have to go back to court and relive all of this.

DTH: How do you all feel about the fact that he says that he has been saved?

Bruce: I won't question someone's religion. ... But I still say there's a price to pay for what he did here on earth. The price is death, and it should take place as scheduled (Friday) at two o'clock.

Margaret: I agree, and if you would talk to any of your prison guards, (death-row inmates) all claim they've been saved ... He's looking for a way out right now. But whether he's been saved or not ... he deserves to be executed, and we need to be able to get some closure and have time to heal.

DTH: What has that been like having to go back into court? Do you have to testify again and again?

Bruce: No, but we have to sit there and listen to it, see the pictures again.

The only thing I think has probably saved both families thus far, is we've all had very good memories of Sheila and Michael. ... And those good memories, good deeds, whatever way you want to put it, that's what's kept us going.

People get killed. We know that. Dying is a part of life. ... But when you've got something like this, where somebody, again, just literally takes a piece of pipe and just beats somebody to death. ... It's not anything that you would wish on your worst enemy.

Judy: But until somebody has walked in our shoes, I don't see how they can say they're against the death penalty.

DTH: Can you all talk a little bit about what it was like receiving the news that your children had actually been murdered, or in your case, Mrs. Barnhill, your brother.

Bruce: Well, in our case, our daughter was supposed to get off work at six o'clock, and she was always home by 10 minutes past six. If she was going to be delayed for any reason, she would call. ... She didn't call us, and it was time for her to be home.

We called the cleaners. The phone rang. Of course nobody answered it ... We finally decided ... maybe she's got car trouble and can't call.

So we left our son at home by himself and told him to lock the doors, we'll be home in a few minutes. And we actually

went to the cleaners. And as we got there, of course we saw rescue trucks, lights flashing. ...

We drove up and parked, and one of the gentlemen ... on the rescue squad ... said, "You do not need to go in the building, and I think you would be better off to stay out here. Something terrible has happened." We already figured that something terrible had happened. ...

We stayed outside. And they found out they couldn't tell us ... what had happened. (The bodies) were damaged — I guess would be the word — so bad they didn't know if somebody had shot them. They just didn't know what had happened. ...

I did make a call to a neighbor and had them go by my house, pick up our son, and just, I said "Go get him. Take him to your house. Don't let anybody talk to him." I didn't even tell them what the problem was. I just said it was something bad.

Margaret: Well, I got a call from my first cousin (who was at my mother's house), that at that time they thought he had been shot. ...

And they called here and they told me, and well I was, it was just absolute shock, disbelief. ...

And I got over there, and (my mother) was just, well, she was just all to pieces. ...

And so I thought, right then, that I had to be the support because there wasn't anyone else to do it. ...

I was the one who had to deal with (the State Bureau of Investigation) agents and the investigation, you know, of the crime scene.

Bruce: It affects more lives than you think.

Margaret: It affects everybody's life. My nine-year-old son at that time had a very difficult time with it. ... He had nightmares for months, and I would hear him crying, and I would go in his bedroom and he would be crouched in the far corner. And he would have a sheer look of terror on his face, and he would be trembling all over.

He was dreaming that somebody was

Murder Revisited: Dec. 19, 1983

A combination of drugs, alcohol and bitterness led Harvey Lee Green to beat two people to death.

Editor's note: The following is a reconstruction of the murders committed by Harvey Lee Green, Jr. on Dec. 19, 1983 based on news accounts and Daily Tar Heel interviews with Green and his victims' families conducted just days before his execution.

By MATTHEW B. DEES
State & National Editor

Harvey began the afternoon swilling cheap wine and toking joints with one of his buddies.

He regularly fended off painful childhood memories — the death of his half-brother and his parents' violent marriage and bitter divorce — with a steady stream of booze and drugs.

His friend staggered home around 4 p.m., leaving Harvey stoned and drunk, unaware that his life would take a drastic turn in just a few short hours.

Still intoxicated, Harvey decided to check the mail about 6:30 p.m.

He donned a field jacket with his cousin's toy gun in one of the pockets and stepped out of his father's house into the crisp December evening.

No one, including Harvey, is sure of what led him to Young's Cleaners that night.

Just slightly more certain is what happened when he stepped in the door and was greeted by 17-year-old Sheila Marlene Bland.

The high school senior who worked part-time at the business was alone when Harvey tried to rob her with the toy weapon.

Just then, 33-year-old John Michael Edmondson, whom friends called Mike, walked in the store.

Sheila cried out that she was being robbed, and a scuffle ensued.

Harvey managed to subdue the two, and told them to lie down behind the counter.

He tried to leave.

But Mike rushed at Harvey, igniting the fatal struggle.

Harvey grabbed an iron pipe 27 inches long and an inch in diameter and began beating Mike in the head.

"I hit him and hit him and hit him, and then he finally let go," Harvey said in his confession to police.

"I hit him three times until he lay there."

Sheila then began screaming and the pipe-wielding Harvey silenced her with at least two blows to the head.

Harvey took the bloodied weapon, \$3.50 in pennies from the cash register and \$20 from Mike before hurrying back to his home.

Then the cleaner's phone rang. Sheila's parents were wondering why their daughter was late.

No one answered.

At 6:55 p.m., Frances Young, the wife of the store's owner, stopped by the business when she noticed lights were still on nearly an hour after closing time.

She entered and saw the bodies of the student employee and an unknown man strewn on the floor in pools of blood. When police arrived, the severe dam-

age to the two victims' heads led investigators initially to believe the victims had been shot.

Meanwhile, Sheila's worried parents were making their way to Young's, expecting to see their daughter stranded on the side of the road because of car trouble.

They didn't expect to see the flashing sirens of police cruisers and ambulances, nor did they expect a rescue squad officer and family friend to meet them at their car with a warning:

"You do not need to go in the building ... Something terrible has happened."

Several blocks away, a television news broadcast was informing the nosier Harvey of what he had done.

Confused and scared, Harvey ambled down the street and tried, as he had so many times before, to take solace in a bottle.

But this time was different. The liquor would not take hold — would not let him temporarily escape the torturous thoughts of his actions.

This would haunt Harvey for 11 days, until New Year's Day 1984, when he admitted to police that he was the killer.

Harvey laid down in his cell that night, a setting that would become all too familiar during the next 15 years, and asked God and the victims' families for forgiveness.

"I said, Lord, this is in your hands now," Harvey prayed.

"I done messed my life up, and it's in your hands."

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SURVEY SAYS ...

DTH readers hit the paper's online site to vote on their stance on the death penalty.



47% of the responses were for the death penalty

53% of the responses were against the death penalty

people being mad. I care about the people who hate me. I love them. I can't say I hate and then love Christ.

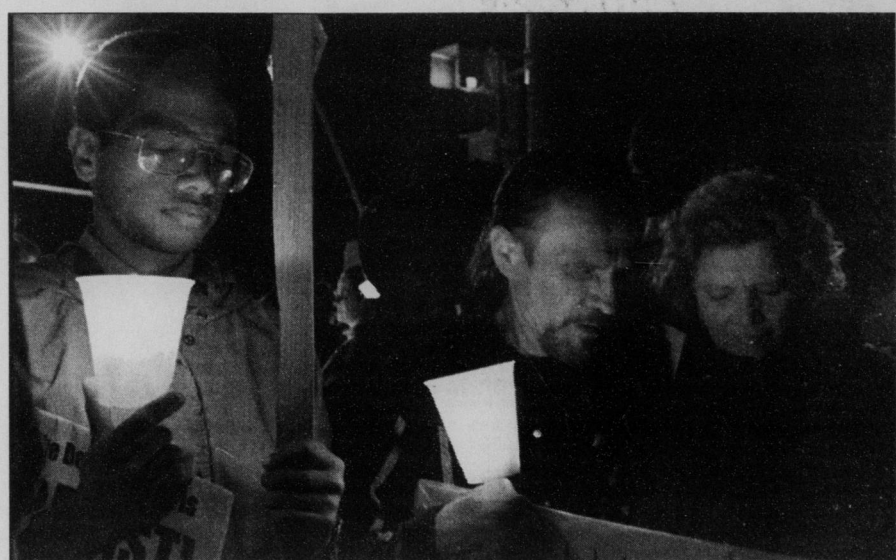
DTH: Does this week feel different?

Green: Yes, it do. It's not only me, but the people around me. They have been more kind, more courteous. They are trying to keep my mind off it, but I know what they are doing.

It's eating them up, too. It's hard being with somebody for 16 years and knowing you're both facing the same thing, and it comes down and it's your turn today.

We try to get by the best we can. We try to uphold and lift up each other but like I say, we ain't a bunch of saints. When so-and-so has a problem, someone goes down and tries to help them.

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DTH/DAVID SANDLER

Phil Comfort of Mebane (middle) and Liza Farmer (right) of Carrboro joined other opponents of the death penalty in front of Central Prison on Thursday night. Harvey Lee Green was executed early Friday morning.

trying to murder his mother and daddy. And I would take him up and put him in his bed and hold him until he quit trembling and went back to sleep.

That February, I got a call that three o'clock in the morning from my neighbor that lives 600 yards down the road, and she told me that he was at her house, that he thought that somebody was trying to murder his parents.

DTH: And how soon after was that?

Margaret: That was the following February. It happened in December. ... We live on a farm, so he had walked across the field, through a 5-foot ditch that had water in it, and gone to the house to try and get help for us because he was having a nightmare.

He could have easily fell in that ditch, and that would have been Harvey Green's third victim.

DTH: I know you're going to get a lot

of people at the prison who are going to be there in opposition to the death penalty and to this execution in specific. They might call you murderers. ...

Judy: I know I'm not a murderer. He's the murderer, and if he gets it, he deserves it.

Margaret: I'm gonna walk right on out of there with my head up and keep right on going.

DTH: Mrs. Barnhill, could you tell me a little bit about your relationship with your brother?

Margaret: There were three of us. I had two brothers, and we were all seven years apart and he was the youngest. ... Mike and I were close because our father had died, and my mother's health was not good, so we had to both help look after her.

Also, his job was teaching children with learning disabilities. And both of

my children were learning disabled ... and that was one reason the youngest son had such a hard time.

DTH: And how old was Mike in 1983?

Margaret: He was 33. He had his master's in education and had already applied to Carolina to work for his doctorate. He liked working with children.

DTH: What if the governor decides to stay the execution? Are you going to fight for the completion of this?

Bruce: As long as I'm breathing and able to take a step. ...

DTH: How much do you think of this these days?

Judy: Not many days go by that I don't think about it.

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