

Of interest

- Whilst in the United States, *RepriveAustralia* interns have worked on the appeal of Les Martin, a man sentenced to death in Lake Charles, Louisiana on the word of one prison yard snitch.
- On February 9, 2002, while our interns continued to work, the US Supreme Court granted a stay 27 minutes before the lethal injection was due to be administered.
- Now, the Supreme Court has refused to hear his appeal and lifted the stay. A new execution date of May 10, 2002 has been set.
- A man our volunteers helped to spare once before now faces execution again in only weeks.

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President's Column

Afghanistan

Whatever the successes of the campaign in Afghanistan and no matter the propaganda that is produced, it is a sad fact that the new interim government in Afghanistan has confirmed its commitment to the death penalty for certain crimes. Chief Justice Fazul Hadi Shinwari of the Afghanistan Supreme Court has reportedly (*The Age, January 2002*) articulated his support for the following in the administration of the Afghani legal system: adulterers to be whipped and/or stoned to death; the hands of robbers to be amputated; proselytising Christians *may* be executed; and murderers to be publicly executed. This is not a question, in my view, of cultural relativity alone – it is a question of human rights and a respect for human life. It seems that in Afghanistan, the more things change, the more things stay the same.

Fiji

It came as a surprise to some of us to learn that Fiji still has the death penalty on its statute books. I would hazard a guess that this fact was of no surprise to the clever deal-making lawyers acting on behalf of recent coup-leader, George Speight. Speight pleaded guilty to treason and was given a mandatory death sentence (by hanging) by High Court Judge Michael Scott. Later the same day, the sentence was commuted to life in prison by President Iloilo. Australia has a history of close political and trade links with Fiji and it is extremely disturbing to learn that the death penalty survives in that politically troubled nation. There is a ray of hope, however. The Fijian Labour party, headed by coup-ousted former leader Mahendra Chaudhry, has recently laid a bill before the Fijian Parliament seeking to strike out the death penalty from the Fijian penal code. Reprive supports the Fijian Labour Party in this initiative and hopes that the Bill is passed into law.

Louisiana, USA

The battle goes on in the US. I understand that some of our recently returned interns played a significant support role at the

Louisiana Crisis Assistance Centre in helping obtain a last minute stay of execution for Les Martin in the State of Louisiana. The stay was granted by the US Supreme Court with only 27 minutes remaining before the execution. Well done to Clive Stafford Smith and all at the LCAC and CPCL offices.

Unfortunately, the stay was subsequently lifted and on May 10, 2002 Les was executed by the State of Louisiana. In our next issue we will provide a more detailed description of Les' case and the deeply shameful way in which the American legal system delivered him for execution.

Return of interns

Our first group of interns has recently returned from New Orleans. From all accounts, the internship was a rewarding experience for all of them. I can confirm that both the LCAC and CPCPL were extremely impressed by the commitment and hard work of the interns. We thank those interns for being 'trail-blazers' (should that read guinea pigs?) for this organisation. We will obtain as much information as possible from Marissa, Kara, Olivia, Nick and Ash in order to make future internships as user-friendly, cheap and rewarding as possible. Congratulations to them all for their commitment and hard work.

Departure of new interns

As one group returned home, another group departed for a three-month internship. Simone Leijon, Eleni Antonopoulos and Bonnie Renou are all now ensconced in New Orleans taking up the challenge at the LCAC. Congratulations to the three of them for finding the time, money and inner strength to provide assistance to the indigent on death row in New Orleans over their three month stint. These three young women bring to a total of 8 the number of interns *RepriveAustralia* has helped send to New Orleans in the last 9 months. Read on in this issue to find out more about Simone, Eleni and Bonnie.

(Continued on page 4)

The Return of the November 2001 Interns

By the end of February all five of *RepriveAustralia's* first crop of interns had returned to Australia. Four of them returned to University to complete the final year of their law studies, one returned to a practice in law at the Victorian Bar. For all of them the return home has been a culture shock after their experiences in the US.

While in the US the five worked at the Louisiana Crisis Assistance Center and the Capital Post-Conviction Project of Louisiana. Both of those offices have been abundant in their praise for the spirit and endeavour of our interns and in their gratitude for the invaluable work that they each performed.

The range of work performed by the five interns is too broad to list but it is worth listing just some of their contributions:

- They interviewed witnesses in cases that were at appellate level as well as those that were about to go to trial;
- They interviewed jurors who had served in capital trials and voted to execute clients of the two offices;
- They visited with prisoners in prisons in three different States to provide information and the comfort of human contact to those who live their lives in the isolation of death row;
- They performed legal research to support the attorneys working in the two

Kara's story

Kara has just returned from an internship and had this to say about her experience: People keep asking me what I gained from my internship in the United States. The most notable thing I would say would be an awareness of how the legal system is really operating in the South.

On my first day at the CPCPL I was shocked by stories of incompetent defence counsel. Cases where attorneys fell asleep during their client's trial, conceded guilt against their client's instructions or simply turned up drunk. What makes this so appalling is that the lawyers are rarely disciplined for their wrongdoings. Instead, it is the client who suffers.

Even on appeal, most clients are unable to obtain relief because the courts have established a standard of ineffective assistance denies equal justice. However, I was equally outraged by accounts of prosecutorial and police misconduct;

offices;

- They spoke to the families of victims in order to add a touch of humanity to a process that is so lacking in that basic quality;
- They interviewed persons formerly convicted of crimes, now unconstitutionally denied the right to sit on Grand Juries;
- They worked tirelessly as Les Martin's execution date drew closer and closer to help gather new evidence and prepare the materials needed for his appeals;
- They gathered outside the gates of Angola prison and on the steps of the Louisiana Supreme Court on the night scheduled for Les' execution and maintained a vigil with friends, family and supporters until, 27 minutes before Les was scheduled to die, the Supreme Court granted a temporary stay of execution;
- They visited and supported the families of defendants, in some cases helping to bring together prisoners and members of their families they had not seen in years;
- They watched the US justice system and its centre piece of capital punishment grind away at the lives of those in its path and the moral authority of those who stand behind it;
- They came from Australia to America to do the right thing.

They made a difference.

including concealing exculpatory evidence, planting evidence, forcing confessions and hiding defence witnesses at trial. While the American Constitution promises freedom for all, that promise is far from a reality.

During my time at the CPCPL I was able to work with inspiring and dedicated people. During my internship I was assigned two different cases. While working on these cases I found myself frequenting the Louisiana Supreme Court pulling evidence, checking police interview tapes for exculpatory evidence and/or misconduct, summarising civil depositions, legal research, indexing, conducting jury interviews in Shreveport, briefing crime scene experts and meeting some of the unrepresented men on death row at Angola State Penitentiary.

Kara Murray

Kara is undertaking final year in a law degree at Deakin University



RepriveAustralia's November 2001 interns

(clockwise) Kara Murray, Nick Button, Ashley Halphen, Marissa Dreher and Olivia Henderson.

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Kara Murray: returned intern

RepriveAustralia: March 2002 Interns

Less than two weeks after the last group of *RepriveAustralia* interns left Louisiana, at the end of February three more volunteers arrived to take up positions at the Louisiana Crisis Assistance Center (LCAC).

The three volunteers are Eleni Antonopoulos, Bonnie Renou and Simone Leijon. Each will work at the LCAC for a period of a bit over three months and have already landed in the deep end.

Eleni Antonopoulos

Eleni completed a law/arts degree at Monash University in 2001 and is taking some time out to consider her next step. An ardent opponent of the death penalty, Eleni's grandfather was sentenced to death seven times by Greece's right wing government for his activities as a resistance fighter in the years following WWII.

Since arriving at the LCAC Eleni has principally been working on the Jefferson Parish Project. The Project seeks to use the skills and experience of the LCAC to bolster the local public defender's office.

Jefferson parish is located adjacent to Orleans Parish and incorporates a series of largely white and middle class neighborhoods in and around New Orleans.

Before the Project was created 2 years ago, Jefferson Parish was returning more death penalty verdicts than any other parish in the State. Following the intervention of the LCAC there has not been a death penalty returned in any case in which the project has been involved.

Eleni's work with the Project has revolved around a series of capital rape trials; Louisiana is one of the last States to seek to impose the death penalty for the offense of rape and Jefferson parish is one of the last parishes in the State to pursue a policy of seeking the death penalty.

Bonnie Renou

Bonnie has no legal training and has just completed her Honours year in criminology at the University of Melbourne. She has previously participated in prison visiting schemes in Victoria and while studying in Canada.

Bonnie arrived on a Friday afternoon and after a few welcoming drinks found herself in

a car driving to Talladega, Alabama by 1pm the next day.

From that moment on Bonnie was working on the case of Maxine Walker, a woman charged with the first degree murder of her shockingly abusive boyfriend.

Maxine is said to have hired two men (for \$50) to kill her boyfriend and then lured him into the ambush in which he was killed. Maxine's boyfriend had previously raped and drowned a 16 year old girl, had his daughter removed from him when she was three as a result of his abuse and repeatedly beaten Maxine. Shortly before his death he had walked into Maxine's house with a chainsaw and threatened Maxine and her children.

Maxine's trial commenced on April 8 and while Battered Women's Syndrome evidence has previously been admitted in Alabama, the trial judge in this case excluded such evidence from Maxine's trial at the request of the prosecutor on the basis that this was a murder for hire and so the previous abuse could not be relevant. Notwithstanding the exclusion of Maxine's defence from the trial, she was acquitted of first degree murder but convicted of simple murder.

Bonnie worked steadfastly in assisting in the preparation of the case including interviewing witnesses, spending time with Maxine, contributing to case strategy meetings and attending hearings.

Simone Leijon

Simone completed her law/arts degree at Monash in 2001 and has volunteered as an intern as a part of her commitment to human rights and the law. Her internship represents a welcome change from a law course increasingly centred on economics and finance.

Simone has worked almost exclusively on the Krishna Maharaj trial. Her work included the interviewing and coordinating of over 30 witnesses in America, Trinidad and the United Kingdom. As a part of her work she traveled to Miami, Florida for three weeks to work on the trial.

A brief description of the case and Simone's reflections may be found on page 5 of this edition.

Richard Bourke



Eleni Antonopoulos



Bonnie Renou



Simone Leijon

Georgia Opts for Lethal Injection Over Electrocution

Last October, Georgia's Supreme Court became the first appellate court in the USA to rule electrocution an unconstitutionally cruel and unusual punishment.

The decision came almost 80 years after that state stopped hanging its death row inmates. Over that period, 441 inmates have been put to death in Georgia's electric chair, the last in June 1998. There are currently 128 men and 1 woman on that state's death row.

Georgia now joins 19 other states using lethal injection as their only form of execution. Alabama and Nebraska remain the only states using the electric chair as their sole method of execution.

Of the 38 states of the US that still impose the death penalty, 16 allow either the condemned prisoner or the state to choose between lethal injection or death by an alternate method (such as hanging, firing squad or lethal gas). In some of those states, only those who committed their offences or were sentenced before a particular date may choose another method.

The Georgia Supreme Court has previously upheld the constitutionality of electrocution on several occasions. However, in the October decision, the majority held that the definition of cruel and unusual punishment was "not a static concept," but rather a reflection of "evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society."

In an opinion written by Justice Carol W. Hunstein, the majority held that "death by electrocution, with its spectre of excruciating pain and its certainty of cooked brains and blistered bodies," did exceed current standards. The majority cited a United States Supreme Court precedent prohibiting "the infliction of unnecessary pain in the execution

of the death sentence" and the Georgia court's own ban on "the purposeless and needless imposition of pain and suffering."

While acknowledging that it could not determine conclusively whether unnecessary pain is inflicted during electrocution, the majority placed great emphasis on the fact that so many states had moved to lethal injection since Oklahoma first did so in 1977.

"The fact that a method involving less pain and mutilation exists," the majority opinion said, "and that many states have moved to that method because it is perceived to be a more humane manner of execution clearly must play an important factor in the determination whether an older method is cruel and unusual punishment."

Accusing the majority of making law, a role more properly left to the legislature, dissenting Justice Hugh P. Thompson asserted "This decision reflects not the evolving standards of decency of the people of Georgia, but the evolving opinions of the majority members of this court."

Notwithstanding that the majority opinion was replete with examples of electrocutions requiring a second electrical surge, of dead prisoners left with blisters and burns, and of brain temperatures that reached 145 degrees Fahrenheit, the dissenting justices concluded that "in effect, the majority defines constitutionally forbidden 'mutilation' to be anything other than a needle prick."

We should also note the reaction of Georgia's Attorney General, Thurbert E. Baker, who said in a statement following the decision that he was "extremely disappointed". There is clearly still a long way to go.

Pia Di Mattina

Georgia now joins 19 other states using lethal injection as their only form of execution



Georgia's Attorney General, Thurbert E. Baker, who said in a statement following the decision that he was "extremely disappointed".

President's Column (cont.)

'This is a True Story' staged in Belgium

Those of you who have read previous newsletters will be aware of my personal involvement in theatrically staging the compelling life-story of Howard Neal. The production, 'This is a True Story', was staged in both Melbourne and London last year. On the strength of the London season and its reviews, Theatre de Poche of Belgium obtained the rights to translate the performance text into the French language and perform the production in Belgium. The

work premiered at the 240 seat Theatre de Poche venue in Brussels in mid-March 2002. Members will be pleased to note that profits from the licensing of the work and the royalties from the staging of the work will flow back to *ReprieveAustralia* to help us continue our work. A special thank you to Theatre Tarquin Inc and Cultural Capital Pty Ltd for granting the rights to *ReprieveAustralia* for the future exploitation of the work.

Nicholas Harrington
President

State v Krishna Maharaj

In March 2002 in Miami Florida, British citizen, Krishna Maharaj was placed before a jury that was asked to recommend whether he should be killed or live his remaining years behind bars in a Florida prison.

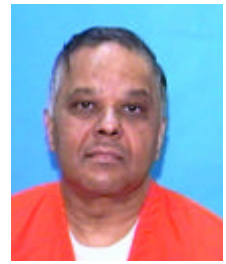
Now 62, Kris was convicted of the murder of two men in a Miami hotel over 16 years ago. He has spent that time behind bars trying to prove his innocence in a justice system marred with some of the most shocking corruption imaginable.

At the time of his first trial Kris told his lawyers that a prosecutor had come to him to seek a bribe on behalf of the judge. A story too unbelievable to be true. Four days into the trial the judge was arrested for soliciting bribes from other defendants. The trial

continued unabated with a new judge stepping in. Kris was convicted and, in accordance with the Florida system, the jury heard evidence on punishment, recommended death and after a further hearing on the issue by the trial judge, the judge imposed the death penalty.

It later emerged that the judge and the prosecutor had gotten together and written out his death sentence before the hearing was conducted.

While Kris still fights for a re-trial to prove his innocence, the hearing in March was a re-sentencing hearing conducted before a new judge and jury. *RepriveAustralia* intern, Simone Leijon, worked on the case and was there to hear the verdict:



Krishna Maharaj
A British citizen, Kris has fought for over 16 years to clear his name following a conviction for double murder in Miami, Florida in 1987. In March 2002 one further step was taken when a new sentencing hearing was conducted.

Waiting to exhale

It's an indictment on a legal system that an innocent man must await a verdict from twelve strangers determining whether or not he shall be spared from execution. Krishna Maharaj, Judge Bagley repeatedly affirmed, had already been found guilty of murder by the state of Florida, and therefore the defendant's maintained argument of innocence was of no interest or relevance to a jury determining only his sentence. The jury's choice: either life imprisonment with no possibility of parole for 25 years or the death penalty.

A jury is selected on the premise that it will represent a fair cross-section of society, while simultaneously being able to evaluate both mitigating and aggravating circumstances so as to conclude with a well-considered verdict. But a jury is also twelve individuals with prejudices and emotions like the rest of us, and it's an interesting exercise to look at each face in the jury box and predict which way he or she will decide. Whether or not a juror could confidently decide within their own power to kill a fellow human is a huge responsibility, and you can't help but mentally plead with them not to ignore this significance.

But the jury selected for Kris' re-sentencing trial had potential, so there was a sense of optimism that once the closing arguments had been presented, and they retreated to their designated room for deliberation, they would be able to fairly evaluate both justice and humanity. During this period, the atmosphere of nervous anticipation and general fear of the unknown is so intense it

becomes tangible. Only the jury can anticipate how long their decision may take and which way it may go, and there is a sense of complete powerlessness once the jury room door closes. From time to time you can't help but stare at that door, as if trying to will a favourable decision.

A day later and the apprehension has escalated, and most wandering eyes tend to settle their gaze on that same jury room door. The act of waiting is teased by the wall clock, then a sudden knock emerging from the other side of the door, and a piece of paper sliding through advise that a decision has been reached. A cruel eternity passes before all parties are present, and a quick glance around the room reveals white knuckles everywhere, fiercely gripping onto stability. The jury noiselessly move to their seats in single file and prepare to advise of their decision regarding the fate of Kris Maharaj - will they let the man standing before them live, or actively choose to take his life? True to the cliché, I am holding my breath, which lingers in the air with every other suspended breath in that court room, and I dare not exhale for fear of not hearing the verdict. And then the clerk reassures us that mercy has ultimately been delivered.

Today, eleven out of twelve jurors have chosen to save Kris Maharaj's life.

Simone Leijon

Simone remains in the US completing her internship at the Louisiana Crisis Assistance Center, having completed her law degree at Monash University in 2001.

*... a quick glance
around the room
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everywhere . . .*



Simone Leijon
A *RepriveAustralia* intern currently in Louisiana and part of the successful legal team that represented Krishna Maharaj in his capital trial in Miami, Florida.

The Gift of Time

Each day here is at best revealing, at worst emotional. What follows is a recent example of an experience that stands out as extremely emotional.

If figures taken between 1989 - 1993 are any indication, guns are used in approximately seven out of every ten homicides - handguns being the weapon of choice, as they can be easily concealed.

In 1998, a security guard was shot with one such handgun. A small amount of money was taken. The victim was on the phone to his wife at the time. She heard four distinctive pops before the phone dropped.

A number of men were arrested, including a teenager...

The Courthouse was the most impressive structure in this particular rural county. It was surrounded by only broken, makeshift abodes, barely standing but allowing some protection from the elements.

The Judge in Courtroom 1 busied herself with the daily list, rife with misdemeanors - the sort of mischief that got us into trouble at the time but we look back on without regret.

A relatively young man sat shackled and handcuffed with a social worker stoically by his side. His competency hearing was the final matter called for the day. Was he able to properly instruct his legal representatives in relation to the charge of first degree murder of a security guard?

A number of experts gave detailed and technical evidence. Even the Judge requested a number of their responses be repeated.

After careful consideration of the evidence, the Judge found the Defendant incompetent to stand trial. The case was continued for 12 months.

I don't know whether the Defendant had understood what went on, I don't know whether he understood why he was at court. I don't even know whether he knew where he was. But one thing was certain, tomorrow he would not be spending his 21st birthday on death row.

I took a right turn off Interstate 10, then a left turn on Highway 61. There were a series of tight turns that I carefully negotiated before reaching my ultimate destination. In just 30 minutes I had travelled from the vibrance of

the French Quarter to a weary and depleted town, divorced from the promises of the American Dream.

An oil refinery was the epicentre of numerous trailers and project houses scattered in the surrounding area. I was somehow reminded of a plantation, only glossed over by the import of industrialization.

As my car came to a halt, I was greeted by the menacing looks of a number of local youths. When they saw a co-tenant smile at me with familiarity, they quickly lost interest.

I had come to pick up the young man's family and transport them to the secured forensic unit to celebrate his 21st birthday. With no public transport available and with little money to spare, they had not seen him since his arrest, four years ago.

A hint of their general isolation first surfaced as we drove through the capital. My passengers sat silently, fixated by their surroundings. The capital was only 30 miles into the drive and I wondered if they had ever been there before.

En route to the hospital, conversation was strained. Whatever came to mind seemed so trivial in comparison to their anticipation. The radio countered the silence until our arrival.

We met Earl, a security officer at the front gate. His chin hung like a necklace and his belly battled to stay above his waistline. He moved with effort. Over the course of our induction, I noticed a compelling mix of stress and excitement overwhelm him. It became apparent that he was slowly losing control - his sedentary existence not accustomed to this level of activity. A query regarding a birthday cake instantly brought on a steady flow of perspiration. He advised that only commercially sealed products were permitted.

I politely listened while Earl went on to detail the infinite threats to security resulting from a breach of this rule. The others strategically took his soliloquy as an opportunity to hurry off and embrace their moment. I finally left Earl in mid-sentence to purchase a rule-compliant birthday cake.

Miraculously, I found a cake able to withstand Earl's voracious inspection. Another officer was specially dispatched to deliver the cake. He was no more than 20: too young to drink

(Continued on page 8)

Each day here is at best revealing, at worst emotional.



Ashley Halphen
Ash is a barrister practising in criminal law in Melbourne and participated in a *RepriveAustralia* internship from November 2001 to February 2002.

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100th US Death Row Prisoner Exhonerated

April 2002 will be recorded in the history of the capital punishment debate as the month in which the United States reached a truly shameful milestone.

In April 2002, at the request of the Arizona prosecutions office that had twice tried to kill him, Ray Krone was released from prison having finally proven his innocence.

Ray Krone's nightmare began in 1991 when he was arrested for the brutal murder of Arizona bartender, Kim Anacona.

He was tried for the crime on a circumstantial case bolstered by bite marks on the victim's body that were said to match Mr Krone's unusual dental pattern—a legacy of a childhood accident.

Mr Krone was convicted and sentenced to death. He sat on death row, his life forfeit for three years before his conviction was overturned and a new trial ordered as a result of what commentators have described as "a technicality".

As if to underline the fallibility of human systems of justice Mr Krone was again convicted of the crime, though this time a life sentence was imposed.

After a total of more than 10 years of torture in Arizona's prisons Mr Krone, one of the lucky ones, was finally able to prove his innocence as a result of advances in the science of DNA testing.

Mr Krone is one of the lucky ones because in his case there were DNA samples and they were determinative of who the killer was. In the vast majority of cases DNA does not provide such a neat answer—the prisoners may be no less innocent than Ray Krone, they just can't prove it.

In Mr Krone's case the DNA was matched to that of a convicted sexual offender, even now serving a sentence for other offences.

In April 2002, Mr Krone became the 100th man to be released from death row in the US since 1973, the second to be released in 2002 and the 12th released due to DNA evidence.

There are no figures for the number of innocent men who have been executed or who are doomed to spend their lives in America's bursting prison system.

The repeated proof of the failures of the US

justice system and the risk it presents to the lives of the innocent has spurred renewed energy in the call for a moratorium on all executions until the system can be repaired.

One of the most famous of the 100 exonerated men, Kirk Bloodsworth, was also twice found guilty of a crime he did not commit. Convicted on identification evidence by honest but mistaken witnesses he was sentenced to death and then life imprisonment before he was finally able to prove his innocence. Kirk has testified before the US Senate and in February 2000 said:

I was not released because the system was interested in what happened to me but because my lawyer was interested . . . I was lucky to have a lawyer who was interested in my case and in working hard for me, although I was not paying him anything.

. . . Despite all the protections provided by the system, I would have been executed saying that I was innocent, and having nobody hear what I was saying. I was going to spend the rest of my life in prison for something I did not do. I was the person whose life was destroyed and who lost his family. I was not and am not a hypothetical person. I was just a regular person with hopes and dreams like everyone else—nothing special.

The obvious and continued failures of the US justice system should cause even those in favor of the death penalty to call for its abolition.

To continue to favor the execution of people at the behest of such an arbitrary system defies logic.

However, while we can congratulate Ray Krone on his good fortune, send thanks for the tenacity of his lawyers and hope that his example will cause more in the US to abandon capital punishment, it is important not to be distracted.

The death penalty is wrong whether the prisoner is guilty of the crime alleged or not. The innocence debate can sometimes divert people from this plain truth.

100 innocent men released from death row is not the reason to abolish the death penalty, it is simply yet another reason.

Richard Bourke

A roll call of the 100 exonerated death row prisoners is available at:
www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/Innocentlist.html

In April 2002, Mr Krone became the 100th man to be released from death row in the US since 1973



Kirk Bloodsworth
Released from death row in 1993 following his exoneration of a 1984 murder

"Despite all the protections provided by the system, I would have been executed saying that I was innocent . . ."

100 innocent men released from death row is not the reason to abolish the death penalty, it is simply yet another reason.



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PLEASE VISIT OUR
WEBSITE AT
WWW.REPRIEVE.ORG.AU

RepriveAustralia was founded in Melbourne in April 2001 by a group of Melbourne lawyers with the intention of assisting in the provision of effective legal representation and humanitarian assistance to impoverished people facing the death penalty at the hands of the state.

It is a sister organisation of *Reprive (UK)*, a UK based international human rights charity which was launched in December 1999 by Clive Stafford Smith OBE. *Reprive (US)* was also established in 2001 to assist in the placement of volunteer interns supplied by *RepriveAustralia* and *Reprive (UK)*.

RepriveAustralia's primary objective is to provide effective legal representation to impoverished people facing the death penalty at the hands of the state, by assisting a body of volunteers from Australia to travel overseas to work on death penalty cases and issues.

The Gift of Time

(Continued from page 6)

in bars, but old enough to supervise troubled adults suffering serious mental illnesses.

Five people plus a soft drink vending machine cluttered floor space a queen sized mattress would cover. The waiting room in the unit had never witnessed a 21st birthday party.

Conversation was caged; there were four uniformed guards in a window-fronted office immediately across the hallway, peering curiously into the room. The request for a knife to cut the cake brought the staring to an abrupt halt.

There were no streamers, balloons, candles or birthday songs. Just five people solemnly

eating cake. I left the room.

I was met a short time later by the family. They carried the remainder of the cake as a remnant of an afternoon that had quickly transformed into a memory.

Outside, under a big old oak tree, I was only able to muster forced smiles for the family portrait that I promised I would forward to the brother, sister and child they had left behind.

Ashley Halphen

Ash is a barrister practising in Victoria, Australia and was a RepriveAustralia intern from November 2001 to February 2002.

The waiting room in the unit had never witnessed a 21st birthday party

Membership renewals

RepriveAustralia is almost one year old—thanks to all of you who have supported the organisation through your membership and interest.

We've achieved a lot in our first year: successfully launching the organisation with the support of Justice Michael Kirby and Clive Stafford Smith; publishing a quarterly newsletter; increasing awareness through our website and public addresses; becoming a voice in opposition to the death penalty in Australia's media and overseas; sending 8 interns to the United States to provide on-the-ground assistance, and contributing to the worldwide lobby to abolish the death penalty.

But, there's plenty more to do—please

continue to help us by renewing your membership for the 2002/2003 financial year, which falls due on 1 July.

Membership for the coming year remains at \$30—a small price to pay to help us to help those on death row. And believe us, for an organisation funded solely through membership fees and the efforts of volunteers, your membership really counts.

A membership form is available on our website and will be included in the next newsletter.

Thanks!

Susan Brennan
Treasurer