Capital city, capital punishment

East Baton Rouge leads Louisiana in number of death-penalty verdicts

By MICHELLE MILHOLLON

David Henry Bowie is a gambler. He played dice with a fish salesman, then allegedly strangled the man after losing all his money. He gambled again by placing his fate in the hands of a jury rather than accept a plea bargain for 80 years in prison.

It was a gamble that didn’t pay off — Bowie was convicted of first-degree murder in March and sentenced to die by lethal injection. He will be transferred to death row this month.

Bowie is the 17th man sentenced to death in East Baton Rouge Parish since District Attorney Doug Moreau took office in 1991. All but one of the cases were handled by his office.

No other parish in the state has had as many death penalty verdicts in the past eight years.

And from 1976, when the death penalty was reinstated by the U.S. Supreme Court, until Moreau came to office, it was rare for a first-degree murder case to even go to trial in Baton Rouge. Most accused murderers bargained for prison terms by pleading guilty, often to reduced charges.

“There was a perception within the legal community that in metropolitan areas, juries wouldn’t return death,”

David Bowie is the 17th man to receive the death sentence since District Attorney Doug Moreau took office in 1991. Bowie will be moved to death row at Angola Penitentiary this month.