By MELINDA SHELTON
Advocate state writer

ANGOLA - Standing behind a greenish-colored wall with a small, rectangular observation glass, Sam Jones completes his state-appointed job. There is no reservation, no hesitation. In the past his was an abhorred job. There were titles of "professional hangman," "sure-shots," vicious men who wore black hoods and reveled in their God-like privilege to snuff out a person's life - legally as the state's official executioner.

An employee who uses a fictitious name, Sam Jones' job is to push a green "start" button that sends up to 2,000 volts of electricity through a condemned man's body.

The first push of the green button - located just above a red "stop" button on a wooden panel with three meters - delivers 2,000 volts at nine amps for approximately 10 seconds. A second push delivers 500 volts at two amps for about 20 seconds. And then he repeats the process again: 2,000 volts and then 500 volts. By alternating the currents, there is less of a chance of burning the inmate.

There is no switch to violently, theatrically pull down. No sudden blinking of the lights. No foreboding entry or exit by a black-hooded executioner.

"No, I don't have horns," Jones said during an interview with the Advocate several hours after the Jan. 4 execution of David Dene Martin. "And I don't see anyone floating around my room at night. No nightmares, and I don't see any ghosts. "My job is to push the button and make sure everything goes OK. I go there to do (See EXECUTIONER, 14A)"
Blackburn said, an aviso is pulled over Blackburn said.

pronounce to the witnesses that the then the parish coroner and a prison (the button)."

Sam's shoulder and watches me. When I

Then he turns to the panel and makes the inmate's face "for dignity breakers," Blackburn said.

execution, an electrician "steps from where Sam is and throws the two breaker switches. A wire extends from one switch to the electrode on the inmate's head, and another to the leg electrode. After completion of the execution, an electrician "steps out from where Sam is and throws the two breakers," Blackburn said.

Behind the chair is a large panel with the inmate, no hesitation in pushing the green button.

Thus far, all seven executions have "proceeded smoothly." Blackburn said, and the prison's method of execution "works for us with no burning, no excessive trauma."

For Jones, who has a verbal contract with the state, there is no remorse for the inmate, no hesitation in pushing the green button.

"I believe in the death penalty," Jones said. "When I heard they needed an executioner, I applied for the job and got it. I'm a master electrician, and one of the qualifications was being a master electrician. . . . 100 percent believe in the death penalty, but everybody has their own beliefs.

Bars are reflected in the mirror in a Death House cell

The final walk is made through this room and two white doors

The executioner observes from behind a cinderblock wall

'No, I don't have horns and I don't see anyone floating around my room at night. No nightmares, and I don't see any ghosts.

"My job is to push the button and make sure everything goes OK. I go there to do a job, and I do it and leave."

Jones said he believes electrocution to be the best method of execution. Like Blackburn, who said the state studied methods of execution and determined electrocution to be the most humane, Jones agreed it is the "quickest, most humanitarian" method of execution.

Jones said he works with prison electricians "to make sure the job goes right, that we go through the same procedures each time," but otherwise he has no contact with prison officials prior to an execution.

Because of the number of court hearings and case reviews, Jones has reached a "point where there's no question of their guilt and every 'T' is dotted and every 'I' is crossed."

"The public is a funny thing," he said. "They say to get that animal off the street, get the animal off the street. Then when it comes to this (execution) their opinion changes. . . . They ought to go out to the graves of the victims and stand there and ask why it happened. . . . These adults are responsible for their actions."

With 29 inmates currently on Death Row, Jones' services could be called upon many more times. But, with great emphasis and a determined tone in his voice, the state's executioner summed up his job:

"It's something I do, but then you never know what lies in the future."

Jones said he believes electrocution to be the best method of execution. Like Blackburn, who said the state studied methods of execution and determined electrocution to be the most humane, Jones agreed it is the "quickest, most humanitarian" method of execution.

Jones said he works with prison electricians "to make sure the job goes right, that we go through the same procedures each time," but otherwise he has no contact with prison officials prior to an execution.

Because of the number of court hearings and case reviews, Jones has reached a "point where there's no question of their guilt and every 'T' is dotted and every 'I' is crossed."

"The public is a funny thing," he said. "They say to get that animal off the street, get the animal off the street. Then when it comes to this (execution) their opinion changes. . . . They ought to go out to the graves of the victims and stand there and ask why it happened. . . . These adults are responsible for their actions."

With 29 inmates currently on Death Row, Jones' services could be called upon many more times. But, with great emphasis and a determined tone in his voice, the state's executioner summed up his job:

"It's something I do, but then you never know what lies in the future."