For grieving families

Murderer's death brings sense of justice

By Gladys L de Villier

"If this has brought back the delith penalty to stay, maybe it will all have been worth it," Mrs. Godfrey Bourque said Friday night of the rape-murder of her daughter, Loretta, and the murder of Loretta's companion, David LeBlanc.

"The scales are now balanced and there is a sense of peace and relief," Mrs. Bourque continued.

Thursday and Friday, following the April 5 execution of Elmo Sonnier, Mr. and Mrs. Bourque of New Iberia and Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd LeBlanc of St. Martinville spoke their thoughts on the events of six years and five months since their teenage children were killed by Sonnier and his younger brother, Eddie.

New Life

They said they are now ready to be in a new life, that they do not hold enmity in their hearts for the two brothers. Eddie, who had also been sentenced to death, had his sentence commuted to life because Louisiana law calls for the death penalty only for the person who does the actual killing. Once his sentence was reduced, however, Eddie charged his story, saying that it was indeed he who had pulled the trigger of the .22 caliber Marlin rifle.

Bourque said Friday night, "Eddie is going to suffer in the pen. I'm surprised that justice has been done. If that's the way the courts wanted it, I'm satisfied. There is a sense of peace and balance now. The pain will never go away, but somehow, I don't know why, the, it's relief. I've carried a great pain that you can't express - for victims, it's not an easy task. I can feel pain for others like us, but until it happens, you can't express it.

As for murderers who are on the loose, Bourque said "I don't think they should be put there to start with - they might do it again, who would be next? If not if they had released that man someone else would have been a victim. That's just my opinion. There's a lot that's been released and put right back. Now, they sit down and say they're rehabilitated. Some, yes, I agree, but others - you just don't know."

Bourque said despite what the public has been led to believe, he did not say prior to the execution that he would pull the switch. What he said, recalled the father, was "I could have pulled the switch if I had to."

"I am not fully of vengeance, he said. He has come to grips with his daughter's death and his feelings about the Sonnier, as has Mrs. Bourque.

Emma Bourque, 24, another daughter, who had previously expressed a question as to how anyone could "forgive the one who did this to your own child," said Friday night, "I know now what they mean when they say it is right to forgive them. You don't forgive them for what they did, but you forgive them because they are human beings. I'm at peace now that I understand this."

Relating to statements that had been made that the Sonnier brothers were brought up without a father, and Elmo had done time, that "he had no chance," David, 28, one of the Bourque brothers, said, "There was something I wanted to say at the parole board hearing and I didn't. I was once caught doing 90 miles an hour in a 55 zone. I was sentenced to 33 days in jail, 39 suspended. My parents couldn't see that, but I realized that I deserved that. But spending time in jail didn't give me the right to go out and kill someone.

"Someone asked me one time if I didn't feel guilty about Elmo's execution. I asked how he thought he would feel if his sister was raped and murdered, and his future brother-in-law taken away. I asked if he thought he knew what suffering really
died.