

See - Vandiver

A Gannett Newspaper/Established 1884—Daily Since 1911

*Editorial from  
 our news-  
 paper.*

4-4-84

Paul B. Flynn, President and Publisher  
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Chesley F. Perry, President Emeritus  
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*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." — The First Amendment*

## Goode's execution is no credit to state

Arthur Goode's scheduled execution tomorrow, barring a last-minute reprieve, is no credit to the state of Florida.

His death will provide no deterrence against crime, and in executing him, the state is lowering itself to the same dreadful level of inhumanity.

When the state begins to use its legal powers to kill people who are demonstrably insane, society is in trouble. And Goode has a well-documented history of mental illness.

Crazed killers will always kill, no matter how many others are put to death by the state — that is the nature of their twisted minds and emotions.

Goode should be confined to a maximum security institution for the criminally insane for life without possibility of parole or escape. Thus he would be isolated from society and could do no further harm.

Of course, this sentence would not satisfy people who resent tax money going to feed, clothe and house convicted murderers, even insane ones. It would not satisfy those who sincerely believe that all killers de-

serve to die — the Biblical "eye for an eye." It is especially hard not to want to rid the world of maniacs who have committed the kind of heinous crime for which Goode is to die. A child killer does not deserve sympathy.

However, it would give society the chance to study such cases in an effort to find out why they become what they are.

Goode's would be a classic case for study because he has been in and out of mental institutions for most of his life. The records of his past are there. It is possible that what finally turned him into a killer could be pinpointed and could help society prevent others from becoming the same.

Not all murderers are sentenced to death. Not all who receive the sentence actually die. Capital punishment has become high-stakes roulette played by criminals, lawyers and judges. Who should live and who should die for murder has become a game of chance.

Tragically, the game will go on as long as capital punishment is the law of the land.

*the News-Press*

April 9, 1984

Fort Myers News-Press  
2442 Anderson Avenue  
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Editor:

I wish to commend the News-Press for its excellent editorial of April 4, 1984, deploring the execution of Arthur Goode. I am a paralegal who worked with Arthur Goode and his lawyers during the last week of his life. Arthur was insane, beyond doubt and beyond argument. That he was executed is an affront to the humanity and conscience of our community. Whatever one may think of the death penalty in general, it is illegal to kill the insane, and Arthur Goode was insane.

Despite the Governor's pious words, and the enthusiasm of those who enjoy executions, April 5th was a sad and shameful day for this state. The moral character of a people is measured by how the most difficult and damaged of its members are treated. By executing Arthur Goode, we have failed in our highest duty as individuals and as citizens. I can only hope that we receive more mercy than we have given.

Sincerely,



Margaret Vandiver  
625 N.E. 1st St., #5  
Gainesville, FL 32602

April 9, 1984

Editor  
Tampa Tribune  
202 S. Parker  
Tampa, FL

Editor:

As one of the people who worked to prevent the execution of Arthur Goode, I must respond to the Tribune editorial of April 6, 1984, which praised the execution as an example of "justice". During the last week of Goode's life, I spent approximately 20 hours with him. I am firmly and absolutely convinced that Goode suffered from a mental disturbance so profound that he had no control whatsoever over his behavior. My observation of him and my conversations with him left no doubt in my mind that his emotional age was that of a 4 or 5 year old child. He was incapable of understanding the nature of his actions, much less of controlling them. He was a terribly sick man, and was no more responsible for the sickness and the forms it took than is a person suffering from a physical disease.

The execution of Arthur Goode was illegal under Florida's own laws, which forbid killing the insane. The execution was immoral, in that it was inflicted on a person who was not responsible for his actions. If the editors of the Tribune wish to endorse a policy of state-sponsored elimination of the mentally disturbed, you are free to do so, but you are not free to call such killings "justice". The word has no meaning in the mouths of those who sanction punishment where there is no responsibility.

Sincerely,



Margaret Vandiver  
625 N.E. 1st Street, #5  
Gainesville, FL 32602

April 9, 1984

Howard Means  
Orlando Sentinel Star  
633 North Orange Avenue  
Orlando, FL

Dear Mr. Means:

As one of the people who worked to prevent the execution of Arthur Goode, I was struck by your thoughtful column concerning the case. I would like to add my own reflections on several points. During the last week of Goode's life, I spent some 20 hours with him, and from my conversations with him, and observations of him, I gained certain insights which had not come to me from all I had read about the case.

You and I agree in finding capital punishment an abomination. We also agree that Goode was a man with a "hideous obsession". Yet you say you are elated that the state of Florida killed Goode, and I am overwhelmingly sad. Let me try to tell you why.

In the time I spent with Arthur, it became clear to me that his emotional level was that of a 4 or 5 year old child. As I battled through my initial repulsion at his sickness, I began to discern how very young he was. His verbal facility was misleading, and it required hours of conversation to realize how little he actually comprehended. Even a few hours before his execution he had little understanding of his plight. He wanted to know who would wipe his tears if he started to cry while strapped in the chair, but he had no comprehension of death at all. He was like a small child.

I firmly believe that he had no control over his actions. For most of us, there is some distance between condition and behavior, between being and doing. That distance is choice, freedom, responsibility. For Arthur, there was no distance. He did what he did because of what he was, and he never chose that. He was no more responsible for his sickness and its manifestations than we are for our height or eye color.

Arthur's sickness brought out the worst in us. He was the perfect target for hatred and abuse. He seemingly invited it, and everyone responded, media, officers, prisoners, public. You mention the final "press conference" as an example of the filth which "poured out of his mouth". That is true. But I have to tell you that when I gently and firmly refused to hear such filth, he spoke of other things. You must concede that the attitude of the media was, "Pay your quarter and see the freak", and they expected their money's worth. I am not denying Arthur's sickness or its repulsiveness. I

am merely asserting that that sickness was exploited and compounded by unscrupulous and sensationalist press. Arthur desperately wanted attention, and he knew how to get it. He said what he said because that was the nature of his sickness, but also he said it because the media wanted to hear it. When it was made clear to Arthur that he did not have to put on a performance in order to keep one's attention, it was possible to steer him away from the subject of pedophilia.

If Arthur Goode's life had any purpose, surely it was to show us how terrible are the ravages of mental disease, and to give us an opportunity to respond in a way demonstrating our own sanity and maturity. We failed terribly. Instead of understanding the disease, we blamed the person who suffered it. Instead of responding reasonably, we reacted with loathing and fear. Instead of caring for a damaged and difficult person, we killed him. Arthur Goode was not responsible for his actions. We are responsible for ours, however, and our failure and cruelty and shame will be with us until we finally and forever renounce the organized savagery of executions.

On April 5th, as you wrote, we killed decency. We also killed a sick, demented, frightened child. You mourn for the death of decency. So do I, but I also mourn for Arthur Goode.

Sincerely,



Margaret Vandiver  
625 N.E. 1st St., #5  
Gainesville, FL 32602

## 'A game called Death'

Of the 200 people who have died in Florida's electric chair, Arthur Frederick Goode III, who boasted of molesting and murdering little boys, was surely the most despised and the least mourned. There was the case, some people might say, for which the death penalty was made.

Goode's crimes were, in a word, fiendish, and so was his behavior in prison. He extolled pedophilia. He wrote letters taunting his victims' parents. He threatened to kill again, if ever he got the chance. He did everything possible to sign his own death warrant.

**YET THE** queasy fear lingers that Florida has imposed its supreme penalty on a lunatic who could not have helped what he was or what he did. It is unquestioned that Goode was mentally ill from early childhood on, possessed by abnormal sexual urges and unable to distinguish effectively from right and wrong. Punishing him, his mother said later, "Was just like whipping a damned dog. He never could figure out why I was doing it." Both times that he killed, he was supposed to be in a mental hospital. He was an ungovernable child in a man's body. Even his bizarre prison behavior was a form of acting out.

But Florida law distinguishes between mental illness and legal insanity. After a half hour's visit, three psychiatrists selected by the state concluded officially that he did indeed meet the legal criteria for execution — which is only

that the condemned person "understand the nature and effect of the death penalty and why it is to be imposed upon him." Did he really? Dr. George W. Barnard, a University of Florida psychiatrist who spent a much longer time with Goode two weeks before his death, said that talking with him about his impending execution "is like hearing a child talk about a pretend or make-believe situation . . . like listening to a child talk of a game called 'Death' . . ."

**THE EXECUTION** was a catharsis for the families of his victims and for all other citizens who shared vicariously in their understandable anger and grief. And it served, of course, to guarantee that Freddy Goode would never kill again. But society is deluding itself if it thinks the killing of Freddy Goode accomplished anything else. It will not prevent murders by other people like him because they are immune to deterrence by example. It will not help us understand what makes them what they are, or how to detect and isolate them before they kill. As one of his attorneys asked poignantly, "It's over for him. But what have we learned from him?"

What we have learned is no more profound or useful than that executions are, as someone once predicted, becoming routine once again. Now that we've had two on the same day, what new precedent will it take to excite the media and the public? Three?



Mary Ann  
Lindley

## Killers as grisly as Goode present a moral challenge

The late Arthur Frederick Goode surely tested the beliefs and emotional stamina of those of us instinctively opposed to capital punishment. It's hard to say he'll be missed.

Goode unabashedly revealed in the deviation he primly referred to as pedophilia. He boasted that after molesting two young boys, he killed them to punish society for its prejudice against him. This man, whose very name rubbed in the fact of his badness, raved that he wanted child movie star Ricky Schroder "to sit on my lap naked when I'm being executed."

Jeez. He sent shocking, perverse letters to his victims' parents, and created a nightmarish world for his own family. In 1982, his mother, Mildred, told the St. Petersburg Times: "Freddy was the type of child you just didn't know how to handle. I'd whip him, but let me tell you something, it was just like whipping a damned dog. He never could figure out why I was doing it."

It seems obvious that anyone in his or her right mind couldn't believe Goode was in his. Yet, despite his ravings and perversity, despite his history of mental illness, Goode's sanity was never of great interest to Florida courts, though it should have been. And on the day that Goode died, Gov. Bob Graham simply reiterated his point about capital punishment as a learning experience for would-be killers.

How preposterous to think that people such as Goode might understand and learn from this message of society when they can't even comprehend the meaning of a mother's paddling.

The deterrence lesson seems also to have been missed by others who are not as mad as Goode, but no less dangerous.

Christopher Bernard Wilder, whose criminal foray apparently brought him to a Tallahassee shopping center two weeks ago, is believed to be stalking the streets of U.S. cities on an almost daily basis — including the day that not one, but two murderers were being executed. (Elmo Sonnier was put to death in Louisiana a few hours before Goode died in Florida.)

And as Goode was being executed, the FBI was preparing to announce Wilder's addition to the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list because he is "extremely active, very dangerous."

Obviously, Wilder either does not understand the meaning of the word "deter," or he pays no attention to the news.

So, if neither the mad nor the wily are stopped by capital punishment, then who — other than the particular killer in question — is?

Deterrence is simply too thin an argument for capital punishment. But if the majority is in favor of state killing, there must be a reason. I land on revenge as the only other valid excuse, and probably the more interesting one.

Revenge is a natural emotion that as a motivating force is possibly as strong as say, love. Sometimes it's even mistaken for love: "If someone did that to my child," many a parent has said, "I could kill him with my own hands."

Yet, despite its temporary sweetness, revenge is a nasty habit. Compare it to the feeling of admiration when you read of a victim's loved one who forgives the killer. We may shake our heads and say, "There goes a bigger person than me," but deep down inside, the feeling's good.

Here is a childhood lesson that sticks in my mind: If you speak badly of someone, your own image is hurt more than theirs.

Somehow, the same moral applies: Revenge lowers you to the level of the hated person. It isn't something to be proud of, and those of us who are not mad, mean or amoral should try to fight it. Not for the sake of the killers, or even the victims, but for ourselves.

THURS 19 APR 84  
11A 5PTimes

# He tested our compassion

■ The writer was an attorney for Arthur F. Goode III, who was executed April 5 at Florida State Prison for the sex murder of a 10-year-old boy. ■

By SUSAN CARY

I write knowing that few will understand or even care. Many will scorn. There are few who mourn the death of Arthur Goode. I am one of the few.

He bothered all of us. The letters, always beginning URGENT, in red ink. The threats. The filthy words, no expletives deleted. His fears and delusions, so terribly out of control, evoked righteous indignation and outrage, confronted our sense of sanity.

Arthur Goode was a mirror for each of us. He reflected our worst fears. We hated seeing the things he made us see in ourselves. So we shattered the mirror. We still look the same, our ignorance and fear and hatred are still there, but with Arthur Goode out of our way, we don't have to look at ourselves any more.

Or do we?

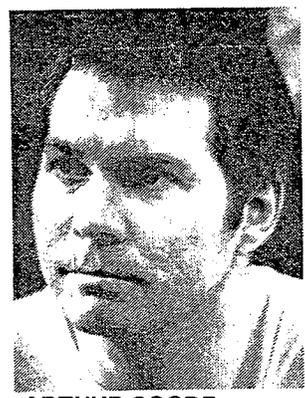
THE INSANITY of Arthur Goode is surpassed only

by our own. What a terrible example we have set: If a problem is too frightening or impossible to solve, just annihilate it. No more problem. Have we now deterred the next insane retarded person from acting upon his uncontrollable insanity? Have we learned a single thing about how such problems are created?

No parents should ever again have to suffer as have Jason VerDow's parents. No parents, either, should ever again have to suffer as have Arthur Goode's parents. We have done nothing to stop that suffering.

Arthur Goode also measured our love and compassion. There was every logical and justifiable reason to despise him. He was an easy target: perverted, retarded, ugly, annoying, demanding, fearful, obsessed, repulsive, crazy. Love for him had to be absolutely unconditional.

I HAD all of the normal reactions to him. I would become angry when the filthy talk poured forth. He assaulted my rationality to the core. Logical answers to his crazy questions were themselves insane. Few could venture through the rain of terror to find the frightened child behind all the sordid verbiage. We who stayed with him his



ARTHUR GOODE

last days and final hours found a 4-year-old with no understanding of cause and effect. He was a tortured and tormented soul who desperately wanted approval and love. One of his final questions to us, knowing he would be killed in a few hours but with no comprehension of death, was "If I cry, who will wipe my tears?"

Arthur Goode was absolutely insane when he was killed. But underneath the sickness flickered a small

... a mirror. flame of light, one that enabled him from his heart with his last breath to apologize for the pain he had caused us.

This bewildered, beleaguered, tortured, twisted person tested the limits of our compassion and showed us where we are lacking. He challenged us to reach beyond the acned face and outrageous words. Much as I hate to admit it, Arthur Goode forced me to be a better person.

15 APR 1984

Electric chair  
fierce deterrent

Electric Chair a 'fierce deterrent'

Editor: I take fathomed exception to your editorial April 8, "A game called death."

15 APR 84

Death by electric chair is the best cure for anyone tried and convicted of the crime of murder. The electric chair is a fierce deterrent and it must be used or no Floridian is safe.

St. Petersburg  
Times FL

INSANITY IS a psychiatrist's cop-out. Eliminate the insanity defense and you'll be surprised how fast the murder rate will plummet. There will be no more need for editorials like "A game called death." Your editorials will not stop justice. Justice will prevail with continued executions.  
Thank you, Gov. Graham, for your courage in upholding the death penalty by electrocution.

Herbert J. Edelman  
Port Richey

Editor: The Times continues its crusade against the death penalty in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Floridians support it. You have called the death penalty brutal murder. Our law calls it punishment. You have said that the death penalty cheapens life. To the contrary, life is so precious that one who wantonly takes the life of another should forfeit his own.

Jack Venderbleek  
St. Petersburg

### Another view

Editor: The editorial "A game called death" was certainly very much to the point. Goode should have been safely put away in a mental institution as he was obviously a lunatic. So why wasn't he?  
As the editorial states, a return to routine executions is a return to the dark ages. It is a return to idiocy and ignorance.

John R. Simpson  
Tampa

### 'Moving' article

Editor: Re: He tested our compassion, April 19 by Susan Cary. I was deeply moved by Susan Cary's article. She expressed what I felt upon reading the account and execution of Arthur Goode. I wish more would share her views of this tragic event.

24 APR 84 SPT  
Mrs. Gilbert Brown  
Dunedin  
P19A

GOODE, ARTHUR  
FLORIDA  
4/5/84

(over-enlarged)

# Now we're rolling

Believers in the revenge theory of justice likely will remember April 5, 1984, for years to come — probably as "Super Thursday."

After years of judicial foot-dragging, after an eternity of impatient delays and intolerable legalities, it happened at last — a doubleheader.

Shortly after midnight, in Louisiana, Elmo Patrick Sonnier took his place in the electric chair to become the 17th man executed since 1977. And, as if to prove that sweet revenge is what justice is all about in America, the state had thoughtfully provided the fathers of Sonnier's two victims with ring-side seats.

Within six hours, here in Florida, child killer Arthur F. Goode III followed Sonnier into the hereafter, as Gov. Bob Graham whispered a pious "God save us all" over the telephone. Goode's execution, the fourth in the Sunshine State, allows Florida to hang onto its slim lead as the killingest state in the union — just ahead of Texas and Louisiana.

And no clearer sign was ever needed that the judicial system would no longer stand in the way of America's capital punishment juggernaut than the double executions of Sonnier and Goode.

Because even as Sonnier was counting his last hours of life, *someone else*, Sonnier's brother Eddie, was confessing to actually having committed the slayings for which Elmo was to die. Previously, Eddie Sonnier had been convicted of abetting, but not committing those murders, and was sentenced to life.

No matter, ruled a succession of federal and state judges, the show must go on. And never mind that under Louisiana law someone who "aids and abets" cannot be subject to the death penalty.

Simple prudence might have dictated that the execution be delayed, if only for a few days, while the state tried to determine which brother actually did commit the murders and which brother stood by and held a flashlight.

But the courts seem to have long since abandoned simple prudence insofar as the official administration of death is concerned. Today, it seems far more important that *someone* die on time. In the end, it really didn't matter which brother died, so long as one did.

And what of Goode?

Of the 18 men gassed, shot, injected and electrocuted in recent years, Goode was undoubtedly the easiest to dispose of. No tears were shed, no second

## Sun editorial

a like crime in Virginia.

Admitted? Heck, he reveled in the details, telling of his enjoyment and his lack of remorse, and saying he would do it again. And just to be accommodating, he also confessed to the murders of other young boys, although police were never able to confirm those murders. They may or may not have been figments of Goode's imagination.

Arthur Goode was easy to kill. His electrocution served notice that Florida would not tolerate such heinous acts of perversion.

But Gov. Graham also served notice of another sort with the dispatching of Goode — notice that Florida would henceforth execute its lunatics without hesitation. Just like they used to do in the Middle Ages.

By any reasonable measure, save Graham's own, Arthur Goode was insane. He had been under psychiatric care since the age of 5. At times, he had been diagnosed as brain-damaged and retarded. When he committed the crime that he was put to death for, he was a runaway from a mental hospital.

His mood swings were such that on one day he would gloat about his crimes and beg for death, and the next he would profess remorse and ask to live. The man did everything but drool and babble in public.

University of Florida psychiatrist George W. Barnard was one of those who thought Goode not competent to be executed, saying Goode treated his pending death like "make believe."

But Graham, citing psychiatric reports his office refused to release, deemed Goode as sane as anyone, and therefore fit to become dead meat.

"What does it take to be declared insane in Florida?" Goode's father asked once after Graham signed the first of two warrants against his son.

It was a good question then — it's a good question still.

For Graham — who insists above all that murderers must die so that others won't murder — his determination to see to the death of a pathetically mad Arthur Goode is most puzzling.

Because if Goode was truly too insane to be able to understand the effect of electrocution,

(over-enlarged)

# Commentary

TAMPA, FLORIDA, FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 1984

## Tribune Editorials

### Courts Showing New Respect for Justice

TWO MURDERERS who richly deserved the penalty were put to death in Florida and Louisiana yesterday. Their executions signified that the courts, at long last, are dumping brakes on the Murderers' Merry-Go-Round.

For year after year, condemned killers have evaded execution by spinning appeals from one court to another. Failing in the state courts and in the U.S. Supreme Court, defense lawyers would begin a new round by filing some frivolous plea in the lower federal courts. This game of spinning between courts was good for years of delay.

The game ran out for Arthur Frederick Goode III, 30, a homicidal homosexual with a predilection for young boys. Eight years after his crime, Goode was executed at the Florida State Prison for the rape and murder of a 9-year-old boy in Cape Coral. Goode also had been con-

rightly called the appeal frivolous and "an abuse" of the legal process. In quick succession the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta and the U.S. Supreme Court also rejected the plea.

In Louisiana, Elmo Patrick Sonnier, 35, lost his final plea to escape execution for the murder of two teenagers who were abducted so the girl could be raped by Sonnier and his brother. The brother, serving a life term, attempted to save Elmo by "confessing" he did the killing but that move was rejected by four appeals courts.

These latest decisions suggest that lower federal courts are heeding the increasing impatience of the U.S. Supreme Court with repetitious appeals. In rejecting a plea to stay a scheduled execution in Mississippi last September, Chief Justice Warren Burger said: "At some point there



April 4, 1984

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FORT MYERS  
**NEWS-PRESS**

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Crazed killers will always kill, no matter how many others are put to death by the state — that is the nature of their twisted minds and emotions.

Goode should be confined to a maximum security institution for the criminally insane for life, without possibility of parole or escape. Thus he would be isolated from society and could do no further harm.

Of course, this sentence would not satisfy people who resent tax money going to feed, clothe and house convicted murderers, even insane ones. It would not satisfy those who sincerely believe that all killers de-

serve to die — the Biblical "eye for an eye." It is especially hard not to want to rid the world of maniacs who have committed the kind of heinous crime for which Goode is to die. A child killer does not deserve sympathy.

However, it would give society the chance to study such cases in an effort to find out why they become what they are.

Goode's would be a classic case for study because he has been in and out of mental institutions for most of his life. The records of his past are there. It is possible that what finally turned him into a killer could be pinpointed and could help society prevent others from becoming the same.

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Tragically, the game will go on as long as capital punishment is the law of the land.

## 'A game called Death'

Of the 200 people who have died in Florida's electric chair, Arthur Frederick Goode III, who boasted of molesting and murdering little boys, was surely the most despised and the least mourned. There was the case, some people might say, for which the death penalty was made.

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that the condemned person "understand the nature and effect of the death penalty and why it is to be imposed upon him." Did he really? Dr. George W. Barnard, a University of Florida psychiatrist who spent a much longer time with Goode two weeks before his death, said that talking with him about his impending execution "is like hearing a child talk about a pretend or make-believe situation . . . like listening to a child talk of a game called 'Death' . . ."

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What we have learned is no more profound or useful than that executions are, as someone once predicted, becoming routine once again. Now that we've had two on the same day, what new precedent will it take to excite the media and the public? Three?

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## Florida death penalty doesn't stop killings

Florida's return to capital punishment in the late 1970s hasn't reduced serious crime in the state.

Instead, the murder rate has skyrocketed.

But apparently this hasn't swayed advocates of the death penalty. Capital punishment is the law in Florida, and a great many Floridians just want it enforced.

Some actually suggest that the state should execute murderers because it helps cut the cost of keeping them in prison.

Such irreverence for human life does no credit even to the cause of eye-for-an-eye justice.

It serves no purpose to note that Arthur Goode III showed no compassion for human life when he butchered an innocent Cape Coral child.

The state is showing an equal disregard for life when it takes Goode's life — if seemingly endless judicial appeals ever allow his electrocution to take place.

And that's the rub for many Floridians. They have become so incensed over the interminable court appeals available to condemned killers that they tend to overlook the merciless finality of the execution they seek.

This paper shares the public's scorn for a judicial system that permits federal judges to stay decisions of a state's Supreme Court for no reason other than that a convicted murderer has asked them to.

But we cannot overlook the fact that the death penalty mocks the state's concern for the sanctity of life. The death penalty is no more honorable

than the killings that prompted it — because it has no capacity for correcting human error.

At best, capital punishment is vengeance, not justice. Murder is inexcusable. But death is absolute. And no act of the state should be absolute. Only God should assume that power.

The question is not whether Arthur Goode, or any other deranged killer, deserves to die for what he did. Instead, the question is whether our society can impose death on a killer without thereby corroding the very human dignity and respect for life that the death penalty seeks to preserve.

Instead of taking the awesome responsibility for life or death into our own hands, shouldn't we instead put killers out of harm's way and concentrate on finding and preventing the causes?

Arthur Goode III is a case in point. The man is obviously deranged. Although he now seeks to escape death, at one point he exulted in preying on little boys and asked the state to execute him.

He must never be allowed to mingle with innocent people again. Throw away the key. But keep him available for study. Society may some day devise a means for discovering the inner forces that turn such people into killers.

Instead of killing its killers, the state should lock them up for life — without any opportunity for parole — and learn everything possible about them.

They're no good to anyone dead.

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## All-night bottle clubs

Gainesville Sun

## OPINION PAGE

# Making a Deadly Parallel

Peter J. Pfluger was hospitalized in Massachusetts two years ago for "hearing voices," but that wasn't his problem.

What worried him was the voices he did not hear, because Pfluger was convinced everybody was into mental telepathy except him. He felt left out. But in the end, he came to believe that pain, his own pain, was transmitted by telepathy. He traced the problem to his grandfather, 80-year-old Clarence Rylander of St. Petersburg.

So Pfluger left his job in Louisiana to visit his grandpop and attacked the sleeping man with fists and flashlight, breaking 11 ribs and the jaw of the old fellow. When the deed was discovered two days later, grandpop was dead and Pfluger was long gone.

He was caught and copped a plea of second-degree murder. The other day, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison — with the judge's hope he would get extensive psychiatric care.

The deed and the pre-sentence report made plain that Peter Pfluger is indeed insane. Presuming he is never released until certified stable, society and Pfluger will be served.

That raises the question of Arthur Frederick Goode III. If the State of Florida had its way, Freddy Goode would have been jolted into the arms of his Maker this week. He is a child molester and a child killer — a true scum who society thinks deserving of electrocution for his crimes.

He nabbed a stay and may burn on another day. But look closer at Freddy Goode.

His deviant behavior surfaced around the age of 12. A friendly teacher, until she moved away, escorted him to a psychiatrist weekly. At times he was deemed brain-damaged and mentally retarded and was treated at a Maryland rehabilitation center. Overall, his teen-age years were crammed with accusations and police reports, because Freddy liked little boys.

At age 22, he got into deep trouble for child molestation in Maryland. He cut a deal and agreed to enter a mental hospital. That was boring. So he walked away and made his way to his parents, living near Fort Myers, who started the Maryland hospital admission process again. During that period in March 1976, according to the court, Freddy Goode lured 9-year-old Jason VerDow from a bus stop, repeatedly molested him, and strangled him.

Freddy Goode's father angrily accused him of the crime, which Freddy denied, so the parents put him back in the train for the hospital in Maryland.

## A Sun Editorial

Freddy walked into the door, took one look around, walked out again, abducted 11-year-old Kenneth Dawson of Virginia, and did to him what he did to Jason VerDow.

Since then, Freddy Goode has confessed to four other murders, which lawmen cannot substantiate. He once pleaded for execution, then retracted. He wrote brutal and obscene letters to the parents of his victims, detailing the suffering he put their sons through. He wrote Florida Gov. Reubin Askew that he had "absolutely no remorse whatsoever for any of the boys I murdered or their parents either." He added, "I rejoice very time I hear a little boy getting murdered."

His most recent theme is remorse, although he is puzzled when asked to describe the symptoms of remorse. As for sex with male children, he still declares, "I love it." He fantazes publicly about finding "maybe an orphan" to live with, because "there are ways to do anything, and there ought to be a way to do this."

Is this man sane?

The courts say he is. Sanity wasn't a major issue, if an issue at all, in the appeals designed to avert his execution Tuesday.

"What does it take to be declared insane in Florida?" asks Freddy Goode's father. It is a good question, touching on the puzzling aspect of criminal justice.

Revisit the case of Peter J. Pfluger, in and out of mental hospitals because he heard voices. He felt telepathic pain and killed his grandfather for causing it. He gets 15 years and, deemed mentally unbalanced, is recommended for treatment.

Now revisit Freddy Goode, in and out of mental hospitals with a 10-year history of perverse mental instability. He kills two youngsters and still seems nutty as a squirrel's nest. Gov. Bob Graham, acting for the State of Florida, wants him put to death.

There has to be an explanation for the widely varying treatment of Peter J. Pfluger and Freddy Goode. We are thankful that Governor Graham, and not us, will be making that explanation someday to Higher Authority.