

Voices of Texas

MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILIES SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Ron Carlson, Deborah's brother

Houston

On June 13, 1983, I received a call from my biological father. He told me to come down to his shop in Houston, stating that something had happened to my sister, Deborah. My life changed forever in that moment. My sister had been murdered in a horrific double homicide. I would see the ghastly images over and over in the months and years to come as the courts dealt with those responsible for the murder and the media reported on the case. The only thing that comes to my mind when I think about those first minutes and hours is shock.

When Debbie and I were kids, our mother was ill. She divorced dad and when she remarried my stepdad, he agreed to adopt us and care for us if mom couldn't. She passed away when Debbie was only 11 and our stepfather kept his promise. To make ends meet, he worked long hours and Debbie took on the mother role and raised me. I don't know where I would have been without her.

It took 14 ½ years for the legal process to be complete. Meanwhile, we waited in uncertainty and were dragged in and out of court for hearing after hearing. My family was divided over whether the death penalty was appropriate. Debbie's son Bucky still doesn't speak to me because of my opposition to the death penalty. Each time an appeal came up, we'd receive media calls and see the pictures on the television. Wounds that had scabbed over were ripped open and bled again. I wish that the killers had simply received life without the possibility of parole so that my family and I would not have been torn apart by the death penalty and could have begun the hard work of grieving and healing years earlier.

Chris Castillo



Ron Carlson

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