

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/innocence-cases-1973-1983>

7. Thomas Gladish *New Mexico Conviction: 1974, Charges Dismissed: 1976*

8. Richard Greer *New Mexico Conviction: 1974, Charges Dismissed: 1976*

9. Ronald Keine *New Mexico Conviction: 1974, Charges Dismissed: 1976 (left)*

10. Clarence Smith *New Mexico Conviction: 1974, Charges Dismissed: 1976*

The four were convicted of murder, kidnapping, sodomy, and rape and were sentenced to death. A subsequent investigation by the Detroit News uncovered lies by the prosecution's star witness, perjured identification given under police pressure, and the use of poorly administered lie detector tests. A state district judge dismissed the original indictments and the men were released after the murder weapon was traced to a drifter from South Carolina who admitted to the killing. (Detroit News Magazine, 1/11/76 and Detroit News, 12/16/75). Visit Ron Keine's [Homepage](#)

<http://www.executionsdoorstep.com/exonerated1.htm>

RON KEINE

Condemned by the False Testimony of a Motel Maid Who Was Thrown in Jail When She Tried to Tell the Truth

“When a guy goes to prison for a crime he commits—robbery, drugs, whatever—when he gets out, there are support programs, counseling services. Parole officers will try to get guys in school or vocational training if they don’t have any skills, to get them off the dope-dealing streets and make them productive members of society. But an innocent man coming off death row, he’s got no parole officer. He’s got nothing. He’s been stuck in a six by nine cell, for no telling how many years. His three meals have been shoved through a gate like he was an animal. If he’s lucky, he might have gotten out for a shower and exercise once a week. He didn’t work. Someone else scheduled every aspect of his day in a routine that he had no control over—including the day they’ll end his life for a crime he didn’t commit. Then by some miracle they discover he didn’t do it, and he gets out. He doesn’t know how to make decisions for himself. He’s got no money. There are no government agencies or services to help him readjust to life on the outside. Friends turn the other way when they see him coming, afraid he’ll ask them for a job. No one will hire him. If he’s got a wife and kids, she’s supporting them. If he doesn’t have a girl, he can’t get one. No one wants to go out with him—what’s he got to offer? He feels like a piece of shit. I know what these guys are going through just off death row—I was there.”— Ron Keine who was nine days away from the New Mexico gas chamber when an appeal stayed his execution and that of the three men convicted along with him. All four were eventually proved innocent, but within five year of their release, the other three were dead.¹

The Crime

February 6, 1974, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Kerry Rodney Lee had only been in Albuquerque a few weeks. Lee, age twenty-three, made his way in the world by both selling illegal drugs and serving as a police informer. His charming, charismatic personality quickly won over nearly everyone he met, a trait enhanced by his dark curly hair, hazel eyes, and fetching smile. Women found him irresistible. He once boasted he could seduce any woman or man he set his sights on.

His new girlfriend, Jan McCord, was a student at the University of New Mexico. Her friends Steve Lent and Pat Spahn had introduced Jan McCord to Kerry Lee. They met him at Okie’s Bar, a popular hangout across the street from the University of New Mexico Campus. Although Jan McCord had known Kerry Lee only a very short time, she was clearly infatuated. She had persuaded Steve Lent to let Kerry Lee room with him, although the arrangement did not last long. On the fourth day of his stay, Lent discovered Kerry Lee engaged in a sexual act with a fifteen-year-old Chicano boy and told him to move out.²

On the evening of February 5, Kerry Lee had use of the Thunderbird that Jan McCord’s father, William McCord, had given Jan to drive. In the glove compartment was an Ivor Johnson .22 pistol, which Lee had taken from William McCord’s gun collection. When

Kerry Lee stopped by Steve Lent's apartment, Lent was not particularly happy to see him, given the past circumstances. And Lee was seriously drunk, probably stoned on downers, too, Steve Lent guessed.³

Sensing the extent of his unwelcome, Kerry Lee cut his visit short, mentioning on his way out that he had some important business to take care of, although the business was likely nothing more urgent than more drinking. Lee made his way to Okie's, where he struck up a conversation with William Velten, age twenty-six, who worked at a nearby Chinese restaurant. The two men had never met before and became acquainted over multiple rounds of tequila, along with an added boost from some Seconals, a strong pharmaceutical analgesic. Feeling no pain, they left the bar.⁴

After stopping briefly at Pat Spahn's, where Lee and Velten never even got around to taking off their jackets, the pair drove out of town to a deserted arroyo. Lee bottomed out the T-bird on a sandy rise in the creek bed.

For reasons that have never been entirely understood, Kerry Lee and William Velten ended up in a death match outside the car. During a struggle over possession of the Ivor Johnson .22, stray bullets struck the T-bird, and Velten pulled a buck-hunting knife. Lee gained control of the pistol and fired. Velten went down. Drunk and enraged, Lee emptied the pistol in Velten's head, and with Velten's buck knife, slashed the man's chest, castrated him, and stuffed his severed penis in his mouth.⁵

Lee heaved the pistol into the shadows and dragged the body beneath the cover of a nearby bush. After scouring the area for spent cartridges, he walked back to the main road, to the Western Skies Motel. At the coffee shop, he met a police officer, who had received a call to investigate a report of gunfire. Lee and the officer had coffee. He told the officer about getting stuck in the sand and said he had been hassled by rowdy kids who threw firecrackers at his car—a tidy explanation accounting for both the gunshots and his unkempt appearance.⁶

The police officer bought his story and phoned for a wrecker.⁷ Lee was soiled and dusty, from the struggle with Velten. There was no blood on his clothes or person, though. He had done his work with the knife after Velten was dead, and the corpse bled very little.⁸

But the gunshot wounds to Velten's head were another matter. Had he kicked sand over the bloodstain where Velten went down?

The alcohol and downers had taken their toll on Kerry Lee. He rode with the tow truck driver back to the arroyo, and the driver pulled the T-bird out, no questions asked. Afterwards, Lee decided to spend the night at the motel, registering under the name David Morningstar. In his pocket, he discovered the spent cartridges that he had retrieved from the scene, and he hid them under the carpet in the motel room.⁹

During the course of the day that followed, February 6, Lee and Jan McCord drove into

the arroyo in a borrowed Land Rover. Horrified when she realized the nature of their errand, Jan McCord watched while Kerry Lee dragged a man's body further into the brush. Lee later returned on horseback, hoping to move the corpse to a still more remote location, but he did not get far. He tied a rope to the corpse, but the horse tangled in the makeshift harness and fell. Burying the body was out of the question with the ground frozen. Exhausted, he gave up and crudely concealed the body under a sage bush.¹⁰

Lee rented a metal detector and returned to the scene of the crime a third time to search for the Ivor Johnson pistol, but he never found it.¹¹

A few weeks later, Kerry Lee left town.¹²

Ron Keine

February 8, 1974, El Monte, California

Late on the evening of February 8, Ron Keine and four of his buddies, bikers like himself, set out from El Monte, California, in a flashy orange van with a custom paint job.¹³ They were headed back to Michigan for motorcycle parts. Michigan was Ron's home state, and the home state of all but one of the others. They were members of the Vagos, a coalition of southern California bikers who had aligned themselves against the notorious Hell's Angels.

Ron was twenty-six. He had been in California just under a year. The Vagos were his reason for being there—"The Vagos had the reputation of being the baddest bikers around, and that was what I wanted to be."

Ron was born in 1947 to a doting, loving mother and an abusive alcoholic father. As a child, he was nervous and emaciated. A battery of tests at a local hospital revealed nothing physically wrong with him. "I wouldn't eat, because I didn't want to sit at the table with my dad. Mealtime was hell. You couldn't say anything, or you got backhanded off your chair, and wound up with a mouthful of blood and loose teeth."

The array of hospital tests also included psychological assessments, which indicated that Ron was extremely intelligent. As a consequence, things at home got even worse for Ron. His father relentlessly berated him for being an underachiever.

"My dad would come in late, drunk, yank me out bed, and smack me around. One time he swung at me, missed, and punched the thermostat through the wall. He said it was my fault, threw me out of the house, and said I couldn't come back until I gave him \$87 to have it fixed—I was fifteen..."

KEINE NOTES

1) Ron Keine, interview by author, tape recording, Winchester, Tennessee, 18-20 February 2005.

2) Douglas Glazier, "New Biker Hearing Asked," Detroit News, 23 September 1975; Douglas Glazier, "Break cited in biker case," Detroit News, 1 October 1975; Douglas Glazier, "Gun Identified in NM Murder," Detroit News, 4 December 1975; Ron Keine; Florida Department of Corrections; Douglas Glazier, "Confessed biker case slayer identified as drug informer," Detroit News, 30 November 1975; Daniel Stuart Johnson, expert witness, telephone interview by author 13 November 2005.

- 3) Douglas Glazier, "New Biker Hearing Asked"; Denise Tessier, "Velten Knife Wounds Inflicted After Death, Doctor Testifies," Albuquerque Journal, 3 December 1975.
- 4) Denise Tessier, "Velten Knife Wounds Inflicted After Death, Doctor Testifies"; Douglas Glazier, "Gun Identified in NM Murder"; Douglas Glazier, "New Biker Hearing Asked"; George Henry Farrah, telephone interview by author, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Winchester, Tennessee, 14 April 2005 and 8 September 2005; Steve Terrell, "Telling a Story of Horrid Crime, Consequences," The Santa Fe New Mexican, 4 June 1995.
- 5) Tessier, "Velten Knife Wounds"; James Brandenburg, "Don't Vilify Vagos Case Jury," Albuquerque Journal, 27 February 2005; Douglas Glazier, "New Biker Hearing Asked"; Douglas Glazier, "Break cited in biker case"; George Henry Farrah; Steve Terrell, "Telling a Story of Horrid Crime, Consequences."
- 6) Douglas Glazier, "Ruling put off for bid on new biker trial," Detroit News, 2 October 1975; Charles W. Daniels, "Prosecutor Misses Point of Death Row Exoneration," Albuquerque Journal, 4 March 2005; Daniel Stuart Johnson.
- 7) Exonerations and the Death Penalty: an in depth look, video recording of panel discussion, University of New Mexico, 14 February 2005.
- 8) Denise Tessier, "Velten Knife Wounds Inflicted After Death, Doctor Testifies."
- 9) Steve Terrell, "Telling a Story of Horrid Crime, Consequences"; Daniel Stuart Johnson; Douglas Glazier, "Gun Identified in NM Murder"; Exonerations and the Death Penalty; Charles W. Daniels.
- 10) Daniel Stuart Johnson; Denise Tessier, "Hate, Prejudice Nearly Sent four to Gas Chamber," Albuquerque Journal, 9 July 1978; Charles W. Daniels; Douglas Glazier, "New Biker Hearing Asked."
- 11) Exonerations and the Death Penalty.
- 12) George Henry Farrah.
- 13) Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section was compiled from the interview sessions with Ron Keine.

http://witnessstoinnocence.org/view_stories.php?Ron-Keine-24

Ron Keine, Assistant Director of Membership and Training

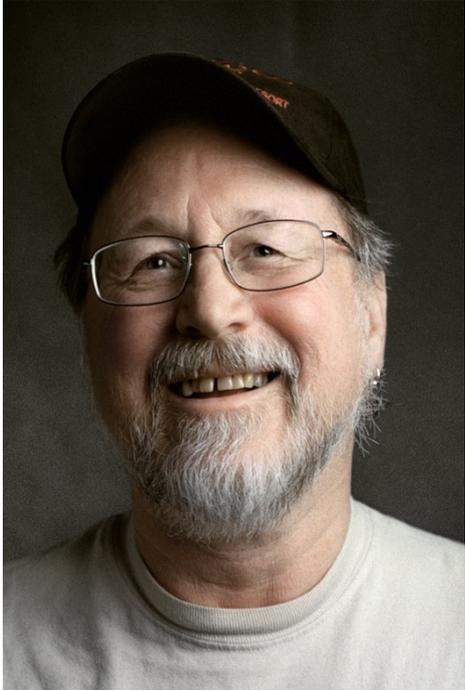
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Ron Keine is currently the Assistant Director of

Communications and Training for Witness to Innocence. Ron was one of four men convicted of the murder and kidnapping of a University of New Mexico student in 1974. He and his co-defendants were sentenced to death before an investigation by *The Detroit News* uncovered lies by the prosecution's star witness, perjured identification given under police pressure, and the use of poorly administered lie detector tests. Ron was released in 1976 after the murder weapon was traced to a law enforcement officer who admitted to the killing. Most recently, Ron has been published internationally, featured in a scholarly publication of the University of Cincinnati College of Law and honored by the Texas House of Representatives.

Ron Keine



Along with three other co-defendants, Ron

Keine was convicted of the kidnapping and murder of University of New Mexico student William Velten in 1974. He was sentenced to death in New Mexico.

A subsequent investigation by the Detroit News uncovered a bizarre campaign by prosecutors to coerce testimony from a motel maid named Judy Weyer, whom they wanted to be their star witness. Theorizing that the murder had taken place at the motel, police first offered the young woman favorable treatment from her boyfriend, who was in trouble with the law, if she testified against Ron and the others. Although she had made statements about a group of tenants at the motel whom she thought could be connected to the crime, when she refused to say that she knew anything about the murder itself, they threatened to charge her with perjury for the previous statements (even though perjury can only take place in court). Then, to increase the pressure on her, prosecutors began to implicate her boyfriend in the murder, and when she wouldn't testify that he had something to do with the crime, they booked her as an accessory to murder and threw her in jail. Eventually, she fabricated an elaborate story in which she had also been raped by the criminals then was forced to watch as they committed the heinous murder. The jury was convinced by her testimony and an execution date was set.

After prosecutors reneged on all their promises to Weyer and her boyfriend—who was sent to prison rather than being freed—she fully retracted her story in a set of taped newspaper interviews. The story broke in January of 1975 and a hearing for a new trial was held. Unbelievably, the judge refused to grant a new

trial, and then the taped interviews with Judy Weyer mysteriously disappeared. Ron Keine and the others remained on death row.

In the fall of 1975, Kerry Lee – the real killer of William Velten – had a religious epiphany and turned himself in for the murder. Despite his confession, thorough knowledge of the details of the crime, and an accurate hand-drawn map of where the body had been hidden, the district attorney maintained that Lee's story was not believable and no charges were filed against him. Keine and the others did win a new trial hearing, however, and the information Lee provided, plus the recovery of the murder weapon, finally resulted in the granting of a new trial.

The new trial was never held. In December of 1975, Judge Philip Biaimonte quashed the murder indictments, having concluded that ballistics tests definitively linked the murder weapon to the confessed killer, who was tried and convicted in 1978. Ron Keine and the other three men were exonerated and set free.

After his release, Ron returned to Michigan and became a successful businessman and was active in local politics. His transition, however, was not easy. "It was hard to find a job," Ron says. "I found that people read the headlines but not the whole story. They just knew that I'd been 'involved' in a murder. I had employers tell me they couldn't hire me because I'd be bad for employee morale and scare the women," he said.

Ron is a strong leader in the anti-death penalty movement and an active participant in Witness to Innocence. Ron currently lives outside of Detroit, where he owns his own business. Ron has been on the Larry King Show, various radio talk shows and a 2007 PBS documentary. Most recently, Ron was published internationally, featured in a scholarly publication of the University of Cincinnati College of Law and honored by the Texas House of Representatives. He feels it is important to tell his story of death row to educate others. "I used to have faith in the American justice system. Now I know it's corrupt and broken. I don't believe the government should kill people."

http://springbreakalternative.org/deathpenalty/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=84&Itemid=84

Ron Keine was wrongfully convicted of murder and sentenced to death in New Mexico. Ron was nine days from execution when the real murderer confessed to a preacher. Along with three co-defendants, Ron Keine was convicted of the murder, kidnapping, sodomy and rape of University of New Mexico student William Velten in 1974 and was sentenced to die in New Mexico's gas chamber. An investigation by The Detroit News after Ron and his co-defendants were sentenced uncovered lies by the prosecution's star witness, perjured identification given under police pressure, and the use of poorly administered lie detector tests. Ron spent 22 months on death row until the real killer came forward and confessed. At one point, Ron says, he was so close to going to the gas chamber that an assistant warden came to talk to him about what he wanted for his last meal. In late 1975, a state district judge dismissed the original indictments and the four men were released in 1976 after the murder weapon was traced to a drifter from South Carolina who admitted to the killing. The murder weapon, a 22-caliber pistol, was found only after a search warrant was issued to open the sheriff's safe. Not only was the murder weapon found, there was also dated evidence showing that the gun was hidden from the defense at the original trial. Since his exoneration, Ron has traveled the country to tell his powerful story of innocence with the Witness to Innocence Project.

<http://thejourneyofhope.blogspot.com/2008/08/rat-trap-death-row-exonerations-expose.html>

Friday, August 08, 2008

The Rat Trap: Death Row Exonerations Expose Pitfalls of the "Snitch" System

If the state of North Carolina had its way, Jones, 49, would have been strapped to a gurney years ago, hooked to an IV and pumped full of a lethal, three-drug cocktail until he asphyxiated.

Instead, on May 2, he walked out of prison a free man after spending 13 years on death row, and another 24 months locked up awaiting retrial -- all for a murder he almost certainly did not commit.

Jones -- known to friends and family as "Bo" -- was released with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Capital Punishment Project after the prosecution's star witness recanted her testimony against him. (Lovely Lorden, a former girlfriend, admitted she'd collected \$4,000 in reward money in exchange for testifying against Jones.)[...]

The prosecution felt little obligation to question the veracity of Lorden's claim. And if the witness is to be believed today, investigators actually helped her keep her story straight.

As a result of Lorden's testimony -- and despite the lack of physical evidence tying him to the crime -- a jury convicted Jones in 1993 and he was sentenced to die for Grady's killing.

What Jones' attorneys didn't know at the time -- and, as it turns out, didn't really bother trying to uncover -- is that Lovely Lorden had made something of a career out of testifying against people close to her. By her own admission, she has aided law enforcement in dozens of investigations and says she helped police make cases against several other boyfriends, as well as her own brother and sons.

What's more, her work as a confidential informant didn't stop after Jones was sent to death row. Jones' attorneys sent *In These Times* copies of receipts that show Lorden was paid money at least seven times for her work as a confidential informant from December 2003 to April 2004, while Jones sat in jail.

Today, Lorden contends she testified against Jones under pressure from the police, in particular Dalton Jones (no relation), the lead officer in the case.[...]

Unfortunately, the case of Levon Jones is not an anomaly. He is the fifth death row prisoner to be exonerated in the past year. Since December, North Carolina alone has released three inmates from death row after it was determined that they did not commit the crimes for which they were convicted. Of these three men, two, including Jones, were

convicted on the false testimony of snitches.[...]

Unfortunately this article is way to long to quote all of it in here but I would really recommend to read all of this really interesting, informing and educating article at alternet.org

Please also read the answer of Ron Keine - an exoneree himself - to this article which I posted as a comment to this post

Posted by Susanne at 5:58 AM

1 comments:

Susanne said...

Because of the 129 death row exonerations and Hundreds of DNA exonerations for lesser crimes, We are reading more and more about scrutiny of the American justice system. People are asking questions and losing faith in the "greatest justice system in the world." Almost half of my fellow death row exonerated were convicted on "snitch" testimony. I offer my own case as an example.

I was put on death row right after my arraignment for the two months preceding my trial. (and we always thought you have to be found guilty of something to go to prison much less death row). At my trial two prison snitches claimed that I confessed to them . There was no physical evidence what so ever. In order for someone to believe what the snitches said , I would have had to do the following.

First I would have to break out of my death row cell in full view of the guards who sat at the desk at the end of the row. Next I would have to break out of a catwalk area. Then out of the cell block into the yard in full view of all the lights and guards in the towers with machine guns. Then instead of scaling a fence or a wall to gain freedom I supposedly broke into another part of the prison where they keep snitches and homosexuals in a protective custody unit. I broke into that heavily guarded catwalk, found two snitches and confessed to them. (Wait it gets even better) I then broke out of the protective custody catwalk and out of that building. Now, instead of trying to escape I retraced my steps going back to death row, breaking in to the building, catwalk and my cell right under the noses of the guards.

Any sane person would look at this and know that no one could possibly believe this scenario. Well 12 jurors at my trial did and sentenced me to death. The only other evidence was a false eye witness who later recanted and told how the prosecution made her lie.

This recent article (see below) Is asking for corroboration of snitch testimony. In my case they had that corroboration. they merely got another snitch to corroborate the first one. A crucial point that should be looked at with a little more attention is the fact that most prison or jailhouse snitches lie. Prosecutors and police have a list of snitches that they can use at any time. Some of these law enforcement officials show little regard for the truth but only to bolster their case. (has anybody ever heard of a prosecutor who gave his snitch a lie detector test? Why not? is the truth that irrelevant to his case?

In my quest to be an informed abolitionist I have read hundreds of cases. Many of these are wrongful convictions. I feel that any time snitch testimony is used in a case it reeks of corrupt prosecution. That and hiding evidence are the trademarks of a corrupt prosecutor. This article below asks for more rules of evidence to protect the innocent. To me it would just be more laws for these arrogant and crooked prosecutors to ignore.

Some might think (and some have told me so) that I am too hard on prosecutors. That there are only a few bad ones. Let me give a few facts here. Over two thirds of all capital cases are overturned because of prosecutorial misconduct and ineffective defense council which counts for a small amount of the total. In the 129 death row exonerations and hundreds of lesser crime exonerations where did the evidence come from against the innocent defendant? It was manufactured or fabricated by the prosecutor. Many times with the full cooperation of the police and sometimes even judges. How many times has a prosecutor been charged with attempted murder when he knowingly sent an innocent man to be executed or used manufactured evidence to convict him? Prosecutors are politicians. They are not in office because they are adept at law. They won a popularity contest called an election. They can do as they please and have the county checkbook at their disposal. Most have immunity which protects them from the law when they do wrong. I have never seen a case where a prosecutor was ever recalled for his or her misdeeds. How can we have a just system when the top officials are corrupt? I have to wonder some times who is the biggest crook? Is it the corrupt prosecutor who constantly and sometimes on a daily basis breaks the law or the crackhead he is maliciously prosecuting? To quote a certain bible belt prosecutor who braggingly said "Any prosecutor can convict a guilty man, It takes a damn good one to convict an innocent one.

About two years ago I had just given a speech when a man who claimed to be a prosecutor told me that he is for the death penalty because it "helps with the black problem". To this day I fault myself for not just bitch slapping that S.O.B.. Am I really too hard on Prosecutors?

In summary, making more laws or court rules will never fix the justice system . We already have laws in place that cover just about everything we could ever think of. The system is not flawed by laws. It is flawed by the human element. Aside from a few honest mistakes it is rampant with corruption. We will never fix the justice system until we start addressing the people who misuse it.

Ron Keine
6:07 AM