

The obsessed: not expert witnesses to their own monstrosity, but Dodd was completely credible on two points: that he killed and raped because he enjoyed it, and that if ever free again, he would rape and kill anew. Clearly Dodd had to be permanently separated from society. His execution was one way; incarceration was the other. No Washington prisoner sentenced to life without parole has ever escaped or been released.

Why, then, execution? Because Dodd literally asked for it? And asked to be hanged as he had hanged the 4-year-old? But that's a lunatic symmetry, which was somehow supposed to be just and of course was not. The boy was still dead at the end of it. Surely the crazed are not the best counselors for what punishment fits their crime.

Deterrence? Object lessons are utterly lost on socio-

cases, with their appeals, are costlier than imprisonment. In any event, it is dangerous as well as repugnant to give government a right to kill based on its own accountings of cost effectiveness.

And, finally, that righteous retribution demanded death, as a way to purge the horrors of Dodd's crimes. In short, that killing him felt good — so much so, a crowd outside the prison partied raucously, chanting and firing Roman candles.

At the end, we are reduced to holding that it is all right to execute just because the killing is, well, satisfying.

Shouldn't it give us pause, at least, that Westley Dodd would understand?

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CHARLES ANDERSON / ACCURACY & FAIR PLAY

Weird tales are nothing new

People strange and odd gravitate to reporters like magnets to true north. For the most part we like them because they are interesting and pick at a substantial curiosity level, the main reason we do this anyway.

Odd folks have stumbled over me right frequently. They get messages from Mars or pick up radio stations through their fillings.

They have sat at my desk or leaped against my car to tell of atomic death rays, flying saucers, parallel planets, returning from the dead or, falling that, miracle cures.

They have written in capital letters and red ink to tell of being followed by secret agents, abducted by aliens, passing through the fourth dimension. Of playing the Grateful Dead backward and hearing ritualistic chants.

Hitler is at a Holiday Inn. By today, we will know that Elvis bought stamps in several states Friday.

The one with a grain of credulity was the one whose teeth got rockably. The rest were twisted creations from the depths of that last frontier, the mind, and God knows what synapse collapsed to churn such pathos in the human ether.

It's not often, though, that such sadness is re-enacted on the public stage, as with the Wilmington City Council Tuesday night.

A fellow who came up with the name of Ronald L. Silver told the council some bizarre things about

Police Chief Robert Wadman.

He got his name right. Everything else was wrong. He accused the chief of pedophilia, child prostitution and my favorite, satanism.

Let us be kind to the stranger among us and say, as Capt. Ben-teen said of Custer's enthusiastic destruction at the hands of the Sioux, "Mistakes were made."

The allegations were old, all disproved. Mr. Silver claimed, among other things, that a new trial had been granted someone found guilty of perjury. Untrue.

Mr. Silver claimed a grand jury had been convened to look into her claims. Not true.

He said he was a "personal investigator," without credentials.

He told a *Star-News* reporter he was retired at 33. Not true. Try "unemployed." He changed his story from Wednesday, when he became an actor, living on his "savings" and pursuing the Grail of duty, honor and country, "moral obligations."

By the time he turned up as Ronald Silver he had lied twice to *Star-News* reporters about his name. Is his name really Ronald Silver? That he carries a birth certificate around to prove it makes me skittish.

He also told the reporters their lives were in danger, but that's just the penalty for bad copy. That might seem severe, but then you don't have to edit it.

He told City Council that a county official told him that the "Incidence of ritual satanic child abuse is disturbingly high."

There are those who would consider one such incident as "disturbingly high," but let it go, because the fellow to whom Mr. Silver said he talked said he was a liar.

He claimed he talked to Sheriff Joe McQueen for "over an hour and a half." The sheriff said get real, it was 15 minutes, max.

You will be hearing more and reading more, for Mr. Silver and his ilk have their own agenda. The newspaper will be trying to get at it while they try to hide it, and this will make the news.

The real issue with Chief Robert Wadman was clearly defined during one of his hiring interviews more than a year ago.

Councilman Luther Jordan, bemused with the chief's repeated distribution of printed material, interrupted: "We know you can write, but can you chief?"

All else is fiddle-faddle.

Charles Anderson is executive editor of the Sunday Star-News and Wilmington Morning Star. We encourage criticism of our news columns, whether for items printed or those which may have been omitted. You may write me in care of the Wilmington Star-News, Box 840, Wilmington, N.C. 28402, or call direct at 343-2301.

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