

by DONALD
JACKSON

Michael John Bell's walk is a
shouldered shuffle, his man-
imid, his flesh soft and paste-
ed. His left eye is slightly out
ocus and his expression is
died yet eager. He talks with
t Midwestern drawl, the sen-
s climbing in inflection so
they all sound like questions.
as a tendency to see himself
little tougher than he is. Al-
everything about him is for-
ble. Everything except where
ves—Death Row at the Col-
o State Penitentiary.

is there because he killed a
and was sentenced to death.
had robbed a gas station in
ver and stolen a car. Police of-
Carl Knobbe pursued him.
s car crashed into a tree.
n Knobbe ran to the car, Bell
him, once through the badge
again in the stomach. Knobbe
three children.

ow, along with three other
enned men—one convicted
urdering a gas station atten-
another of killing his son, a
of shooting a grocery clerk
eath—Mike Bell sits in his
at Canon City and waits. He
been waiting for five years.
xecution has been scheduled
mes and postponed six times.
dds are that sooner or later—
year, perhaps the year after—
umber will come up in the
y that determines who is ex-
ed in the United States. If and
t it does, the execution will
tried out just 125 paces from
e he now sits—in the gas
ber on the third floor of his
lock. Death Row inmates call
as chamber “the penthouse.”
e death penalty is almost ex-
in America today. The num-
of executions has fallen from
h of 199 in 1935 to one in
and two in 1967; there have
none at all in a year. A
t-based legal assault on cap-
punishment (see p. 108) has
ed hundreds of executions
delayed as many more. The
irony, however, is that the
er of men sentenced to
is increasing. As a result,

CONTINUED

in the room

**black on/in cream
rectangle a bit flatter than square
surrounded (angularly) by cream-gray
& then shiny, thin metallic
frame, on beige wall a foot from six-foot by two-foot windows
the black
curvilinear?
leaning back (left)
thickness 1 to 2 inches
painted
2 “lines”
from my angle
2 1/2 reflections of 15” diameter glass spheres lighted within
in a recessive angle top frame to
side frame
varicolored bipeds below
wiggling small sticks
on flat white or yellow
thin material**

undulating hum outside

JACK COLLUM

February 2005
Eco-Lit Class

