

ORIGINAL

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

JAMES MONTELL CHAPPELL,  
Appellant/Cross-  
Respondent.  
vs.  
THE STATE OF NEVADA,  
Respondent/Cross-  
Appellant.

Case No. 43493

FILED

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JANETTE M. BLOOM  
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APPELLANT'S REPLY BRIEF ON APPEAL  
AND ANSWERING BRIEF ON CROSS-APPEAL

STATE'S APPEAL FROM GRANTING OF PETITION FOR  
WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS (POST CONVICTION) AS TO A  
NEW PENALTY HEARING AND CHAPPELL'S CROSS-APPEAL  
AS TO FAILURE TO GRANT A NEW TRIAL AND FOR  
NOT GRANTING RELIEF ON THE OTHER GROUNDS  
RAISED CHALLENGING THE PENALTY HEARING  
IN THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

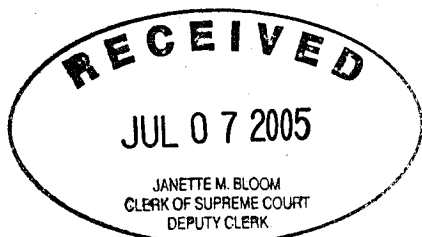
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VS.

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

13

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1 to complain that CHAPPELL has not preserved his issues. Of course,  
2 if CHAPPELL had not filed a cross-appeal to protect his rights, the  
3 prosecutor would later argues that he had waived his rights.

4 The State does not respond to the specific issues raised by  
5 CHAPPELL or even attempt to follow the format of the Opening Brief,  
6 but rather in a hodgepodge fashion addresses some of the issues in a  
7 cursory fashion. CHAPPELL, in keeping with proper appellate practice  
8 will Reply to the State's Answering Brief on cross-appeal and then  
9 Answer Issue Number III which purports to be the State's Opening Brief  
10 claim although not designated as such to delineate same from the  
11 Answering Brief arguments.

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1                    REPLY BRIEF ON CHAPPELL'S DIRECT APPEAL

2                    ARGUMENT

3                    I.

4                    CHAPPELL WAS DENIED EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE  
5                    OF COUNSEL AT THE TRIAL PHASE AND THE  
6                    DISTRICT COURT SHOULD HAVE ORDERED A NEW TRIAL

7                    While the State correctly cites to the appropriate standard to  
8                    be applied where there is a claim of ineffective assistance of trial  
9                    counsel, (Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 104 S. Ct. 2052  
10                   (1984), the State fails to comprehend that the defense theory at trial  
11                   mandated that witnesses be called on CHAPPELL'S behalf to explain the  
12                   relationship between CHAPPELL and Panos and the reason for CHAPPELL'S  
13                   reaction to the perceived infidelity of Ms. Panos.

14                   The State does not bother to address the testimony at the  
15                   evidentiary hearing of trial attorney Howard Brooks (Brooks) that the  
16                   focus of the trial became the history of the relationship between  
17                   CHAPPELL and Panos. Brooks ignored CHAPPELL'S request to call a  
18                   number of witnesses to testify about their relationship. (11 APP  
19                   2560) It speaks volumes about the weakness of the State's position  
20                   that State refuses anywhere in their Answering Brief to reference the  
21                   testimony that was presented at the evidentiary hearing from trial  
22                   counsel. Likewise this testimony was not seriously challenged at the  
23                   hearing itself.

24                   If this Court does nothing more than consider the defense  
25                   "strategy" and failure to investigate and present witnesses to support  
26                   the defense, the result will be obvious; the District Court should  
27                   have granted CHAPPELL a new trial based on ineffective assistance of  
28                   counsel.

                  The State, as shown by the Answering Brief seems not to

1 understand two salient, indisputable points. First, premeditation is  
2 only one element of first degree murder as defined in Byford v. State,  
3 16 Nev. 215, 994 P.2d 700 (2000). Second, testimony that Panos would  
4 consent to CHAPPELL'S presence in the residence would negate the  
5 element of felony murder for the finding of first degree murder as  
6 opposed to a lesser offense. Both of these crucial points could have  
7 been addressed by the witnesses that were not located, and obviously  
8 not called to testify at trial.

9       While the trial court recognized the importance of the witnesses  
10 at the penalty phase, it fails to grasp the impact these witnesses  
11 would have had during the trial. Trial counsel developed and pursued  
12 a strategy at trial, but then failed to present the evidence available  
13 to convince the jury that it was not first degree murder. The Court  
14 erred in this respect and should have granted CHAPPELL a new trial.

II.

THE DISTRICT COURT ERRED IN NOT REVERSING  
CHAPPELL'S CONVICTION AND SENTENCE UNDER  
THE STATE AND FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL  
GUARANTEES OF DUE PROCESS, EQUAL  
PROTECTION, IMPARTIAL JURY FROM  
CROSS-SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY, AND  
RELIABLE DETERMINATION DUE TO THE TRIAL,  
CONVICTION AND SENTENCE BEING IMPOSED  
BY A JURY FROM WHICH AFRICAN-AMERICANS  
AND OTHER MINORITIES WERE SYSTEMATICALLY  
EXCLUDED AND UNDER REPRESENTED

Most recently the United States Supreme Court was called upon to  
examine the jury selection process in State Courts and the recurring  
problem of exclusion of minorities from jury services. In Johnson v.  
California, 545 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2005) the Court was compelled to remind the  
criminal justice system that:

"Undoubtedly, the overriding interest in eradicating  
discrimination from our civic institutions suffers whenever  
an individual is excluded from making a significant  
contribution to governance on account of his race. Yet the  
'harm from discriminatory jury selection extends beyond  
that inflicted on the defendant and the excluded juror to  
touch the entire community. Selection procedures that  
purposefully exclude black persons from juries undermine  
public confidence in the fairness of our system of  
justice.' *Batson*, 476 U.S., at 87; see also *Smith v.*  
*Texas*, 311 U.S. 128, 130 (1940)"

Johnson, 545 U.S. at p. 9.

The Court then went on to state:

"The disagreements among the state-court judges who  
reviewed the record in this case illustrate the imprecision  
of relying on judicial speculation to resolve plausible  
claims of discrimination. In this case the inference of  
discrimination was sufficient to invoke a comment by the  
trial judge 'that 'we are very close', and on review, the  
California Supreme acknowledged that 'it certainly looks  
suspicious that all three African-American prospective  
jurors were removed from the jury.' 30 Cal. 4th, at 1307,  
1326, 71 P.2d, at 273, 286. Those inferences that  
discrimination may have occurred were sufficient to  
establish a prima facie case under *Batson*."

Id. at p. 10.

The decision of this Court in Chappell v. State, 114 Nev. 1404,

1 1411, 972 P.2d 843 (1998) concerning the peremptory challenges of the  
2 two African-Americans is strongly at issue given the Johnson v.  
3 California, supra, decision. No longer can the State come up with  
4 bogus, yet arguably race-neutral reasons for peremptory strikes of  
5 minorities. "[I]t does not matter that the prosecutor might have had  
6 good reasons...[w]hat matters is the real reason they were stricken."  
7 Paulino v. Castro, 371 F.3d 1083, 1090 (9th Cir. 2004).

8       It is not insignificant to note that the cumulation of errors and  
9 the re-examination of previous decisions seriously calls into question  
10 the validity of the District Court's decision not to grant CHAPPELL  
11 a new trial as well as vacating his sentence of death.

1 III.

2 CHAPPELL'S CONVICTION AND SENTENCE ARE  
3 INVALID UNDER THE STATE AND FEDERAL  
4 CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE OF DUE PROCESS,  
5 EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE LAWS, EFFECTIVE  
6 ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL AND RELIABLE SENTENCE  
7 BECAUSE CHAPPELL WAS NOT AFFORDED EFFECTIVE  
8 ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL ON DIRECT APPEAL

9 The State does not contest that there was a failure of  
10 contemporaneous objection to five (5) separate jury instruction listed  
11 in the Opening brief, instead choosing to argue that the instructions  
12 given were proper. The State, thus concedes that counsel would be  
13 deficient in performance if any of the instructions were improper and  
14 the failure to object prevented appellate review or resulted in a  
15 procedural bar in post conviction proceedings.

16 CHAPPELL will not re-argue the merits of each of the  
17 instructions, but will rather rely upon the authorities and argument  
18 raised in the Opening Brief. By doing so, CHAPPELL has preserved the  
19 issues raised and established that the jury was improperly instructed  
20 at both the trial and penalty hearing without proper objection from  
21 trial counsel.

22 The State has elected to address all of the penalty hearing  
23 issues in Argument III which apparently serves as partially the  
24 Answering Brief to the Cross-Appeal and it's Opening Brief on the  
25 appeal filed by the State from the Order granting CHAPPELL a new  
26 penalty hearing. CHAPPELL will address the penalty hearing issues  
27 likewise, although labeling same as Answering Brief to State's direct  
28 appeal. The District Court did not grant relief on many of these  
issues, however, CHAPPELL respectfully urges that if would have been  
proper to do so.

IV.

CHAPPELL'S CONVICTION AND SENTENCE ARE  
INVALID UNDER THE STATE AND FEDERAL  
CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE OF DUE PROCESS,  
EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE LAWS, EFFECTIVE  
ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL AND RELIABLE  
SENTENCE BECAUSE A NUMBER OF JURY  
INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN AT TRIAL WERE FAULTY  
AND WERE NOT THE SUBJECT OF CONTEMPORANEOUS  
OBJECTION BY TRIAL COUNSEL, AND NOT RAISED  
ON DIRECT APPEAL BY APPELLATE COUNSEL

These issues were addressed above with respect to the failure of  
trial counsel to object to the improper instruction. The merits of  
the issues are apparent from the arguments and authorities already  
asserted herein and in the Opening brief. CHAPPELL respectfully  
relies upon same as having established his entitlement to relief.

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V.

THE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN AT THE PENALTY  
HEARING FAILED TO APPRAISE THE JURY OF  
THE PROPER USE OF CHARACTER EVIDENCE AND  
AS SUCH THE IMPOSITION OF THE DEATH  
PENALTY WAS ARBITRARY AND NOT BASED ON  
VALID WEIGHING OF AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING  
CIRCUMSTANCES IN VIOLATION OF THE EIGHTH  
AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

Once again the State argues that this issue is not properly before the Court as the issue is barred because it was not raised on direct appeal, or raised by trial counsel. By making this argument the State, once again, concedes that CHAPPELL received ineffective assistance of trial and appellate counsel. It is the failure of trial and appellate counsel that caused any procedural bars. If this is a meritorious issue there must be a finding of a Sixth Amendment violation.

The State in it's Answering Brief asserts that jury instruction seven and eight adequately "made it clear that the jury could not sentence Defendant to death based on character evidence presented during the penalty hearing." (Ans. Br. p. 26) The State, however, only selectively cites to portions of the two instructions in making this argument and then totally ignores the holding in Evans v. State, 117 Nev. 609, 28 P.3d 498 (2001) that the jury can only consider "character" evidence after the weighing process is complete.

Support for the requirement of proper instruction is also found in a decision by the United States Supreme Court. In Buchanan v. Angelone, 522 U.S. 269, 118 S.Ct. 757, 760, 139 L.Ed.2d 702 (1998), the Court explained as follows:

"Petitioner initially recognizes, as he must, that our cases have distinguished between two different aspects of the capital sentencing process, the eligibility phase and the selection phase. *Tuilaepa v. California*, 512 U.S. 967, 971, 114 S.Ct. 2630, 2634, 129 L.Ed.2d 750 (1995). In the

1 eligibility phase the jury narrows the class of defendants  
2 eligible for the death penalty, often through consideration  
3 of aggravating circumstances. Id. at 971, 114 S.Ct., at  
4 2634. In the selection phase, the jury determines whether  
5 to impose a death sentence upon an eligible defendant. Id.  
6 at 972, 114 S.Ct. at 2634-2635.

7 The failure to properly instruct the jury violated CHAPPELL'S  
8 rights under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. Failure of trial  
9 and appellate counsel to protect these constitutional rights was  
10 ineffective assistance of counsel. Under either theory CHAPPELL is  
11 entitled to relief.  
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1 VI.

2 CHAPPELL'S DEATH SENTENCE IS INVALID  
3 UNDER THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES  
4 OF DUE PROCESS, EQUAL PROTECTION, AND A  
5 RELIABLE SENTENCE BECAUSE THE NEVADA  
6 CAPITAL PUNISHMENT SYSTEM OPERATES IN AN  
7 ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS MANNER AND DOES  
8 NOT NARROW THE CLASS ELIGIBLE TO  
9 RECEIVE THE DEATH PENALTY

10 CHAPPELL is fully aware that this Court in the past has upheld  
11 the constitutionality of the death penalty scheme in Nevada in  
12 numerous case. It is, however, uncontroverted that the Court is  
13 continually reviewing the statutory and procedural mechanism by which  
14 the decision is made to terminate the life of a fellow human being.  
15 this Court has stated that

16 "Furthermore, we observe that this court's examination of  
17 this state's death penalty scheme does not stand alone.  
18 The United States Supreme Court itself has in recent years  
19 reexamined its own precedent and redirected the national  
20 debate over the death penalty, placing this field of  
21 jurisprudence in transition in many respects." McConnell  
22 v. State, 121 Nev.Ad.Op. 5, p. 6-7 (2005)

23 One only need reference this Court's opinion denying rehearing  
24 in McConnell v. State, 120 Nev.Ad.Op. 105 (2004); McConnell v. State,  
25 121 Nev.Ad.Op. 5 (2005) to determine that there is no constitutionally  
26 required narrowing in the Nevada statutory scheme as enacted and as  
27 applied by the District Attorney. In McConnell the Court made the  
28 following observation:

"Thus, we asked 'is Nevada's definition of capital felony  
murder narrow enough that no further narrowing of death  
eligibility is necessary once the defendant is convicted?'  
The answer is no, as we concluded." (footnote omitted)

McConnell, 121 Nev.Ad.Op. 5 at p. 10-11.

Further the Court chastisized the State for it's  
misinterpretation of the requirement for a real narrowing function:

1 "Amicus is correct that a defendant in Nevada becomes  
2 death eligible only after two steps: a finding that at  
3 least one aggravator exists and a finding that the  
4 mitigating evidence does not outweigh any aggravator or  
5 aggravators. McConnell did not discuss the second step,  
6 and therefore amicus says this court failed to discern that  
7 the capital sentencing scheme as a whole sufficiently  
8 narrows death eligibility. The potential effect of  
mitigating evidence does not provide the required  
narrowing. In effect, amicus advances the novel and  
unsound argument that an aggravator that fails to  
constitutionally narrow death eligibility is of no concern  
because of the possibility that a jury may not return a  
death sentence due to mitigating circumstances."

9 Id., at p. 13.

10 The facts of the instant case establish that there was no  
11 constitutionally adequate narrowing of the death eligibility of  
12 CHAPPELL. Irrespective of the other claims raised in this case  
13 CHAPPELL is entitled to a new penalty hearing under a system that  
14 provides an actual narrowing.

1                                   **CROSS-RESPONDENT CHAPPELL'S ANSWERING**  
2                                   **BRIEF ON CROSS-APPEAL OF THE STATE**

3                                   PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

4           The State's Brief does not delineate any of the headings as it's  
5 Opening Brief on cross-appeal, however, it appears that heading  
6 III(A) consisting of pages 22-25 challenge the findings of the  
7 District Court granting a new penalty hearing to CHAPPELL. All other  
8 issues that were argued pertain to the numerous other valid and  
9 meritorious claims that were raised by CHAPPELL in his Writ of Habeas  
10 Corpus. The District Court having found that CHAPPELL was entitled  
11 to a new penalty hearing based on ineffective assistance of counsel  
12 in locating and calling witnesses had no need to address the remainder  
13 of the claims, but CHAPPELL respectfully urges the other issues  
14 warranted relief as argued in the Opening Brief herein.

15           (A)   **Trial Counsel's Inability to Locate Witnesses Warranted**  
16 **Reversal of the Death Penalty**

17           The thrust of the State's argument is that the witnesses that  
18 trial counsel failed to locate and use at the penalty hearing would  
19 have been cumulative to CHAPPELL'S trial testimony, and would have  
20 "directly contradicted the defendant's sworn [trial] testimony".  
21 (State Opening Brief on Cross-Appeal p. 25) The State fails to  
22 specify in what respects the testimony from the witnesses would have  
23 contradicted CHAPPELL. In fact a review of the Affidavits show that  
24 the testimony would have corroborated CHAPPELL.

25           The State ignores the testimony from the evidentiary hearing of  
26 trial counsel Howard Brooks. Brooks testified that the focus of the  
27 trial became the long history of the relationship between CHAPPELL and  
28 Panos and that he had failed to investigate the relationship. (11 APP  
2560)

1 Even though CHAPPELL had given him a list of witnesses he only  
2 went to Michigan for one day and made a token effort to contact the  
3 witnesses. (11 APP 2568) He did not go to Arizona at all even though  
4 incidents were introduced from Arizona at trial. (11 APP 2562) The  
5 State further ignores that the State proceeded on a theory that Panos  
6 had moved to Arizona from Michigan to get away from CHAPPELL and that  
7 he had followed her. Evidence was readily available to show that  
8 Panos urged CHAPPELL to come to Arizona to be with her and paid for  
9 his airline ticket. (11 APP 2676-78) This evidence would have  
10 destroyed much of the image the State inaccurately presented to the  
11 jury.

12 CHAPPELL set forth a complete summary of the testimony of Brooks  
13 and witness affidavits in the Opening Brief at pages 8-16 and  
14 respectfully refers the Court to said summary.

15 The State also complains in a footnote that present counsel for  
16 CHAPPELL could not locate David Green or Earnestine Harvey for  
17 purposes of the Writ of Habeas Corpus. (Opening Cross-Appeal page 23)  
18 It should be noted that the investigation for trial would have been  
19 conducted many years ago in 1995 or 1996. The Supplemental Petition  
20 was filed in 2002. It is only logical that it would have been much  
21 easier to find witnesses with a contemporaneous investigation instead  
22 of years later. This further bolsters that the ineffectiveness of  
23 trial counsel prejudiced CHAPPELL'S defense, not only at trial and on  
24 appeal but on Habeas Corpus.

25 The State is incorrect that David Green was not located. The  
26 Affidavit of Investigator Reefer shows that he was able to locate and  
27 interview Mr. Green and the contents of that interview are set forth  
28 in the Reefer Affidavit. (11 APP 2672-2673) Green provided

1 employment information on CHAPPELL as well as describing the  
2 relationship in Arizona between CHAPPELL and Panos. (11 APP 2672-73)  
3 It was only later when the Affidavit was sent to Green to sign that  
4 Green could not be located.

5 A district court's findings of fact, when considering a claim of  
6 ineffective assistance of counsel, are entitled to deference upon  
7 appellate review. Hill v. State, 114 Nev. 169, 175 953 P.2d 1077,  
8 1082 (1998), *cert. denied*, 525 U.S. 1042, 119 S.Ct. 594 (1998), *citing*  
9 Riley v. State, 110 Nev. 638, 647, 878 P.2d 272, 278 (1994), *cert.*  
10 *denied*, 514 U.S. 1052, 115 S.Ct. 1431 (1995). A claim of ineffective  
11 assistance of counsel is a mixed question of law and fact and may be  
12 subject to the Supreme Court's independent review. McNelson v. State,  
13 115 Nev. 396, 403, 990 P.2d 1263, 1268 (2000). In order to assert a  
14 claim for ineffective assistance of counsel the defendant must prove  
15 that he was denied "reasonably effective assistance" of counsel by  
16 satisfying the two-prong test of Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S.  
17 668, 686-7, 104 S.Ct. 2052, 2062-64 (1984); State v. Love, 109 Nev.  
18 1136, 1138, 865 P.2d 322, 323 (1993). Under this test, the defendant  
19 must show first that his counsel's representation fell below an  
20 objective standard of reasonableness, and second, that but for  
21 counsel's errors, there is a reasonable probability that the result  
22 of the proceedings would have been different. Strickland, 466 U.S.  
23 at 687-688 and 694, 104 S.Ct. at 2065 and 2068. Warden, Nevada State  
24 Prison v. Lyons, 100 Nev. 430, 432, 683 P.2d 504, 505 (1984) (adopting  
25 Strickland two-part test in Nevada). "Effective counsel does not mean  
26 errorless counsel, but rather counsel whose assistance is '[w]ithin  
27 the range of competence demanded of attorneys in criminal cases.'" Jackson v. Warden, Nevada State Prison, 91 Nev. 430, 432, 537 P.2d

1 473, 474 (1975) (quoting McMann v. Richardson, 397 U.S. 759, 771, 90  
2 S.Ct. 1441, 1449 (1970)).

3 In considering whether trial counsel has met this standard, the  
4 court should first determine whether counsel made a "sufficient  
5 inquiry into the information that is pertinent to his client's case."  
6 Doleman v. State, 112 Nev. 843, 846, 921 P.2d 278, 280 (1996); citing  
7 Strickland, 466 U.S. at 690-691, 104 S.Ct. at 2066. Once such a  
8 reasonable inquiry has been made by counsel, the court should consider  
9 whether counsel made "a reasonable strategy decision on how to proceed  
10 with his client's case." Doleman, 112 Nev at 846, 921 P.2d at 280;  
11 citing, Strickland, 466 U.S. at 690-691, 104 S.Ct. at 2066. Finally,  
12 counsel's strategy decision is a "tactical" decision and will be  
13 "virtually unchallengeable absent extraordinary circumstances."  
14 Doleman, 112 Nev. at 846, 921 P.2d at 280; Howard v. State, 106 Nev.  
15 713, 722, 800 P.2d 175, 180 (1990); Strickland, 466 U.S. at 691, 104  
16 S.Ct. at 2066.

17 In the instant case the District Court determined that trial  
18 counsel was ineffective and that CHAPPELL was prejudiced by the  
19 failures. The findings of the District Court are entitled to  
20 deference and should not be disturbed by this Court as the findings  
21 relate to granting a new penalty hearing. Trial counsel failed to  
22 make reasonable and sufficient inquiry into the known and available  
23 information that was pertinent to the defense of the case and to an  
24 adequate presentation at the penalty hearing. This Court, at the very  
25 least, should affirm the new penalty hearing order of the District  
26 Court.

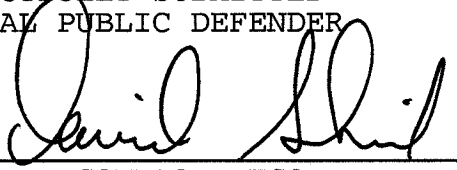
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CONCLUSION

Based on the arguments and authorities contained herein, and in the Opening Brief, it is respectfully requested that the Court affirm the granting of a new penalty hearing but also remand the case for a new trial.

DATED this 30 day of June, 2005.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED  
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1 CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

2 I hereby certify that I have read this appellate brief, and to  
3 the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, it is not frivolous  
4 or interposed for any improper purpose, I further certify that this  
5 brief complies with all applicable Nevada Rules of Appellate  
6 Procedure, in particular NRAP 28(e), which requires every assertion  
7 in the brief regarding matters in the record to be supported by  
8 appropriate references to the record on appeal. I understand that I  
9 may be subject to sanctions in the event that the accompanying brief  
10 is not in conformity with the requirements of the Nevada Rules of  
11 Appellate Procedure.

12 DATED: June 30, 2005

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that service of the Appellant's Reply Brief was made this 1 day of JULY, 2005, by depositing a copy in the U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, addressed to:

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