Beat: Local

Missouri executes man convicted of brutal 1989 rape, murder

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USPA News - A Missouri man convicted of participating in the abduction, rape and brutal murder of a 15-year-old girl in March 1989 was executed by lethal injection on Wednesday, state officials said. His accomplice is still awaiting execution after nearly 25 years.

Michael Taylor, 47, received a lethal injection just after midnight local time at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Bonne Terre, a city in St. Francois County. He was pronounced deceased at 12:10 a.m., said Mike O`Connell, a spokesman for the Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS). Taylor, who participated in the abduction, rape and murder of 15-year-old Ann Harrison in March 1989, did not give a last statement before his execution and declined an order for a special last meal, O`Connell said. Instead, he was given a meal tray that included potato soup and a sandwich. "The abduction of Ann as she waited in her driveway for the school bus, and her subsequent rape and murder, were crimes so brutal that they remain seared in the minds of many Kansas City residents," said Missouri Governor Jay Nixon. "Michael Taylor pleaded guilty to this horrible crime, and was convicted and sentenced to die for Ann`s murder. That punishment has now been carried out." In the hours before the execution, both Nixon and the U.S. Supreme Court denied last-minute requests to halt the execution. "Taylor pleaded guilty to these wanton, heinous crimes and was subsequently convicted of murder and sentenced to death. My decision today upholds this appropriate sentence," Nixon said. Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster noted that Taylor spent 20 years attempting to convince the courts to overturn his death sentence, which is five years longer than Harrison had lived before she was killed by the men. "Please take a moment to keep Ann and her family in your thoughts and prayers," he added after Wednesday`s execution. According to prosecutors, Taylor and his accomplice, Roderick Nunley, were driving a stolen Chevrolet Monte Carlo on the morning of March 22, 1989. The two men had smoked marijuana and consumed alcohol overnight, leading at one point to a high-speed police pursuit that ended when the officer lost the vehicle on a highway. Hours later, at around 7 a.m., as Harrison was waiting for her school bus at the end of her driveway, Taylor stopped the vehicle and allowed Nunley to grab the young girl and force her into the stolen vehicle. She was blindfolded and taken to Nunley`s house, where both men raped her. Harrison was then forced into the trunk of the stolen car, thinking she would be taken to call her parents for ransom. Instead, Harrison was stabbed repeatedly by both men, with Taylor telling investigators he stabbed her "two or three times, probably four." Harrison`s body was found in the trunk of the stolen Monte Carlo on March 23. Court documents detailed a gruesome death for the schoolgirl, with Nunley`s first knife being too dull to slash Harrison`s throat. The medical examiner testified that Harrison was alive when all the wounds were inflicted and may have been conscious for up to 10 minutes after the stabbing.

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