

Kentucky executes first inmate in 9 years

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EDDYVILLE, Ky. -- A Kentucky inmate who resisted all appeals to stop his execution was put to death Friday for murdering two young children.

In the state's first execution in nine years, Marco Allen Chapman was given a lethal injection at the Kentucky State Penitentiary. He was pronounced dead at 7:34 p.m. CST.

The 37-year-old pleaded guilty in 2004 to killing 7-year-old Chelbi Sharon and 6-year-old Cody Sharon in their northern Kentucky home in an attack that wounded their mother and another child. Chapman asked to be executed and fought for the right to fire his attorneys to clear the way.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry," Chapman said to witnesses before his execution. He lifted his head off the gurney, looked into the victim's witness room and spoke.

"I just want you to know that I'm not a monster, but I committed a monstrous, evil act," Chapman said. "This is the man I am, willing to give his life."

His last words were "yes, sir," when the warden asked him if he was ready to proceed.

Carolyn Marksberry, who survived Chapman's attack in 2002 along with her daughter Courtney, said in a statement that the execution may allow her two slain children to "truly rest in peace."

"I believe the tears shed today should be for the victims of this crime, not Marco Chapman," Marksberry said in the statement. "Marco Chapman committed the crimes, accepted responsibility for those crimes and then decided his own fate."

Warden Tom Simpson read a lengthy statement on Chapman's behalf in which the condemned man apologized repeatedly for killing the children and attacking the family. Chapman said he considered the Marksberrys like family.

The execution took about 14 minutes. About two minutes after Simpson ordered it to start, Chapman took several short, rapid breaths, then was still.

On a field in the back of the prison, nearly a dozen death penalty opponents braved near-freezing temperatures for a candlelight vigil.

"This was a state-assisted suicide," said Kaye Gallagher, a coordinator for the Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

Chapman took a Bible, writing materials and a television to the execution house Thursday, said Lisa Lamb, a spokeswoman for the Kentucky Department of Corrections. He requested a last meal of a 32-ounce sirloin steak, 20 butterfly shrimp, salad, iced tea and a banana cream pie.

His remains were to be cremated and turned over to family members, Lamb said.

Kentucky has executed two people since states resumed the practice in 1977 after a four-year court-mandated layoff. Harold McQueen was put to death in the electric chair in 1997 for the shooting of a Richmond store clerk. Eddie Lee Harper waived the remainder of his appeals in 1999 for the killing of his adoptive parents in Louisville in 1982.

Executions most recently in Kentucky and elsewhere around the country were halted for nearly a year while the U.S. Supreme Court considered a challenge to Kentucky's lethal injection protocol.

The high court in April turned away the challenge, which sought to have the drug cocktail used by Kentucky and nearly three dozen other states declared cruel and unusual punishment.