

Tampa man dies by lethal injection

STARKE -- A man who steadfastly maintained his innocence in connection with a murder that occurred nearly 26 years ago was put to death by lethal injection tonight.

Wayne Tompkins, 51, was declared dead at 6:32 p.m., eight minutes after his execution began.

The execution was the third to go smoothly since new protocols were adopted after a botched one in 2006 that halted the death penalty from being carried out in Florida for more than a year.

Tompkins was convicted of strangling his girlfriend's daughter and burying her body beneath their Tampa home. Prosecutors said he had tried to force himself on 15-year-old Lisa DeCarr and killed her when she resisted his sexual advances.

Many of Lisa's family members attended the execution.

Tompkins made no formal statement, muttering only, "I'm good" when asked if he had anything he wanted to say.

Earlier today, he met with his mother and ate fried chicken and banana split ice cream for his last meal, according to Florida Department of Corrections spokeswoman Gretl Plessinger.

Lisa DeCarr's mother reported her missing to the police in March 1983, thinking she might have run away. But with a psychic's help in June 1984, authorities unearthed skeletal remains wrapped in a pink bathrobe from about a foot of dirt below the porch of the southeast Seminole Heights home where Lisa, her mother and Tompkins had lived.

The sash of the robe had been used to strangle the victim, the medical examiner said, and was still tied tightly around the neck bones.

Lisa's mother said she had last seen her daughter in the robe and that Tompkins, by then her ex-boyfriend, had been alone at the home with her that day.

He was already in jail when police charged him with murder, accused of abducting and raping at knifepoint two convenience store clerks in Pasco County. He pleaded guilty to the rapes.

He has spent 23 years on death row for Lisa's murder. Three governors have signed his death warrants. Each time, his attorneys found some way to delay his execution.

They questioned the truthfulness of state witnesses' testimony. They argued that one of those witnesses, a jailhouse snitch, embellished his trial testimony at the urging of the prosecutor. They lamented that jurors never heard important mitigating factors, including Tompkins' childhood abuse and his addiction to alcohol and drugs.

They were even unconvinced that the bones pulled from the shallow grave belonged to Lisa, who they argued had been seen alive after the day on which prosecutors said she died.

On Tuesday, the Innocence Project of Florida urged the governor to grant a stay of execution once again so that further DNA tests could be conducted. The first round of testing occurred only recently, and the results were inconclusive.

Colleen Jenkins, Times Staff Writer