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Fla. man executed for '83 murder of abducted woman

By RON WORD

Associated Press Writer

STARKE, Fla. (AP) -- A Florida man was executed Wednesday for murdering a 45-year-old mother of two who was raped, tortured, and strangled after a car she was in broke down on a highway 26 years ago.

John Richard Marek, 47, died at 6:33 p.m. after receiving an injection at Florida State Prison.

He was condemned for the first-degree murder and kidnapping of Adela Marie Simmons, whose nude body was found the day after she climbed into a pickup truck to get help after a friend's car broke down on Florida's Turnpike in Palm Beach County in 1983.

Marek's last statement was "Jesus remember us sinners" and he followed it with the Lord's Prayer, according to Gretl Plessinger, a Department of Correction spokeswoman. It had been inaudible to members of the media and witnesses, which included Simmons' son-in-law.

Marek's appeals were turned down by the U.S. and Florida Supreme Courts on Wednesday. He had claimed the other man in the truck, Raymond Wigley, killed Simmons.

Martin McClain, Marek's attorney, tracked down inmates who claimed Wigley told them he was the killer. Wigley, who had received a life sentence, was murdered in prison in 2000.

Simmons and her friend Jean Trach were returning to Miami from a vacation in Clearwater on June 16, 1983, when Trach's car began stalling. As the Barry University co-workers neared Jupiter on the turnpike, the car wouldn't restart.

Marek and Wigley stopped their pickup truck and offered to take one of them to the next toll booth to call for help. Simmons volunteered over Trach's warnings.

A police officer stopped Marek and Wigley about 3:30 a.m. as they walked away from a Dania Beach lifeguard stand. They got into a pickup truck - later determined to be stolen - and drove away.

Simmons' body was found inside the lifeguard tower about 7 a.m. That evening, Wigley was arrested in Daytona Beach, driving the truck. Inside was a gold watch, gold pendant and gold earring belonging to Simmons and a gun. Marek was arrested at Daytona Shores.

Marek testified that after they picked up Simmons, he fell asleep. When he awoke, he said the woman was not in the truck. He testified Wigley told him he had dropped her off at a gas station. He testified he again fell asleep and when he woke up, he was on the beach.

Fingerprints found at the lifeguard station matched both Wigley and Marek, but only Marek's prints were found inside the observation deck, where the body was found.

Wigley testified that the victim was forced to perform oral sex and repeatedly sexually assaulted.

After the execution, Alan Bantau, Simmons' son-in-law, spoke on behalf of Simmons' daughters Vivienne Yao and Aileen Simmons Bantau.

"It's painful for me to think about how she spent her last evening alive, how she suffered at the hands of John Richard Marek and Raymond Wigley. Nothing prepares you for losing someone you love in such a horrible manner," Bantau said.

Andrei Trach, Jean Trach's son, also spoke.

"I have no pity for the animal that was executed this evening. He got off easy. He's with his maker and his maker's wrath. I pray God shows no pity on his soul," Trach said.

Marek had a three-hour visit Wednesday from his girlfriend, Marion Dollinger from Eppelheim, Germany, said Plessinger, a Department of Correction spokeswoman. She said he was calm and quiet in the hours before his death.

He met with an Episcopalian minister in the afternoon. He ordered a last meal of a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich with mayonnaise and wheat bread, onion rings, french fries, blueberries and strawberries and whipped cream, and a Dr Pepper.

About 20 death penalty opponents gathered in a grassy field outside the prison to protest the execution.

"People think that because we protest the death penalty, we're in favor of what people did," said Martha Lushman, 47, of Palm Bay. "No, we don't agree with what they did. They did wrong. But we don't believe, I don't believe, it's our decision to terminate their life."

Marek's was the 68th Florida execution since the death penalty was reinstated in 1979, the 24th by injection and the second this year.

"It's a question of justice. The death penalty doesn't serve any use in our modern society. It should be abolished, at least in favor of life without parole," said Joseph Koechler, 66, from Ormond Beach.

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