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13 outsiders view death of Rector

Witnesses listen; wait beyond curtain

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a first-person account from The Associated Press of the Friday night execution of Rickey Ray Rector.

BY RON FOURNIER
Associated Press Writer

VARNER — The witness room was stuffy and quiet. The witnesses were curious, what is that noise in the death chamber? Is Rickey Ray Rector groaning? Why hasn't the execution started?

At 8:50 p.m. Friday, six policemen, two lawyers, two reporters, a state employee, a pastor and a housewife filed into the witness area, a dimly lit 18-by-12-foot room.

About 9:55 p.m., Rector's lips moved rapidly — as if he was drawing shallow breaths. His lips stopped moving a minute later.

Almost like a movie crowd waiting for the feature picture, the witnesses stared ahead at four glass windows covered by dark curtains.

On the other side of the dark curtains, the brain-damaged police killer was being prepared for his 9 p.m. execution by injection, the witnesses were told.

Ten minutes passed, but the curtain did not open. The execution was not going to go off on schedule.

"This your first time?" Jeff Rosenzweig, one of Rector's attorneys, asked a fellow witness.

"Yes," the man said. "I hope it's my last," the lawyer said, rocking forward on his elbows and looking at the floor.

A.L. Lockhart, director of the Department of Correction, entered the witness room at 9:02 p.m. and looked at the dark curtains. "The medical team is having difficulty securing a good vein in both arms," he told the witnesses.



DEATH DISCUSSION — Jeff Rosenzweig, one of Rector's attorneys, talks about Rector's execution Friday night at the Cummins Unit in Vanner.

Rosenzweig witnessed the execution, which was delayed by problems finding a vein suitable for the lethal injection.

Rosenzweig said he had expected it would be tough to find a vein to inject the killer fluid because the nearly 300-pound Rector was flabby and out of shape.

At 9:17 p.m., the witnesses heard the first noise from behind the dark curtains. Rosenzweig said it sounded like Rector groaning, probably after getting stuck with a needle.

The same quick, deep noise was heard at least seven more times between 9:20 p.m. and 9:35 p.m. Prison officials later confirmed Rector was cooperative but groaned when stuck by a needle at least eight times.

Rosenzweig and co-counsel John Jewell talked about what would happen if the execution could not be carried out by midnight. They decided a new death warrant would be issued, but a new trial would not be required.

"Another 2½ hours," Rosenzweig said. "And they'll have to start all over."

The witnesses could hear what sounded like skin slapping. Medical officials apparently were trying to raise a vein in Rector's arm.

"They're going to beat him

to death," Lt. Rod Pearson of the Conway Police Department said.

He and his colleagues attended the execution because Rector killed fellow officer Robert W. Martin in 1981. After killing Martin, Rector shot himself in the head, causing severe brain damage. Courts and doctors said he was competent to be executed because he understood his punishment.

The medical team secured the tubes to Rector about 9:40 p.m. and the dark curtain opened 10 minutes later.

"There's not anything moving in that monitor at all. It's straight across."

Rector was strapped to a gurney, a white sheet covered him from his feet to his lower lip.

The murderer moved his lips, but he could not be heard through the glass. Prison officials later said Rector's last words were: "I got baptized and saved."

Lockhart gave the order to begin the lethal drip about 9:50 p.m., 50 minutes behind schedule.

Rector blinked his eyes

slowly. He looked like a man nodding off to sleep for about two minutes when he closed his eyes for good.

Lockhart, now inside the execution chamber, fidgeted with folded pieces of paper — writing and reading, writing and reading.

Several witnesses stood up for a better view.

About 9:55 p.m., Rector's lips moved rapidly — as if he was drawing shallow breaths. His lips stopped moving a minute later.

He didn't move again.

At 10:08, Conway police detective Bob Barham looked at what appeared to be a heart monitor at the head of the gurney. "It looks like it's flat-lining," he said. "Oh, there was a jump. There's another flutter."

Two minutes later, he said, "There's not anything moving in that monitor at all. It's straight across."

Rector was pronounced dead at 10:08 p.m.

When an orange brace was removed from his neck, witnesses saw that Rector's black, gray beard had been shaved to a stubble.

"He wanted to look nice for his family," Jewell whispered. The dark curtains closed.

Californian visits LR, uncorks 4 new wines

BY RICK KRON
Democrat-Gazette Food Editor

Most 2-year-olds drink milk, water and maybe even Kool-Aid, but for Jim Bundschu, wine was the beverage of choice.

Bundschu, now 48, is the 14th-generation owner of the

The new releases Bundschu unveiled included Gundlach Bundschu Gewurztraminer, 1990; Gundlach Bundschu Chardonnay, 1990; Gundlach-Bundschu Merlot, 1989; and a 1988 cabernet sauvignon. The wines will retail for about \$14

age and is priced lower than normal.

The winery owner said the recent "60 Minutes" piece about the health benefits of red wine has given the wine industry a tremendous push.

"It's the first positive to

gives us some ammo to counterbalance the negative attacks."

Bundschu added that he likes to separate wine from the liquor or "booze" category.

"Wine is a beverage onto itself," he said. "It's a great be-

Actress

The Associated Pr

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