

DAMSEL OF DEATH IS EXECUTED IN FLORIDA - MICHIGAN PAL SAYS WUORNOS 'READY TO GO'

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STARKE, Fla. -- **Aileen** Carol **Wuornos** , called the Damsel of Death by her prosecutors, was executed voluntarily and peacefully by lethal injection Wednesday, dying much more gently than any of the seven men she shot to death a dozen years ago.

"She was extremely happy, ready to go. She has made her peace," said Dawn Botkins, a longtime friend who went to school in Troy with **Wuornos** and will take her ashes back to Michigan for burial. Botkins visited **Wuornos** Tuesday night at Florida State Prison.

The two women prayed together Tuesday night, Botkins said. She said **Wuornos** , on her knees, prayed for the families of her seven victims and asked forgiveness for the pain that she caused them.

Her last words were: "I'd just like to say I'm sailing with the Rock and I'll be back like 'Independence Day' with Jesus, June 6, like the movie, big mother ship and all. I'll be back."

She was pronounced dead at 9:47 a.m., said Jill Bratina, a spokeswoman for Gov. Jeb Bush.

Wuornos , 46, was executed for the shooting death of Richard Mallory, 51, an appliance store owner from Clearwater whose body was found near Daytona Beach in 1991. **Wuornos** confessed to killing six other men, including one whose body has never been found.

Wuornos spent her formative years in Troy, but withdrew from Troy High School after her freshman year in 1971. Aside from a traffic ticket in 1973 and a couple of police runs to her family's house on Hickory off Livernois, she left no real imprint in Michigan. Florida officials say she'd lived in Florida since 1976. **Wuornos** voluntarily ended all appeals, saying she wanted to end a tragic life of violence. She was abandoned at birth by her parents, raped before she was a teen and gave birth to a son before she had a driver's license, according to court records.

Late Tuesday, the Florida Supreme Court rejected last-minute appeals by anti-death penalty activists who renewed claims that she was mentally ill and should not be executed.

Last week, **Wuornos** passed the last of several competency tests -- a review by three psychiatrists who said that she met the standard of understanding the meaning of the death penalty and knowing why it was being given to her.

She was dubbed the Damsel of Death because police believed she lured the men to death by posing as a motorist or traveler in distress or in need of directions, or by posing as a prostitute.

Because female serial killers who use violence are all but unknown in the annals of criminal justice, her arrest on Jan. 9, 1991, at a Daytona Beach biker bar got national attention, and her case eventually spawned two movies, an opera and several books.

Wuornos didn't order a last meal and skipped the regular fare of barbecued chicken, mashed potatoes, apple crisp and tea, Sterling Ivey, a Department of Corrections spokesman, said.

Botkins and **Wuornos** became friends during their high school days in Michigan. They renewed their friendship after **Wuornos** was arrested in 1990, exchanging frequent letters. **Wuornos** wrote often to Botkins' two children, warning them to live a more righteous life than she had. Botkins also visited **Wuornos** in prison.

Wuornos claimed to be an exit-to-exit hooker who worked the freeways and back roads of north central Florida.

Wuornos was an alcohol and drug abuser who robbed to make ends meet and to get gifts for her lesbian lover, police said.

Gov. Jeb Bush signed **Wuornos** ' death warrant even though the state's death penalty law is under review by the Florida Supreme Court. Two other inmates have been issued stays of execution.

Caption: Photo PHELAN M. EBENHACK/Associated Press; Photo PETER COSGROVE/Associated Press

Aileen Wuornos spent her formative years in Troy.

Florida State Attorney John Tanner comforts two of the victims' relatives, Wanda Poucey, left, and Letha Prater-Webb.

The Rev. Fred Ruse, left, of St. Matthew Catholic Church in Winter Haven, Fla., leads the anti-death penalty protest in Starke. (PHOTO RAN IN STATE EDITION, PAGE 5A.)

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