

## Female death-row inmate's appeal denied by U.S. Supreme Court

HOUSTON (AP) — An execution date is imminent for Karla Faye Tucker, one of seven condemned women in Texas, now that the U.S. Supreme Court has rejected what could be her final appeal, Harris County prosecutors say.

The high court decision Monday, without comment, paves the way for the first execution of a woman in Texas since 1863 and only the second in the nation since the court in 1976 allowed the death penalty to resume.

Texas, the nation's most active capital punishment state, has administered lethal injection to 143 inmates since executions resumed in 1982, but none have been women.

Thirteen years ago, Velma Barfield was sent to the North Carolina death house, making her the only woman executed in the modern era of capital punishment.

According to Texas records, Chipita Rodriguez was the last woman to be executed in the state, hanged in 1863 for the murder of a horse trader. Tucker and some of the other condemned Texas women have had previous execution dates but all have been halted by court reprieves.

"We're going to ask for something for the end of January or the first part of February," Roe Wilson, an assistant district attorney in Harris County, said Monday. "That's really the next step."

"Then it's just going to be up to the governor. There's nothing left courtwise."

Gov. George W. Bush, a staunch supporter of the death penalty, has said he has not reviewed Tucker's case yet.

Once a date has been set, the governor could issue a one-time 30-day reprieve. Based on the findings of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, whose members he ap-

1983 to steal some motorcycle parts. After Dean was bludgeoned with a hammer by Garrett, Tucker repeatedly hit him with the ax to stop the beaten Dean from making a gurgling sound. Thornton was hiding under a blanket during the attack. When she was discovered in the room, Tucker turned the ax on her, according to testimony. The victims' bodies had more than 20 stab or puncture wounds.

Since her conviction, Tucker has insisted she has turned her life around, found religion, married a minister and no longer is the drug-addicted prostitute who as a young teen-ager was a groupie touring with rock and roll's Allman Brothers Band.

"I'm so far removed from the person that I used to be out there," Tucker told the CBS program "60 Minutes" in an interview aired Sunday. "For me, what's weird is thinking back on some of the things I used to do, and thinking, 'I did that?'"

She had no reaction Monday when informed of the Supreme Court ruling by her warden at a prison in Gatesville, about 40 miles west of Waco, David Nunnelee, a Texas Department of Criminal Justice spokesman, said.

In the high court appeal, her attorneys contended instructions given to her jury prevented them from considering that she was intoxicated at the time of the killings. The appeal also argued that her trial lawyers were ineffective.

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**ROE WILSON**  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
HARRIS COUNTY

points, he could commute her sentence to life, although the governor is not required to follow the recommendation of the panel.

Tucker, 38, has been on death row since her conviction for killing Jerry Lynn Dean, 27, at Dean's Houston apartment during a burglary. Dean's companion, Deborah Thornton, 32, also was killed with the 3-foot-long ax, which was left embedded in her chest by her killers.

Tucker's companion, Daniel Garrett, also received a death sentence for his part in the slayings. He died in prison in 1993 of liver disease.

Testimony at their trials showed the pair broke into Dean's apartment June 13,

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### ACCIDENT

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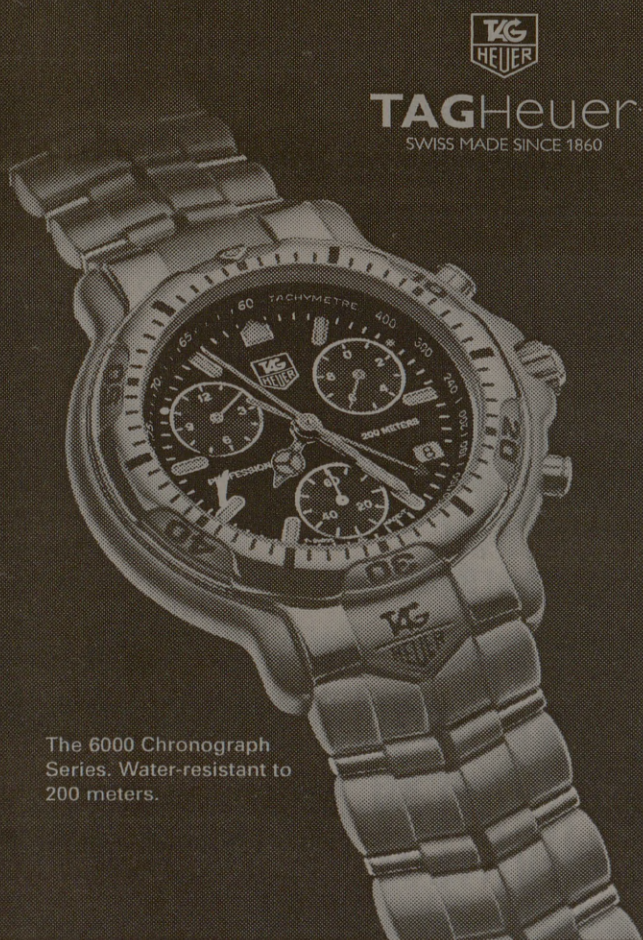
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