

Beat: News

Brain-damaged inmate executed for 1996 killing of Missouri sheriff's deputy

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USPA News - Cecil Clayton, who was convicted for the 1996 fatal shooting of a Missouri sheriff's deputy but who claims that a traumatic brain injury renders him incompetent, was executed on late Tuesday after a divided U.S. Supreme Court rejected his request for a stay of execution. Cecil Clayton was executed by lethal injection at 9:13 p.m. local time on Tuesday at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Bonne Terre, Missouri, said Mike O'Connell, a spokesman for the Missouri Department of Corrections.

He was pronounced dead at 9:21 p.m. The execution took place hours later than scheduled as prison officials awaited decisions from Missouri Governor Jay Nixon and the U.S. Supreme Court, although they were not legally required to await. In a statement read out outside the prison, James Castetter, the brother of murdered Sheriff's Deputy Christopher Castetter, said Clayton's execution "destroys an evil person that would otherwise be walking this earth," and rejected claims that Clayton was incompetent to be executed due to a traumatic brain injury. "There has been so much talk about the mental capacity of Cecil, but just him going to Martin Cole and wanting him to say he was with him all evening, telling Martin that he just shot a cop and then when seeing two police officers asking if he should shoot them too. There is no doubt in my mind that Cecil knew what he had done, as he went to Mr. Cole for help," James Castetter said. The victim's brother added: "I know there is more that was said, but this in my mind is an easy determination of Cecil's mental capacity/abilities to know that he had done something wrong and went for help to hopefully keep him out of trouble. The Great State of Missouri did not kill an innocent man, Cecil Clayton's actions is what put him to death." Clayton, who does not claim to be innocent, was convicted in the 1996 fatal shooting of Deputy Christopher Castetter. The events began hours before the shooting, when Clayton became angry at his girlfriend while at a convenience store in Purdy, causing the store's clerk to call the sheriff's department. The Purdy police chief arrived and waited until Clayton and his girlfriend left separately. Within an hour, however, Clayton drove his truck to his girlfriend's residence. She was not there, but her sister called the sheriff's department when she saw Clayton sitting in his truck in their driveway. Deputy Castetter responded to the scene but was later found in his patrol car with a gunshot wound to his forehead. He died after being taken to a hospital. Clayton had been injured in 1972 when a piece of wood broke off a log that he was sawing while working in a sawmill. The piece of wood became lodged in Clayton's head, requiring surgery that resulted in the loss of nearly 8 percent of Clayton's brain and 20 percent of his frontal lobe. He broke up with his wife after the accident, began drinking alcohol, was unable to work, and became prone to violent outbursts. Clayton's IQ scores were determined to be higher than 70 - the generally recognized cutoff for intellectual disability - at three separate occasions, even though the most recent test put his IQ at just 71. Missouri Supreme Court Judge Laura Denvir Stith, in dissenting from the court's ruling Saturday to deny a stay of execution, argued that 71 is an estimate with a margin of error, which could potentially place Clayton's IQ below 70, making him ineligible for execution.

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UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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