

McVEIGH EXECUTED: ; Eyes open in death; Time of death called at 8:14 a.m.



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TERRE HAUTE, Ind. - Offering no trace of remorse, Timothy McVeigh went to his death today with the same flinty look he showed the world when he was first arrested for killing 168 people in the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building. McVeigh received a chemical injection from the government he so despised, and was pronounced dead at 8:14 a.m., becoming the first federal prisoner executed in 38 years. He died silently, with his eyes open.

Instead of making an oral statement, McVeigh, 33, issued a copy of the 1875 poem "Invictus," which concludes with the lines: "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

In Oklahoma City, 232 survivors and victims' relatives watched a closed-circuit TV broadcast of the execution, sent from Terre Haute in a feed encrypted to guard against interception.

Some said he seemed to stare straight at them from 620 miles away by gazing directly into the overhead TV camera in the death chamber with a cold, hard look.

"I think I did see the face of evil today," said Kathy Wilburn, whose grandsons Chase Smith, 3, and brother Colton, 2, died in the bombing six years ago on April 19, 1995.

McVeigh, wearing a white T-shirt, khaki pants and slip-on sneakers, looked pale as he awaited death. His hair was cropped short. A light gray sheet was pulled up tightly to his chest as he lay strapped on the gurney.

McVeigh made eye contact with his four personal witnesses, then with the 10 media witnesses, then squinted toward the tinted window shielding the 10 victims' witnesses from his view.

The lethal injection was administered to his right leg. When the first drug was delivered, he let out a couple of deep breaths, followed by a fluttery breath. His head moved back, his gaze fixed on the ceiling, and his eyes were glassy.

In Washington, President Bush declared that McVeigh had "met the fate he chose for himself six years ago."

"Today, every living person who was hurt by the evil done in Oklahoma City can rest in the knowledge that there has been a reckoning," Bush said.

In a recent letter to The Buffalo News, McVeigh said his body would be released to one his attorneys and cremated, and his ashes would be scattered in an undisclosed location.

In Oklahoma City, Kathleen Treanor, whose 4-year-old daughter, Ashley, and her husband's parents died in the bombing, watched the closed-circuit broadcast and she said there was no display of emotion in the room as the execution took place.

She held up a picture of her daughter and said: "I thought of her every step of the way."

Larry Whicher, the brother of a bombing victim, said McVeigh looked straight into the camera with a cold, blank stare in the moments before he died - "and that stare said volumes." The camera was suspended from the ceiling and pointed at an angle at his face.

"He had a look of defiance and that if he could, he'd do it all over again," Whicher said. He added: "I don't think he gave himself to the Lord. I don't think he repented and personally I think he's in hell."

Jay Sawyer, who also watched via TV, said: "Without saying anything, he got the final word, absolutely. His teeth were clenched, just like when they showed him coming out of that facility when he was first arrested. His teeth were clenched, his lips were pursed and just a blank stare."

Janice Smith, whose brother Lanny Scroggins died in the bombing, prayed with her children at the Oklahoma City National Memorial, then left after getting word that McVeigh was dead.

"It's over," she said. "We don't have to continue with him anymore."

McVeigh's lawyer Robert Nigh somberly reminded reporters that the government not only executed the Oklahoma City bomber, but also a decorated Gulf War veteran, a

son and a brother. He said there was "nothing reasonable or moral about what we did today."

"If there is anything good that can come from the execution of Tim McVeigh, it may be to help us realize sooner that we simply cannot do this anymore," Nigh said.

Attorney General John Ashcroft, who authorized the closed-circuit broadcast, was in Oklahoma City when McVeigh was put to death. He did not watch the broadcast but wanted to be with the families of the victims, officials said.

For security reasons, Ashcroft's whereabouts had been kept secret until the execution was carried out.

McVeigh's co-conspirator, Terry Nichols, sat in his jail cell in Oklahoma City with no access to radio or television. Nichols was convicted on federal charges of involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy and was sentenced to life in prison. Oklahoma prosecutors are pursuing state murder charges that could bring the death penalty.

The day before McVeigh's execution, his attorneys said he was sorry for those who suffered but that he didn't regret detonating a massive bomb at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building - the worst act of terrorism on U.S. soil.

McVeigh received a mixture of sodium thiopental, to sedate him; pancuronium bromide, a muscle relaxant that collapses the diaphragm and lungs; and potassium chloride, which stops the heart.