

= Teresa Lewis =

Teresa Wilson Bean Lewis (April 26 , 1969 ? September 23 , 2010) was an American murderer who was the only woman on death row in Virginia prior to her execution . She was sentenced to death by lethal injection for the murders of her husband and stepson in October 2002 . Lewis sought to profit from a \$ 250 @, @ 000 life insurance policy her stepson had taken out as a U.S. Army reservist in anticipation of his deployment to Iraq .

In September 2010 , Lewis became the first female inmate to die by lethal injection in the state of Virginia . The state had last executed a woman in 1912 . The case led to debate over capital punishment due to Lewis 's gender as well as questions regarding her mental capacity .

= = Background = =

Teresa Wilson grew up in poverty in Danville , Virginia , where her parents both worked in a textile mill . Teresa sang in a church during her youth . At 16 , she dropped out of school and married a man she met at that church . The couple had one daughter , Christie Lynn Bean , but the marriage soon ended in divorce , after which Teresa turned to alcohol and painkillers . Her mother @-@ in @-@ law , Marie Bean , described Teresa as " not right " .

After migrating between dozens of low @-@ paying jobs , Teresa Wilson Bean eventually found work in the spring of 2000 at the Dan River textile mill , where her supervisor was Julian Clifton Lewis , Jr . He was a recent widower with three children , Jason , Charles , and Kathy . Teresa moved into Julian 's home in June 2000 and the two married soon after . In December 2001 , Julian 's older son , Jason Clifton Lewis , was killed in a car accident , leaving his father \$ 200 @, @ 000 from a life insurance policy . Julian used the money to buy a manufactured home on five acres of land in Pittsylvania County , Virginia .

In August 2002 , Julian 's younger son , Charles J. Lewis , obtained a \$ 250 @, @ 000 insurance policy in preparation for his impending deployment to Iraq as part of the United States Army Reserve . Charles designated his father as the primary , and Teresa Lewis as the secondary beneficiaries .

= = Murders = =

In the fall of 2002 , Teresa Lewis met 21 @-@ year @-@ old Matthew Jessee Shallenberger and 19 @-@ year @-@ old Rodney Lamont Fuller at a Wal @-@ Mart in Danville and began a sexual relationship with both of them . In October 2002 , Charles came home on a visit from Army training in Maryland . On October 23 , Shallenberger and Lamont were given \$ 1 @, @ 200 by Lewis to purchase firearms and ammunition to kill Julian Lewis and his son Charles for the insurance money . Their first attempt to kill Julian while on the road did not succeed .

A week later , on the night of October 30 , Shallenberger and Fuller entered the Lewis ' trailer through a back door that Teresa had left open . While she waited in the kitchen , Shallenberger shot the sleeping Julian several times , while Fuller shot Charles in his bedroom with a shotgun . After discovering Charles was not dead , Fuller shot him twice more . Teresa waited 45 minutes before calling for help , and while waiting for the police to arrive , she removed money from her dying husband 's wallet . She divided \$ 300 with Shallenberger and Fuller before they left . However , sheriff 's deputies arrived prior to Julian dying , and heard him say , " My wife knows who done this to me , " while she had claimed the two had been killed by unidentified assailants in a home invasion .

Shortly after , Teresa Lewis was caught attempting to withdraw \$ 50 @, @ 000 from her dead husband 's account with a forged check . Within a week , she confessed to law enforcement officers that she had offered money to have her husband killed . During the investigation , prosecutors found that Lewis had been trying to gather the assets of her late husband and stepson even before they had been buried .

During the murder trial , the judge deemed Lewis the mastermind of the crime and called her " the head of this serpent . " Barbara G. Haskins , a court appointed , board @-@ certified forensic

psychiatrist , stated that " Cognitive testing showed a Full Scale IQ of 72 . Verbal IQ was 70 , and Performance IQ was 79 . " Dr. Haskins also stated that Teresa Lewis was and is able to make a plea agreement and enter pleas . Lewis ' lawyer stated that ? She ? s not mentally retarded , but she is very , very close to it . "

= = = Sentencing and appeals = = =

Defense attorneys thought the evidence against Lewis was overwhelming and advised her to plead guilty to the capital charges in order to avoid a jury , and hope that the judge would show some leniency since Lewis had been cooperating with investigators . However , she was sentenced to death , since under Virginia law , multiple murders within a three @-@ year period are subject to the death penalty . The two co @-@ conspirators who actually did the shooting , Shallenberger and Fuller , were sentenced to life imprisonment at separate trials . Lewis was granted an automatic review by the Supreme Court of Virginia , which rejected the argument that it was unfair to execute Lewis while the co @-@ conspirators got life sentences , as well as rejecting Lewis ' challenges to the constitutionality of Virginia 's death penalty law . Lewis was placed on death row at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women in Troy , Virginia .

Lewis ' daughter , Christie Lynn Bean , served five years because she knew about the plan but failed to report it .

In November 2004 , a private investigator met Shallenberger at Wallens Ridge State Prison in Big Stone Gap , Virginia on behalf of Lewis . Shallenberger wrote in a partially transcribed affidavit : " Teresa was in love with me . She was very eager to please me . She was also not very smart . " However , Shallenberger tore off and ate the parts of the document that he had signed . Shallenberger said , " What will happen will happen . " Shallenberger committed suicide at the prison in 2006 .

Over 7 @, @ 300 appeals for clemency were reportedly sent to Virginia governor Bob McDonnell . Her supporters stated that " Lewis is deeply remorseful and has been a model prisoner , helping fellow female inmates cope with their circumstances . " Her father , Melvin C. Wilson , Sr. , testified how Lewis took care of her invalid mother prior to her death . Lewis herself stated that " I just want the governor to know that I am so sorry , deeply from my heart . And if I could take it back , I would , in a minute ... I just wish I could take it back . And I 'm sorry for all the people that I 've hurt in the process . " On September 17 , 2010 , McDonnell decided not to stop Lewis ' upcoming execution , stating : " Having carefully reviewed the petition for clemency , the judicial opinions in this case , and other relevant materials , I find no compelling reason to set aside the sentence that was imposed by the Circuit Court and affirmed by all reviewing courts . "

Her attorneys filed motions for a writ of certiorari with the U.S. Supreme Court to stay the execution , but were denied on September 21 , 2010 . Dissenting Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor indicated that they would have granted a stay .

= = Execution = =

Lewis ' last meal consisted of two fried chicken breasts , sweet peas with butter , a Dr Pepper and German chocolate cake for dessert . Lewis addressed stepdaughter Kathy Lewis Clifton , who came to witness her execution , to apologize for killing her brother and father .

I just want Kathy to know that I love you , and I 'm very sorry .

Lewis was executed on September 23 , 2010 , at 9 p.m. by lethal injection , at Greensville Correctional Center in Jarratt . This made her the 12th woman to be executed in the United States since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976 . Lewis was the first woman to be executed in Virginia by lethal injection ; the last woman to be executed in the state was Virginia Christian , who died in the electric chair in 1912 . Lewis was also the first woman to be executed in the U.S. since Frances Newton in 2005 in the state of Texas , and the second woman to be executed since serial killer Aileen Wuornos in 2002 in the state of Florida .

= = = Public reaction and aftermath = = =

Lewis ' execution started a debate in the U.S. and other parts of the world concerning capital punishment , and more specifically the application of death sentences on women in murder cases . Richard Dieter , executive of the Death Penalty Information Center , argued that " so few women are involved in more heinous murders that , when they are , they cause greater offense than if they had been men . Virginia 's attorney general really pushed the fact that she had committed adultery with a co @-@ defendant and that she was somehow dishonored and should be looked down upon " . Ken Cuccinelli , the Attorney General of Virginia , stated that " the brutal nature of the crimes themselves as well as Lewis ' callous , manipulating , adulterous , greedy , egregious behavior " justified the death sentence .

Thousands of supporters argued that her death sentence should have been commuted to life imprisonment . Lewis ' attorney James E. Roca III said , " A good and decent person is about to lose her life because of a system that is broken ... it is grossly unfair to impose the death sentence on her while Shallenberger and Fuller received life . " Her low IQ also became a matter of discussion , with supporters citing this as a reason she should not have been sentenced to death . Legal novelist John Grisham echoed those sentiments and argued that evidence indicated Shallenberger , who had an IQ of 113 , was the actual mastermind . Grisham quoted from an affidavit by co @-@ conspirator Rodney Lamont Fuller : " As between Mrs. Lewis and Shallenberger , Shallenberger was definitely the one in charge of things , not Mrs. Lewis . "

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad cited the case to denounce Western media coverage of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani , a woman in Iran who had been sentenced to death by stoning for adultery . He claimed the media 's " heavy propaganda " campaign was perpetrating a double standard by not responding with similar outrage over Lewis ' impending execution . Executive director Larry Cox of Amnesty International , which opposes the death penalty under all circumstances , stated : " Proceeding with this execution would come dangerously close to violating the U.S. Constitution , which prohibits capital punishment for those with ' mental retardation ' ? a precedent established thanks to Atkins v. Virginia . "