



## South Carolina Department of Corrections

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For immediate release

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**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – The capital punishment sentence of Stephen Christopher Stanko was carried out tonight, pursuant to the order of the S.C. Supreme Court and in accordance with state law.

The execution was performed by lethal injection and began at 6:06 p.m. He was pronounced dead by a physician at 6:34 p.m.

Stanko, 57, was sentenced to death for crimes committed on April 8, 2005, in Horry and Georgetown counties. Stanko bound, beat and strangled his girlfriend, Laura Ling, to death while beating and raping her daughter, who was a minor, in their Murrells Inlet home. He also sliced the daughter's throat in an attempt to murder her, but she survived.

After Ling's murder, Stanko drove to Conway to the home of Henry Lee Turner, 74, who considered Stanko a friend. While there, Stanko shot and killed Turner, stole his truck and fled. He was arrested several days later in Augusta, Ga., after a new female friend became aware of his wanted status and turned him into authorities.

Stanko was first convicted and sentenced to death in Georgetown County in August 2006 for Ling's murder. He also was convicted of kidnapping and armed robbery of Ling and for kidnapping, first-degree criminal sexual conduct, and assault and battery with intent to kill for her daughter's rape and attempted murder.

Stanko received his second death sentence in November 2009, when he was convicted and sentenced to death in Horry County for murder and armed robbery in Turner's death.

Tonight's execution is for Turner's death as those state and federal appeals have been exhausted.

Stanko's final statement was read to witnesses by his attorney and is attached.

Witnesses to the execution included:

- Three members of the victims' families.
- A representative from the 15th Circuit Solicitor's office, which prosecuted both cases.
- One member of the Stanko family.
- Stanko's attorney.
- And three members of the news media.

Stanko's specially requested meal was fried fish, fried shrimp, crab cake, baked potato, carrots, fried okra, cherry pie, banana pudding and sweet tea. It was served on Wednesday evening.

Stephen Christopher Stanko last statement:

What must be said first and foremost is to Christina and the rest of Laura's family and all of Henry's family. I am truly sorry for the pain and loss that I caused in this horrible situation. Sorry is NEVER enough but that does not mean it should not be said. Not a single day—NOT ONE SINGLE DAY—has gone by that Christina, Laura and Henry have not been in my thoughts and prayers.

If my execution helps with closure and/or the grieving process, may they all move forward with that being completed.

I have been a death row inmate for over 20 years now, and in that period of time, I have been the product of the worst day of my life. That is what happens. We live every day with the knowledge and understanding and responsibility of what happened. For my victims and their families and for my own family, I have done everything possible to honor them over this time. I am sorry to my family for all the pain that I have caused them.

What I hope and pray that is known and understood about me—and every death row inmate and inmate in the world is that we are not the sum of one moment in time.

In my youth, I was an honor student and athlete. I was a member of clubs like the Honor Society and Beta Club, the Junior Engineering Technical Society and Mu Alpha Theta math team, the president of some including the Spanish Club. I do NOT say this to brag. I say it because I was not what people see me as now—in this moment.

In my early adulthood, I volunteered at the orphanage, I saved a drowning child in Augusta, I coached youth baseball. I was not what people see me as now— in this moment.

On death row, I have tutored inmates, some are now in general population. Some will possibly be released. I have written books. I have lectured to college students via telephone across the United States. My years have shown me the good that exists in others.

NONE of this is meant to brag. It is only meant to show that I am NOT ONLY what people see me as now—in this moment.

In my life as a free person, I was raised Catholic, spent years in catechism and Sunday school, and learned the Bible from cover to cover, chapter and verse. I have always believed in God.

In prison—on death row—I saw faith in volunteers who came in and showed us God's love. I experienced faith in looking at myself with my past and present and later in eternity. In here, I have seen, felt, and now have a relationship with God. I am not what people see me as now—in this moment.

We execute people in this country for moments in their life. For over 20 years, people have only seen these moments and judged us for those alone. I have lived approximately twenty thousand nine hundred and seventy-three days (20973) but I am judged solely for one (1).

I am NOT trying to lessen what has happened. There is no way for me to EVER make up for what happened. That has been my life for over 20 years.

If I spent another 20973 days apologizing, it would not be enough for that day, but that was NOT my only day.

If my death helps anyone, that is one thing, but once I am gone, I hope that Christina, Laura's family and Henry's family can all forgive me. The execution may help them. Forgiveness will heal them.

To Lindsey and the Joes, to Charles and Emily, to Jill and Cierra and Rosalind, Ali, Briana AND EVERYBODY who fought, I could not have been able to have ever known better people. You became family.

Jeff. I love you. No man or woman has had a better brother.  
Charles. The same. No man or woman could have found a better brother.