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## Virginians United Against Crime

Virginia Death Penalty Case Summary



**Victim: Wilma Harvey**  
**Murderer: David Pruett**  
**Date/Location of Murder: February 12, 1985, City of Virginia Beach**  
**Aggravating Factors: Rape, Multiple Homicides**  
**Execution Date: December 17, 1993**

### Newspaper article:



Washington Post  
December 17, 1993

#### **VIRGINIA MAN EXECUTED FOR RAPE, MURDER**

JARRATT, VA –

David Mark Pruett was electrocuted tonight for raping and killing his best friend's wife in Virginia Beach nearly nine years ago.

Pruett, 44, was pronounced dead at 11:11 p.m. here at the state's Greensville Correction Center, where the state's electric chair is housed. "He had his eyes down when they brought him in and strapped on his face mask. He didn't look at anybody," said Deborah Thomas-Lamb, one of eight witnesses to the execution.

Pruett declined to make a final statement, she said.

Pruett was visited about eight hours before his execution by his wife, Paula, said David Bass, an operations manager for the state Department of Corrections. Bass said the two had been married recently.

Earlier today, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously rejected Pruett's appeal. The one-paragraph order did not give the court's reasons.

Pruett was convicted in 1986 of raping and stabbing Wilma Harvey in her Virginia Beach home on Feb. 12, 1985. Harvey's husband, Richard, who had given Pruett a job at the restaurant he managed, was away on business at the time.

Wilma Harvey's nude body, with multiple stab wounds, was found on her bed with her hands tied behind her back.

"Mrs. Harvey's murder was one of the worst I've ever seen," said Ken Phillips, who prosecuted Pruett.

When he confessed to the slaying, Pruett also told investigators he had killed Deborah McInnis, a co-worker at a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant in Virginia Beach, in 1975.

He was convicted of first-degree murder and robbery in that case, four months after the capital conviction.

Pruett's execution was the fifth in Virginia this year, and the 22nd since the state reinstated capital punishment in 1982. Only Texas and Florida have executed more people.

In a petition filed with Gov. L. Douglas Wilder, Pruett's attorney, Donald Lee, argued that Pruett's death sentence should be commuted to life in prison. Because of past convictions, Pruett would not be eligible for parole.

Lee said jurors who sentenced Pruett to die never heard about his severe emotional and psychological problems.

When Wilder was asked this week to explain why he rejected clemency, he pulled out a photo showing Wilma Harvey with her throat slashed and said, "That's why."

**Disclaimer:** This summary should not be interpreted as offering a full review of all aspects of the case, nor is it intended as a substitute for trial records. Rather, its purpose is to provide a general overview of the convicted, the circumstances of the capital offense and the victims who were involved. Consequently, selected portions of court documents and newspaper reports are edited in the interest of brevity.