

HEADED FOR DEATH ROW



Staff photo by CHARLIE MEADS

Andrew J. Chabrol is escorted from Chesapeake Circuit Court on Thursday after being sentenced to die in Virginia's electric chair. A 35-year-old former Navy lieutenant, Chabrol was convicted in May of the 1991 abduction, rape and murder of Melissa M. Harrington.

Killer sentenced to be executed Oct. 2

By Matthew Bowers
Staff writer

CHESAPEAKE — Andrew J. Chabrol became the 49th member of the state's death row Thursday when a Circuit Court judge confirmed his death sentence for the abduction, rape and murder last year of a woman who rejected him.

Chabrol showed no emotion as Judge Russell I. Townsend Jr. formally levied the penalty he had announced at the end of a May sentencing hearing. It was Townsend's first death-penalty decision, and believed to be the first handed

down since the city was formed in 1963.

The judge set Oct. 2 as the date for Chabrol's execution in the electric chair, but it will be postponed pending an automatic review of the death sentence by the state Supreme Court. The review usually takes from six to nine months, according to the Supreme Court clerk's office.

Chabrol, who has said he welcomes death and won't fight his execution through court appeals, told the judge he had no statement.

In May, Townsend also sentenced Chabrol to two life terms,

the maximum, for the rape and abduction convictions.

The judge on Thursday declared Chabrol an indigent, and in the next week will appoint one or two attorneys to represent him during the sentence review and any appeals.

Chabrol, a 35-year-old former Navy lieutenant, meticulously plotted in a computer journal the abduction of Melissa M. Harrington, a 27-year-old Navy boatswain's mate and his subordinate. Coworkers said Chabrol was obsessed with the woman, although both were married and Harrington had rejected his offer of an affair.

Chabrol said he feared that her sexual-harassment complaint against him would cost him his wife and two sons, and that Harrington was harassing him.

Harrington was snatched from in front of her Virginia Beach townhouse the morning of July 9, 1991. Hours later, police found her nude body in a bedroom of Chabrol's Great Bridge home, wrapped in a blanket with her face covered by a tight mask of duct tape. She had been strangled and suffocated.

Chabrol and his longtime friend,

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THE CHABROL CASE

Sept. 29, 1990 — Melissa M. Harrington turns down Andrew J. Chabrol's offer to have an affair.

Nov. 23, 1990 — Chabrol learns that Harrington has made a sexual-harassment complaint against him.

July 9, 1991 — Chabrol and his boyhood friend, Stanley J. Berkeley, abduct and rape Harrington, and Chabrol kills her. Both are arrested in Chabrol's house, where police find Harrington's body.

Aug. 30, 1991 — Harrington's husband, Joseph H. Harrington, sues Chabrol and Berkeley for \$1.8 million.

Feb. 28, 1992 — Chabrol pleads guilty to capital murder, rape and abduction.

March 25, 1992 — Circuit Court jury convicts Berkeley of first-degree murder, rape and abduction, and recommends maximum sentences of three life terms in prison plus \$200,000 in fines. Sentencing is scheduled for Aug. 14.

May 19, 1992 — Circuit Court Judge Russell I. Townsend Jr. fixes Chabrol's sentence at death for capital murder, plus two life sentences for rape and abduction.

July 2, 1992 — Townsend formally sentences Chabrol to death and sets Oct. 2 as the execution date.

CHABROL

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Stanley J. Berkeley, 33, of the Virgin Islands, were arrested in the house. Berkeley also was convicted of murder, rape and abduction and is awaiting sentencing.

In court Thursday, Chabrol wore a state prison-issue denim shirt and rolled-up blue jeans. He sat with hands folded, staring down at the defense table, as his attorney made a final plea for his life.

"The defendant is a college graduate, a military man, a family man, with no criminal history," the attorney, William R. Brown, said.

Commonwealth's Attorney David L. Williams countered that the death sentence was appropriate. "His insistence in blaming her . . . I suggest to you, cuts squarely against . . . remorse," he said.

Afterward, the victim's husband, Joseph H. Harrington, said: "I'm

just glad that that's over."

Chabrol will be transferred in the next week to death row at Mecklenburg Correctional Center. He will be housed in a one-man cell furnished with bunk, desk, sink and toilet, and will be allowed to bring in his own television, radio, typewriter and electric fan, said Joann Royster, operations officer.

He and 11 other death-row prisoners at a time will be allowed out of their cells for five hours a day to eat, watch TV or play cards or board games such as Monopoly.

"They act the same as any other inmates," Royster said. "To tell you the truth, the death-row area is quieter than the other areas. The only way you can tell is, there is a steel door" in addition to the regular barred doors.

Since reinstating the death penalty in 1976, Virginia has executed 14 men. The latest was the controversial execution of Roger Coleman on May 20, the day after Chabrol learned his fate.