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Convicted Cult Killer Dies in Nebraska Prison

(AP) - LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) - Nebraska authorities say an inmate on death row for the 1985 cult killings of two people in Richardson County has died in custody.

Michael Ryan was sentenced to death in Richardson County District Court for the deaths of 5-year old Luke Stice and fellow cult member James Thimm.

Spokeswoman Jessica Houseman for the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution confirmed Monday that 66-year-old Michael Ryan died in prison. Houseman said he died around 5:45 p.m. Sunday. She said an autopsy would be performed to determine the cause of death.

Ryan was convicted in the torture and killing of 26-year-old James Thimm at a farm north of Rulo, where Ryan led a cult, and in the beating death of Luke Stice, the 5-year-old son of a cult member.

Ryan has been on death row since his convictions.

Associated Press / John Nixon