



OFFICE OF THE  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Stanislaus County

832 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300  
Modesto, CA 95354

Mailing: P. O. Box 442, Modesto, CA 95353  
Phone: (209) 525-5550 Fax: (209) 525-5545

**Birgit Fladager**  
**District Attorney**  
Carol Shipley  
Assistant District Attorney

Chief Deputy District  
Attorneys  
Jerry Begen  
Steve Casey  
Dave Harris

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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Carol Shipley

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Re: Parole Hearing on Darren Lee Phone: (209) 525-5550

**Modesto, California** – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Darren Lee of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole at a January 31, 2008 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings at Solano State Prison at Vacaville. Deputy District Attorney Richard Gore appeared at the hearing and argued for continued confinement based on the danger Lee would pose to public safety should he be released into the community. The Board of Parole Hearings agreed and denied parole for four years.

On June 26, 1979, Lee (age 16), Marty Spears (age 17), Jeffrey Maria (age 17), and Ronald Anderson (age 18) joined in a plan to rob the Modesto residence of Phillip and Kathryn Ranzo. The four knew the Ranzos were home as they finalized their plans in a parked car outside the residence. Spears commented that they may have to murder the couple. They gained entry to the house when they asked to use the phone because they had run out of gas. Phillip Ranzo offered to help them. Once inside the house, the Ranzos were held at gunpoint, tied up, and then brutally murdered.

The four were convicted of murder and received life sentences. Lee's and Spears's life sentences were without the possibility of parole. In 1983, the California Supreme Court ruled that the state's capital punishment law could not be imposed upon persons under age 18. Accordingly, Lee and Spears were re-sentenced to terms of 25 years to life, with the possibility of parole.

In attendance at the parole hearing on January 31<sup>st</sup>, were Phillip Ranzo's mother, sister, son and nephew. They have attended all the parole hearings of the convicted murderers to personally tell the Board how this horrible crime has impacted their lives.

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