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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: November 30, 2011
Re: Christopher Rabbiosi

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Christopher Rabbiosi, age 41 of Modesto, was sentenced to 42 years to life for the murder of Shawnee Butler. Deputy District Attorney Beth O'Hara Owen prosecuted the case for the People.

On September 19, 2008 at approximately 12:34 a.m., Rabbiosi, shot the victim in her head as the two of them sat in her vehicle parked on Dragoo Park Drive in Modesto. Rabbiosi and the victim had engaged in a seven-year extramarital affair. The victim had recently broken up with Rabbiosi after a failed attempt to start a new life with him in Oklahoma. The victim had funded their month-long excursion, to and return from Oklahoma, with a 401-K retirement fund she cashed in from the employment she quit in order to go to Oklahoma with Rabbiosi. Rabbiosi had promised several times to repay her half the money and failed to do so.

On September 19, 2008, after receiving threatening phone calls from the victim's sister and stepson, Rabbiosi arranged with the victim to meet her. He brought a .380 caliber handgun with him. The victim had informed her family members that, if she did not return or call by a certain time, then something had happened to her. The victim's husband and adult son went looking for her in the area she was to meet Rabbiosi after they did not hear from her within the specified time frame. As the victim's husband turned onto Dragoo Park Drive, he spotted the victim's vehicle and turned his high beams on to ascertain if she was safe inside the vehicle. At that moment, Rabbiosi fired his weapon into the victim's head. The victim was unarmed and Rabbiosi admitted she had never possessed a weapon and she had never threatened him. Rabbiosi got out of the car and chased the victim's unarmed husband and son while pointing the gun at each of them. Rabbiosi then fled on foot. The victim's husband and son transported the victim to the nearest hospital where she was treated. She succumbed to her injuries less than a month later.

Rabbiosi turned himself in to the Modesto Police Department on September 19, 2008 at approximately 7:00 a.m. He admitted he “knew better” than to bring a handgun to meet with the victim and noted he had completed the police academy training program in 1992.

At the sentencing hearing, the victim’s husband, Jerry Butler, and her adult son, Charlie Butler, addressed the Court.

Jerry told the Court about Shawnee’s contagious smile that caught his eye the first time they met many years ago at a Bingo Hall. He stated, “Shawnee never had any enemies and would light up a room anytime she walked into it.”

Charlie Butler and his wife were expecting what would have been Shawnee’s first grandchild when Shawnee was murdered. Charlie told the Court that his “young daughter was deprived the right to know her grandmother who would have loved to dote on her.” He asked the court to give “Christopher Rabbiosi the same leniency as Rabbiosi gave my Mom.”

Christopher Rabbiosi gave no statement, showed no emotion and made no eye contact with the victim’s family; he just stared ahead to the Court.

The Honorable Ricardo Cordova sentenced Rabbiosi to 42 years to life in state prison.

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