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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: May 4, 2021
Re: Steve Schmidt
Inmate Granted Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Steve Lawrence Schmidt, age 71, was found suitable for parole during an April 9, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at Folsom State Prison in Represa, California. Deputy District Attorney Jonathan Lee appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On the evening of February 26, 1998, Ceres police were called to a residence where Schmidt and an accomplice, Kevin Michael Duckett, were attempting to force entry into the victim's home. When officers confronted the pair, Duckett ignored commands to submit to arrest, pulled out a handgun, pointed it the police and was shot and killed.

Schmidt fled over the fence and ran but was caught by another officer stationed nearby. Schmidt struggled with police before being handcuffed. Officers found a large "Rambo" style fixed blade hunting knife in Schmidt's left boot, a loaded handgun tucked in his front waistband, a smaller caliber loaded handgun in his left boot, a "butterfly" style knife in his front shirt pocket and another knife up a shirt sleeve. A blood test taken after the arrest showed the presence of opiates in his system.

On August 20, 1999, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Schmidt of attempted residential burglary and being a felon in possession of a firearm. The jury also found true that Schmidt had been convicted of five previous serious or violent felonies that qualified under California's "Three Strikes" law as well as having been sent to prison on six prior occasions. Based upon the convictions and his prior felony criminal record, Schmidt was sentenced to serve 25 years to life in state prison.

Schmidt had an extensive criminal history prior to the crime including convictions for robbery, involuntary manslaughter (for the killing of a drug dealer who owed him money), kidnapping, assault with a deadly weapon, being a felon in possession of a firearm, robbery with a gun, residential burglary and drug possession.

During his time in prison, Schmidt committed six rule violations including smoking, being out of bounds, possession of tattoo paraphernalia, manufacturing alcohol, possessing alcohol and refusing to report to assignment, his last violation being in 2010.

A comprehensive risk assessment by a prison psychologist who interviewed the inmate gave the opinion that Schmidt represented a low risk for future violence if released into the community due to his advanced age and age-related physical disabilities.

At the hearing, prosecutor Lee argued against Schmidt's release based on various unsuitability factors, including the violent nature of his prior criminal convictions, his rule violations during incarceration, and the recency of his institutional programming.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board found Schmidt no longer posed an unreasonable risk to public safety and was suitable for parole. The Board based their decision on factors including Schmidt's age, the prison psychologist's evaluation that he posed a low risk of future violence, that he had no serious rule violations in 10 years and that he had completed significant self-help programming.

This was Schmidt's first and only parole hearing. He has been in prison for approximately 22 years.

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