



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Stanislaus County
832 12th Street, Suite 300
Modesto, CA 95354
Mailing address: POB 442, Modesto, CA 95353
Telephone: (209) 525-5550 Fax: (209) 525-5545

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney
Carol Shipley
Assistant District Attorney
Chief Deputy District Attorneys
Jerry Begen
Alan Cassidy
Dave Harris

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: January 8, 2009
Re: Russell Trunzo-Parole Granted

For More Information Contact:

Carol Shipley, Assistant District Attorney
Phone: (209) 525-5550

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that convicted child killer Russell Trunzo, age 51, was found suitable for parole and released from prison into the community on New Year's Eve, 2008.

On October 15, 2008, the State Board of Prison Hearings at San Quentin State Prison found Trunzo was suitable for parole. The Parole Board had convened a special hearing to address a recent court ruling by the Honorable Donald Shaver. Judge Shaver granted Trunzo's request to reverse the Board's 2007 decision denying parole and ordered the board to release Trunzo from prison. Senior Deputy District Attorney Doug Maner appeared at this hearing and objected to Trunzo's release because he still poses an unreasonable threat to the community due to his lack of rehabilitation, lack of insight into the factors which caused him to commit murder, and untruthful statements minimizing his responsibility to previous Parole Boards.

The Attorney General's office, which handles parole board litigation, declined to appeal Judge Shaver's decision to release Trunzo from prison, and the Parole Board had no choice but to comply with the court's orders. The Governor's Office reviewed the Parole Board's decision granting parole, and on December 31, 2008 declined to reverse the parole board's decision, and ordered Trunzo's release from prison, over the objections of the District Attorneys Office. Trunzo now resides in a halfway house for parolees in the Bay Area.

Trunzo killed his girlfriend's two-year-old baby four days before Christmas in 1978 because the baby had soiled his diapers and was having difficulties with potty training. Trunzo at first denied striking the child, claiming that he fell and hit his head. Later he admitted shaking the child, and accidentally causing his head to strike the toilet seat. After the first versions were proven to be false, Trunzo admitted to losing his temper and slapping the baby several times in the head. The baby had extensive bruising over most of his body consistent with a prolonged, severe beating. The pathologist who examined the baby found evidence consistent with physical abuse that occurred

weeks prior to his death. Evidence at Trunzo's trial established that he did not call for help after rendering the child unconscious and that there was at least a fifteen minute delay until help was summoned to the crime scene by the child's mother.

Trunzo was convicted of second degree murder in 1979, and was sentenced to fifteen years to life in prison. He has had eighteen subsequent parole hearings. At all of these hearings he has failed to admit full responsibility for this crime and the child's prior abuse. The District Attorney's Office argued that Trunzo's inability to completely admit his responsibility for the crime showed that he didn't understand the factors which caused him to kill and there was too great a risk that he would re-offend.

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