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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 5, 2014
Re: Three Murderers Denied
Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager reported today that three convicted murderers were denied parole at recent hearings for three to five years each.

Thomas Odell Coke, age 55, formerly of Modesto, was found unsuitable for parole at a June 23, 2014 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings in Ione, California. Deputy District Attorney Randy Fischer appeared at the hearing and argued against parole based upon Coke's failure to reform and the danger he poses to society if released. The Board agreed.

Coke was convicted of murdering James Dudley Walton of Ceres, California, on December 20, 1977. Walton, age 20, was shot in the chest by Coke with a rifle as a result of a feud between the victim and Coke over a mutual love interest.

Since his last parole hearing in 2009, Coke was convicted of two counts of Prisoner in Possession of a Weapon and was sentenced to an additional six years prison in August of 2010.

Coke is serving a life sentence for this murder and has been in custody for thirty-six years. He was found unsuitable for parole at the hearing, but will be granted another parole hearing in five years.

Catarino Martinez, age 46, formerly of Modesto, was denied parole at a June 25, 2014 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings in Solano State Prison, Vacaville. Deputy District Attorney Beth O'Hara De Jong appeared at the hearing and argued for continued confinement based on the gravity of the offense, lack of insight into the life crime and Martinez's lack of parole plans. The Board of Parole Hearings agreed and denied parole for three years.

In 1998, Martinez's wife was planning on divorcing him. He told her, and others, that if he couldn't have her, then no one could. On April 19, Martinez lured his wife into his home by stating that a non-existent welfare check was at his home for her. Once inside the bedroom, he

attacked her from behind and stabbed her five times. She escaped the house with Martinez chasing her, but was able to get away. Martinez destroyed evidence of the crime and claimed that she attempted to commit suicide (despite the fact that the stab wounds were to her back) and that he injured himself trying to stop her.

On September 28, 1998 Catarino Martinez was convicted of attempted premeditated murder and spousal battery and is serving a life sentence. This was his fifth parole hearing; his sixth will be scheduled in three years.

Surya Chand, age 64, of Seattle, was found unsuitable for parole at a June 24, 2014 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings at San Quentin State Prison. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar appeared at the hearing and argued for continued confinement based on the severity of the commitment crime and Chand's deceptive answers to the Board. The panel members agreed and denied Chand's parole for another three years.

On the evening of November 7, 1981, Chand attended a wedding reception at the American Legion Hall in Modesto where he became drunk and got involved in several fistfights. After being told that he had to leave due to his excessive intoxication, Chand threatened to kill the partygoers. Chand eventually left the building and went to his car in an unlit portion of the parking lot. After the reception ended and the guests came outside, Chand drove his car towards them at a high rate of speed with the lights out. He struck and killed his aunt, Suruj Mahabir and seriously injured a 15-year-old girl. Chand then fled to Washington where he was captured a year later after being arrested for an unrelated petty theft case.

On April 29, 1983, Chand was convicted of murder, attempted murder, and felony hit and run. Chand is currently serving a 24 years-to-life sentence in state prison.

During the parole hearing, Mr. Chand gave conflicting statements. "Although the prison psychologist concluded that Mr. Chand had a 'low to non-elevated risk to reoffend,' that assessment was based on deceptive answers that he gave to the doctor," stated prosecutor Jeff Mangar, "and the report should be disregarded." The Board agreed.

Chand has previously been denied parole six times.

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