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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Date: December 30, 2021
Re: Ronald Ray Anderson
Double Murder Inmate granted parole

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Ronald Ray Anderson, age 60, of Modesto was found suitable for parole during a December 28, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad. Deputy District Attorney Amy Elliott Neumann appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People and argued before the Board against Anderson's release.

On June 25, 1979, Anderson and his three crime partners, Marty Jackson (aka Marty Spears), Jeffrey Maria and Darren Lee, planned a home invasion robbery of the Ranzo home because they believed large amounts of cash were kept inside the home. In preparation for the robbery, Anderson drove by the Ranzo home as many as five times. The plan was for Anderson to stay in the car while his crime partners knocked on the door of the Ranzo home and pretended to be out of gas and asked to use the telephone. While Anderson acted as a lookout, his crime partners left the car armed with weapons, rope to tie up the Ranzos, and spoke of an intent to kill the Ranzos.

Approximately 20 minutes later, Maria and Lee returned to the car in a hurry with envelopes full of cash and jewelry. Anderson admitted at a previous parole hearing that he believed that Maria and Lee saw Mr. Ranzo get murdered. Without seeking aid for the Ranzos, Anderson drove Maria and Lee to safety and then returned to the Ranzo home to get Jackson. Despite inconsistencies in his story, some trial testimony indicating he saw what happened inside the Ranzo home, and an unexplained gap in time of over 60 minutes, Anderson maintains that he never went into the Ranzo home.

On June 26, 1979, the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Ranzo were found in their home. Both had been hogtied. Phillip Ranzo was found dead on the floor of the garage. He had been beaten over the head with a blunt instrument at least six times and suffered a fatal stab wound to the neck. Kathryn Ranzo was found in the bathroom of the house. She had been struck multiple times in the head with an axe. There were signs she had been tortured with multiple cuts to her eyes and face. She had been sexually assaulted and suffered a fatal stab wound to the throat. The house had been ransacked, with cash, jewelry and a gun missing. The murders orphaned their 10-year-old child, Mark, who happened to have spent that night at his grandparents' house.

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Twenty-three hours before the Ranzo murders, Anderson and his crime partners robbed and assaulted a caretaker of a home in Newman. Anderson and his crime partners told the caretaker, Leonard Luna, that they had run out of gas. Once inside the house, they hogtied Mr. Luna and beat him in the head with a revolver. The group proceeded to ransack the home, stealing multiple guns and weapons, which Anderson and his crime partners used at the Ranzo home. In previous parole hearings, Anderson had admitted it was his idea to hogtie Mr. Luna, but he denied it at the most recent hearing.

Pre-trial publicity caused the trial to be moved to Alameda County on a change of venue. In 1979, an Alameda County Superior Court jury convicted Anderson of the murders and he was sentenced to serve life in prison.

At the parole hearing on December 28, Deputy District Attorney Neumann urged the Board not to release Anderson for the safety of the community and given the heinous nature of his crimes. She argued that he needed additional insight into the role he played in the killings, lacked sufficient parole plans, and had lied to the Board about his involvement in the crime.

Surviving members of the victims' family also attended the hearing and asked the Board to deny Anderson's parole, telling the Board they feared for their safety if Anderson is released, and explaining the heartache they have endured. The family has attended 29 parole board hearings for Anderson and his crime partners.

After deliberations, the Board determined that Anderson qualified for both "elderly parole" and "youthful offender" considerations, and that he did not pose a risk to public safety. In granting parole, the Board acknowledged that Anderson had lied under oath to them in the hearing but felt that the lie did not rise to the level of justifying a denial of parole.

This was Anderson's 11th parole hearing. He was previously denied parole in 1993, 1994, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2011, 2016, and 2019. Anderson was granted parole in December 2017, but that decision was reversed by Governor Jerry Brown in 2018. In 2021, Anderson challenged his murder convictions under newly created Penal Code §1170.95 which modifies the state's "felony murder" rule. His challenge was denied. The Judge who handled that motion determined that Anderson was a major participant in the murders as well as an aider and abettor who shared the same intent to kill as his co-defendants.

The Board's decision to grant parole advances to the Decision Review Unit of the Board of Parole Hearings which will have 120 days to review the grant of parole. If the Decision Review Unit approves the grant of parole, Governor Newsom will receive notice of the parole grant and has 30 days to reverse, modify, refer to the full Board sitting *en banc*, or let the grant of parole stand.

Members of the community who wish to comment on Anderson's potential parole release are encouraged to contact:

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ATTENTION: LEGAL UNIT

<https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail>

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