



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: April 14, 2023
Re: Jeffrey Allen Maria
Convicted Double Murder inmate granted parole

For More Information Contact:

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Phone: (209) 525-6909

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Jeffrey Allen Maria, age 61, of Turlock was found suitable for parole during a March 8, 2023, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the California Medical Facility prison in Vacaville. Deputy District Attorney Amy Elliott Neumann appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People and argued before the Board against Maria’s release.

In June of 1979, Jeffrey Maria, Marty Spears, Ronald Anderson and Darren Lee were all involved in the brutal killing of Philip and Kathryn Ranzo. At the time, Maria and his three co-defendants believed a large amount of cash was kept inside the home. Mr. Ranzo was a respected pharmacist working for the city hospital and Mrs. Ranzo owned and operated a hair salon.

In preparation for the robbery, Maria and the others drove by the Ranzo home as many as five times. They planned to knock on the door, pretend to be out of gas, and ask to use the telephone. Arriving there around 9:45 p.m., each defendant carried a firearm and rope to tie up their intended victims. They discussed killing the Ranzos before leaving Anderson at the car to act as a lookout.

Spears and Lee knocked on the front door, told Mr. Ranzo that they had run out of gas and asked him to use the phone while Maria hid in nearby bushes. Mr. Ranzo offered them the gas in his garage and led them there to retrieve it. Spears and Lee then brandished their guns, threatened to kill him and forced him to the floor, where Spears hogtied his legs and feet together. Maria joined the pair in the garage where Mr. Ranzo was beaten six times in the head with his son’s baseball bat. At some point, he suffered torture wounds to his eyelids and was fatally stabbed in the neck.

Lee, Spears, and Maria then went inside the home. They forced Kathryn Ranzo at gunpoint into her upstairs bedroom where she was tied up and raped by Spears. When her body was later found there were signs that she had been struck multiple times in the head with an axe and suffered a fatal stab wound to the throat as well as multiple cuts to her eyelids and face. The brutal killings left their ten-year-old son, who had stayed at his grandparents’ house that night, an orphan.

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Maria told the Board that he never went into the home despite later telling a friend that he went inside and helped in the search for money, something both Spears and Lee confirmed. Getaway driver Anderson also told investigators that Maria had an envelope of cash and valuables in his hands when he ran from the Ranzo home.

At the parole hearing on March 8, Deputy District Attorney Neumann urged the Board to deny parole, arguing that Maria demonstrated a lack of significant insight into the role he played in the killings and had lied to the Board about the facts concerning his involvement in the crime.

Surviving members of the victims' family also attended and asked the Board to deny parole. Family members have attended 32 parole and other post-conviction hearings for Maria and the others over the years.

After deliberations, the Board determined that Maria qualified for both elder parole and youthful offender considerations, that he did not pose an unreasonable risk to public safety and granted parole.

This was Maria's sixth parole hearing. He was previously denied parole in 2013 and 2020. On three previous occasions Maria was granted parole in 2015, 2017, and 2018, but those decisions were reversed each time by then Governor Jerry Brown.

The Board's decision to grant parole advances to the Decision Review Unit of the Board of Parole Hearings, which has 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 Maria's potential parole release are encouraged to contact:

- Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 445-2841
<https://www.gov.ca.gov/contact/>
(Scroll down to the comment subject "Parole – Governors Review" and include Jeffrey Allen Maria, CDCR #C17137.)
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Board of Parole Hearings
P.O. Box 4036
Sacramento, CA 95812-4036
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By email: BPH.CorrespondenceUnit@cdcr.ca.gov

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