



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: April 14, 2023
Re: Steven Eugene Rice
Serial Kidnapper Granted Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Steven Eugene Rice, age 52, of Oakdale was found suitable for parole during a March 16, 2023, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at Avenal State Prison in Avenal. Deputy District Attorney Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On September 5, 1993, Rice approached Victim #1 as she was leaving work in Oakdale and forced her into her own car. Rice got in alongside her and began to drive through town, holding tightly onto Victim #1's thigh the entire time. As Rice slowed to make a turn, she broke away from his grip and escaped by jumping out of the moving vehicle.

Three weeks later, on September 27, 1993, Rice approached Victim #2 as she was leaving the Oakdale Post Office. He brandished a knife and demanded that she get into her car. Victim #2 complied but began screaming for help when Rice got in and began to drive her car. Rice slapped Victim #2, threatened to kill her if she continued to scream and pushed her head into his lap so others would not see her. Rice then drove Victim #2 to a remote location where he sexually assaulted her.

Two weeks after that, on October 11, 1993, Rice approached Victim #3 as she was working in a laundromat in Oakdale. Rice approached the victim from behind, threatened her with a knife and dragged her into a restroom. When Rice tried to lock the door, Victim #3 fought back, kicking the bathroom door open, grabbing Rice's hand with the knife and biting his fingers. With Rice yelling at Victim #3 to let his hand go, Victim #3 began pushing him towards the front door. Once he was forced outside the laundromat, Victim #3 locked the door. Rice then dropped the knife and ran away.

All three victims were able to identify Rice from a photographic lineup. He was arrested and charged in each case. A criminal history check showed that Rice had previously been convicted in the state of Missouri for sexually assaulting his wife's 15-year-old sister.

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On March 29, 1994, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Rice of multiple counts of kidnapping with the intent to commit robbery, kidnapping, first-degree robbery, sexual battery, assault with a deadly weapon and false imprisonment. The late Judge John Whiteside then sentenced Rice to serve life in state prison plus eight years and four months.

Since going to prison, Rice regularly violated prison rules including possessing and using controlled substances in 1994, 1996 and 2010, participating in riots in 2000 and 2008, and possessing alcohol in 2002. During the parole hearing on March 16th, Rice told the Board that he accepted responsibility for his crimes, expressed remorse for what he did and discussed the extensive programming he has engaged in over the last 29 years in prison custody to address his criminality.

Deputy District Attorney MacKinnon argued to the Board of Parole Hearings that Rice lacked insight and credibility, had inadequate release plans, and urged the Board to direct Rice to engage in further sex offender programming. MacKinnon argued that a recent evaluation by a prison psychologist gave the opinion that Rice continued to pose a moderate risk to public safety if he were to be released. MacKinnon argued this was extremely concerning due to the callous disregard for life or the suffering of another shown by Rice in targeting multiple women who were vulnerable and alone.

The Board of Parole hearings disagreed and granted Rice parole. They found that Rice was being honest about his traumatic childhood in which he claimed to have been abused and neglected and how it related to the causative factors of his life crime. The Board was also impressed with the fact that Rice had not recently violated prison rules and has been sober since 2010. Since Rice was 22 years old at the time he forcibly kidnapped and attempted to rape three different women, the Board was required to give “great weight to the fact that Rice was a “youthful offender” at the time of his crimes and found he had developed impulse control and maturity since his conviction. The Board was also impressed by Rice’s rehabilitative programming, self-reflection, education and vocational training in prison over the last 29 years. Lastly, the Board found that Rice had adequate parole plans which included transitional housing, job plans, and family and community support.

This was Rice’s third parole hearing. He was previously denied in 2016 and 2021. The Board’s decision now advances to the Decision Review Unit which has 120 days to review the grant of parole. If the Decision Review Unit approves the decision, Governor Newsom will then have 30 days to refer to the full Board sitting *en banc* or let the grant of parole stand.

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