



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Jeff Laugero
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
Mark Zahner

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: May 1, 2023
Re: Levi Anthony Oliver
Convicted Killer Denied Parole

For More Information Contact:

John Goold, Public Information Liaison
Phone: (209) 525-6909

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Levi Anthony Oliver, age 41, of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole during a March 1, 2023, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at Mule Creek State Prison in Ione. Deputy District Attorney Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

In June of 1995, when Oliver was 14 years old, his mother, Terry Harrison, suggested he and his 19-year-old brother and two teenage friends help her steal a car so that they could go purchase drugs. When they found a nearby 74-year-old homeless veteran asleep in his vehicle, Oliver and one of his friends entered the car and overpowered the elderly victim. Harrison then drove them to a park where they pulled the victim out of the passenger compartment and kicked him numerous times to keep him quiet before stuffing him in the trunk. Oliver kicked the victim in the face so hard that it left teeth marks on his shoes. Harrison then drove them around for an hour searching for a source to buy drugs. Whenever the victim would make noises from the trunk, Harrison would repeatedly slam on the breaks to make him be quiet. Eventually, an acquaintance of Harrison's directed Oliver and his friend to drive the car to a remote orchard in Hughson where they pulled the victim from the trunk, bound and gagged him, and threw him into an irrigation well. As the victim begged for his life, Oliver jumped down into the well and physically shoved the victim's body further down into a pipeline. Local farmers found the victim's body a month later.

In October of 1996, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Oliver of first-degree murder, kidnapping, carjacking and robbery. Judge David Vanderwall then sentenced Oliver to serve 25 years-to-life in state prison on the first-degree murder plus an additional life term for kidnapping for the purposes of carjacking that ran consecutive to the murder charge. The remaining carjacking and robbery charges were either run concurrently or stayed.

A prison psychologist who interviewed Oliver prior to the parole hearing gave the opinion that Oliver currently posed a low risk for future violence if he were to be released into the community, despite Oliver having regularly violated prison rules up until 2013 for such things as failing to report, refusing to provide a urine sample, possession of unauthorized medication, possession of alcohol, being out of bounds, and fighting.

Prosecutor MacKinnon asked the Board to deny Oliver parole due to his need for continued rehabilitation, additional substance abuse programming and more well-defined parole plans. MacKinnon argued that the brutality and callousness of the murder combined with his lack of sufficient insight required more than the relatively few years of rehabilitative programming that Oliver had already completed. She argued that his history of aggression and continued re-offending during the time he has been in prison custody showed that Oliver's criminal behavior was firmly established and required extensive programming and insight, without which he remained an unreasonable risk of danger to the community if released.

After deliberations, the Board denied parole for a period of three years. Oliver was 14 years old at the time of the killing, requiring the Board to give great weight to the fact that Oliver qualified as a "Youthful Offender." The Board found that, despite the callous nature of the killing, Oliver had shown subsequent maturity and growth. However, they also found that he lacked sufficient programming and showed a lack of insight into what caused him to violently murder a 74-year-old stranger. The Board encouraged Oliver to develop more stress coping tools and to participate in more substance abuse programming.

This was Oliver's first parole hearing, having previously waived his right to a hearing in 2020. He will be eligible for another parole hearing in 2026 although that date may be advanced if he can demonstrate to the board a change in circumstances.

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