



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 12, 2023
Re: Steven Floyd Oliver
Murder Conviction

For More Information Contact:

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

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Steven Floyd Oliver, age 68, of Modesto has been sentenced to 40 years-to-life in state prison for the murder of his wife, Sylvia Oliver. Deputy District Attorneys Melissa Chichportich and Fawn Smolak prosecuted the case for the People.

On the evening of November 17, 2016, Oliver called his daughter on the telephone sounding so incoherent and intoxicated that she could barely understand him. Knowing her father and stepmother had a history of arguing, the daughter called 911 to request police conduct a welfare check at the Oliver residence in Modesto. Responding Officers noted that Oliver smelled of alcohol and appeared to be intoxicated. When they asked him if he and his wife had been arguing, Oliver told them, "I was trying to go to sleep. My wife woke me up and said, 'shoot me,' and I did. She's laying on the floor."

Police found Sylvia lying dead on the kitchen floor with her feet pressed up against the cabinets. She had been shot once in the head. The morning of the murder, the two had just returned from visiting Sylvia's family in Texas.

Oliver was arrested and transported to the Modesto Police Department. During several interviews, Oliver gave various stories, each inconsistent with the other. In one version, he said he did not know the rifle was loaded when he pulled the trigger. In another, he told Detectives he had fired a warning shot to the side of her head but did not realize another round was in the chamber when he pulled the trigger. In a third version, Oliver told detectives that Sylvia had placed the rifle to her own forehead and the gun went off when she pulled on the barrel. After the shooting, Oliver admitted going outside to finish a drink and smoke a cigarette. When he returned, he checked the victim for a pulse and found none. He then called his daughter to tell her he shot Sylvia, hoping she would arrive before police were called.

On March 28, 2023, after four days of testimony, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury found Oliver guilty of second-degree murder. The jury also found true an enhancement that he personally and intentionally discharged a firearm causing the victim's death.

Office: 832 12th Street, Suite 300 Modesto, CA 95354 Mailing: PO BOX 442 Modesto, CA 95353
Telephone: (209) 525-5550 Fax: (209) 558-4027 www.stanislaus-da.org



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During a hearing held on May 9, 2023, Judge Carrie M. Stephens sentenced Oliver to serve 15 years to life in state prison for the murder in addition to 25 years to life for the enhancement to run consecutively, for a total term of 40 years-to-life in state-prison, the maximum allowed by law.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Oliver was remanded without bail to the custody of the Sheriff to await transportation to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

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