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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 7, 2023
Re: Ronald Dean Smith
Three Strikes Inmate Parole Denied

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Ronald Dean Smith, age 69, was found unsuitable for parole during a June 22, 2023, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo. Deputy District Attorney Margot Roen appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On November 22, 2015, Smith, then age 61, burglarized a Modesto home while the owners were outside doing yardwork. He was caught leaving the house and confronted by the owner. During a physical struggle, Smith swung a corkscrew at the victim multiple times before attempting to flee on foot. A Modesto police officer who was in the area talking to citizens about the homeless problem, heard the commotion, went to the home and arrested Smith. When interviewed, Smith admitted to stealing a wallet from a purse in the victim's bedroom.

On August 26, 2016, Smith pled guilty to one count of residential burglary and admitted three prior residential burglary "Strike" convictions from 1981, 1990 and 1992. Judge Thomas Zeff then sentenced Smith under California's "Three Strikes" law to serve a combined total of 40 years-to-life in state prison. An appeals court upheld the conviction and life sentence in 2017. In the opinion, the court noted how Smith had been committing burglaries since his youth and was on parole for residential burglary when he committed his life offense.

Since being in prison, Smith has violated prison rules for possessing a controlled substance, being absent from his work assignment and refusing to accept assigned housing. More recently, Smith tested positive for opiates on two separate occasions and admitted to drinking "pruno" (an inmate manufactured alcohol) that he had obtained from a cellmate.

Prosecutor Roen asked the Board to deny parole, arguing for continued confinement based on Smith's failure to recognize his propensity for violence and to adequately address his addiction problem which was directly linked to his lengthy history of criminal behavior.

After deliberations, the Board found Smith still posed an unreasonable risk to public safety and denied him parole for the minimum period of three years. When announcing their decision, the Board highlighted the following factors: Smith's inability to maintain sobriety despite attending a

comprehensive substance abuse program, his inability to withstand peer pressure to drink and do drugs, and his inability to recognize the causative factors behind his substance abuse and life of crime. The Board told Smith that he also needed to revise and improve his relapse prevention plans and remain free from drug and disciplinary violations in order to prove to the Board that he is ready to be paroled.

This was Smith's second parole hearing. His next hearing will be scheduled in three years although he may request a date in advance if he can show a change in circumstances to the Board.

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