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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 7, 2023
Re: Marty Don Spears
Double murderer denied parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Marty Don Spears, age 61, was denied parole during an August 2, 2023, hearing held at San Quentin State Prison. Prosecutor Amy Elliott Neumann and members of the victims' family appeared at the hearing to successfully argue against Spears's release.

In June of 1979, Spears, Jeffrey Maria, Ronald Anderson and Darren Lee were all involved in the brutal killing of Philip and Kathryn Ranzo, who they believed kept a large amount of cash inside their 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, Spears and the others drove by the Ranzo home several times. Each defendant carried a firearm and Spears had 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 to use the phone. Mr. Ranzo offered them the gas in his garage and led them there to retrieve it. Once there, Spears and Lee brandished their guns, threatened to kill him, and forced him to the floor where Spears tied his legs and feet together. Spears then struck Mr. Ranzo in the head six times with a baseball bat and fatally stabbed him in the neck. Mr. Ranzo's body also showed that he suffered torture wounds to his eyelids.

Spears, Lee, and Maria then went inside the Ranzo home where Spears forced Kathryn Ranzo at gunpoint into her upstairs bedroom, tied her up and raped her. When her body was 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.

During the almost four-hour long hearing, the Parole Board questioned Spears about drug rehabilitation programming and his most recent rules violation where he was seen on security video covering up a camera near a hole in the floor adjacent to a perimeter wall. While not

established conclusively by the investigation, the hole appeared to have been dug for an attempted escape. The camera remained covered for several months while Spears and other inmates admitted they engaged in shooting up opioids at that location. Spears told the Board that he only injected drugs once during that time, but the Board did not find him credible.

As in previous parole hearings, Spears continued to lie to the Board about their plan that night and maintained that they all agreed to leave if anyone was home, but he struggled to answer the Board's question of why he had rope with him if the group's intent was really to leave if the house was occupied.

Prosecutor Neumann argued to the Board agreed that Spears's persistent drug addiction continued to pose an unreasonable risk of future danger to the public if he were released. Sandy Ranzo Howell spoke for the victims' family, telling the Board and the inmate that "no matter what, you will always be Philip and Kathy Ranzo's murderer and Kathy's rapist." Victim Advocate Beth DeJong argued that Spears continued to present a danger to the public.

After deliberations, the Parole Board agreed and found Spears unsuitable for parole for a period of three years. The Board found that, even though Spears was only 17 ½ years old at the time, the evidence showed he acted as the "mastermind and ringleader" of this violent attack against unsuspecting victims. Although Spears youthful age and his completed programming were mitigating factors, his institutional record was aggravating. The Board did not believe Spears's version of the facts giving rise to his most recent rule violation and found that he still engaged in persistent criminal thinking. The Board directed Spears to "address the monster of his drug use," "his entrenched criminal thinking" and to engage in sex offender rehabilitation programming.

Although parole was denied for only three years, based on the changes in California law regarding youthful parole, Spears may once again seek to advance his hearing to an earlier date earlier if he can show to the Board he has made "progress" in his rehabilitation.

Members of the Ranzo family have attended 30 parole hearings in order to argue against the release of any of the four co-defendants involved in these brutal murders.

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