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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: December 14, 2018
Re: Clay Arthur Harris
Convicted killer denied parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Clay Arthur Harris, age 45, of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole during a November 7, 2018, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at San Quentin State Prison. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Laugero appeared at the hearing to represent the interests of the People of Stanislaus County.

On June 14, 1992 Harris and co-defendant Daniel Utter kidnapped an elderly victim who had parked his motor home near McHenry Avenue to watch cars cruising up and down the street during Graffiti night. They tied up the victim inside his RV and then drove the vehicle around Modesto selling off his possessions to buy rock cocaine. After several hours, they ran off leaving the victim to free himself and contact police.

Four days later, on June 18th, the pair attacked two transients sleeping in a dumpster in Modesto. Harris held a knife to the first victim's throat while Utter smashed him in the head with a piece of concrete and then stabbed him in the chest, killing him. Harris used the knife again on the second victim while Utter robbed and then stabbed the second man.

On June 24, 1992, Harris and Utter were both arrested. Harris was subsequently convicted by a Stanislaus County jury of kidnapping and robbery in the first incident and first-degree murder, robbery, attempted robbery and assault with a deadly weapon in the second. On December 28, 1992, he was sentenced to serve a total of 40 years to life in state prison for his role in those crimes.

Prosecutor Laugero attended the November 7th hearing and argued against Harris being released on parole noting that Harris committed numerous prison rules violations. Laugero also pointed out that Harris lacked any appreciable insight into what motivated him to commit the crimes and failed to take advantage of any self-help or self-improvement programs to address his antisocial attitude and behavioral problems. Despite the "great weight" given to "youthful offender" criteria, the Board of Parole Hearings agreed and denied Harris parole for 3 years. This was his second parole hearing.

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