



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
David P. Harris

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Jeffrey M. Laugero
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: May 4, 2021
Re: Nicholas John Harris
Convicted Killer denied parole

For More Information Contact:

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

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Nicholas John Harris, age 34, of Turlock was found unsuitable for parole at an April 27, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the state prison in Jamestown, California. Chief Deputy District Attorney Michael D. Houston appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On August 12, 2008, Turlock Police officers responded to a reported stabbing and vehicle fire on Bennington Avenue. Officers found victim Mark Anthony (Tony) Henson, age 25, on the front porch suffering from several stab wounds. He died at the hospital. A nearby white Mitsubishi sedan was engulfed in flames. Investigators determined the fire had been deliberately set using a flammable accelerant.

An autopsy revealed the victim had been in a violent struggle. Investigators contacted by Harris's girlfriend told them she had seen Harris after the killing and fire and that Harris had various injuries, including burn marks, to his face and hands. The girlfriend also described Harris as "very jealous" and that he had made remarks to her about vandalizing the victim's vehicle. Using a pretext telephone call between the girlfriend and Harris, police were able to record evidence that Harris committed the killing and arson. When police arrested Harris at a family member's home in Sacramento, they found the knife used in the killing in a vehicle parked in the driveway. Harris confessed to detectives when interviewed.

Harris was charged with murder and entered pleas of not guilty and not guilty by reason of insanity. Chief Deputy Houston prosecuted the case for the People. In guilt phase, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Harris of second degree murder and arson on May 27, 2014. In a separate trial, the same jury found Harris was sane at the time of both crimes. Judge Linda McFadden, who presided over the case, sentenced Harris to 16 years-to-life in state prison.

Prior to the parole board hearing, a prison psychologist examined Harris and gave the opinion that he posed a moderate risk of violence to the public if released.

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 the parole hearing, Chief Deputy Houston argued for continued confinement based on Harris's lack insight into his crimes and that his release would pose an unreasonable risk to community safety if paroled. Several of the victim's family who attended the hearing also argued against Harris's release. After deliberations, the Board of Parole Hearings agreed and denied parole for 5 years.

This was Harris's first parole hearing. He will be scheduled for another hearing in 2026.

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