



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: December 17, 2021
Re: Ronald Dean Smith
Three Strikes Inmate Denied Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Ronald Dean Smith, age 68, was denied parole at the conclusion of a December 8, 2021, hearing by the Board of Parole Hearings held at the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo. Deputy District Attorney Jonathan Lee 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 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. A comprehensive risk assessment by a prison psychologist who interviewed Smith gave the opinion that he still posed a moderate risk for future violence if he were to be released into the community.

Prosecutor Lee argued against Smith's release based on various unsuitability factors, including his rule violations during incarceration, his unwillingness to participate in institutional programming, and his lack of insight into the factors that contributed to his criminality.

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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: Mr. Smith's lack of institutional programming, the prison psychologist's evaluation that Smith poses a moderate risk of future harm and his rule violations while incarcerated.

This was Smith's initial parole hearing. His next hearing will be in three years but may be advanced to an earlier date under Elder Parole rules established by the legislature in the last few years.

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