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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 18, 2021
Re: Steven Eugene Rice
Serial kidnapper denied parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Steven Eugene Rice, age 50, of Oakdale was found unsuitable for parole during a July 28, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at Avenal State Prison. Deputy District Attorney Dannica Molina appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On September 5, 1993, Rice approached Victim #1 as she was leaving work in Oakdale and forced her into her own car. Rice got in alongside her and began to drive through town, holding tightly onto Victim #1's thigh the entire time. As Rice slowed to make a turn, she broke away from his grip and escaped by jumping out of the moving vehicle.

Three weeks later, on September 27, 1993, Rice approached Victim #2 as she was leaving the Oakdale Post Office. He brandished a knife and demanded that she get into her car. Victim #2 complied but began screaming for help when Rice got in and began to drive her car. Rice slapped Victim #2, threatened to kill her if she continued to scream and pushed her head into his lap so others would not see her. Rice then drove Victim #2 to a remote location where he sexually assaulted her.

Two weeks after that, on October 11, 1993, Rice approached Victim #3 as she was working in a laundromat in Oakdale. Rice approached the victim from behind, threatened her with a knife and dragged her into a restroom. When Rice tried to lock the door, Victim #3 fought back, kicking the bathroom door open, grabbing Rice's hand with the knife and biting his fingers. With Rice yelling at Victim #3 to let his hand go, Victim #3 began pushing him towards the front door. Once he was forced outside the laundromat, Victim #3 locked the door. Rice then dropped the knife and ran away.

All three victims were able to identify Rice from a photographic lineup. He was arrested and charged in each case.

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On March 29, 1994, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Rice of multiple counts of kidnapping with the intent to commit robbery, kidnapping, first-degree robbery, sexual battery, assault with a deadly weapon and false imprisonment. Judge John Whiteside sentenced Rice to serve life in state prison plus seven years and four months.

In previous parole hearings, Rice claimed that his crimes were financially, not sexually, motivated and that he was going to rob each victim and sell their belongings for drugs. This time, at the hearing on July 28th, Rice admitted that his crimes were sexually motivated and that he intended to rape each victim.

Deputy District Attorney Molina argued to the Board of Parole Hearings that Rice was unsuitable for parole due to a demonstrated lack of programming while incarcerated, his demonstrated lack of insight into why he committed the crimes and that his answers to both the prison psychologist and the Board appeared scripted and disingenuous. Lastly, prosecutor Molina argued that a recent psychological evaluation gave the opinion that Rice continued to pose a moderate risk to public safety if he were to be released into the community. This was concerning because Rice targeted multiple women who were vulnerable and alone.

The Board agreed and denied parole for three years. Despite giving great weight to Rice's young age at the time (he was 22) which made him eligible for "Youthful Offender" parole, the Board found that the "hallmark features of youth" did not outweigh the aggravating factors, such as his lack of programming and moderate risk to public safety if released.

This was Rice's second scheduled parole hearing. In 2013, he voluntarily waived his right to a hearing for three years and, in 2016, he was denied parole for five years. In 2019, Rice filed a petition to advance his parole suitability hearing date, which was denied.

His next hearing will be set sometime in 2024 although he may, again, petition the board for an earlier hearing date.

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