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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: January 7, 2022
Re: Jonie Dietzman
Robbery/Murder inmate denied parole

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Jonie Dietzman, age 60, of Modesto, was found unsuitable for parole during a January 5, 2022, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla. Deputy District Attorney Amy Elliott Neumann appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People and argued before the Board against Dietzman’s release.

On May 28, 1993, Dietzman and co-defendant Michael David Stephens, who was armed with a sawed-off shotgun, went to the home of Jose Calderon, intending to rob him of cash and drugs. At the time, Calderon was home with his fiancé Katherine Valverde and five other individuals who were visiting.

After forcing their way inside, Stephens ordered the five visitors to line up against an inside wall. He then demanded several times that Calderon give him money and drugs. For her part, Dietzman guarded the front door and held a telephone cord in her hands that was to be used to tie up the victims. Ms. Valverde later testified at trial that Dietzman kept the cord visible and kept handling it during the robbery.

As Calderon begged for his life, Stephens shot him in the head. As the victim lay on the floor dying, Dietzman, at Stephens’ direction, took money from his and the other victims’ pockets. Dietzman then began binding each person’s hands but became worried they were taking too long and that law enforcement might arrive any minute, so she and Stephens fled. During the entire time, Dietzman showed no concern or regard for the safety of anyone in the home. Afterwards, she and Stephens split the stolen money.

Both suspects were arrested and charged. Stephens was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to serve 99 years in prison. He died in 2016. As for Dietzman, on January 14, 1994, after a jury began deliberating in her trial, she entered a plea of no contest and admitted her role in the murder and robberies. Dietzman was sentenced to serve 25 years to life in state prison.

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In the middle of the January 5th parole hearing, Dietzman and her attorney requested the Board accept a stipulated three-year denial so that she could have more time to address her persistent drug addiction issues. After the Board refused to accept her stipulation and proceeded to closing statements, Prosecutor Neumann argued against Dietzman's release and requested the Board direct Dietzman to engage in significant drug addiction rehabilitation and other programming in order to address and understand the causes of her criminality.

After deliberations, the Board determined that although Dietzman qualified for "elderly parole" consideration, she still posed an unacceptable risk to public safety and denied parole for three years. This was Dietzman's third parole hearing. She was previously denied parole in 2010 and 2017. Dietzman has been in prison for approximately 27 years.

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