



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
Jeffrey M. Laugero

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston
Mark Zahner

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 10, 2022
Re: Archie Ray Lawrence
Three Strike Inmate Granted 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 Archie Ray Lawrence, age 66, of Shreveport, Louisiana was found suitable for parole during an August 2, 2022 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Correctional Training Center in Soledad. Deputy District Attorney Victoria Vasquez appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On July 18, 1994, Lawrence, then 38, went into the Yogurt and Bagel Café in Modesto and ordered a yogurt. He then brandished a blue-handled knife and told the clerk, "Don't move and open the cash register." He fled the store after taking a large number of bills. The clerk was able to get a license plate number from Lawrence's car and reported it to police. A California Highway Patrol unit spotted him in downtown Modesto and attempted a traffic stop. Lawrence led officers on a pursuit for over two miles until he came to a dead-end street. He was arrested after running into a dirt field. When interviewed, he admitted he was guilty of the crime and stupid for committing it.

Lawrence was on parole from prison at the time of the offense and had previously been convicted of grand theft in 1975 and 1979 as well as robbery in 1984 and 1989, all in Los Angeles County. He served two separate prison terms for each robbery offense.

On April 25, 1995, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Lawrence of second-degree robbery. At a subsequent court trial before the late Judge John G. Whiteside, Lawrence was found to have been convicted of the two prior robberies in 1984 and 1989, both of which counted as "Strike" priors under California's Three Strikes law and as serious felony prior convictions. Whiteside then sentenced Lawrence to serve 35 years-to-life in State prison. An appellate court upheld his conviction and sentencing in 1996.

At his parole hearing, Lawrence told the Board that after he took the money at the Yogurt shop, the victim asked if he still wanted the yogurt. Lawrence said he told her, "No, ma'am, thank you" and left. He admitted to the panel that while he was arrested and convicted of only three robberies, he likely committed at least 10 robberies and was under the influence during each crime.

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



<https://www.facebook.com/StanislausDistrictAttorney/>

Since going to prison, Lawrence continued to use controlled substances and violated various prison rules including delaying lockup, delaying count, refusing a direct order, failure to stand for count, refusal to work and disruptive behavior. Prosecutor Vasquez argued to the Board that a positive test for marijuana use as recently as 2016 showed Lawrence had not resolved his issues with substance abuse and should not be released. A prison psychologist who interviewed him in 2021 found that Lawrence had not developed any relapse prevention plan, did not adequately address his addiction issues and had a history of parole and probation violations by continuing to abuse intoxicants after being released from custody. The psychologist also found that Lawrence posed a moderate risk for committing future violence in the community if he were to be released.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board found that Lawrence had followed the recommendations of the prior panel after his first hearing in 2021 and granted parole. The Board gave special consideration to Lawrence's elder parole factors in making their determination, indicating that he showed significant changes supporting his release and potentially had much to give back to help children in the Los Angeles community if he is allowed to live there while on parole.

This was Lawrence's third parole hearing. In 2019, he waived his right to a hearing and in 2021 he was denied parole for a period of three years.

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