



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WOODLAND MURDERER'S PAROLE DENIED

(Woodland, CA) –June 19, 2014 -Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that on June 18, 2014 a Board of Parole Hearings panel denied parole for convicted murderer Thomas Branscum. Branscum is 52 years old and was living in Woodland at the time of the murder. The hearing took place at the California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Commissioner Richard Guerrero and Deputy Commissioner Timothy O'Hara unanimously agreed to deny Branscum's parole for a period of five years after deliberating for over an hour.

On November 27, 1990, Yolo County Sheriff's deputies found the body of 30-year-old Lewis Scholes in a secluded wooded area near Portuguese Bend, one mile east of Knights Landing on the Sacramento River. Fourteen months later, Branscum pled guilty to murdering Lewis Scholes and was sentenced to 15-years-to-life in state prison.

At the parole hearing, Branscum described the events leading up to the murder. He admitted to loading a shotgun at his house and then borrowing a friend's truck. Branscum and his friend drove Scholes to Knights Landing where Branscum followed him into the woods and shot him three to five times. Branscum stated he took the victim's wallet and threw it in the river with the gun so he would not be identified. To avoid being caught, he replaced the pickup truck's tires so police would not connect him to the crime.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Jonathan Raven appeared at the hearing on behalf of the Yolo County District's Attorney's Office. Raven argued against Branscum's release based upon the inmate's inability to take full responsibility for the murder, his anger, alcohol, and drug issues and lengthy criminal history. Additionally Raven told the panel, "The inmate stated he committed this crime because he felt disrespected, but today he shows a lack of insight for the real motivation."

The brother of the victim, Vincent Scholes, attended the hearing. He has been present for all three prior hearings. Mr. Scholes spoke on behalf of the victim's daughter, who was unable to attend the hearing. Mr. Scholes reminded the panel and the inmate, "My brother was taken from us. He did not get the chance to raise his daughter, walk her down the aisle at her wedding, or be present for the birth of his grandchild."

After Commissioner Guerrero read the decision, Deputy Commissioner O'Hara addressed Branscum. "Your crime does not make sense. You are not going to get past this unless you face it. You owe it to yourself and the victims. Now is the time to do this. Face up to what you did and walk through it bit-by-bit." He concluded, "We cannot let you out not having dealt this these issues."

District Attorney Jeff Reisig spoke of the critical role of the District Attorney at parole hearings. "We are the voice of the victims and the citizens of Yolo County," said Reisig. "The result of a five year denial of parole means that Vincent Scholes and his family will not have to travel to a prison and face Branscum again for many years."

Branscum will not be eligible for parole until June, 2019.

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