



COUNTY OF YOLO
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sacramento Man Denied Parole for 1995 Murder

(Woodland, CA) – May 11, 2023 – On May 10, 2023, Board of Parole Hearings commissioners denied parole to convicted murderer Michael Todd. Mr. Todd, who lived in the greater Sacramento area at the time of the crime and is now 57, is currently serving his sentence at CA State Prison, Los Angeles.

In March of 1995, Mr. Todd and Kenneth Buffer brutally attacked the victim, James Williams, at a home in West Sacramento. During the trial, witnesses testified that Mr. Williams owed Mr. Buffer and Mr. Todd \$10,000, as a result of drug deal. Mr. Buffer severely beat Mr. Williams with his hands and feet until Mr. Williams went into a coma. While Mr. Buffer watched, Mr. Todd burned Mr. Williams multiples times with a knife that had been heated on a stove. Also, caustic liquid was poured over Mr. Williams' body which caused severe burns. Mr. Buffer later drove Mr. Williams, who was nearly dead, to his friend's house where he was abandoned in the back seat of his own car. Mr. Williams died ten days later of "blunt force trauma," after being taken to the hospital. A jury convicted both Mr. Buffer and Mr. Todd of 1st degree murder and torture, and both were sentenced to 25-years-to-life in prison.

For the past four years, Mr. Todd has been appealing his conviction based on a new law enacted in January, 2019. As a result of this law, changes were made to the felony murder law eliminating prosecution of an individual who agrees to commit a felony crime that results in a murder if that individual did not harbor actual malice or was not a major participant who acted with reckless disregard during specified felony offenses. Mr. Todd argued that he did not participate in any physical beating of the

victim and denied burning the victim. He claimed his actions did not contribute to the victim's death and, as such, he did not act with malice.

On August 26, 2022, Judge Stephen Mock denied Mr. Todd's petition. Judge Mock found that while the victim's main cause of death was blunt force trauma, the death resulted from a constellation of injuries. Judge Mock determined beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Todd's repeated burning of the victim with a hot knife contributed to the victim's death and supported a finding of implied malice murder. Records show Mr. Todd is appealing Judge Mock's decision to the Third District Court of Appeals.

During yesterday's parole hearing, Mr. Todd took full responsibility for contributing to the death of Mr. Williams. When asked about his petition and appeal to overturn the conviction, Mr. Todd said he believed he had withdrawn his appeal.

Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig stated that he was pleased with the parole board's denial. "The family of James Williams have been suffering immeasurable pain since this senseless and brutal murder," said Reisig. "We will do everything we can on their behalf to honor Mr. Williams and to keep society safe. That is the very least we can do for this family and all families who have survived similar tragedies."

Mr. Todd will be eligible for another parole hearing in 2026.

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