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Kenneth Donney Denied Parole for 1995 Murder

District Attorney Jeffrey S. Rosell announced today that parole was denied for Kenneth Donney, who was convicted in 1995 for the murder of his wife, Nina Leibman. Donney was an attorney working and living in Santa Cruz when he killed his wife. After an argument at home over their pending divorce, Donney stabbed his wife 29 times with their young children present. His seven year old son tried to enter the room while the murder was taking place. In the most significant moment of the hearing, Donney's son Phillip, now 28, told the Parole Board that he could clearly hear his mother repeatedly crying out "I don't want to die" while his father screamed "You should have thought of that before!" Phillip concluded his statement by saying he would fear for his life if his father was released on Parole.

Kenneth Donney is now 70 years old and has served 21 years of a 16 – life sentence. He had previously insisted that he had no memory of stabbing his wife and that he must have been in a dissociated mental state at the time of the murder. However, after relentless questioning by the Parole Board, Donney finally admitted "I murdered my wife." He now claims that years of therapy have recovered his memory of the incident, in which his wife came at him with a knife and he was forced to take it away from her. Contrary to this story, Doctor Mason, who performed the autopsy noted that there were many defensive wounds to the victim's hands. He concluded that she was brutally stabbed, and suffered injuries to her head from a blunt object.

Santa Cruz Prosecutors David Sherman and Michael Mahan traveled to Stockton State Prison to argue against parole for Donney. They stated that he should be denied parole because he has never admitted the truth; nor has he demonstrated rehabilitation during his incarceration. The Parole Board denied Donney's request for parole, also citing his lack of insight into what he did and how it has affected the victim's family. District Attorney Rosell reiterated that Donney poses a continuing risk to public safety, saying, "The District Attorney's Office will continue to be active in the parole process and use all reasonable resources to make sure that dangerous people are kept behind bars."