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CONVICTED MURDERER RICHARD ORNELLAS DENIED PAROLE FOR ELEVENTH TIME

Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeffrey S. Rosell announced today that Richard Ornellas was denied parole for his role in the brutal murder of Santana Pawsey in 1978. Ornellas appeared in front of a panel for the California Board of Prison Terms at the California Health Care Facility in Stockton, CA. Assistant District Attorney Shannon Murphy attended the hearing.

On July 25, 1978, Ornellas, who was an acquaintance of the victim, went to her house in Capitola. Shortly after he arrived, an argument ensued and he then bound, strangled and beat Pawsey to death with his bare hands. A jury convicted Ornellas of murder in March of the following year, and he was sentenced to life in prison.

Ornellas had been discharged from parole from San Mateo County one month prior to murdering Pawsey. He had an extensive criminal history which included assaulting women, and a sexual assault of a minor. He was diagnosed as a sexual psychopath due to these crimes.

Since his incarceration, Ornellas has exhibited violent and combative behavior towards other inmates and prison employees. Regarding the Board's decision, Assistant District Attorney Murphy said, "Mr. Ornellas continues to show violent and aggressive behavior to those around him and his release would jeopardize the safety of the public. The Board has made the correct and proper decision in denying his parole." District Attorney Rosell added, "My office fully concurs with the Board's decision to keep this dangerous man behind bars where he cannot terrorize the members, especially women, of our communities. While the victim's family still mourns and grieves the loss of their loved one, we hope they can find solace in knowing that justice continues to be served and the defendant will continue to be held accountable for his heinous actions."

This was Ornellas' eleventh parole hearing.