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Parole Granted to Convicted Murderer Robert Gruner
CDC #D48392; Kern County Court Case number SC031059A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced the California Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) granted release to convicted murderer Robert Gruner. On April 3, 2024, BPH found that Gruner no longer continued to pose a current and unreasonable risk to public safety. Representing the District Attorney's Office was Deputy District Attorney Gina Nargie.

On January 29, 1986, shortly after midnight, Gruner and two other males went to the area of Chester and L Street in Bakersfield to purchase drugs. Gruner and his two crime partners found the victim, Rick Patterson, walking down the street. Gruner jumped out of the car, pointed a rifle at the victim, and yelled "Rock or money, rock or money!" The victim put his hands up and said he didn't have any. Gruner immediately shot the victim one time in the chest. The victim was 25 years old and died from the gunshot wound.

Law enforcement located Gruner days later. When officers tried to arrest Gruner, he fled in his vehicle. While he was accelerating away, Gruner aimed his vehicle toward one of the detectives. The detective had to jump on the hood of his patrol vehicle to avoid being hit. Gruner led law enforcement on a high-speed vehicle pursuit, traveling at speeds in excess of 70 to 80 miles per hour, crossing into opposing lanes and running red lights. Gruner ran several vehicles off the road during the pursuit. Ultimately, the vehicle pursuit ended when Gruner lost control of the vehicle at Hughes Lane and Wilson Road.

When law enforcement inspected Gruner's abandoned vehicle, they found Gruner's six-month-old son lying on the floorboard of the car with injuries due to not having any safety harness at the time of the crash. Gruner fled on foot after he crashed the vehicle but was ultimately shot by law enforcement and then placed under arrest.

On December 12, 1986, Gruner pled guilty to first degree murder and admitted the special allegation that he was armed with a firearm at the time of the murder. On January 9, 1987, a Kern County Judge sentenced him to 25 years to life plus an additional 2 years. At the time of the sentencing, the Judge

stated, “This is the most senseless killing I have seen in a long time as a judge...”

On April 3, 2024, the Board of Parole conducted Gruner’s ninth parole hearing. The commissioners focused on his substance abuse history, sobriety, and insight into racially motivated violence. The Kern County District Attorney’s Office asked the Board of Parole to deny parole. The Board of Parole found that Gruner no longer posed a current and unreasonable risk to public safety and granted parole.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented, “Gruner has complete disregard for human life – killing one person and jeopardizing the lives of law enforcement, innocent people on the road, and his own child. The board’s release decision is truly alarming.”