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MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Approved by: DDA Joseph Kinzel

Re: Murder conviction: Travis Smoot: BF 164146 A

On March 25, 2019, a Kern County jury found Travis Smoot guilty of 2nd degree murder for the killing of his cellmate, Larry Thomas Hite, at Kern Valley Prison.

On the early morning hours of December 1, 2015, Kern Valley State Prison Corrections Officers found Smoot standing at the door of his prison cell, which had a white sheet hung to obstruct a view into the cell. When the cell was opened, Officers saw that Hite was lying dead on the floor. Hite's hands and feet were hogtied with torn sheets, and both of Hite's ears were punctured – a pencil in his left ear and a pen in his right. Hite was also impaled with a walking cane.

Smoot told responding officers that "Hite and I were up all night drinking coffee and Hite was telling me about a rape he did not get convicted for. I told him to stop or I would [expletive] kill him. Hite wouldn't stop, so I tortured Hite all night and killed him around 4 this morning." Smoot admitted to finally killing Hite by strangulation.

Smoot was originally sentenced to prison for repeated vehicle thefts, but was convicted of two separate assault cases while in prison, extending his prison time.

Hite was committed to prison for a cold-case 1986 murder in July of 2015 after a jury trial in San Bernadino.¹

Smoot's sentencing is scheduled for May 14, 2019, where he faces a 16 years-to-life sentence.

The case was prosecuted by DDA Brad King and investigated by the Department of Corrections.

¹ <https://www.pe.com/2015/09/11/court-defendant-sentenced-in-1986-riverside-cold-case/>

