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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Re: Murder Resentencing: Susan Clevenger: Case # SC 081856B

On December 11, 2001, a jury found Susan Diane Clevenger guilty of first-degree murder with a special circumstance of kidnapping in the death of 31-year-old Bradley St. Clair. Clevenger was also found guilty of conspiracy to commit murder and kidnapping for ransom causing death. Clevenger was sentenced to three life sentences to be served concurrently.

Clevenger's convictions stem from a plot hatched in early 2000 to kidnap and hold for ransom her boss, Bradley St. Clair. Clevenger was employed as a secretary for St. Clair's family business, St. Clair Investments. Clevenger and her boyfriend, Keith Shell, spent months conspiring to kidnap and hold Bradley St. Clair for a \$1 million ransom. Clevenger had obtained information about the office's layout, other employees' schedules, the office phone systems, and the different ways to enter/exit the building. Additionally, Clevenger actively solicited two additional persons to assist with the kidnapping.

In the early evening hours of August 7, 2000, Clevenger put the plan into motion by letting Shell inside the office building after all other employees left for the day. The only person remaining inside the office building was Bradley St. Clair. Shell entered the building and while attempting to kidnap St. Clair, a struggle ensued. During the struggle, Shell duct-taped St. Clair's arms, legs and eyes. Shell then used St. Clair's necktie to strangle St. Clair to death. Shell was also convicted of murder, conspiracy to commit murder and kidnap for ransom causing death. Shell is currently serving a life sentence.

Clevenger's appeals were exhausted in 2004. Clevenger filed a writ of habeas corpus in 2016 seeking relief after claiming she was not a major participant in St. Clair's murder – which was denied by the Honorable Steven M. Katz of the Kern County Superior Court. Clevenger filed a second writ of habeas corpus in 2018, again seeking relief after claiming she was not a major participant in St. Clair's murder – which was also denied by the Honorable John W. Lua of the Kern County Superior Court.

In 2020, California's Senate Bill 1437, providing relief to convicted murderers who claimed they were not major participants in their crimes and/or did not act with an express or implied intent to kill. Clevenger filed a petition for relief pursuant to this new law. The Fifth District Court of Appeal had previously found that Clevenger's circumstances entitled to relief under the language of the new law. As a result of the new law, Clevenger was found eligible to have her murder conviction reduced to the lesser-involved felony predicated the murder, which was kidnapping.

Today, Clevenger's life sentence for the first-degree murder of Bradley St. Clair was reduced to 8 years, the maximum penalty prescribed by California's new law for felony murder based on the underlying crime of kidnapping. Clevenger's convictions for other crimes in addition to the original murder are not subject to reduction under current laws, so Clevenger's two additional life sentences remain in place, despite the new law effectively reducing her sentence for the murder charge to credit for time served.