



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**TULARE WOMAN DENIED PAROLE FOR 1987 MURDER OF HUSBAND**

On December 3, 2019, at the California Institution for Women in Corona, a California parole board issued a three-year denial for June Gravlee, age 65, for the 1987 murder of her husband. In 1990, Gravlee was convicted of first-degree murder with the special circumstance of murder for financial gain. In the penalty phase of the trial, the Tulare County jury recommended a death sentence. However, the trial judge at the time modified the verdict to a penalty of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Her sentence was again modified in 2018 when former Governor Brown commuted her sentence, the reduction of which made her eligible for parole.

“Despite a Tulare jury listening to the evidence and deciding death was the appropriate punishment, both a former Tulare County judge and former Governor Brown showed the defendant far more compassion and leniency than she did to her victim,” said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward. “I applaud the Parole board for not releasing her, but this case is a prime example of why we must have truth in sentencing in California.”

June Gravlee and her husband Andrew Gravlee were married in October of 1986. At the time of the marriage, she was over 35 years younger than her husband. On July 17, 1987, at their home in Tulare, Gravlee and her brother Gary Smith stabbed and beat Andrew, killing him. The pair wrapped his body in a tarp and drove him in his pickup to a ravine in the hills near Kettleman City, where they buried him. For the next few months, Gravlee collected her husband’s pension and social security checks, and even applied for additional benefits. Gravlee explained her husband’s absence by telling people he had left town suddenly.

In late 1987, Andrew's family became suspicious that they had not heard from him. Tulare Police Department officers began an official investigation in 1988 and questioned Gravlee, who eventually told officers that it was her brother who killed her husband. On June 14, 1989, Andrew's body was discovered with stab wounds to the back and chest, and severe blunt force trauma to his head determined to be caused by strikes with a ball-peen hammer.

Smith pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree murder and was sentenced to 25 years-to-life in prison. He was granted parole in 2013 after serving 24 years.

"I agree with the decision to deny parole. This was an especially heartless murder of a hard-working husband. The jurors saw June Gravlee for who she was and returned a verdict of death. The denial of their recommendation diminished their hard work as judges of the facts and the gravity of her brutal crime," said former Tulare County District Attorney Phil Cline, who prosecuted the case against Gravlee in 1990.

The District Attorney's Office routinely attends life parole hearings and a supervising deputy district attorney argued against inmate's release in this case.

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