



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

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**PROSECUTORS SECURE PAROLE DENIAL FOR CONVICTED
MURDERER GRANTED CLEMENCY BY GOVERNOR**

Late yesterday afternoon via video conference, TCDA prosecutors secured a 3-year parole denial for Richard Flowers, age 64. In 1994, Flowers stabbed, strangled, and robbed 78-year-old woman Mary Eloise Garcia in her Tulare home. Flowers used the money and items stolen from his victim to buy cocaine. In 1996, a jury convicted Flowers of first-degree murder with the special circumstance of burglary and robbery, the special allegation that he personally used a deadly weapon, vehicle theft, and receiving stolen property. It was also found true that Flowers possessed two prior strikes and had served four prior prison terms for theft, burglary, and fraud. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Flowers applied for clemency under former Governor Jerry Brown in 2018, but Brown took no action before leaving office. In March 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom granted clemency to Flowers, citing his alleged reform in prison. The granting of clemency, despite the sentence of life without the possibility of parole, entitled Flowers to a parole hearing.

In June of 1994, Mary Eloise Garcia, the 78-year-old victim, lived alone in the house where she had lived for over 50 years and where she was murdered. Garcia lived on her Social Security income and kept any cash she had in her purse rather than a bank account. She was cautious about who she let in the house, using a peephole and having visitors announce themselves before being allowed in. Flowers occasionally did yardwork for her and she would sometimes invite him in when she retrieved the cash from her purse to pay him. In the early morning hours of June 6, 1994, neighbors heard Mary's voice and a man's voice arguing; the next day, Mary's car, a gift from her children, was

not in her driveway. A handyman and a neighbor approached the front porch and noticed her door was slightly open. They entered the residence and found Mary dead.

When Tulare Police Officers responded to the victim's house, they found Mary dead on the living room floor and her house and purse ransacked; no money was found, the victim's car was missing, and a window on the side of the house had been knocked out. The telephone line had been cut, and a kitchen knife was found on the coffee table and another found outside in a clump of grass. Her car was later found jacked up in a stall of a car wash, with the stereo, all four tires and rims, and the spare tire missing. Contact was made with a witness who said he observed a black male stripping the car at the car wash and then driving off in a Lincoln Continental. On June 7, 1994, Flowers was arrested while driving his Lincoln Continental. Custody of the Lincoln Continental was released to Flowers' spouse, who discovered a gold locket and some watches in the glove compartment of the car. These items were later identified as belonging to Garcia.

Arguing against Flowers' release was Assistant District Attorney Robert Dempsie, who prosecuted Flowers in 1996 and secured his conviction. Also present were five members of Garcia's family, including children and grandchildren. Each spoke against Flowers' potential release. TCDA victim advocates assisted the victim's family.

"Never did I imagine that I would return to this case 24 years after the conviction considering the sentence of life without parole. It was an honor and a privilege to once again represent a family who had lost someone so dear to them, and the community as a whole who remembered the terrible events of this case," said Dempsie. "I'm pleased that he was not released."

During the hearing, Flowers denied stabbing Garcia and cutting her phone line, and, for the first time, alleged the involvement of an accomplice. Flowers denied either was armed with a knife.

"Twenty-four years later, he clearly has not taken full responsibility or steps toward reform," added Dempsie.

In 2018, the Office of the District Attorney launched a public campaign urging Tulare County residents to contact Governor Newsom and the Board of Parole Hearings to deny

Flowers' attempts at release. Nearly a half-million people viewed posts regarding Flowers on the TCDA Facebook page. Over 200 letters and petition signatures were sent to the Board of Parole Hearings from a website created by Tulare County Supervisor Kuyler Crocker, www.stoptherelease.com, that advocated against Flowers being released and potential return to the county.

“While I applaud the Board’s decision in this case, I am continually outraged by the lack of truth in sentencing in California. Clemency should not have been granted in this case to begin with,” said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward. “It is quite clear that the voice of this office and that of our community was heard. I thank everyone who wrote letters and shared posts on social media in support of the victim’s family.”

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