



APRIL

Child Abuse Prevention Month

COUNTY OF FRESNO

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DISTRICT ATTORNEY OPPOSES COMMUTATION AND RELEASE OF MURDERER SUSAN RUSSO

On Saturday, April 15, 2017, California Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. commuted the sentence of Susan Lee Russo from “Life Without the Possibility of Parole” to “25 years to Life” for the 1st degree murder of her husband David Russo. This commutation now makes Mrs. Russo eligible for parole consideration. The Fresno County District Attorney’s Office has previously urged the Governor to deny this extraordinary relief, and the office will be opposing her release back into the community at her upcoming parole hearing.

In July 1994, Susan Russo devised a plan to have her husband, volunteer firefighter and Navy Chief David Russo, killed in the hopes of collecting a nearly one million-dollar life insurance payout. She then conspired with her fellow drug users and co-defendants Jason Andrews (whom she was having an affair with) and Bobby Morris, to pay them \$100 to kill her husband. In the early morning hours of July 14, 1994, Mrs. Russo let her co-conspirators into the Russo home where two of the Russo children were sleeping. Mr. Russo was then murdered by a single gunshot wound to the back of the head while he slept. Mrs. Russo then methodically but unsuccessfully cleaned the murder scene, shampooed rugs, and washed walls. During the investigation it was discovered that Mrs. Russo had previously asked her daughter to lie about her whereabouts after staying at Jason Andrew’s home, and on the day of the murder had told her mother-in-law that she and David were doing great and getting better.

At trial, Mrs. Russo was convicted of 1st Degree Murder with the Special Circumstances of Lying-in-Wait and Murder for Financial Gain, as well as Conspiracy to Commit Murder. She was also convicted of a separate Solicitation of Murder of her co-defendant Bobby Morris for asking a fellow inmate at the Fresno County Jail to have her husband kill Mr. Morris. Prior to her sentencing, Mrs. Russo wrote to the trial judge stating that she was not guilty and that she “was not prison material.” She also complained that she had “lost my husband, my children, my home, my possessions and now my freedom.” Mrs. Russo’s convictions and sentence were affirmed after appeals to both the Fifth District Court of Appeal and the California Supreme Court.

After learning of Governor Brown’s action, Fresno County Supervisor Buddy Mendes, who knew Chief Russo, asked “Where is justice for David?”

The Media may email FCDAMedia@co.fresno.ca.us with questions.