



GREGORY D. TOTTEN
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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Man Found Guilty of 1980 Murders

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that Wilson Claude Chouest, Jr. (DOB 12/2/1951) was found guilty of killing two unidentified women in July 1980. The jury also found true the special allegation that he personally used a knife during the commission of the murders, and the special circumstances of rape during the commission of a murder and multiple murder. The jury found Chouest not guilty of a third count of murder for the fetus of one of the victim's because there was insufficient evidence to prove it was viable, which was required by law in 1980.

On July 15, 1980, an unknown female, identified during trial as "Jane Doe Kern County," was found stabbed to death in an orchard in Delano, Kern County. An autopsy revealed she had been stabbed 29 times and had been raped. Three days later, on July 18, 1980, a second unknown female, identified during trial as "Jane Doe Ventura County," was also found stabbed to death in the upper parking lot of Westlake High School. An autopsy revealed she had been stabbed 16 times and had been raped. She was approximately 20 weeks pregnant at the time. In 2013, DNA evidence linked the murders to Chouest, who was already serving a life sentence for robbery, kidnapping, and rape convictions he suffered out of Tulare County in September 1980. Due to the similarities between the two cases, the Kern County District Attorney's Office agreed that the "Jane Doe Kern County" case should be tried in Ventura County.

Sentencing is set July 12, 2018, at 8:30 a.m. in courtroom 48 of the Ventura Superior Court, County of Ventura. Chouest faces a maximum possible sentence of two consecutive terms of life without the possibility of parole plus three years.

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The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

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