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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 20, 2018

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Defendant Found Guilty for 1983 Cold Case Murder

Martinez, Calif. – On September 20, a Contra Costa County jury found defendant Sherill Lynn Smothers of Granite Bay guilty for the murder of Marsha Carter. The victim was killed in 1983 and her body was not found for 10 days. Smothers was a prime suspect during the initial investigation of her murder. Years later he was linked to the crime scene with a positive DNA match.

Smothers now faces a sentence of 25 years to life in State Prison. Contra Costa County Deputy District Attorney Christopher Walpole prosecuted the case on behalf of the People. The jury trial lasted six weeks before the Honorable John W. Kennedy in Department 8 at the Martinez Superior Court. Sentencing for the defendant will occur on September 28.

“With this jury verdict the family of Marsha Carter can finally be at some peace. For decades there was no justice for her brutal murder. Ultimately the defendant is now held accountable. I also want to underscore the important work done by the Richmond Police Department and Sheriff’s Forensic Lab. Without their assistance and commitment to see this case through its end, we would not have been successful.” said Deputy District Attorney Walpole. Walpole is a prosecutor in the Homicide Unit.

Smothers’ blood was found in Carter’s residence after her initial disappearance. Ten days later her body was found in the trunk of her car in West Sacramento. The investigation into her murder led law enforcement authorities to establish Carter and Smothers knew each other and had a previous relationship.

On September 18, the jury had notified Judge Kennedy that a verdict had been reached. Smothers was not in court and did not return to court on Tuesday. He initially told his attorney he was on his way to Martinez. After a bench warrant was issued for his arrest, an inspector with the District Attorney’s Office located Smothers at his residence in Granite Bay and took him into custody without incident. Smothers was out on bail during the trial. He is now remanded into custody.

In 2016, a Grand Jury returned an indictment against the defendant for the following charge and enhancement:

- Count 1, Murder – guilty verdict
 - Special Allegation – Use of a Deadly Weapon – found not true by the jury

Case information: People v. Sherill Lynn Smothers, Docket Number 05-161318-1.

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