



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
 JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR  
**PRISONER REVIEW BOARD**

Edith Crigler, Chair

**EN BANC MINUTE SHEET**  
**OPEN SESSION—July 27, 2022**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on July 27, 2022, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for the following individuals in custody:

C15356	KNIGHTS, GEORGE*
C10360	RENO, RONALD*
C81714	BELL, RUDY*
L40191	CLAY, ROOSEVELT*
C10475	LARSON, RAYMOND*

The meeting was called to order by Madam Chair Crigler.

Roll call was taken by Recording Secretary Andrea Hegland.

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Mr. Jared Bohland	X	
Ms. Edith Crigler	X	
Ms. Lisa Daniels	X	
Mr. Rodger Heaton	X	
Ms. LeAnn Miller	X	
Mr. Donald Shelton	X	
Ms. Robin Shoffner	X	
Ms. Carmen Terrones	X	
Mr. Ken Tupy	X	

9 Members Present

The Board heard and voted upon the cases of George Knights, Ronald Reno, Rudy Bell, Roosevelt Clay, and Raymond Larson as detailed in the individual case minutes.

Meeting was adjourned (EC—DS). Leave.



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**EN BANC MINUTE SHEET  
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Inmate Name: **GEORGE KNIGHTS\***

IDOC Number: **C15356**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on July 27, 2022, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for George Knights\* C15356.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Shoffner, Ms. Terrones, Mr. Tupy, and Madam Chair Crigler.

Recording Secretary: Andrea Hegland.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

The basis for the Board's decision, at this time, is as follows:

Mr. George C. Knights is a 75-year-old male who has served almost 51 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. His offender overview dated March 3, 2022, lacks any detail to his institutional adjustment. It only states that during his incarceration, Mr. Knights has not had a job assignment or gone to school/programming.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On July 17, 1970, at approximately 7:00pm near 1150-1160 N Sedgwick and 1117-19 N. Cleveland buildings, Sergeant Severin and Officer Rizzato were on their Cabrini-Green assignment. A citizen came up to them and complained that someone was firing a rifle from one of the high-rise apartment buildings. Adjacent to the housing project was a baseball field and as the two officers were crossing the field to investigate the complaint, the sniper's gunfire rang out from the Cabrini-Green high-rise building at 1150 North Sedgwick. Officer Rizzato and Sergeant Severin both were each shot and killed by the sniper.

**MR. KNIGHTS' STATEMENTS AS TO THE OFFENSE**

Mr. Knights maintains his innocence and states he never confessed to committing the murder of the two police officers. He did express his sorrow for the loss of life and knows that their families did not have the opportunity to share memories and happiness with them.



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### **INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Institutional adjustment is good, as reflected by the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) administered on November 10, 2021, resulting in a low-risk designation. The ORAS recommends that he “finds a way to connect with the offender community in a positive way.” He volunteers with social services agencies and offers to provide education and prevention services by speaking to audiences about experiences of incarceration.

Mr. Knights has the following accomplishments and participation:

- Member of Stateville Prison Band
- Cell house Clerk
- Employment at Correctional Industries Sign Shop
- Leadership Goal (Jail) Jaycees

### **PAROLE PLAN**

Primary housing plan is to live with daughter Tania Knights-LaSalle. Secondary housing plan is to live in Waterloo, Iowa transitional housing, owned and operated by Kim and Otto MacLin, Ph.D.

### **DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Ms. Yablonicky, Mr. Knights’ attorney, stated that Mr. Knights is not capable of hurting anyone in his current physical state and is innocent of this crime. Ms. Yablonicky then stated that Mr. Knights was not in a gang and that he was a family man. She stated that Mr. Knights is very remorseful to both families.

Ms. Yablonicky also stated that Mr. Knights has not had any violence in his institutional adjustment and that he has done everything that has been asked of him in prison. He also has great family support, financially and emotionally. She then discussed his various options of parole sites within his family.

Mr. Marshall Knights, Mr. Knights nephew, was present to support his uncle. He stated that it was very emotional for him to talk about, but he wanted the opportunity to get to know his uncle. He wanted Mr. Knights to get an opportunity to “go home and do good with his family”.



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Mr. Frank DiMaria, a retired Chicago Police Officer and Trustee of the Fraternal Order of Police Chicago Lodge#7, spoke in protest of parole for Mr. Knights. Also present, were several current Chicago Police Officers, that were in protest of Mr. Knights parole. Mr. DiMaria stated that he was there to represent the victims, victims' families, and all police officers. Mr. DiMaria stated that Sgt. Severin and Officer Rizzato were there to do a "walk and talk". He stated that the 2 officers had volunteered to be a part of this newly started program. He stated they were not just on a regular patrol. Mr. DiMaria discussed how violent the Cabrini Green Housing Complex was at that time. He stated that the officers were crossing a ball field when they were shot with hunting rifles that were capable of shooting 1,000 yards. He stated that the other responding officers could not recover the bodies of Sgt. Severin and Officer Rizzato because of the continuous gun fire. Mr. DiMaria pleaded with the board to think about the victims and their families. He stated that the families live in fear. He discussed that violent loss destroys families. He also discussed that there was no mercy shown to Sgt. Severin and Officer Rizzato that day. Mr. DiMaria stated that to parole Mr. Knights would send a bad message to the community, it would send a message that "there is no law".

Ms. Yablonicky agreed that the crime was heinous. She stated that Mr. Knights was not the perpetrator of this crime. She discussed that he has served 52 years with minimal tickets, and he is ready to go home. She stated that both families have been affected by this tragedy.

Member Miller questioned a ticket for contraband.

Ms. Yablonicky responded that Mr. Knights had been in prison for 52 years without any violent episodes. She stated that the contraband was a tool that Mr. Knights had made to be able to score his chocolate bars. He did 7 days of segregation in September of 2021. She stated that this was not a dangerous thing.

Member Shelton discussed that 7 days of segregation is serious enough and that Mr. Knights should know better after 52 years.

Madam Chair Crigler discussed that the contraband was more of a needle than that of a knife.

Member Shelton discussed that they had heard good things about Mr. Knights, but nothing about the investigation and the witnesses.

Madam Chair Crigler and Member Shelton discussed the violence in the Cabrini Green Housing Complex in the 1970's.

Member Heaton questioned what facts should be discussed. He stated that there were 2 boxes of bullets purchased but that the petition only states 1 box. He discussed that the petition



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states that Mr. Knights took Mr. Boone to buy the shells, but the trial transcript states someone else.

Madam Chair Crigler stated that this was Mr. Knights first time having counsel. She discussed that prosecutors are good at their jobs.

Mr. DiMaria discussed the protest hearings that had taken place.

Madam Chair Crigler stated that John Severin, nephew to Sgt. Severin, reached out to Mr. Knights and has made a relationship with him. She stated that Mr. Knights is not a danger to his community rather he will be an asset to his community.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to grant parole (EC—LD). Motion fails by a vote of 2-7. Members voting in favor of the motion were Ms. Daniels and Madam Chair Crigler. Mr. Bohland, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Ms. Shoffner, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Terrones and Mr. Tupy dissented.

Motion for a 3-year set (KT—LM). Motion fails by a vote of 4-5. Members voting in favor of the motion were Mr. Bohland, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, and Mr. Tupy. Madam Chair Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Shoffner and Ms. Terrones dissented.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Knights' case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Knights would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole release, and that parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*“The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged.”*



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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET  
OPEN SESSION—July 27, 2022**

Inmate Name: **RONALD RENO\***

IDOC Number: **C10360**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on July 27, 2022, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Ronald Reno C10360.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Shoffner, Ms. Terrones, Mr. Tupy, and Madam Chair Crigler.

Recording Secretary: Andrea Hegland.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Ronald Reno C10360 was interviewed via WebEx virtual platform from Dixon Correctional Center on June 2, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Reno represented himself without any others present. Mr. Reno was dressed in uniform blue and put together. Mr. Reno was very respectful, self-aware, and communicated clearly. There were no health concerns at the time of the interview. The virtual interview was carried out without issue. Mr. Reno brought with him a copy of a book that has excerpts pertaining to his life. This would be brought up during the interview repeatedly.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On October 6, 1970, the Mr. Reno forced open a living room window to the home of Marcia Vespa and entered the darkened home. Mr. Reno then proceeded to the kitchen where he found a carving knife that was 12 ½" in length. Mr. Reno then crept upstairs to the bedrooms of the house armed with the knife. The victim's two children were asleep in their rooms when Mr. Reno invaded Mrs. Vespa's bedroom and set upon her as she lay asleep in her bed dressed only in a nightgown. At knife point, Mr. Reno then raped the victim, and when he had finished, he plunged the carving knife into her heart and again into her side killing her. Mr. Reno then went down the stairs, stole two purses that were on the dining room table, and fled through the kitchen. Mr. Reno proceeded through neighbors' backyards before sneaking into a garage where he ransacked the purses, leaving his thumbprint on one of the articles in the purse.

Statement of facts for the Rape and Agg Battery convictions are that Mr. Reno accosted the victim in her basement as she was doing laundry. Mr. Reno forced the victim to have sexual intercourse with him, compelled her to submit to an act of oral copulation and then proceeded to beat her into bloody unconsciousness with a baseball bat. Before beating her, he told her he had



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to do something with her to keep her from identifying him. She remained hospitalized for seven days sustaining a broken finger, broken jaw, and burns about her body where he attempted to force her body into a burning boiler furnace.

On April 27, 1971, the victim, Mrs. Cobb was walking into a building when Mr. Reno grabbed her, demanding money. Mr. Reno took the victim's wallet containing cash. Mr. Reno was identified by photograph and arrested on May 8, 1971.

Mr. Reno was sentenced on May 4, 1972, to 20 - 40 years for the rape and 5 to 10 years for Aggravated Battery. The state originally recommended 30 to 60 for the rape, 5 to 10 for Deviate Sexual Assault, and 5 to 10 for the Agg Batt. Mr. Reno was sentenced on July 29, 1973, for Robbery with a 2-year sentence to run concurrent to the Rape and Agg Battery sentences. Mr. Reno was sentenced on August 2, 1973, to 100 - 300 years for murder after the state recommended a sentence of 200 - 600 years.

**MR. RENO'S VERSION OF THE OFFENSE**

Mr. Reno fully acknowledges his role in the crimes and take responsibility for them today. Mr. Reno stated he feels remorse for his actions. He stated repeatedly that he knows he destroyed two families as well as his own family. Mr. Reno states that he even feels responsible for his own mother's death in the 1980's as his actions and crimes devastated his mother, and he believes that drove her to an early death in her 50's. In open statements, Mr. Reno first shared about the murder conviction, stating that he broke into the house. He quickly simply admitted to the crime. He stated that his mindset at the time was that if you get rid of any witnesses, then you don't have anything to worry about. Mr. Reno went on to state that he did the other crimes as well. Mr. Reno said that he can't bring the victim back, he is sorry for both families, and that he did wrong. Mr. Reno wants whatever time he has left to be used for good. He states that he is making efforts, he has a story to tell to help people, and that prison actually helped him a lot.

Mr. Reno shared that at the time of the crimes he was surrounded by gangs and other people without any kind of structure or direction in life. He was getting high, trying to become someone that he wasn't, and succumbing to peer pressure. Mr. Reno stated that, "I brought it upon myself wanting to be somebody."

In a follow up question, I stated that after raping Ms. Richardson, it is stated that Mr. Reno beat her with a baseball bat and evidence suggested that he attempted to put her into a furnace causing burns to her body. I asked what the reasoning was behind those additional actions beyond the rape. Mr. Reno stated that he came to his senses as he was pushing the body into the furnace and decided not to follow through with it. Mr. Reno confirmed that if he had not changed his mind, she would have been killed in the furnace. He stated that he was fully capable



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of completing the act of putting her into the furnace. Mr. Reno stated that in the moment, he remembered the murder in 1970 and decided not to follow through with the full act.

In his most prior En Banc interview, it was noted that Mr. Reno denied his involvement and guilt in the crimes for many years including in 1999, but eventually took responsibility for his actions.

### **CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Mr. Reno's criminal history is of concern. Mr. Reno has a lengthy and serious juvenile record from 1960 to 1969. Following his juvenile convictions, starting in 1970, Mr. Reno went on to have arrests for Contributing to the sexual delinquency of a child, disorderly conduct and mob action, theft, and rape in 1970. Then in 1971 after the murder and amongst his other holding convictions, Mr. Reno was arrested for Burglary which was reduced to theft, grand theft, and grand theft with traffic violations and resisting arrest. Mr. Reno was on 3 years of probation for burglary committed after the murder and violated that probation with the other holding convictions.

### **INISITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Mr. Reno maintains close contact with family through letters as well as occasional phone calls and visits. He is particularly close to his nieces. He also had the support of his sister until her passing in March of 2022.

In regards, to Mr. Reno's engagement with programming and services during his incarceration, there is very little to consider. Mr. Reno states that he completed substance abuse and foundations courses. He states he has been in sex offender programs for days or weeks in the past when a program would come to the institution to offer it. The 2017 En Banc interview notes state that he completed a 1-hour rape culture seminar in 2015 but has taken nothing else for sex offender services. Per the 2022 offender overview, Mr. Reno has not taken part in any kind of programming since his last En Banc in 2017.

Mr. Reno's disciplinary record while in IDOC is also of concern. There are 8 pages of tickets on the old forms prior to 2000 with serious offenses including '84 assault, '85 gang activity, '86 arson, '88 assault, '89 assault for slamming a correction officer's head as well as drugs and bribery, '90 dangerous contraband, '91 dangerous contraband, '92 assault for throwing a clock at an officer, '96 dangerous contraband and assault of an officer for grabbing an officer, '97 gang activity, and 2000 for arson. Per the 2017 SPIN assessment, Mr. Reno admitted to IDOC staff that in the early 80's he shanked and piped other inmates on several occasions but never got into





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trouble because IDOC was different back then. Mr. Reno's response to me regarding his old tickets was "a man had to be a man."

Mr. Reno has 5 pages of tickets from 2001 to present. Since his last En Banc in 2017 Mr. Reno has accrued 20 minor tickets and 14 major tickets including: '17 damage to property for altering wiring, '17 dangerous contraband for razor blades, '17 drugs for 6 capsules and a white powder, '17 attempted trafficking, '20 damage to property for breaking a shelf in his cell, '20 Drugs for a tortilla bag full of homemade liquor, '20 Drugs for possession of 100 ounces of homemade liquor, '21 Contraband for altering power and other wiring, '22 Contraband and disobeying direct order refusing orders by officers as he approached his cell during a cell shakedown where they found multiple contraband items, two more contraband tickets in February and March of '22 including one for multiple altered items, and a pending insolvency ticket from June of '22 for yelling at staff and slamming chuck. There is also a 2002 new felony conviction for marijuana in a penal institution. There are 5 minors and 2 majors in 2021 and 2022 alone, along with the pending minor from a month ago. Mr. Reno's response to the new tickets was, "you will get a ticket if an officer wants to give you one." Mr. Reno claims that he has instigated some tickets, but that other tickets are coming from officer harassment. He admits to making wine for other inmates and states he doesn't blame anyone for his behavior.

Throughout the interview, Mr. Reno claims to take responsibility for his negative behaviors, while also placing blame on officers that had an issue with him, officers holding grudges, or officers not understanding what he was really trying to do at the time. He mentions officers trying to prove themselves and him just reacting to them. He also admits that for much of the time, tickets just didn't mean anything to him. He claims that he learned the hard way and now he is trying. Mr. Reno said, "took me a long time to learn what I lost in life. I'm not the monster that I was."

Mr. Reno shared that he has a belief in God. He reads daily bread devotionals and scripture daily. Mr. Reno states that he has never been stabbed or piped in all these years despite his own behavior, and he feels he made it this far because of his faith in God.

Mr. Reno has attempted to earn his GED and has taken some college courses but never completed any education program. He was gifted a GED book which he studies, but states that he is still on a wait list to take the GED class. He talked at length about having written a book, ultimately clarifying that he has excerpts from his life published in a Foundations for Life book written by Bob Clinkert.

In regard to institutional work assignments and vocational progress, Mr. Reno states he gave up trying to have a job in the institution in order to focus on his studies. Per the 2017 SPIN assessment, Mr. Reno wants to work but has trouble holding down jobs. He has lost jobs due to transfers and due to being in segregation. Per the 2022 offender overview, Mr. Reno worked as a janitor from 2018 to 2020 but has not been assigned to a job since then. Mr. Reno claims that he



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lost that job due to a falling out with a different lieutenant than the one he had issues with for recent tickets.

Other notes from the 2017 SPIN assessment include concerns about his response to supervision given his ticket history; as well as confirmation that he was put into protective custody in the early 80's to leave his gang at the time. He also stated to that staff member, that he spent years denying his involvement but had a change of lifestyle when his mom died. Mr. Reno stated in that assessment in 2017 that he is aware that the murder victim's husband works very hard to keep him in prison.

### **PAROLE PLANS**

Mr. Reno has no solid parole plan to speak of. The family members that would like to act as a host site are not able to, as their homes do not meet requirements for the sex offender registry. St. Leonard's has also confirmed they are not an option.

Mr. Reno would depend on state benefits, but states he also has some people behind him. He also stated that there are some roadblocks to his social security benefits because he was living and working under the alias of Ronald Reno. His government name is Ronald Logan Espy. He stated there are some people who could hire him. He is supported by nieces and cousins, as well as a church that sends him money on occasion that is local to Dixon which he met during summits.

There are no behalf letters to discuss. Mr. Reno submitted a letter on his own behalf. He reached out to a US Congressman who referred him to his State Congressman. A State Representative responded only in acknowledging issues he brought up, but nothing in support of his petition.

Mr. Reno faces factors complicating release in that he is a sex offender with sexually violent person status as well as lack of a viable release site. Per the 2022 offender overview, IDOC recommends sex offender counseling, GPS, no victim contact, and no computer/internet access should he be granted parole.

### **OPPOSITION TO PAROLE RELEASE**

The Cook County State's Attorney submitted a five-page opposition letter in 2017 stressing the seriousness of the offenses committed while on probation with a history of serious offenses as well as ongoing institutional tickets and a lack of provable rehab.



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There are 5 letters of protest from 2017. There is also indication from the 2017 En Banc interview notes, that several family members did not intend to appear anymore in opposition as it was too painful to keep bringing it up.

### **EN BANC HISTORY**

The first year that Mr. Reno was considered for parole was in 1982. Mr. Reno has been up for release twenty times prior to this hearing. He has received a 2-year set in 1989, six 3-year sets between 1991 and 2009, and 5-year sets in both 2012 and 2017. In 2017, the Prisoner Review Board voted unanimously to deny parole and a 10-4 decision on the vote for a 5-year set.

### **DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

The members had no questions regarding the presentation and no further discussion.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (JB—DS). Motion prevails by a unanimous vote. Leave.

Motion for a 3-year set (JB—DS). Motion prevails by a vote of 7-2. Members voting in favor of the motion were Mr. Bohland, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Shoffner, Ms. Terrones, and Mr. Tupy. Madam Chair Crigler and Ms. Daniels dissented.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Reno's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Reno would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole release, and that parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*



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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**

**OPEN SESSION—July 27, 2022**

Inmate Name: **RUDY BELL\*** IDOC Number: **C81714**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on July 27, 2022, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Rudy Bell\* C81714.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Shoffner, Ms. Terrones, Mr. Tupy, and Madam Chair Crigler.

Recording Secretary: Andrea Hegland.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

On March 3, 2022, Mr. Bell was interviewed by Board Member, LeAnn Miller via WebEx at Hill Correctional Center in Galesburg, IL. Mr. Bell's daughter, Angela Bell and his attorney, H. Candance Gorman were also present at the interview via WebEx. The interview started at 9:05am with Mr. Bell and Angela being sworn in. Mr. Bell is 70 years old. He is serving a sentence of 100-200 years for the murder of Tyrone Smith. Mr. Bell has been incarcerated for 44 years

Mr. Bell was very appropriate in his answers and his conversation. Mr. Bell stated that his name should be spelled Rudie instead of Rudy. He stated that it has been misspelled the entire time he has been incarcerated.

Mr. Bell stated that he has a very close relationship with his family. He stated that he is close with his mother, three siblings and cousins through letters and phone calls. He stated that he had a cousin to visit in 2011 but it is due to travel from Chicago to Galesburg is why he doesn't have many visits. Mr. Bell's mother now lives in Florida, and he talks with her weekly.

Mr. Bell stated that he worked in a plastic factory, U.S Steel as a laborer. He stated that his brother- in -law and uncle have a job lined up for him upon his release.

Mr. Bell stated that he has served 44 years in prison. He said he takes advantage of recreation time. He said he assists others in lifting weights and body building. Mr. Bell got his GED in 2017. He stated that he has several certificates in tailoring; custodial, a health care certificate, anger management certificate and is on the wait list for Auto class. Mr. Bell states that he goes to church 3-4 times/week.



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Mr. Bell was asked, if he could say anything to the Board, what would he want to tell them. He stated, "I have been in prison most of my life and my kids' lives. I am not bitter or mad at anyone about my situation. All these years I have been here, I have come to realize that the lifestyle I was living was totally detrimental. I have grown close to God, and I am trying to live righteously the best I can. I'm 70 years old and life expectancy for a man is 72 years of age. I realize that I don't have much time on earth, but what time I do have I want to help others and myself. I am truly sorry for the loss of life that happened in this case. I am sorry to the family 1000 times over. I am truly remorseful for my gang activity. May God Bless everyone!"

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On April 2, 1977, at 2:30am, Rudy Bell along with Orville Miller and 2 other unidentified men jumped from a vehicle and executed Tyrone Smith. He had just pulled up in front of his home and walked toward the trunk of the car. His mother, girlfriend, girlfriend's child and aunt were all in the car. They had just returned from picking up his aunt from the airport. While standing in front of his house, the victim shouted to an approaching vehicle to turn on their headlights. At that point, Mr. Bell and his co-defendant, Orville Miller, exited the car, and shot and killed Tyrone Smith in front of his family members. A witness, Ms. Audriana Thomas and her friend, Robert Anderson were standing a few doors north of 7948 S. Union when the shooting occurred. She saw four people get out of the dark blue car when it pulled alongside the victim's car. She then saw guns go off and recognized Rudy Bell and Orville Miller who she knew from the neighborhood. Additionally, extraction markings on the shells found near Tyrone Smith's body were compared to similar marking on shells found at Bell's home. Ballistic experts concluded they matched.

Mr. Bell was a member of the Moorish Americans street gang, which grew out of the Blackstone Rangers, headed by notorious, Jeff Fort. Mr. Bell was a high -ranking member (General) and enforcer for the El Rukns, Mr. Bell's street gang.

The State's Attorney's office was aware of the El Rukn's efforts to intimidate Audriana Thomas and prevent her from testifying against Mr. Bell. She was placed into protective custody in the weeks leading up to the trial, which was set for early September 1977. The defense attorney persuaded the trial judge to have witness Audriana Thomas perform a pre-trial interview. For her safety, the interview was to be held at the State's Attorney office on September 1, 1977.

Despite the government's attempt to relocate and protect Audriana Thomas around the time this case was pending in court, the El Rukns persisted in their attempt to intimidate her to not testify throughout the Summer of 1977. El Rukn General, Derrick Porter was acting as the defense attorney's "paralegal." He paid her to leave Illinois for California. When she returned prematurely, Porter and other El Rukns held her against her will for over a week in the Crest



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Hotel at 67<sup>th</sup> Street and South Stoney Island Avenue. After Audriana Thomas eluded them, it became apparent that she would not be intimidated. Attorney Swano provided the El Rukns with police reports and discovery that listed her home address and Jeff Fort ordered her killed to protect Mr. Bell and Mr. Miller.

At approx. 6:30am on September 1, 1977, El Rukn hitmen, Williams Doyle, an associate of Mr. Bell, along with Henry Andrews, George Carter and Teddy Parrish followed a car they believed that Audriana Thomas was in from her house on S. Wentworth Ave. Andrews and Carter were Rudy Bell's cousin and they and Doyle were members of Mr. Bell's faction of the El Rukns. However, the car they followed from Audriana's house was driven by Rowena James, Audriana's sister. Rowena was with her mother, her father, and young son. The car containing the El Rukns drove up next to Rowena James while she was stopped at a stoplight on 98<sup>th</sup> St and S. Wentworth. William Doyle executed Rowena James by shooting her in the head twice with a shotgun in the mistaken belief that she was the witness who was to testify against Mr. Bell. Audriana Thomas was informed of her sister's execution later that morning while awaiting the interview in the State's Attorney's office.

The next day, the Chicago Police executed a search warrant on the El Rukn headquarters at 3939 S. Drexel Boulevard. This headquarters was referred to as "The Fort" by the El Rukns. It was fortified with iron doors, barred window, and armed members of the El Rukn gang. Police executed a search warrant and discovered a copy of the Chicago Police Department's Tyrone Smith homicide file in one of the rooms of "The Fort." This supports the investigators theory that the murder of Rowena James was connected to the murder of Tyrone Smith and the intended target in the Rowena James murder was, in fact Audriana Thomas, the eyewitness.

Despite what Mr. Bell's El Rukns did to her sister, Audriana Thomas still testified at the trial. She was also terrified about the well-being of her daughter, Bonnie. At a post-trial hearing held in court, multiple gang members attended. One of them was stopped and arrested. He was found to have in his possession a photo of Bonnie, Audriana's daughter. It was in the gang member's wallet along with the out-of-state phone number of Audriana Thomas.

In a letter to the Board on December 6, 2016, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois has stated,

"The Tyrone Smith/Rowena James murders are two of the most infamous of the many dozens of killings carried out by the members of the El Rukn Organization in the 1970's and 1980's. Rudy Bell has never expressed any remorse for the Smith murder. Bell was a hardened killer in 1977 and there is no evidence that has changed. He remains a danger to society."

Under the Federal RICO Act, Mr. Doyle was convicted of the murder of Rowena James and conspiracy to Commit Murder of Audriana Thomas. It has always been the prosecution's theory that Rowena was mistaken for her sister, the eye-witness, Audriana Thomas and that the



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El Rukns meant to eliminate the witness to Tyrone Smith's murder. Mr. Bell was subsequently convicted of the Murder of Tyrone Smith and was sentenced to 100-200 years for the crime.

**MR. BELL'S VERSION AS TO THE OFFENSE**

Mr. Bell stated that he has no knowledge of the incident, as he was at a party in Wisconsin with Orville Miller. He stated that he is innocent of the crime.

**CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Mr. Bell was 25 years old at the time of the murder and had previously been arrested 30 times.

**INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Mr. Bell's institutional adjustment started out as poor. He has had 97 IDRs since 1978, and many are major IDRs. His last IDR was 10/13/2020 for jamming his door. Mr. Bell stated that he got into a lot of trouble in his early years in prison. He now tries to be a mentor to other inmates, to help them with their time in prison. Mr. Bell stated that he now has made a good adjustment to being incarcerated. Mr. Bell is A grade and is currently unassigned.

Mr. Bell has his GED and many certificates. He stated that he gave up gang life 10 years after being incarcerated. However, he had a major

IDR for Gang Activity on 5/8/2006. IDOC doesn't have an official denouncement of this.

Mr. Bell went on a hunger strike last year to protest his living conditions. He was moved to another housing unit, but he wants to be moved to the handicapped section.

**OPPOSITION**

Cook County State's Attorney, Ms. Kim Foxx opposes the release of Mr. Bell.

**EN BANC HISTORY**

Mr. Bell has been presented at En Banc 27 times. He has been unanimously denied by the Board until August 2020 where he received a vote of 7-6 to deny and April 29, 2021, where he received a vote of 7-5 to deny.



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**PAROLE PLANS**

Mr. Bell stated that he wanted to go the Half-way house, Roll Call. He stated that he was approved for this placement on February 13, 2022. Linda Weatherspoon, Associate Director has approved him. Milton Golden, co-founder and CEO of Roll Call stated that Rudy saved his life in Cook County Jail, and he wants to help him.

Mr. Bell also has support from La Shawn K. Ford, State Representative of the 8<sup>th</sup> District and Mr. Rory Guerra, Founder and Director of Saints of Humboldt Park.

He states that he has a lot of support and will get the medical support and counseling that he needs to re-enter society. He stated that he will have a mentor and they will work with him for him to become a mentor to others. He stated that they have offered him a job at the half-way house.

**DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

H. Candance Gorman, Mr. Bell's attorney, was present on his behalf. Ms. Gorman stated that Mr. Bell expresses great remorse while still maintaining his innocence. She discussed his remorse for his gang life and stated that he is making amends by being a mentor to other inmates. She stated that Mr. Bell mentored Mr. Golden, who went on to start Roll Call.

Ms. Gorman discussed that Mr. Bell has a detailed parole plan, which included acceptance at St. Leonard's and Roll Call. She stated that Mr. Bell has a lot of support from family and friends as well. He speaks to his mother, who is 94 years old, on the phone every week and wishes to be able to see her before she passes. Ms. Gorman stated that Mr. Bell is 71 years old and not a risk to the community, rather he wants the opportunity to help others in the community. She discussed that the co-defendant, Mr. Miller, was released 3 years ago.

Deacon Moore, a family friend of more that 50 years, was present on behalf of Mr. Bell. Mr. Moore stated that Mr. Bell's mother is extremely ill and under hospice care. He discussed Mr. Bell wanting to spend time with his mother before her passing. Mr. Moore stated that there are multiple organizations and community leaders that will help Mr. Bell with his transition back into the community. Mr. Moore discussed Mr. Bell's health conditions and age. He stated that Mr. Bell should spend his remaining years with his family.

Member Heaton questions Mr. Bell taking responsibility while still maintaining his innocence.

Ms. Gorman stated that Mr. Bell takes responsibility because he was found guilty.





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Members discuss if Mr. Bell was ever charged with the murder of the witness.

Member Heaton questions if Mr. Bell ever renounced the gang.

Ms. Gorman stated that Mr. Bell has not been apart of a gang in over 20 years.

Member Heaton questions if Mr. Bell is still in contact with his co-defendant.

Ms. Gorman stated that she contacted Mr. Miller and not Mr. Bell.

Member Heaton stated that according to prison records, Mr. Bell is in contact with Mr. Miller.

Members discuss that IDOC does not have any record of Mr. Bell renouncing his gang affiliation and his most recent gang ticket being in 2006.

Ms. Gorman discussed the ticket in 2006 being for a photograph that Mr. Bell received in the mail. She stated that the photo was cleared to be received, but during a shakedown it was taken because others in the photo are still believed to have gang affiliation.

Members discuss the ongoing communication between Mr. Bell and his co-defendant, Mr. Miller.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (LM—DS). Motion prevails by a vote of 6-2. Members voting in favor of the motion were Mr. Bohland, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Terrones, and Mr. Tupy. Madam Chair Crigler and Ms. Daniels dissented. Ms. Shoffner abstained.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Bell's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Bell would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole release, and that parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*



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**EN BANC MINUTE SHEET  
OPEN SESSION—July 27, 2022**

Inmate Name: **ROOSEVELT CLAY\***

IDOC Number: **L40191**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on July 27, 2022, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Roosevelt Clay L40191.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Shoffner, Ms. Terrones, Mr. Tupy, and Madam Chair Crigler.

Recording Secretary: Andrea Hegland

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

Roosevelt Clay is a 66-year-old African American male. He is currently serving 60-120 years for three counts of Murder. Mr. Clay received a 5-year set when he was last seen by the Board on July 27, 2017. He is currently unassigned at Hill Correctional Center.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On April 25, 1975, Mr. Clay, and several co-defendants, kidnapped a medical doctor and two patients. The men were going to hold the doctor for ransom, requesting \$100,000. However, when one of the defendant's went to put the doctor into the car, the doctor stated his heart could not take it and did not want to go into the trunk. The co-defendant then pistol whipped the doctor and forced him into the trunk. The doctor then suffocated inside the trunk of the car he was being held in. Two sisters were forced into the back of the car. When the defendant's found out the Doctor was dead, they shot the two sisters to get rid of any witnesses.

**MR CLAY'S STATEMENT AS TO THE OFFENSES**

Mr. Clay has refused to speak with the Board at this hearing, as he has done in the past as well.

**INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT**

Since his last hearing, he has not received any tickets. He last received a major IDR for Contraband/Unauthorized Property on 9/8/2017. He was found guilty and received a verbal reprimand.



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**PAROLE PLANS**

Mr. Clay is facing a life sentence in the State of Wisconsin, if he is ever released from the Illinois Department of Corrections. There is an interstate agreement processed detainer conviction of first-degree murder on October 24, 1988. A warrant was issued in Wisconsin on October 4, 1989.

**DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

Member Shelton questions if Mr. Clay gave a statement to police.

Member Tupy stated that Mr. Clay did give a statement. He stated that Mr. Clay believed he would receive help from the FBI for giving a statement. Member Tupy discussed the 1982 Wisconsin case, stating the Mr. Clay was given a Life sentence.

The members had no questions regarding the presentation and no further discussion.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (KT—JB). Motion prevails by unanimous vote. Leave.

After thorough consideration of Mr. Clay's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Clay would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole release, and that parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*



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***EN BANC* MINUTE SHEET**

**OPEN SESSION—July 27, 2022**

Inmate Name: **RAYMOND LARSON\***

IDOC Number: **C10475**

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board met in open *en banc* session at 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois, on July 27, 2022, at the 9:00 a.m. session to discuss and deliberate parole eligibility for Raymond Larson\* C10475.

Members present were Mr. Bohland, Ms. Crigler, Ms. Daniels, Mr. Heaton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Shelton, Ms. Shoffner, Ms. Terrones, Mr. Tupy, and Madam Chair Crigler.

Recording Secretary: Andrea Hegland.

**PRESENTATION OF INTERVIEW AND FILE**

On June 16, 2022, Mr. Larson was interviewed by Board Member, LeAnn Miller via WebEx at Hill Correctional Center in Galesburg, IL. Ms. Emelia Carroll, Attorney for Mr. Larson and Emma Kunin, Social Worker were present at the interview. Ms. Robin Shoffner, Board Member observed the interview. The interview started at 9:00am with Mr. Larson being sworn in. Mr. Larson was very polite and answered all questions that were asked. Mr. Larson stated that he was born in Chicago and then moved to California. He stated he then moved back to Illinois. He has 1 older ½ sister and a younger brother. Mr. Larson hasn't been in contact with any family members in over 20 years. I asked Mr. Larson if he could say anything to the Prisoner Review Board, what would he want to tell them. He stated, "I would like the opportunity to have a life again. I would follow all the rules from the Prisoner Review Board to successfully complete parole. I regret things that I have done in the past."

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

In 1971, Mr. Larson was incarcerated in IDOC for Robbery and 3 counts of burglary. On May 12, 1972, Mr. Larson was released from IDOC on a 3-day furlough.

On May 14, 1972 @ 3:00am, Mr. Larson went to the Elmwood Park Ford Dealership at 1825 N. Harlem in Chicago. Mr. Larson broke a window on the overhead door to gain access into the building. Once inside, Mr. Larson drove a 1972 station wagon through the overhead door and parked it on the dealership lot. He then re-entered the building, entered a 1971 green Mustang Mach I and drove away.



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Three days later May 17, 1972, in Franklin Park, Mr. Larson entered the home of Mrs. Lownie Suchey at gunpoint. He robbed her and sexually assaulted her by forcing her to perform oral copulation on him. His fingerprints were found in the apartment. One of the items taken from the victim's house was a rifle.

On May 17, 1972, Francis Casolari Jr, a 16-year-old Sophomore at Prosser High School in Chicago, returned home from school and at around 4:00pm in the afternoon, rode his bike to a nearby pond in Schiller Woods to go fishing. Mr. Casolari never made it home; his parents reported him missing on May 18, 1972. Police found the body of Mr. Casolari in the Schiller Woods, where his naked body was covered with branches and debris.

On May 19, 1972, police officers stopped a green Ford Mustang. The green Ford Mustang contained Mr. Larson, his brother Gary and a 14-year-old girl. (During discussion, this was clarified to be a 16-year-old girl). This girl had been reported missing since 10am on May 18, 1972. The police recovered a pellet gun and the .22 caliber rifle that had been stolen from Mrs. Suchey's apartment. The weapons were tested and determined to be the weapon used to take Mr. Casolari's life.

Mr. Larson confessed to police and an Assistant State's Attorney that he drove a Mustang to the parking lot South of Irving Park Road in the forest preserve. He was looking for something to shoot when he saw a child, standing in the woods, fishing. Mr. Larson stated he was between forty and fifty feet away from the child when he shot the boy in the stomach. The autopsy revealed Mr. Casolari suffered 23 gunshot wounds to his body. Nearby, a beer can containing Mr. Larson's fingerprints were found.

Mr. Larson was later sentenced to 100-300 years for Murder, with a sentence of 4-12 years for Deviate Sexual Assault to run concurrently with the Murder sentence.

### **CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Mr. Larson has a long history of criminal activity. He was 13 years old when he was sent to Juvenile Detention. He was incarcerated in Adult IDOC at the age of 25. He is currently 77 years old.

Mr. Larson was granted parole on April 29, 2021, with a 9-3 vote from the Prisoner Review Board.

Mr. Larson violated his parole on May 22, 2021. His violation report noted that he violated # 3 (Failure to report to your agent AWOL); #4 (Failure to permit the agent to visit your host site, employment or elsewhere deemed necessary); #5 (Failure to attend a program or reside in a facility established for the instruction or residence of persons on parole or mandatory



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supervised released); #8 (Failure to get your agent's permission before leaving the State of Illinois); #9 (Failure to get your agent's permission before changing your residence or employment). Mr. Larson left the state without permission to visit a friend. He admitted to this incident. He said the rules were miscommunicated. However, he signed the rules on May 13, 2021. A diversion was completed on May 19, 2021, and he was informed to remain at the host site to await the agent. Mr. Larson failed to do so. Parole was revoked.

### **PAROLE PLAN**

Mr. Larson will reside at New Beginnings Transitional Housing at 11722 S. Prairie Chicago, IL. Cabrini-Green Legal Aid will support him with a social worker to help him get the support in mental health services, public benefits, as well as any other needs he has. He has a long-time friend, Peggy Stapleton who will provide emotional and financial support.

### **OPPOSITION**

State's Attorney Kim Fox opposes the release of Mr. Larson.

### **DISCUSSION**

Summary of discussion for parole consideration:

The members had no questions regarding the presentation and no further discussion.

### **DECISION AND RATIONALE**

Motion to deny parole (LM—LD). Motion prevails by unanimous vote. Leave. After thorough consideration of Mr. Larson's case, the Board voted to deny parole. The Board feels that parole release at this time would not be in the interest of public safety, as there is a substantial risk that Mr. Larson would not conform to reasonable conditions of parole release, and that parole release at this time would deprecate the serious nature of the offenses and promote a lack of respect for the law.

*"The Board makes a specific finding that the release of victim protest letters could subject a person to actual risk of physical harm. The Board further notes that, pursuant to Illinois law, victim statements are confidential and privileged."*