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PRESS RELEASE

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2008 Home Invasion Marijuana Ripoff Murderers Arrested

Three individuals with connections to local outlaw motorcycle clubs were arrested today for the murder of Eric John Jones, 50, during a 2008 Paradise home invasion robbery directed at taking his marijuana.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey and Paradise Police Chief Chris Buzzard announced today that Christopher Phillip Levin, 47, Darrell Leigh Hughes, 50, and William Kurt Breunle, 47, all of Paradise, were charged and arrested for First Degree Felony Murder stemming from events which occurred on December 28, 2008. Levin and Hughes were arrested this morning without incident at their Paradise homes by Paradise Police assisted by District Attorney and Sheriff's investigators. Breunle was arrested at the Butte County Jail where he has been in custody on other charges since January.

Prior to his death, Eric Jones was known to boast of his marijuana cultivation operation, which included surveillance cameras about his home. At that time, Levin, Hughes, and Breunle all belonged to the same motorcycle club. On the night of the murder, they entered Jones' property prior to his arrival home. While wearing masks, they ambushed Jones as he and two guests entered the front yard through a tall, padlocked fence gate. After being beaten by the three intruders, Jones was bound and gagged and left lying in the front yard causing traumatic asphyxia resulting in his death. The other two victims were forced inside the home while two of the suspects attempted to break into a safe there. Once the suspects decided to leave, they took the surviving victims' identification cards and warned them not to tell of what had happened because they knew their names and addresses. Additional charges of kidnapping and witness intimidation were brought against the three defendants for their crimes against the surviving victims.

Over the course of the past two and a half years, an unceasing investigation by the Paradise Police Department aided by the Butte County Sheriff's Office and the Butte County District Attorney, resulted in the complaints being issued against the three suspects today. Breunle is currently in custody facing similar charges during two separate marijuana robbery incidents, as well as an insurance fraud case where he was receiving disability insurance benefits for alleged carpal tunnel syndrome, but was video taped while exercising and lifting a 400-pound barbell gripped in his hands.

Each of the three defendants is charged jointly with each of the five crimes alleged. They face a maximum term of confinement in state prison of Twenty-Five Years to Life for Murder, plus two additional Life sentences on the kidnap charges, plus 5 years on the witness intimidation charges.

District Attorney Ramsey said, “Regardless of one’s position on marijuana issues, the ruthless killing of Mr. Jones at his own home and the intimidation of his unfortunate guests motivated by greed and opportunism will not be tolerated. The cooperative effort of the agencies involved in this investigation to solve an aging case and bring murderers to justice exemplifies the high quality and dedication of those sworn to protect our county.”