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District Attorney

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### **ROBERT LANOUE SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR 1982 MURDER OF FIVE-YEAR-OLD ANNE PHAM OF SEASIDE**

*People v. Robert John Lanoue, Court Docket No. 22CR005951*

**SALINAS, California-** Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine M. Pacioni announced today that the Honorable Jennifer O'Keefe sentenced Robert John Lanoue, age 72 of Reno, Nevada, to 25 years to life in prison plus 31 additional years. On February 20, 2025, Lanoue pleaded guilty to first-degree murder, kidnapping, committing a forcible lewd act on a child under 14, forcible rape and forcible sodomy for the January 1982 abduction and murder of five-year-old Anne Pham of Seaside. These offenses constitute five "strikes" pursuant to California's Three Strikes Law. Lanoue was also ordered to register as a sex offender for life.

Pham disappeared while walking to her kindergarten class at Highland Elementary School on January 21, 1982. She was never seen alive again. On January 23, 1982, her remains were discovered on the former Fort Ord. She had been sexually assaulted and strangled to death. The initial investigation did not result in any arrests, and Pham's murder went unsolved for more than 40 years.

In 2020, investigators with the Monterey County District Attorney's Office Cold Case Task Force worked collaboratively with Seaside Police Department to reopen Pham's case and submit items of evidence from the case for DNA testing. Lanoue was identified as a suspect after DNA testing was performed on a rootless pubic hair found on Pham's remains. Astrea Forensics of Santa Cruz performed whole-genome sequencing on the hair that resulted in a DNA profile capable of being used to search genetic genealogical databases. A forensic genetic genealogist with Parabon NanoLabs identified "Lanoue" as a possible last name of the suspect. Further research by members of the Cold Case Task Force identified Robert John Lanoue as the likely suspect.

Lanoue was 29 years old at the time of the homicide. He was in the United States Army and was stationed at Fort Ord, where Pham's body was found. Lanoue lived on Luzern Street in Seaside, which was 0.1 miles away from the Pham family residence. One of Lanoue's children also attended

Highland Elementary School along with Pham, though there is no indication that the families knew each other.

When interviewed by an investigator with the Cold Case Task Force on July 6, 2022, Lanoue admitted to picking up Pham as she was walking to school. He claimed not to remember killing her, but he acknowledged that he may have blocked it out of his memory to protect himself. He admitted that he had a history of sexually assaulting young girls.

Further analysis by Dr. Richard Green of UC Santa Cruz and Parabon NanoLabs provided strong evidentiary support that Lanoue was the source of the hair found on Pham's body.

The case was investigated by the Monterey County District Attorney's Office Cold Case Task Force, the Seaside Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, with the valuable assistance of Astrea Forensics, Dr. Richard Green of UC Santa Cruz, Parabon NanoLabs, the Serological Research Institute (SERI), the Nevada State Police Division of Parole and Probation, the Reno Police Department, and the Regional Sex Offender Notification Unit.

In January 2022, the Monterey County District Attorney's Office Cold Case Task Force received a \$535,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The grant, titled "FY 2021 Prosecuting Cold Cases Using DNA," provides funding to support forensic testing and investigative activities in the prosecution of cold cases where DNA from a suspect has been identified. Funding from the U.S. Department of Justice grant enabled the Cold Case Task Force to seek justice in Pham's case.