



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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Kevin Ray James Pleads Guilty to 1997 Bank Robbery Murder of Monica Leech



VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Kevin Ray James (DOB 09/23/67), of San Bernardino, has pled guilty to the 1997 murder of Monica Leech during an armed bank robbery in Thousand Oaks, and admitted that he personally used a firearm during the commission of the crime. As part of the plea, James will receive a sentence of 19 years to life in state prison.

The Leech and Cavaletto families shared that the resolution provides them with a sense of closure after decades of uncertainty and heartbreak:

“Losing Monica has been an unbearable tragedy. While nothing can bring her back, we are pleased that the defendant has accepted responsibility for her death. This outcome brings a sense of justice and accountability and allows us to begin moving forward while honoring Monica’s memory. We want to thank investigators with the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office and prosecutors and investigators with the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office for staying with it and achieving this outcome.”

Senior Deputy District Attorneys Richard Simon and Hayley Moyer of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Major Crimes Unit prosecuted the case.

"Today marks the successful conclusion of a 28-year pursuit of justice for Monica Leech and her family," Mr. Simon said. "Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's Office, Kevin James now stands convicted of murder with the personal use of a firearm. This resolution not only holds him accountable but also protects our community and spares Monica's loved ones the pain of reliving this tragedy through a prolonged trial."

On April 28, 1997, two armed men disguised as construction workers with raincoats, hardhats, and pantyhose as masks entered Western Financial Bank on Thousand Oaks Boulevard. They forced employees, including Monica, into the vault room and demanded they open the safe. During the robbery, Monica and another bank employee were handcuffed by the suspects, forced to their knees, and Monica was fatally shot. Leech, a beloved mother of four from Camarillo, died at the scene. The suspects fled with a little over \$11,000 in cash.

The case remained cold for more than two decades until new forensic evidence and investigative leads identified James as one of the suspects. On March 13, 2023, he was charged with the murder of Leech.

James is scheduled to be sentenced on June 13, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 44 of the Ventura County Superior Court.

Case: 2023005876

Defendant Information:

Kevin Ray James (DOB 09/23/67)
San Bernardino

Charges pled to:

- PC 187(a) – Second-degree murder

Special allegations admitted:

- PC 12022.5(a) – Use of firearm

