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August 28, 2026
For Immediate Release

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Oceanside Man Guilty for 2008 Murder of Military Veteran with Paraplegia

***Jury Convicted Jeffrey Roberson of First-Degree Murder in Killing of
Cecil Zachary Jr.***

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that Jeffrey Roberson, 60, was convicted by a jury of first-degree murder for the 2008 killing of Cecil Zachary Jr., a military veteran with paraplegia who was beaten to death with a wooden log in his Oceanside home. The jury also found true an allegation that Roberson used a deadly weapon, a wooden log, in the commission of the murder.

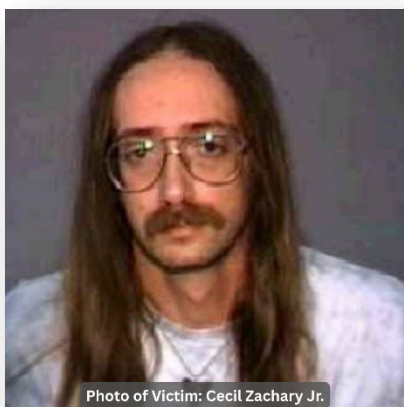


Photo of Victim: Cecil Zachary Jr.

On June 19, 2008, a home care nurse discovered Zachary, 51, dead in hospital bed in the living room of his home in the 1500 block of Molly Circle in Oceanside's Fire Mountain neighborhood. A towel covered his face, and responding officers observed obvious signs of trauma. Zachary had been paralyzed from the waist down following a traffic collision decades earlier and rarely left his bed. A log was found at the scene and was suspected to be the murder weapon. The San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office determined that he died from blunt-force injuries to the head.

For more than 17 years, investigators worked to identify the person responsible for Zachary's killing, but the case remained unsolved. The investigation was ultimately revived through advances in forensic DNA technology. Investigators used new DNA technology to extract and collect DNA from the log and a DNA profile was developed that linked Roberson to the killing. In February 2025, Oceanside Police Department detectives arrested Roberson in Spring Valley. During a subsequent police interview, Roberson admitted to killing Zachary, but claimed self-defense. The jury disagreed with that claim.

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“This was a brutal and intentional killing of a vulnerable victim in his own home, and for more than 18 years, Cecil’s loved ones had to live with the pain and unanswered questions surrounding his death,” DA Stephan said. “This conviction brings justice and accountability for Cecil, who was a veteran with paraplegia, and his family. It also demonstrates the importance of never giving up on a homicide investigation. Advances in forensic DNA technology gave investigators a new opportunity to uncover critical evidence and identify the person responsible. I am grateful to the Oceanside Police Department investigators and our Cold Case Homicide Unit, especially Deputy DA John Philpott, for their perseverance, dedication, and commitment to pursuing justice for Cecil and his loved ones.”

Roberson’s trial began August 18, 2026, at the Vista Courthouse. After hearing the evidence, the jury returned its verdict on August 27, finding Roberson guilty of first-degree murder and finding true the allegation that he used a deadly weapon, a wooden log, during the commission of the crime.

Roberson’s sentencing is November 16, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. in Department 20 at the Vista Courthouse.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney John Philpott from the Cold Case Homicide Unit. The DA’s Cold Case Homicide Unit is dedicated to pursuing justice in unsolved homicide cases by working with law enforcement partners to reexamine evidence, utilize modern investigative techniques and take advantage of advances in forensic science. The Unit works to provide answers to families and hold those responsible for long-unsolved homicides accountable, regardless of how much time has passed.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.