330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-4040
SanDiegoDA.com

OFFICE OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

SUMMER STEPHAN
District Attorney

RACHEL SOLOV
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Contact: Tanya Sierra (619) 531-3315
***En Español* Barbara Medina (619) 531-3305**

Man Already Charged in Real Estate Fraud Case Arraigned on Murder Charge

Cedric Von Ferdinand Killed Foster Mother Nadine Jett and Buried Her on Valley Center Property

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan announced today that Cedric Von Ferdinand, 34, has been arraigned for the murder of Nadine Jett, a retired Los Angeles attorney who disappeared in January 2024 and was later found buried on her Valley Center property. Von Ferdinand is charged with murder for financial gain by poison and he faces life in prison without parole or the death penalty.

Von Ferdinand has already been ordered to stand trial on 33 felony counts related to a real estate fraud and theft scheme he committed on the estate of the victim, who had also been his foster mother. Those charges and allegations include grand theft, identity theft, forgery, and filing false documents with a loss totaling over $500,000.

“This is the most despicable act someone could commit against a mother figure who gave the best of herself to someone in need,” DA Stephan said. “This defendant preyed on Nadine Jett when she was at the lowest point of her life, fighting cancer. I am grateful to the outstanding work of the Sheriff’s detectives who investigated this case and our own team of investigators and prosecutors who worked on this case to make sure justice could be pursued.”

In addition, Kim Pifer, 60, is charged as a codefendant with multiple counts of forgery and identity theft for impersonating Nadine Jett on two occasions at defendant Von Ferdinand’s request after Jett had already died.

In August 2023, Jett was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and began chemotherapy. Von Ferdinand moved into her Valley Center home to care for her. At that time, Jett owned her Valley Center residence as well as two investment properties in Los Angeles County. She also had three certificates of deposit (CDs) at her bank totaling about $675,000.

Jett went to a chemotherapy appointment on January 14, 2024. Shortly afterward, Von Ferdinand told friends and family that Jett only had a few months to live, that she wanted to be cremated and that she did not want anyone to know her condition. He also told them that they were going to Mexico for a second opinion, which they did in March, according to what he told family. By the end of that month, Von Ferdinand said Jett had died in Mexico and that her body had been cremated.

However, he could not produce a death certificate, and family members reported Jett missing in June 2024. About a month later, they reported suspicious real estate transactions involving her three properties to the District Attorney's Office.

District Attorney Investigators discovered deeds purportedly signed by Jett on January 26, 2024, transferring all three of her properties to Von Ferdinand. They also found a power of attorney purportedly signed by her the same day. All four documents were notarized. Investigators seized the notary journal associated with the documents and determined that the thumbprint in the journal belonged to the defendant, not to Jett.

DA investigators found that Jett's CDs were liquidated on January 15 and 16, 2024, coinciding with their maturity dates. The following month, Von Ferdinand used those funds to purchase a $500,000 condo in Gardena, California. In April 2024, he sold one of Jett's Los Angeles properties, receiving more than $200,000 in proceeds. The District Attorney's Office filed felony fraud charges against the defendant in April 2025.

In the meantime, Sheriff's detectives searched for Jett or evidence of her death. Unable to find her or a death certificate, homicide detectives took over the investigation. They learned that around January 16, 2024, the defendant had solicited someone to dig a six-foot hole, and that on January 17, 2024, he told an acquaintance that Jett had died. They also determined that Jett had a scheduled CT scan on January 19, 2024, which she did not attend. Detectives concluded that the last confirmed sighting of Jett was at her January 14 chemotherapy appointment and that when she left that appointment, she was wearing a Neulasta patch intended to boost her immune system, which could be removed after 27 hours. Detectives found that on January 25, 2024, the defendant called to cancel all of Jett's future medical appointments.

In July 2025, Sheriff's Detectives searched Jett's Valley Center property and found her partially mummified remains buried in a six-foot hole near her residence. Her body had been wrapped in a bed sheet, and she was still wearing the same pajamas seen in photos of her taken around Christmas, as well as the Neulasta patch.

The Medical Examiner's Office conducted an autopsy and submitted liver and stomach samples for toxicology testing. The results revealed extraordinarily high concentrations of fentanyl ingested shortly before death. The fentanyl contained acetyl fentanyl, which is commonly found in illicitly manufactured fentanyl but not in pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl. The toxicologist opined that the amount ingested constituted a massive overdose. The medical examiner determined that the cause of death was fentanyl toxicity and that the manner of death was homicide.

In August 2026, Sheriff's detectives searched the defendant's condo in Gardena, California, where they discovered a recorded marriage license. The license purported to marry defendant and Jett. It was signed and notarized on May 18, 2024 and recorded in Los Angeles County the next day.

"Investigators with the San Diego County Sheriff's Office and San Diego County District Attorney's Office worked together tirelessly with one goal in mind—to find justice for Nadine Jett and her family," said San Diego County Sheriff Kelly Martinez. "For more than two years, the Sheriff's Homicide Unit's Cold Case and Missing Persons team logged countless hours sifting through evidence and interviewing people to find out what happened to Jett. Let this case send a clear message to criminals: no matter how much time goes by, we will hold those responsible for such horrific acts accountable for their actions."

Von Ferdinand pleaded not guilty today in Vista Superior Court.

Deputy District Attorneys John Dunn and Alex Poyhonen are prosecuting this case.

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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.