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May 2, 2025
For Immediate Release

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Man Sentenced to Prison for Killing Wife, and Throwing Her Severed Legs in Dumpster

Case Went Cold for 18 Years Before Being Solved in 2021

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) said today that a 72-year-old man has been sentenced to prison for the gruesome murder and dismemberment of his wife in 2003, a case that remained unsolved for nearly two decades before it was cracked using Investigative Genetic Genealogy.

Jack Potter was sentenced today to 15 years-to-life in state prison for the 2003 murder of his wife, Laurie Diane Potter, whose legs were found discarded in a Rancho San Diego apartment complex dumpster over two decades ago. Thanks to the relentless efforts of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department and the District Attorney's Cold Case Homicide Unit, the case was solved in 2021.

"This was a brutal, calculated murder that shattered the lives of Laurie's loved ones, who then had to endure nearly 20 years of unanswered questions and unimaginable grief," DA Stephan said. "Thanks to the extraordinary work of law enforcement, our Cold Case Homicide Unit, and Deputy District Attorneys Julie Lynn and Mark Amador, justice has finally been served. Their dedication and refusal to give up on this case, no matter how much time passed, led to this long-overdue resolution."

The homicide investigation began in October 2003, when a maintenance worker at the Country Hills Apartment complex in Rancho San Diego discovered a pair of severed human legs in a dumpster. Despite exhaustive efforts by law enforcement, the victim remained unidentified, and the case went cold. In 2020, the San Diego County Sheriff's Homicide Cold Case Team used Investigative Genetic Genealogy based on DNA from the legs to possibly identify the victim.

This was the first time that investigators had used the new investigative technique to identify a previously unknown homicide victim. After further investigation, the woman was confirmed to be Laurie Diane Potter, 54, who had been living in Temecula in 2003 but had previously lived in the Rancho San Diego apartment complex.

Potter pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in February 2025, just one month before he was scheduled to stand trial, and he admitted that he smothered his wife to death.

He was previously indicted by a grand jury in August 2024, and during those proceedings jurors heard how Potter became obsessed in 2003 with a woman he met at a strip club—who shared the same first name as his wife. Within weeks of Laurie’s legs being discovered, Potter opened multiple credit accounts and made extravagant purchases, including a new pick-up truck, a Hummer SUV, and a ski boat. He gifted the Hummer and boat to his new girlfriend, rented her an apartment in Corona Hills, and provided her with a credit card carrying a \$30,000 limit.

In the years that followed, Potter maintained the deception opening credit cards in Laurie’s name and fraudulently filing Family Court documents claiming he had contacted Laurie about the proceedings—years after she had been murdered. He utilized the Family Court to sell their family home in Temecula and pocket all profits.

“This case is a stark reminder that the pursuit of justice never stops,” said DA Stephan. “And neither does the grief of those who lose someone to violence. Today, we honor Laurie’s memory and stand with her family in their long-awaited moment of justice.”

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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.

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