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Defendant Sentenced to Prison in 1974 National City Cold Case Murder

Carlin Cornett Stabbed Christy Bryant During Her 7-Eleven Shift

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan announced today that Carlin Cornett, 70, was sentenced to five years-to-life in prison on June 7, for the 1974 murder of Christy Bryant, a former Marine and 7-Eleven clerk. Bryant was stabbed more than 30 times in the back room of the store during her night shift in National City.

“When a murder is unsolved for decades, it takes an enormous toll on the victim’s loved ones, but now the family of Christy Bryant have a measure of justice after many years of mourning their loss,” DA Stephan said. “I am grateful to our Cold Case Unit and detectives in the National City Police Department who worked tirelessly on this case until it was solved, and the killer was brought to justice.”

The case was a priority for National City Police.

“The National City Police Department would like to thank every law enforcement agency that assisted us with this investigation,” said National City Police Chief Jose Tellez. “This collaboration led to the arrest and conviction of a dangerous murder suspect. The exemplary work performed on this nearly 50-year-old case highlights the National City Police Department’s unwavering commitment to solve cases and to hopefully give families of victims a sense of closure and justice.”

Cornett pleaded guilty to second-degree murder on April 26. In 1974, the punishment under the law for second-degree murder was five years to life in prison.

The case was solved with the DA’s Cold Case Homicide Unit working in collaboration with the National City Police Department, which exhausted every lead and never gave up. Their work was possible through the grant-funded Cold Homicide and Research Genealogy Effort, (CHARGE) which applies investigative genetic genealogy to cold case homicides led by the DA’s resident genealogist Deputy District Attorney Laura Tanney.

On July 31, 1974, Bryant was working the overnight shift at the 7-Eleven on Highland Avenue in National City when she was attacked. After being stabbed more than 30 times, she died at the scene. During the struggle, the defendant cut himself with the knife and left a blood trail as he fled the store. The blood was unidentified for almost 50 years until the National City Police Department in collaboration with CHARGE applied the new tool of investigative genetic genealogy to the unidentified blood. An investigative lead was generated, and the defendant was ultimately identified as the attacker through a standard DNA test.

The District Attorney's Office commended the National City police department for their outstanding investigative work on this case over the many years it was unsolved, especially retired detectives Raymond Estrada and David Bavencoff, and current Sgt. Mark Segal.

This case was prosecuted by the team leader of the DA's Cold Case Homicide Unit, Deputy District Attorney Chris Lindberg.

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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.