



# ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

## NEWS RELEASE



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### Kevin Ray James Sentenced for 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, was sentenced on June 13, 2025, to 19 years to life in state prison for the 1997 murder of Monica Leech during an armed bank robbery in Thousand Oaks. James previously pled guilty on May 16, 2025, and admitted that he personally used a firearm during the commission of the crime.



*Monica Leech*

Monica's family, friends, and co-workers spoke at the sentencing hearing, providing victim impact statements. Those speaking included Monica's husband, sister, and a fellow bank teller:

"The hurts, nightmares, and heartaches we all have will never go away, for one senseless act. You already had what you came for, the money, all you had to do was leave. There is no such thing as closure for what was done that day and the loss and hurt will never go away. We will all live with this for the rest of our lives because of your actions." – Floyd L.

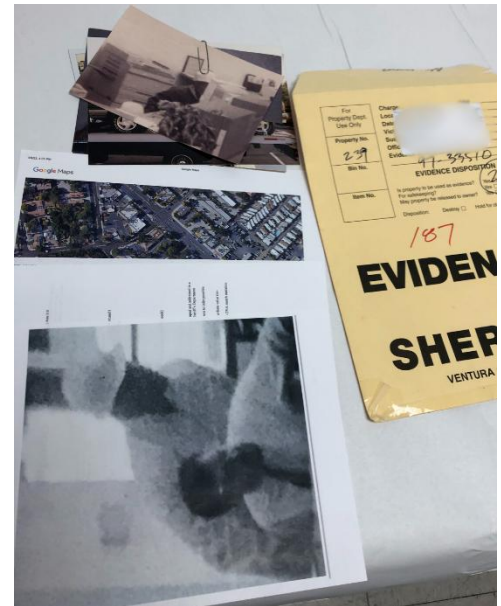
"All family members have been changed to some degree due to Monica's senseless murder. Despite this, we stand united, determined to seek justice for Monica and to ensure that her memory lives on." – Christina H.

"The emotional and mental anguish caused by the act of being robbed at gunpoint is incomparable to the horror of hearing the gun go off and seeing a colleague and friend fall over right beside me. The crime was violent, but the murder of Monica Leech was pure, unprovoked evil." – Scott G.

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

“This sentencing is the culmination of a lot of hard work by the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office and the District Attorney’s Office to finally bring justice to the family, friends, co-workers and loved ones of Monica Leech,” Mr. Simon said.

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.

**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



*Kevin James at his change of plea hearing on May 16, 2025.*

