



CITY OF LA PALMA

NEWS RELEASE

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DNA Evidence Helps La Palma Police Make an Arrest in 41-year-old Cold Case Murder

LA PALMA, Calif. – The Orange County District Attorney’s Office has charged Larry Stephens, 65 of Santa Rosa for the 1974 cold case murder of a 31-year-old woman from La Palma. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of life in state prison.

On December 11, 1974, 31-year-old Patricia Ann Ross was found dead inside her Orangethorpe Avenue apartment. She was discovered naked and lying face down in her bedroom. Her small dog was also discovered nearby, unharmed, inside a dresser drawer.

Stephens, then 24-years-old, is accused of entering Ross’ apartment and sexually assaulting and then strangling the victim in her bedroom. It is believed, that the defendant and Ross did not know each other prior to the crime.

The murder went unsolved for 41-years, until authorities were recently notified that a DNA sample collected from the crime scene matched the DNA profile of Stephens. “The La Palma Police Department is grateful for everyone associated in investigating this brutal murder over the 41-years that it went unsolved, and hope that this arrest and successful prosecution will bring some closure for Patricia Anne Ross’ surviving family and friends. May “Annie” finally rest in peace,” said La Palma Police Chief Eric Nunez.

About the City of La Palma

Ranked by Money Magazine in 2007, 2011, and 2013 as one of America’s Best Places to Live, the City of La Palma is a 1.9 square mile general law city in northwest Orange County, consisting of over 15,568 residents and approximately 300 commercial and industrial businesses. The City was incorporated in 1955 under the name of Dairyland and has 52 full-time and 35 part-time employees.

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