

OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

**JOHN T. SAVRNOCH**  
District Attorney



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Ann Bramsen, Sr. Deputy District Attorney

CONTACT NAME

(805) 346-1468

CONTACT PHONE

\*\*\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\*

**1988 COLD CASE CLOSED-ALOYSIUS JAMES GUILTY OF THE FIRST DEGREE MURDER  
WITH THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE OF MURDER IN THE COMMISSION OF THE  
RAPE OF OFELIA SANDOVAL ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1988**

**Re: *People v. Aloysius James***  
***Santa Barbara Superior Court Case No 24CR02219***

SANTA MARIA, Calif., February 27, 2026 — Santa Barbara County District Attorney John T. Savrnoch announced today a jury returned a verdict of guilty against defendant Aloysius James of first-degree murder with the special circumstance of murder in the commission of the rape of thirty-year-old Ofelia Sandoval, who was killed on September 18, 1988, in Santa Maria, California. Sentencing is set for April 14<sup>th</sup> in Department 6 of the Santa Maria division of the Santa Barbara Superior Court. The defendant is facing a sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

Ofelia Sandoval was discovered strangled to death, on the floor of her home on the evening of September 18, 1988. Santa Maria Police Officers vigorously investigated her death in 1988 and collected countless pieces of evidence. Her death was ruled a homicide. Despite a valiant effort to solve her murder, the case went cold in 1989.

Over the years many different SMPD detectives worked on the murder of Ofelia. In the early 2000's the Department of Justice used technology to develop a DNA profile of an unknown male on items found in Ofelia's room. The male DNA profile did not match to any known DNA profiles and did not match to any profiles in the national database. However, the Santa Maria Police Department never gave up on solving Ofelia's murder.

In 2018, the FBI partnered with SMPD to obtain a covert DNA profile from Aloysius James. Then in 2023, the Department of Justice developed the same male suspect DNA profile from samples taken at Ofelia Sandoval's autopsy in 1988. SMPD detectives obtained a warrant for the arrest of Aloysius James and they booked him into custody in Georgia on April 16, 2024.

Today marks the culmination of almost 38 years of work on the murder of Ofelia Sandoval. District Attorney John Savrnoch would like to thank and acknowledge the combined efforts of retired law enforcement officers Titsworth, Begg, Spears, Marquez, Mahwinney, Hupp, Prescott, Flores, Graham, and Hammond. The entire Santa Maria Police Department including officers Stowasser, Silver, and Craven. FBI Special Agents Smith and McPherson, the Hall County Regional Swat Team in Hall County Georgia and the Gainesville Police Department in Georgia.

Special thank you to San Luis Obispo County District Attorneys Office for their contribution of Investigator Julia Tatarian, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, Coroners Bureau, and the Department of Justice DNA Laboratory. He also thanks Senior Deputy District Attorney Ann Bramsen, D.A. Investigator Ronnie Murillo and victim advocate Bianett Garcia for their hard work and dedication to achieving justice in this case. Sentencing is set for April 14, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in Department 6 in Santa Maria before the Honorable Judge Imel. The defendant is facing a sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

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