



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CRIMINAL CASE UPDATE
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MAN SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR 43-YEAR-OLD COLD CASE MURDER

RIVERSIDE – More than 43 years after murdering a woman whose body was left in the Riverside County desert, a man was sentenced today, June 5, 2015, to life in prison for his crime.

Michael Jerome Hayes, DOB: 9-22-48, was convicted of first-degree murder on May 7, 2015, for the murder of Mary Costa, whose body was found March 12, 1972, by a group of real estate investors in a then-undeveloped area of Desert Hot Springs. It was believed the victim's body had been at that location for one to five weeks before being found. Costa has last been seen alive by friends in February 1972. Jurors deliberated for just more than one full day before coming back with a verdict of guilty of first-degree murder.

As Superior Court Judge Charles Koosed sentenced Hayes, he called the murder "despicable and deplorable." Hayes, by law, must be sentenced under the 1972 sentencing laws since that is the year the crime happened. In 1972, the crime of first-degree murder carried a sentence of 7 years to life, meaning he will be eligible for parole in seven years.

At that time of the murder, homicide detectives were unable to develop any leads. Then in late 1976, a woman came forward and told police that Hayes, her husband, had murdered a girl and left her body in the desert in 1972. She told detectives that Hayes had shown her the victim's body and even asked her to help him move the body. The woman also told detectives that Hayes told her he picked up the victim to rob her and got \$7 from her during the crime. The woman told detectives Hayes threatened to kill her if she ever reported the murder and she came forward because Hayes had moved out of the state.

The case remained cold until 2010 when a Riverside County sheriff's detective began investigating the murder again during which he conducted follow-up interviews and had DNA testing done which yielded no results. In 2012, DA's Investigator Christine Emmens also began investigating the murder. She located two more former wives of Hayes. One woman said she was abused by Hayes and that he would kill her if she reported it, adding that he had previously killed a woman and left her body in the California desert. A second former wife told Emmens that, while she and Hayes were dating, he bragged that while he lived out West, a woman "did him wrong" and then went to the desert and never came back.

The DA's Office filed the murder charge in 2012 after the new evidence was gathered.

The case, RIF1205953, was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Christopher Cook and Deputy District Attorney Emily Hanks.

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