

Orange County District Attorney & Orange County Sheriff's Department



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATTORNEY ARRESTED FOR MURDER FOR FINANCIAL GAIN OF EX-WIFE BY STRANGLING AND THROWING HER OVERBOARD ON ITALIAN CRUISE

SANTA ANA – A former Orange County attorney has been arrested on charges of murdering his ex-wife for financial gain by strangling her to death and throwing her overboard while on a cruise in Italy. Lonnie Loren Kocontes, 55, Safety Harbor, FL, is charged with one felony count of special circumstances murder for financial gain. If convicted, he faces a minimum sentence of life in state prison without the possibility of parole and is eligible for the death penalty. The defendant was arrested yesterday, Feb. 15, 2013, in Florida and will face extradition proceedings at a date to be determined. He is being held without bail.

In the early 1990s, Kocontes was working as an attorney for a law firm and met victim Micki Kanesaki, who worked as a paralegal for the same firm. They married in 1995. The couple divorced in 2001, but lived together off and on through 2006.

On May 21, 2006, the defendant is accused of flying with Kanesaki to Spain and boarding a cruise. On May 25, 2006, the couple took a day-time excursion and toured the town of Messina, Italy. The couple returned to the ship and Kanesaki was last seen alive at approximately 11:00 p.m.

Late on the night of May 25, 2006, or early in the morning of May 26, 2006, Kocontes is accused of murdering Kanesaki by strangling her to death and throwing her body overboard into the ocean. He is later accused of reporting her missing.

On the morning of May 27, 2006, Kocontes returned to California. Kanesaki's body was discovered floating off the coast of Paola, Italy, later that day on the afternoon of May 27, 2006.

Kocontes is accused of financially benefiting from the victim's murder by being the beneficiary of several of their bank accounts and property and receiving the proceeds from the sale of their home.

In 2008, Kocontes is accused of attempting to move over \$1 million between various bank accounts with his new wife, Katherine K. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), who had investigated the death of Kanesaki, began investigating the money transfers for possible illegal activity and the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) ultimately seized the money from Kocontes' bank accounts. A civil asset forfeiture case was subsequently filed in the US District Court for the Central District of California.

In 2010, USAO discussed the potential criminal case with the Orange County District Attorney's Office (OCDA) for possible review. In 2012, the OCDA requested additional investigation on the case from the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD), who discovered additional evidence related to the murder.

The OCDA filed the murder case against Kocontes Feb. 13, 2013. OCSD, US Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, and Pinellas County Sheriff's Department investigators arrested the defendant in Safety Harbor, FL, on Feb. 15, 2013.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with additional information is encouraged to contact Supervising District Attorney Investigator Randy Litwin at (714) 347-8492 or OCSD Investigator Don Voght at (714) 647-7051.

The FBI and OCSD investigated this case. Senior Deputy District Attorney Susan Price of the OCDA's Homicide Unit is prosecuting this case.

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