

Daily News

# WOMAN GETS LIFE FOR MOTHER'S MURDER

Article from:

Daily News (Los Angeles, CA)

Article date:

August 13, 2003

Byline: Staff and Wire Services

A Palmdale woman was sentenced Tuesday to 35 years to life in prison for the slaying of her mother, who authorities said was murdered after she confronted her daughter and son-in-law about debt they had run up in her name.

Vanessa Walker, 44, an indoor swap meet booth operator, was convicted of second-degree murder in the 2001 slaying of 67-year-old Nada Lazarevic, whose decomposing body was found near a mountain highway in Kern County two weeks after she was reported missing by another daughter.

"I cannot express the words how I feel that my own sister murdered our mother," Lazarevic's daughter Jasmina Trifunovic said in court. "Vanessa is evil, inhuman and a cold-blooded person. ... She has killed twice and destroyed many lives."

Walker was convicted in 1988 in Contra Costa County for voluntary manslaughter for the shooting death of her first husband, Lance Marquez.

Husband Ken Walker, 40, also convicted of second-degree murder by a separate jury, was sentenced last month to 15 years to life in prison. Vanessa Walker got a longer sentence because of the earlier conviction.

Before she was sentenced, Vanessa told the judge she did not kill her mother.

She alleged she was a victim of domestic violence for several months before the murder. She also claimed her first husband was abusive before she killed him.

Vanessa apologized for "my lapse in judgment for not reporting this crime. I have three children that I love dearly that need me to take care for them," she said.

The judge was unmoved.

"I don't have the words to express the outrage that I feel," Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Terry A. Green said, "the wanton damage to so many people."

Vanessa's former mother-in-law, Geraldine Marquez, stated in Los Angeles Superior Court Tuesday that she had warned that Vanessa Walker might kill again and asked for a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors contended the Walkers murdered Lazarevic because she had found out they made about \$50,000 in credit card charges under her name without her knowledge.

The couple went to the victim's home on Aug. 25, 2001, murdered her, put her body in the trunk of her own car and drove to a deserted location off of Walker Pass Road in the Sequoia National Forest, where they dumped her terry-cloth robed body, prosecutors said.

The Kern County Coroner's Office says Lazarevic died of blunt trauma. During Ken Walker's sentencing, **Deputy District Attorney** Vivian Moreno placed the majority of blame on him.

"We believe Ken strangled (the victim), and the condition of Lazarevic's body made it appear she suffered wounds to the neck and abdomen," Moreno said.

Moreno and fellow prosecutor **Michael Kraut** argued that Vanessa Walker was also culpable. They alleged she covered up after the crime, rode with her husband to dump the body, and then misled police who questioned her.

Prosecutors said Vanessa also deceived her sister, who was searching for their mother.