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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

After Sergio Pino's death, the fight over his multimillion-dollar estate has just begun

BY CATHERINE ODOM AND JAY WEAVER

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Sergio Pino, the president, CEO and founder of Century Homebuilders Group, at the company's Midtown Doral residential complex sales center in August 2016. PATRICK FARRELL
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FBI investigating Sergio Pino

FBI agents raided the residence the well-known home builder as part of a investigation into his alleged connection to threats against his wife Tatiana Pino's life. The pair are in a divorce dispute.

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After Sergio Pino died by suicide last month as the FBI raided his home, multiple conflicts have arisen within the Miami-Dade developer's company, Century Homebuilders Group, and in probate court about how the wealthy businessman's fortunes should be distributed.

Before his death, Pino was worth at least \$150 million, though it is unclear what the total value of his estate is. In recent weeks, his estranged wife, Tatiana Pino, and his brother, Carlos Pino, have clashed over who should serve as the representative of the estate. Tatiana has since stepped into the role of president at Century, rankling some at the company. Also hanging over the probate proceeding: a hefty multimillion-dollar estate tax that the IRS is expected to impose in the aftermath of Pino's death, as well as the federal criminal prosecution of nine men who are accused of conspiring with him [in an alleged murder-for-hire plot](#) targeting Tatiana.

Right now, one of Century's banks, Seacoast, has frozen several of the company's accounts, including its funds used for home-construction projects, according to an Aug. 20 complaint filed by the bank. The bank has asked for a declaratory judgment about the ownership of the accounts so it can unfreeze the assets. Resolving that dispute is considered one of the critical factors in further developing Century's projects.

Sergio Pino, 67, was the founder of Century Homebuilders Group, which is said to be the largest Hispanic-owned home builder in the U.S. He died by suicide on July 16 as FBI agents attempted to raid his home and arrest him for his alleged role in a murder-for-hire plot targeting his estranged wife. Tatiana Pino, 55, had filed for divorce in April 2022 after she came to believe Sergio was poisoning her with fentanyl — fears the FBI later validated in its investigative reports.

In the years after Tatiana filed the divorce papers, she and her sister reported a series of threats that included an armed attack, a hit-and-run and multiple arsons. Now, weeks after federal investigators announced that those threats were part of a larger plot orchestrated by Sergio Pino, Tatiana's sister Aurora Linares has sued his estate, seeking financial compensation for the emotional distress she says she endured.

Linares, who was the target of two separate arson attacks allegedly carried out by men hired by Sergio, is suing for \$30 million in damages in connection with the attacks. She is seeking compensatory and punitive damages from the estate.



Sergio and Tatiana Pino in an undated photo Cortesía/Elaine Palladino

Tatiana and Sergio Pino had been fighting in divorce court about how to divide their assets for more than two years. Though the dissolution of marriage case was dismissed last month following Sergio's death, similar conflicts persist in probate

court over the division of Sergio's assets and estate. In fact, the number of interested parties has broadened to include Sergio's four children, his brother and his business associates, with the potential to complicate the already contentious proceedings.

Tatiana Pino is now seeking a declaratory judgment to confirm that she owns Century Homebuilders Group outright based on the fact that she and Sergio held all the equity in the company as husband and wife.

Tatiana claims she and her late husband owned Century together as tenants by the entirety, according to the company's operating agreement. That would mean they both owned 100% of the company and their joint interests could not be divided except by a divorce decree or another agreement.

In a November deposition in the divorce case, even Sergio Pino said he believed that he and Tatiana owned Century together as tenants by the entirety, though he said he was not entirely sure. Since Sergio died before the couple's divorce was finalized, that would leave Tatiana with 100% ownership of the company — unless anyone challenging her can overcome her claim in probate court.

Tatiana is now [listed online as the president](#) of Century.

"The company is running very well under Tatiana's helm," her attorney, Raymond Rafool, told the Miami Herald. He declined to comment further about the probate case.

Although Tatiana knew little about the intricacies of the business while Sergio was alive, she has learned about its inner workings since she filed for divorce and has been privy to internal financial statements and other relevant information, according to the couple's divorce case and depositions.



Sergio Pino, right, and his brother, Carlos Pino, second from right, watch as their father, Eugenio Pino, second from left, receives a plaque from Florida International University President Mitch Maidique, left, at FIU's University House on Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2004. Sergio Pino of Century Builders Group gave \$2 million to the FIU Global Entrepreneurship Center, now the Eugenio Pino and Family Global Entrepreneurship Center. Sergio surprised his father by honoring him with the donation. Jared Lazarus/Herald staff *Miami Herald* archives

Tatiana's legal team also claims the will that Sergio signed in March designating his brother Carlos as the representative is invalid, and both sides claim the other has conflicts of interest in the matter.

Because of the dispute, the judge ordered earlier this month that a third-party curator be appointed. Philip Shechter, an accountant, was appointed to the position on Aug. 20. Shechter was recommended by Tatiana and her attorney for his financial expertise, though numerous other candidates were proposed for the position by her adversaries in the probate case.

Tatiana's involvement in Century since Sergio's death has led to discord within the company in recent weeks. Some employees, as well as Carlos and his attorney,

pushed for her to sign a settlement agreement and give up her title as president, Tatiana has alleged in court documents.

The settlement agreement, according to the documents, would have transferred ownership of the company to Pedro Hernandez, the managing director and VP of construction and land development for Century. Tatiana refused to sign the agreement.

Multiple high-level employees resigned from Century in the weeks after Sergio's death, seemingly in protest of Tatiana's involvement, according to court filings. Hernandez resigned but has since returned to the company. In a note that Sergio wrote to his employees before his suicide, he seemed to endorse Hernandez as his successor at Century. "Support Pedrito," he urged his employees [in the letter](#).

Sergio Mendez, Carlos Pino's attorney, said he would not comment on the contents of the proposed settlement agreement other than to say that it had been presented to Tatiana and that she had declined to sign it. Mendez has made clear his disapproval of Tatiana's leadership at Century. In an email last month that is now part of the court record, he criticized her openly.

"The presence of Tatiana Pino at the CHG offices negatively affects the operation of the company," Mendez wrote. "She negatively affects the value of the Company. She never had anything to do with the operation of the business and is not in any way qualified."

Carlos testified during his deposition that he does not believe Tatiana owns Century in its entirety, but rather a 50% share.

Sergio's will, which he signed not long after four men [were quietly arrested](#) in March in connection with making threats against his wife, does not specify who would own the company in the event of his death. The will states that Sergio's assets would be left according to the provisions of his trusts. At the time, Sergio had numerous trusts, none of which list Carlos or Tatiana as a beneficiary.

Tatiana's legal team has claimed that when her late husband signed the will, he was not in his right mind, as evidenced by his alleged attempts to have her killed. They

argue that could invalidate the will entirely.

Also in question is a 1992 marital agreement between Sergio and Tatiana. During the divorce proceedings, the document was the subject of intense controversy. Tatiana claimed the agreement, which limits the assets she would be entitled to, is invalid because she signed it under duress the day before the couple's wedding.

But even if the will and marital agreement are admitted as valid documents, Tatiana's legal team believes she is entitled to extensive marital assets, including ownership of Century. Tatiana has retained ownership of the Cocoplum home where the couple resided during their marriage and where Sergio died last month.

Sergio's \$10 million yacht and an \$1.8 million home in Key Largo are also potentially on the table.

Tatiana's team has further alleged that Carlos Pino may have been helping his brother dissipate marital assets during the couple's lengthy divorce proceedings.

In a motion filed earlier this month, Tatiana's legal team drew attention to a sum of \$3.2 million that was slowly transferred from Sergio to Carlos starting in 2019, the year in which the FBI says the poisoning attempts against Tatiana began. Mendez denied the allegation.

"That's completely false," Mendez told the Herald. "They're trying to disparage my client's reputation in order to attempt to block him from assuming his rightful role as the personal representative for his brother's estate."

Though a curator has already been appointed in the probate case, Mendez said it's still a possibility for his client to be appointed as personal representative down the line.

Tatiana's legal team has also intimated Carlos could have known about the murder-for-hire plot. In filings from earlier this month, Tatiana's legal team stated that she is "uncertain of [Carlos'] involvement or knowledge of the criminal plot, however, discovery in this matter is in its infancy."

Carlos denied knowledge of the alleged murder-for-hire plot during a deposition earlier this month.

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