

Funeral home director held while inquiry about human remains continues

Written by Marty Randall

Tuesday, 18 May 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 May 2010 12:05

Indiana State Police are continuing an investigation involving human and animal remains found in a building on the grounds of R.D. Pyke Funeral Service in Henryville last week.

Richard D. Pyke, 42, owner/operator of R.D. Pyke Funeral Service in Henryville, and his 19-year-old son, Richard "Bradley" Pyke, were arrested by ISP detectives in an undercover sting operation on Wednesday evening, May 12.

Both were charged on Thursday, May 13, in Clark Superior Court with theft, a Class D felony. Bradley Pyke was released on his own recognizance. His father, however, was held without bond pending a hearing on revocation of his previously-posted bond in Clark County.

The arrest of the father and son last week took place after a customer of the Pykes' pet cremation service became concerned and called the ISP Sellersburg post. That person told officers that he had left the remains of a pet dog at the funeral home for cremation on Monday, May 10. The customer was called two days later and told the ashes were ready to be picked up.

However, ISP detectives apparently knew through a new investigation that had begun at the funeral home on May 10 that all animal remains had been removed from the business on Tuesday, May 11. "They knew there was no way the remains of a pet dog could be at the funeral home," stated Sgt. Jerry Goodin, Sellersburg post public information officer.

Officers made arrangements for the animal's "ashes" to be collected. When the transaction was completed and the service paid for, officers immediately arrested Bradley Pyke. About 1½ hours later, Richard Pyke was arrested at his Henryville residence.

The elder Pyke has previously been arrested by ISP detectives on several counts of insurance fraud and theft stemming from cases in Clark and Floyd counties. In those incidents, he is accused of having sold pre-burial insurance policies and then cashing in the policies before the

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policy-holders had actually passed away.

Pyke is scheduled for trial in Floyd Superior Court on June 7 on eight counts of insurance fraud. All of those stem from business allegedly conducted at the Pyke Calloway Funeral Home in New Albany.

His trial on nine counts of theft, a count of conversion and 15 counts of insurance fraud in Clark Superior Court is scheduled for September 14.

Pyke was also charged in Barren County, Ky., in late April for writing a check on an account with insufficient funds.

The new investigation started May 10 by the ISP Sellersburg post after someone called the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency (IPLA) and allegedly said there was a foul odor coming from a building at the Henryville funeral home.

A second caller said there were two human bodies in the building, information from a news conference held last week indicated.

Larry Harvey, IPLA compliance director, stated he went to the Pyke facility on May 10 to inspect it. He was quoted as saying, "Once I entered the building, I discovered the two (human) bodies and animal remains..." in the building that was used for embalming and cremation.

Harvey said during the news conference arranged by the ISP post that the crematorium at Pyke Funeral Service is an unlicensed facility and that Richard Pyke's funeral director license was suspended after theft and fraud charges were filed in Clark and Floyd counties.

A statement made by Clark County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Jeremy Mull during court proceedings on May 13 indicated that felony charges may be filed against Pyke, apparently in regard to what authorities discovered in the building.

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No information was released about the human remains. Families of the deceased have been notified.

Owners of animals found in a freezer were contacted so that the bodies could be taken to other facilities. Three dogs were in the freezer. Another seven or eight pets were said to be either in the cremation process or were badly decomposed.