

Posted on Thu, Dec. 04, 2003

Funeral home settles lawsuit over uncremated bodies

Associated Press

ROME, Ga. - An \$8.7 million settlement was approved Thursday in a federal lawsuit against a Tennessee funeral home over uncremated bodies at the Tri-State Crematory in northwest Georgia.

The suit involving 252 plaintiffs and Buckner-Rush Funeral Home of Cleveland, Tenn., was part of the class-action lawsuit against Tri-State Crematory and funeral homes that did business with it.

Elizabeth Cabraser, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said some of her clients could receive payments before the end of the year.

Defense lawyer Lisa Higgins said that while Buckner-Rush and its corporate parent, Prime Succession Inc., settled the case, they denied any liability for acts committed by Tri-State Crematory.

Investigators discovered 334 uncremated bodies at the Noble, Ga., crematory in February 2002. Crematory operator Brent Marsh faces 787 felony criminal charges related to the discarding of bodies.

The class-action lawsuit was filed last year against Tri-State Crematory and 46 funeral homes that did business with it. A trial is scheduled for March 1.

Cabraser told Judge Harold L. Murphy that settlement negotiations are under way with several other funeral homes.

A \$300,000 preliminary settlement with 67 plaintiffs was approved by Murphy with Love Funeral Home in Dalton, Ga. A final settlement with Putnam Reed Funeral Home of Pikeville, Tenn., also was approved. The settlement must first be approved by a

bankruptcy court in Florida, where Prime Succession Inc. and its subsidiaries have filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Both Higgins and Cabraser said they expect the bankruptcy judge to approve the settlement.

Information from: Chattanooga Times/free Press