



Orange County Coroner's 2017 body mix-up even worse than reported

Lawsuit says new evidence shows larger pattern of negligence in identifying remains of homeless people in Orange County, Calif.

SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, February 13, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- One afternoon last spring, Frank Kerrigan was told that his homeless, mentally ill son was found dead behind a store in Fountain Valley, Calif. A funeral home received the body, a funeral was held and the family grieved the loss of Frankie Jr., 58.

For 17 days they believed Frankie was dead — until he showed up alive at a friend's house. The story of his misidentification, and the Kerrigan family's funeral for a stranger, made international headlines.

But how the Orange County Coroner's Office could make such an error — a question that's never been answered — just got more bizarre. That's because the body found outside the store that morning is not the same one that was mistakenly buried, according to a lawsuit filed by the family Tuesday in Orange County Superior Court.

"After informing Kerrigan of Frankie's death but before releasing a body to Chapman Funeral Homes, employees or agents at the Coroner's office realized that the body recovered at the Verizon store looked nothing like Frankie," [Attorney V. James DeSimone](#) wrote in the lawsuit. To cover up the error, the lawsuit states, someone at the Coroner's office "released a body that ... looked 'close enough' to Frankie... with the belief that no one would care because the deceased were homeless.

"We don't know how many other families could also be affected by this cavalier arrogance," DeSimone said. "Is it because their family member happened to be mentally ill and homeless?"

Orange County and Chapman Funeral Homes are named in the lawsuit, filed on behalf of Kerrigan Sr. and Frankie's sister Carole Meikle, seeking damages for negligence, civil rights violations, negligent and intentional misrepresentation, concealment and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

DeSimone, a Los Angeles-based attorney, provides vigorous and ethical representation to achieve justice for those whose civil and constitutional rights are violated.

DeSimone, Kerrigan and Miekle are available for interviews. Contact Brenda McGann, 310-245-3238.

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