



Ray Brent Marsh addresses the court during sentencing proceedings in Walker County Court in LaFayette, Ga., on Monday. Agreeing with the terms of a plea deal, Judge James Bodiford sentenced Marsh to 12 years in prison followed by a lengthy probation and a \$20,000 fine.

Ex-crematory boss gets 12 years in jail

LaFAYETTE, Ga. — Former crematory operator Ray Brent Marsh was sentenced to 12 years in prison Monday after relatives of some of the 334 people whose bodies he left to decay on his property confronted him on the stand about why he did it.

"How did you eat and sleep knowing the bodies were in the back yard?" asked Letha Shropshire of LaFayette, whose mother's body was supposed to have been cremated.

"I believe you will come to meet your maker one day and the hell you put us through will come back to you," said Natasha Mann, of Adairsville. "You may not have killed my father, but a part of my heart died when you put his body in a vault with 20 others."

After nearly two dozen relatives spoke for more than six hours, Marsh stood up and apologized.

"I can't give you the answers that you want, but I can apologize," he said, before promising to write a letter of apology to all the families that would "tell more."

When the sentence was handed down, Marsh said: "I will not cry when I go into my jail cell. I will not whimper. I will accept my punishment. I will do my time."

Instead of performing cremations, Marsh, former operator of the Tri-State Crematory in northwest Georgia, dumped the bodies behind his house and crammed them into burial vaults. He gave cement dust to the relatives instead of the ashes of their loved ones.

Agreeing with the terms of a plea deal, Judge James Bodiford sentenced Marsh to 12 years in prison followed by a lengthy probation and a \$20,000 fine.

Some relatives came from as far away as Indiana and Michigan to testify Monday. At the beginning of the hearing, the judge explained to the families that Marsh cannot be compelled to explain his crime.

"There's been a lot of emotion in this case," District Attorney Herbert Franklin said. "Naturally, there's going to be emotion and that's part of the victim impact statements." Marsh has pleaded guilty to 787 counts, including theft, abuse of a corpse, burial service fraud and making false statements.

Relatives have reached an \$80 million civil settlement with Marsh, though it is unclear how much of that will ever be paid. A lawsuit against funeral homes that sent bodies to Marsh's crematory was settled for \$36 million, and much of that has been paid.

Marsh, 31, also has pleaded guilty to related charges in Tennessee and received a 12-year sentence to run concurrently with the Georgia sentence. He took over the family business in 1997.

Trial OK'ed for officer tied to abuse

By Chris Nisan

Special to Sentinel-Voice

MINNEAPOLIS (NNPA) — On January 10, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals cleared the way for a civil lawsuit, bought by the family of Charles Craighead against the city of St. Paul and police officer Michael Lee, to go to trial. Craighead was a Black man who was shot and killed by St. Paul Police Officer Michael Lee in December 2001.

In the ruling by the three-judge panel, the court rejected arguments by the city that the case should be dismissed because it and Lee had immunity from claims stemming from the incident. "This is a classic example of a case that should be decided by trial rather than summary judgment," said the panel in its decision.

Lee is also the officer who was accused three weeks ago of beating 85-year-old Leon Nins of St. Paul and spraying

him with mace.

"It [the shooting] was unnecessary," said Craighead's longtime companion, Joyce McDougle, in an interview with the *Spokesman-Recorder*. "The police officer who did this to Charles should be punished. When we heard about it [the Nins incident], we just couldn't believe that this officer was still being allowed to work."

"That really hurt a lot. That could have been my mother or grandfather."

Lee shot and killed Craighead in what is, perhaps, one of the most bizarre incidents of police violence in recent memory.

Craighead was defending himself against an attempted carjacking by Carlos A. Scott. Scott had shot two men earlier that day and was trying to take Craighead's vehicle in an apparent attempt to escape.

According to witnesses' testimony recounted in court

documents, the two men scuffled over Scott's gun. Craighead had taken the gun from Scott, said McDougle and another witness. They said he was holding the gun over Scott's head out of his reach, "as an older child would hold an object out of reach of a younger child who was trying to take it from him," according to court documents.

When Lee arrived at the scene, he fired his shotgun, killing Craighead and wounding Scott.

According to Lee, he ordered Craighead to put the gun down. Lee said Craighead did so for a moment, but quickly picked it back up again and pointed it at Scott and then at Lee. It is at this point, Lee said that he fired.

McDougle and another witness, Meredith Price, testified that Lee did not tell Craighead to put the gun down, gave no commands or

warnings, and that Craighead never put the gun on an object in the dumpster as alleged.

"[Lee] arrived, got out of the car, and shot him. It was pretty much that quick," said Price in her testimony recounted in court documents.

Lee claims that he did not hear a police radio dispatch that explained that the gun had changed hands.

"That's a lie," said McDougle. He and other family members explain in their charges against Lee that based on the timeline of events, Lee had to have been in his squad car and heard the radio broadcast.

"What you have to recognize is that it is difficult to get a summary judgment when you have to concede all of those facts and all of the favorable inferences that flow from those facts," said Frank Villaume, assistant St. Paul city attorney.

(See Officer, Page 5)

State of Union

(Continued from Page 1)
same old ideology."

Such issues "are about old-fashioned moral values that don't get talked about much in Washington," Reid said.

The comments seemed to underscore Democratic attempts to attract the segment of Americans who have told pollsters that morality is a major factor in how they vote.

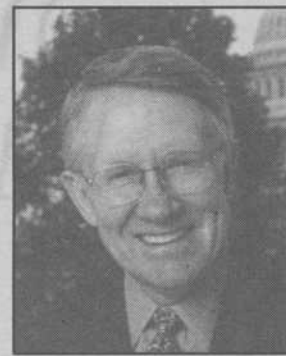
Pelosi spoke of having met with U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and wounded soldiers in military hospitals.

"They remind us of our responsibility to build a future worthy of their sacrifice," she said.

The man whom Bush defeated last November, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., took on the president as well. He said, "Every American deserves a real plan to improve retirement security — not weaken it," and said Bush must do more to unite Iraqis and persuade other nations to help train an Iraqi security force.

"The greatest tribute to the memory of the fallen is an exit strategy called success," Kerry said.

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., said Bush "did not mention how many more lives will be lost because we still have no timetable for leaving Iraq. And he did not mention how his plans for Social Security dramatically cut benefits across the board and make the challenge worse."



"Democrats are all for giving Americans more of a say and more choices when it comes to their retirement savings. But that doesn't mean taking Social Security's guarantee and gambling with it."

— Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV)

Besides re-electing Bush, the Nov. 2 voting increased the small but decisive majorities Republicans hold in Congress. The GOP also ousted one of the most visible Democrats, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D.

That has left the lower-profile Pelosi and Reid among the party's leaders and forced Democrats to ponder what course will best help them

regain House and Senate seats.

Many in the party think Bush has given Democrats a golden opportunity with his idea of letting beneficiaries divert some Social Security revenues to new personal investment accounts, and borrowing money to pay the extra costs.

Democrats were volunteering few detailed alternatives to Bush proposals. Reid

told reporters that without a specific White House blueprint for overhauling Social Security, he saw no need for Democrats to offer "a counterplan to nothing."

Reid and Pelosi also accused Bush of failing to develop a plan for protecting the country from terrorism and said Democrats wanted more health, education and job training benefits for veterans.

Rep. Mel Watt, D-N.C., chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, said Bush's speech paid little attention to education and other issues of concern to blacks.

"It's quite apparent this president lives in world just totally removed and unappreciative of the challenges millions of African Americans experience every day," Watt said.

FREE TRAINING AVAILABLE

NBSI, a private non-profit organization has received funding to assist eligible applicants with no cost to you, training in almost any field. To qualify you must be unemployed or underemployed, at least 18 years of age and reside in southern Nevada.

Please contact the office nearest you:

NBSI
930 W. Owens
Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-647-4929



NBSI
2280 E. Calvada Blvd. #101
Pahrump, NV 89048
775-727-4388

Equal Opportunity Employer
Funded by the Southern Nevada Work Force Investment Board