

Singer's body stolen and burned

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The body of a young rock singer has been stolen and partly burned, authorities reported yesterday.

"It looks like something out of Transylvania, out of the legend of Count Dracula," one police official said of the theft of Gram Parsons' body, which was whisked away in a hearse from a loading dock at Los Angeles International Airport on Thursday.

San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies reported that a partially burned body and a casket were found 200 miles away yesterday at a remote desert site near the Joshua Tree National Monument. A spokesman said the body was identified tentatively as Parsons'.

The death of the 27-year-old rock singer and musician — who played with such groups as the Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers — has been a minor mystery.

Parsons was pronounced dead Wednesday at a hospital near the site where the body was found. An autopsy was performed, but authorities said its results were inconclusive.

The casket was taken from the airport while awaiting a flight to New Orleans for burial. Two men arrived at the dock in an old hearse and told attendants that Parsons' family had changed its mind and wanted the body flown from nearby Van Nuys airport, police said.

The body was turned over to the two men after they signed receipts for it, police added. Parsons' relatives said later they had not changed their plans, Los Angeles police said.

The burned body was discovered in the Mojave Desert after authorities were alerted by campers that "a log was burning near the monument."

Frank Barbary owner of the Joshua Tree Inn, said Parsons had been staying there "to get away from the smog . . . He just comes out for a few days and uses the pool and relaxes."

Barbary said that on Wednesday a couple who had accompanied Parsons and a girl to the inn told him Parsons "was breathing funny in his room." He said efforts at mouth-to-mouth resuscitation failed.