Singer’s body theft probed

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The theft of a body and apparent
burning of the corpse of a
young rock singer has left au-
thorities in two sections of
Southern California searching
for clues.

“It looks like something out
of Transylvania, out of the leg-
end of Count Dracula,’’ one po-
lice official said Friday of the
theft of Gram Parsons’ body.

The remains were taken in a
hearse from a loading dock at
Los Angeles International Air-
port on Thursday.

San Bernardino County sher-
iff’s deputies reported that a
partially burned body and a
casket were found 200 miles
away Friday at a remote
desert site near the Joshua
Tree National Monument. A
spokesman said the body was
identified tentatively as Par-
son’s.

Even the death of the 27-
year-old rock singer and musi-
cian — who played with such
groups as The Byrds, the Fly-
ing Burrito Brothers and the
International Submarine Band
— has been shrouded in mys-
tery.

Parsons was pronounced
dead Wednesday at a hospital
near the site where the body
believed to be his 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 bur-
ial. Two men arrived at the
dock in an old hearse and told
attendants that Parson’s family
had changed its mind and
wanted the body flown from
nearby Van Nuys airport, po-
lice said.

The body was turned over to
the two men after they signed
receipts for it, police added.

Parson’s relatives said later
they had not changed their
plans, said Los Angeles police
Sgt. John Hamilton.

The burned body was dis-
covered 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 song. He just
comes out for a few days
and uses the pool and relaxes.”

Barbary said that on Wednes-
day a couple who had accom-
panied 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.

The three persons with Par-
sons were not identified.