

Funeral Home Owner Convicted Of Corpse Abuse

Friday, 12 September 2003

From the Dispatch - Columbus, Ohio
September 12, 2003

TOLEDO, Ohio -- The owner of a funeral home where eight decomposing bodies were found was convicted Friday of abusing a corpse and theft after pleading no contest.

>

Henry Harden faces a maximum of nine years in prison. Lucas County Common Pleas Court Judge James Jensen set sentencing for Oct. 10.

Harden, 62, did not make any statements in court. Afterward, his attorney, John Potts, said Harden and his wife were relieved that the investigation was over.

Authorities in June found eight bodies at the Sherill-Harden Funeral Home. Six were in the home's preparation room while two were in an adjacent garage.

Some bodies had been gnawed by rodents and were left there for months. One still has not been identified.

Harden provided the names of six of the deceased. The seventh body was identified July 8. He has been unable to identify the last body and has told investigators he believes it was there before he took over the business.

He said he got into financial trouble because he would reduce rates or provide free services for poor people until he no longer could cover bills.

The Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors suspended the licenses of the Hardens and the funeral home on June 26.

A separate order shut down the home, which the Hardens already had closed after the eight bodies were found on June 20 -- a day after the state received a tip that there were several decomposing bodies that had not been properly disposed of in the funeral home.