

Whitey paid for Alcatraz inmate's funeral Bulger didn't forget `Rock' pal
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NEWS

RALPH RANALLI

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Fugitive Irish Mob boss James J. "Whitey" Bulger paid to have the body of one of Alcatraz prison's most infamous inmates exhumed from a pauper's grave and brought home for a proper Indian burial in the Eastern Oklahoma hill country, the Herald has learned.

Residents of tiny Daisy, Okla. (pop. 100) still remember the day in early 1989 when Bulger, driving a rented Lincoln Continental and throwing around \$100 bills, brought his old prison buddy Clarence Carnes home in a \$4,000 bronze casket.

Carnes was the youngest prisoner ever sent to the infamous San Francisco Bay island prison, where Bulger served time for bank robbery in the 1960s.

After "Birdman of Alcatraz" Robert Stroud, Carnes was perhaps Alcatraz's most famous inmate. Carnes - better known as "The Choctaw Kid" was the sole survivor of the prison's deadliest escape try, the "1946 Blastout," which resulted in seven deaths.

Bulger told people involved in the Oklahoma funeral that Carnes "took care of him" when he was in Alcatraz and may even have saved his life.

He also joked with the Oklahomans about his reputation.

"If this ever gets back to you, they're going to tell you I'm the head of the Irish Mafia, but I'm not," Bulger told Atoka Funeral Home director Robert Embry. with a chuckle.

Asked what he did for a living, Bulger replied: "I run a liquor store" - no doubt a jesting reference to the South Boston Liquor Mart, a one-time Bulger hangout.

In recent months, FBI agents searching for the elusive 67-year-old reputed killer and bureau informant stumbled across the story of how Bulger brought his old prison buddy home to a Choctaw burying ground after having him exhumed from a pauper's grave outside a Missouri prison hospital, law enforcement sources said.

Officials, however, say they have stopped granting interviews on the search until hearings in U.S. District Court on the FBI's decades-long informant relationships with Bulger and Winter Hill Gang cohort Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi are over.

Carnes, a full-blooded Choctaw Indian, died on Oct. 3, 1988 at age 61 at the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Mo. He had been in an out of state and

federal prisons since age 16 and at 18 he was the youngest person ever sent to Alcatraz on murder, kidnapping and escape charges.

Believing he had no surviving relatives, prison officials buried him in pauper's grave at the Catholic Cemetery of Springfield. That fact was written into obituaries of Carnes that ran in newspapers nationwide.

In early 1989, Embry remembers getting a telephone call from "James" from Boston.

"I'm a friend of Clarence Carnes, he died outside of Springfield Missouri and was buried in pauper's grave. I want to give him a decent burial and bury him there on Indian land,"

Embry, now retired from the funeral business, recalled Bulger saying.

If you can get him here, I can bury him, Embry replied.

Almost the next day, Embry said, he received a call from a funeral home in Ozark, Mo.

The funeral director's son there said "a man from Boston" had paid to exhume Carnes, put him in their best casket and have him driven from Missouri to Oklahoma.

"When they came down with him (Carnes) - I'll never forget it - it was in this beautiful bronze casket," Embry said. The casket alone probably cost about \$4,000, he said.

The Missouri funeral director's son then handed Embry a crisp \$100 bill, a tip from "Jim from Boston," and said he had received a similar tip himself.

"He said `I'm going over to a horse track in Tulsa and spend mine,'" Embry recalled.

"Then I got another call from James (who) said, `I'm coming down,'" Embry said. "He said `I want a Choctaw funeral for Clarence. I want a Choctaw preacher and some Choctaw singers, and I want to bury him at Billy Cemetery.'"

Billy Cemetery is a small burying ground on Choctaw land, named after Isaac Billy, a tribal judge. The Billys are cousins of the Carnes clan, locals say. The Choctaws were once the largest American Indian tribe in the southern U.S. and there are tribal councils in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Florida and Louisiana.

Embry hired the Rev. Sampson Parish, a local Choctaw preacher and five female singers.

Bulger flew to Dallas, rented a Lincoln Continental and drove up Routes 75 and 43 to the diminutive Daisy, where Stout's Country Store and a U.S. Post Office are the only businesses in town.

A few hours before the funeral, Embry said, Bulger learned from one of the locals that Carnes' grand-nephew was in jail in Tulsa. Bulger drove to Tulsa and bailed him

out - a 240-mile round trip.

"He was about 20 minutes late, but he said he would have made it if he hadn't got stopped by the Highway Patrol."

The singers performed several Choctaw songs and the Rev. Parish preached at the gravesite, mostly in Choctaw.

"He has a tendency to do that when he really gets going," Embry said.

Virginia Stout, 72, a distant cousin of Carnes who attended the funeral said she didn't catch much of the sermon.

"I think he said something about believing everyone has some good in them."

Afterward, Bulger and his blond girlfriend chatted with the locals for a while.

"He seemed interested and he knew a lot about Clarence," Stout said.

Then they got back in the big rental car and left, but not before liberally tipping everyone involved and handing Embry a couple more pristine \$100 bills.

Bulger later ordered a \$500 headstone that still stands over Carnes' grave. Embry said Bulger sent \$800 in cash to cover those costs.

The two kept in touch by telephone for several months before losing touch.

Embry said he had no idea that Bulger was a notorious crime boss and FBI informant.

"He just said he was getting ready to buy a boat and take a cruise around the world," Embry said. "He said, 'If you need anything, just call me and let me know.' I said maybe I could use a loan some day, but I was just joking."

Photo Caption: SET IN STONE: Virginia Stout and James Erkin visit the gravesite of Clarence Carnes in Daisy, Okla. James 'Whitey' Bulger paid for the funeral of his old Alcatraz friend. AP photo