

pick up the body at the hospital. Presbyterian officials couldn't find it. The hospital searched for hours before discovering that the body was taken to Romero Funeral Home in Belen, Gaddy said.

Nobody at the hospital signed the body out or checked the toe and wrist tags, he claimed. And the same thing happened at Romero's, according to Gaddy, because the funeral home assumed it had the body of a person that was to be cremated.

When a hospital official contacted Romero's, it was learned that the body was mistakenly cremated, he alleged.

Presbyterian Hospital issued a statement saying an employee made "an unfortunate and regrettable error" in not following appropriate protocols in releasing two deceased patients to two local funeral homes.

"This mistake began with Presbyterian Hospital. The employee responsible failed to confirm identification of the deceased patient and released the wrong body," the statement said.

"We are extremely sorry and wish to offer our deepest apologies to both families," said Presbyterian Chaplain Bill Dorman.

Romero Funeral Home owner Dicky Romero said Friday, "Our hearts go out to the family. We can't imagine what they're going through or what they're going to continue to have to go through. But we followed all of our procedures accordingly."

John Calles, 46, said it was important to have his wife's body intact because only a whole body can get to heaven. Calles said he was brought up not to believe in cremation, even though the Catholic Church now approves it.

"I'm not going to say who is to blame," said Calles, a permanently disabled construction worker. "Whoever it is, they made a big mistake. I hope it's a lesson for them so that other people don't have to go through the same thing.

"It hurts twice when you lose your wife and can't bury her."

Family Told Body Mistakenly Cremated

■ *Woman's survivors wanted a traditional Catholic funeral, and their lawyer says they are devastated*

BY PAUL LOGAN
Journal Staff Writer

After Mary Ann Calles died Tuesday of kidney and liver failure at Presbyterian Hospital, her family began preparing for a traditional Catholic funeral in Belen.

But their plans were dashed Wednesday.

They were told alleged mistakes were made at the hospital and, later, at a funeral home, resulting in the cremation of Calles' body, the Calles family's attorney, Phil Gaddy, said Friday.

Gaddy said Calles' husband, John, and daughter, Marlene, 19, "were both devastated. It's their belief you need a body to go to heaven. They're beside themselves."

The family had wanted Calles, 37, buried in a purple dress that her sister bought the day before she died. On Thursday, they had planned to hold services — an open casket viewing, a funeral Mass at Our Lady of Belen Catholic Church and burial in the parish cemetery.

But only a Mass was held for the Belen artist and homemaker because the family didn't have her ashes, John Calles said Friday.

"Right now I don't know where they're at," he said of the ashes. "Me and my daughter are hurting. I can't even put my wife to rest. What is there to put to rest?"

The night before the funeral