

ARCHIVE

BEYOND THE SCHUAVO CASE: BACK TO NORMAL // As families retreat to grieve, burial plans add to anguish

By Chris Tisch

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Two families grieved separately and a community showed signs of returning to normal the day after Terri Schiavo died.

Her husband, Michael Schiavo, grieved at an undisclosed location Friday, away from his Clearwater home. He awaited the completion of an autopsy, then plans to see his wife's remains cremated and interred in a family plot in Pennsylvania. It was unclear late Friday if the Pinellas-Pasco Medical Examiner's Office had released the body.

Schiavo's in-laws, Bob and Mary Schindler, planned a memorial service Tuesday evening in Gulfport that will be absent their daughter's body.

The Schindlers would like their daughter's body to be made available for the service. They also would like her buried. But a court order gives Michael Schiavo control of his wife's body.

The Schindlers had no discussions Friday with Michael Schiavo and do not intend to press the issue in court, said their attorney David Hibbs.

There also was some confusion based on a statement made Thursday by one of Michael Schiavo's brothers. Scott Schiavo reportedly told a news agency that his brother would withhold the location where he would inter his wife's remains from the Schindlers.

Tampa Bay Times

But a court order, signed by Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge George Greer this week, says Michael Schiavo must give the Schindlers "notice of any memorial services and the location of cemetery where the ward's remains are interred."

Michael Schiavo's other brother, Brian, said Friday that the court order would be obeyed. Scott Schiavo could not be reached Friday.

"Obviously, if it's a court order he'll (Michael Schiavo) follow the court order, which he's done the whole time," Brian Schiavo said.

The Schindlers have scheduled a funeral Mass for 7 p.m. Tuesday at Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Gulfport.

The Rev. William J. Swengros, pastor of the church, said the Schindler family will greet friends in the Maria Center next door to the church at 5800 15th Ave. S from 5:30 to 7 p.m. The Mass will follow. A reception with refreshments will begin at 8:30 p.m. in the Maria Center.

"The body won't be present, but all the faithful will be gathered to entrust her soul into the loving embrace of God," Swengros said.

Swengros said the Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle was offered for the service, but the Schindlers preferred to have the Mass in their own parish. Most Holy Name of Jesus is much smaller than the cathedral, he said, so the church will set up speakers outside for overflow crowds.

The priest said Monsignor Thaddeus Malanowski will preside and the Rev. Frank Pavone will give the homily. The service will be private, Swengros said, but an area will be set up for the media.

He said the family's faith is strong. "There is such a strong belief in the resurrection of the Lord. Of course, there is a sadness, but then there is a tremendous peace."

In lieu of flowers, the Schindlers ask donations be made to the Terri Schindler-Schiavo Foundation.

Tampa Bay Times

Terri Schiavo was at the center of a legal battle over whether she would have wanted to be kept on artificial life support 15 years after suffering a devastating brain injury. She died Thursday, 13 days after a feeding tube was removed by court order.

While the Schindlers believed their daughter was semiconscious, her husband believed she was in a persistent vegetative state. The autopsy could settle the debate about the extent of her brain damage.

Terri Schiavo's fate drew hundreds of protesters to her hospice in Pinellas Park. For two weeks they prayed and chanted. In all, 53 people were arrested, most for trespassing when they tried to bring Schiavo water.

Students at Cross Bayou Elementary School, which is just down the street from the hospice, attended classes in other locations. Students will remain at those locations Monday, but will return Tuesday to Cross Bayou, principal Marcia Stone said.

On Friday, city workers began hauling away the signs, statues, rosaries and flowers protesters left behind near the hospice.

They began taking down the orange plastic fence that had separated the protesters from everyone else.

And then, just like that, the protesters returned. They drifted down the sidewalk holding wooden crosses and pushing baby strollers. They set up their chairs and tables once again on the crushed brown grass. By 11 a.m., 90 people had gathered in front of a makeshift altar for a Mass.

"We get to say when we're done," said Lisa Wilson, 48, a protester from Topeka, Kan., who had gone to get some breakfast when her signs were removed, "and we're not done."

News organizations, still packing up their trucks, grabbed their cameras and made a dash for them. The Terri Schiavo story wasn't over yet.

For the next hour, the protesters bowed their heads and kneeled in the dirt next to vases of wilted roses and lilies.

Tampa Bay Times

After the service, many of the protesters exchanged e-mail addresses and phone numbers and printed messages in a notebook being given to the Schindlers.

Some protesters promised to return every year on the anniversary of Schiavo's death. A few others, like Wilson, said they were staying until the laws were changed to prevent what happened to Schiavo.

Capt. Sanfield Forseth, a spokesman for Pinellas Park Police, said protesters will be allowed to stay in the right of way near the hospice as long as they don't camp there. He said four officers would likely remain through the weekend monitoring the area.

"I think everything's calming down and heading back to normalcy," Forseth said.

Times staff writers William R. Levesque, Waveney Ann Moore, Donna Winchester and Anne Lindberg contributed to this report, which included information from the Associated Press.