

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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Nov. 19, 2013

Former Funeral Home Employee Pleads to Theft of Human Remains, Other Counts

A former apprentice embalmer accused of taking gold crowns from human remains at a Lancaster funeral home pleaded no contest and was immediately sentenced today, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Deputy District Attorney John Evans said Pete Jacob Lara, 39, pleaded to seven felony counts – one count each of possession of methamphetamine and removal or possession of dental gold from human remains, and five counts of commercial burglary.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Christopher Estes of the Antelope Valley Branch Office sentenced Lara to seven years in state prison to be served in local custody.

Lara additionally was ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution to the Wounded Warrior Project, an organization that provides programs and services to military veterans wounded in combat as they transition to civilian life.

Lara is a former employee of Halley-Olsen-Murphy Funeral Home in Lancaster. While working as an apprentice embalmer, the defendant took gold crowns from bodies and other items including a cremation urn box and medallions used to decorate urn boxes worth more than \$1,000.

Prosecutors said Lara went on to pawn the stolen goods at pawn shops and jewelry exchanges. The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Annually, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](http://da.lacounty.gov) prosecutes more than 60,000 felonies and 140,000 misdemeanor crimes.