



Suspected Celebrity Embezzler Pleads Innocent

Man Accused Of Stealing From Burt Reynolds And Loni Anderson

LOS ANGELES, Posted 1:52 p.m. August 19, 1999 -- A man accused of embezzling money from actor Burt Reynolds pleaded innocent today to charges of forgery and grand theft.

Tarzana, Calif., resident William Patrick Bentley, 39, also faces separate charges of defrauding the Los Angeles Police Department's widows and orphans fund, said a wire service.



Bentley was arrested on the charges involving Reynolds and his ex-wife, Loni Anderson, when he showed up at the downtown courthouse last week for the start of his trial in the LAPD case.

He posted a \$20,000 bond in the LAPD case, in which he is accused of taking \$30,000 in fees under false pretenses while acting as "coordinator" for the 28th annual Police-Celebrity Golf Tournament last year.

After his arrest, a wire service said sheriff's deputies found a business card in Bentley's wallet that indicated he was president and personal manager of Burt Reynolds Productions -- positions he never held.

Deputy District Attorney Michael Kraut told reporters the address on the cards was traced to a Tarzana post office box that was obtained a year after the actor fired Bentley, who worked as a low-level assistant to Reynolds in 1995.

Bentley allegedly forged Reynolds' signature on letters, a contract and a check for \$20,000 from the Suarez Corp., which wanted to hire the actor to make a personal appearance.

He also allegedly forged the signatures of Anderson and others on release letters. That apparently enabled him to collect \$24,000 from the Suarez Corp.

Bentley is being held in lieu of \$104,000 bail. Kraut has asked that the source of Bentley's bail money, if and when he posts bond, be scrutinized to make sure it is not ill-gotten. According to news reports, the defendant has not yet tried to make bail.

Arraignment was delayed yesterday when Bentley complained of chest pains and difficulty breathing after he arrived at the downtown courthouse from the Men's Central Jail, said a wire service.

Today, a preliminary hearing was set for Aug. 31.