

[Teen handcuffed Sam Mazzola to waterbed, sheriff's officials say](#)



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COLUMBIA STATION — A 17-year-old boy chained and handcuffed Sam Mazzola to the waterbed where the same teen found Mazzola dead on Sunday morning, Lorain County sheriff's Sgt. Donald Barker said Thursday.

Mazzola, 49, had asked the teen to shackle him to the bed because he anticipated another man, with whom he had a relationship, would be coming to his North Marks Road compound later that night, Barker said the investigation has determined. The teen told investigators he left after securing Mazzola, Barker said.

Chief Deputy County Coroner Frank Miller has said Mazzola died sometime between 1 and 2 a.m. Sunday after he asphyxiated on a foreign object he had in his mouth. When the teen found Mazzola around 11 a.m. Sunday, the controversial exotic animal owner was wearing a mask.

Barker and Miller both said it appeared Mazzola accidentally died during a consensual sex act.

Deputies are still investigating whether the other man Mazzola had hoped would come over was at the compound late Saturday or early Sunday or if anyone else was there, Barker said.

"There's still some things we've got to check out," he said.

Dave Garnek, the executor of Mazzola's estate, declined to comment Thursday on how Mazzola died, but he said the efforts to remove the exotic animals, including bears, tigers and wolves, that his friend kept at the compound were going well.

He said the only animals that haven't been transported to U.S. Department of Agriculture-approved facilities are a few wolves and bears.

Mazzola's bears, which he used to let people wrestle, had brought him notoriety over the years, especially after the Aug. 19, 2010, fatal mauling of Brent Kandra by one of the bears. Kandra suffered approximately 600 wounds during the attack.

Mazzola later put down the bear, Iroquois, at the request of Kandra's family, who had pushed to have Mazzola charged with reckless homicide.

That investigation was still ongoing when Mazzola died Sunday. The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation had also been investigating whether Kandra was a friend or employee of Mazzola's because Mazzola didn't have workers' compensation insurance at the time of the mauling.

Mazzola also had faced the possibility of serving time in a federal prison if he was determined to have violated the conditions of his probation on charges he illegally transported bears for public display and illegally sold skunks in 2007.

Mazzola was accused of associating with known felons, offering to display his animals — something he wasn't supposed to do — and failing to notify his probation officer that he had pleaded no contest in Elyria Municipal Court to a charge that he hadn't kept proper records on some of his animals.

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