

Erpenbeck's buried cash now up for grabs in court

Creditors, feds spar over builder's money

By Dan Horn
dhorn@enquirer.com

The quest for Bill Erpenbeck's buried treasure isn't over yet.

A federal appeals court in Cincinnati ruled Thursday that the government may not be entitled to the \$250,000 that Erpenbeck told a friend to bury on a private golf course before he went to prison.

Erpenbeck, a homebuilder serving 25 years for his role in a

massive fraud scheme, put the money in a cooler about 10 years ago and asked his golfing partner, Steven Michael Skidmore, to hide it until his legal troubles were over.

In a move the appeals court judges said was "befitting a John Grisham novel," Skidmore buried the cooler of cash near the green of the third hole at Summit Hills Country Club in Crestview Hills.

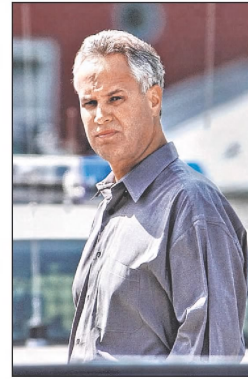
Erpenbeck came clean about the money in 2009 and implicated Skidmore, who was sentenced last year to 16 months in prison. The FBI dug up the money, which was waterlogged and

deteriorated, and exchanged it for new bills at the U.S. Treasury.

The federal government then seized the money as part of a forfeiture meant to recover some of the \$34 million Erpenbeck was convicted of stealing from banks and homebuyers.

When U.S. District Judge Sandra Beckwith upheld the seizure two years ago, the story seemed to be over. But lawyers in Erpenbeck's bankruptcy case appealed Beckwith's ruling, arguing the money should be distributed to his creditors instead.

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A federal appeals court ruled Thursday the government may not be entitled to the \$250,000 former homebuilder Bill Erpenbeck had buried before he went to prison. ENQUIRER FILE

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jerrwilliamsauthor
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