

Retired El Dorado County sheriff's sergeant arrested

By Kathryn Reed

A retired El Dorado County sheriff's sergeant who worked in the South Lake Tahoe substation is behind bars.

Donald Philip Atkinson, 50, was arrested March 8 on 44 felony charges. He is accused of embezzling more than \$300,000 from the El Dorado County Deputy Sheriff's Association, of which he was president. Grand theft, perjury and forgery are among the other charges.

The 11-page complaint filed by the state Attorney General's Office in El Dorado County Superior Court says the crimes occurred between Jan. 1, 2005, and June 30, 2011. The alleged thefts started when he lived in the Carson Valley and continued to when he moved to El Dorado Hills, where he was most recently living.



Donald
Atkinson

Atkinson is the detective who in 2006 handled teacher Karsten Gronwald's child pornography case. In 2007, he was widely quoted admonishing then Sheriff Jeff Neves for shuffling assignments that put search and rescue responsibilities in the hands of Placerville deputies. He was vocal with the Board of Supervisors when it came to budget cuts.

El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Daniel B. Proud set Atkinson's bail at \$1 million.

This is the same judge who in March 2007 ruled against the deputy sheriff's association and in favor of Neves in regards to the labor suit.

When a scam in June 2007 was gaining traction soliciting money for the deputy sheriff's association it was Atkinson who warned people not to donate the money.

A joint press release from Attorney General Kamala D. Harris and El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson says, "An investigation by the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office with assistance from the Attorney General's Office showed that Atkinson falsified official documents, including Fair Political Practice Commission forms, submitted forged documents to DSA and claimed checks were written for charitable purposes but pocketed the money. The investigation was conducted after a request from the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office."

Atkinson allegedly used the money to open accounts in his name.

He is accused of taking \$100,000 from a 72-year-old woman and \$20,000 designated for the families of Sgts. Mark Dunakin, Ervin Romans, and Daniel Sakai and Officer John Hege, the four Oakland police officers killed by a parolee in March 2009.

Incline man wins case against Merrill Lynch

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

An Incline Village man was recently awarded \$1.375 million in an arbitration case against Banc of America Securities, now Merrill Lynch. The damage award returns his entire investment, plus interest, which was made a year before the 2008 banking crisis unfolded.

A stock broker for Bobby Hayes, a retired businessman, put \$883,122 into a complex multi-level security known as a collateralized loan obligation in July 2007. The terms were 12 years at 8 percent interest, said his lawyer, Tom Bradley of Reno. Hayes said he had instructed his broker not to make high-risk investment with the money.

Hayes lost his entire investment within 14 months, Bradley said. He took his case before the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, or FINRA, an independent agency which regulates securities firms and financial brokers under the Securities and Exchange Commission.

In three days of hearings in Reno last year before a three-person FINRA panel, Bradley claimed breaches of written and oral contracts and fiduciary duty, fraud, negligence and state securities violations, according to FINRA's dispute resolution. Representatives of Banc of America Securities LLC and Merrill Lynch sought dismissal of the claims.

Read the whole story

Backcountry control burns in Nevada planned through May

The Nevada Division of Forestry is conducting prescribed burns at Tunnel Creek in the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park backcountry from March through May, weather permitting.

Tunnel Creek road from Highway 28 to Tunnel Creek Station may be closed in order to conduct the burns. Signs will be posted throughout the area when burns are being conducted. Nearly 100 acres are being treated in 15 phases.

The burns are part of ongoing fuels treatment and forest restoration efforts in the Lake Tahoe area.

The Tunnel Creek burns are being conducted by the Nevada Division of Forestry in cooperation with the Division of State Parks, Division of State Lands and the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District.

‘Tahoe Blues’ reading

“Tahoe Blues” reading at Lake Tahoe Community College is June 8 at 7pm.

Join Bona Fide Books and LTCC in celebrating the release of the latest Bona Fide book, “Tahoe Blues”.

Writers will dive into their tales – tall and true alike. This is part of the LTCC Writers Series.

Books will be on sale and authors ready to sign them.

The reading is free.

Poetry slam at Sierra Nevada College

Sierra Nevada College presents the 6th annual Tahoe Poetry on April 27 at 7pm at Patterson Hall.

The evening is free and open to all. There are cash prizes for the top three competitors – \$300, \$200 and \$100.

Participants must be present 20 minutes prior to the show to sign-up; the first 10 to sign up will compete. Each competitor has three minutes to perform their poem.

The emcee is poetry slam champion Denise Jolly.

Poetry slam at LTCC

Poetry slam at Lake Tahoe Community College on April 26 at 8pm.

Emcee is Denise Jolly.

Free to attend; \$5 for competitors. Each competitor should prepare two poems. Sign-ups are 15 minutes before the event.

4 Santa Cruz men arrested on drug charges in Stateline

Four Santa Cruz men were arrested this week on charges of transporting and distributing cocaine in Stateline.

The monthlong investigation by the Tri-NET Narcotic Task Force, Douglas County sheriff's deputies and Santa Cruz officers ended March 2 with Joseph Perez, 26, and Oscar Madriz, 25, booked on charges of trafficking and sales of a controlled substance.

Officers also seized approximately 255 grams of cocaine with a street value of \$25,500. A vehicle, firearm, and cash were also confiscated.

Sheriff's deputies said Madriz, an ex-felon out of California, had a loaded semi-automatic handgun in his possession which he will face an additional charge for.

These arrests led deputies to another Stateline hotel room where they said small amounts of cocaine and marijuana were found, along with drug paraphernalia. Arrested in the room were Tyler Silveira, 28, and Joaquin Lara, 27, both from Santa Cruz, on various drug related charges.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

California water settlement may be bad for Nevada

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

What happens in California holds sway over many of Nevada's most important industries: Californians populate the state's casinos, they are the state's best would-be buyers of renewable energy, and now, they may be setting a standard for how Nevada's scarce water resources will be allocated in the future.

Or at least that is what Nevada, along with a host of other Western states, fears will happen if a federal bill to restructure California's system for sharing water among urbanites, farmers and conservation projects passes Congress.

This week, the House of Representatives voted to approve the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act. The bill upends a 2006 settlement on water distribution that ended almost 20 years of lawsuits, as well as five years of planning to implement the settlement to replenish the San Joaquin river – a move California's governor believes will make it a more reliable resource for both wildlife and thirsty Californians.

Farmers have never liked the irrigation restrictions that came with the deal. One influential Republican representative of California's agricultural areas said the water pumping limitations had caused a "man-made drought" hampering the local economy in the San Joaquin Valley.

The particulars of the dispute are localized to California. But some Nevadans believe that if the federal government can successfully intervene to impose a water settlement on California, there's no reason government won't meddle in Nevada's water disputes too.

Read the whole story

Medical marijuana supporters taking cause to Legislature, not voters

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Medical marijuana advocates are dropping efforts to qualify a November ballot initiative to regulate California's dispensary industry and instead plan a media campaign to lobby the Legislature to tackle the issue.

Cannabis industry groups including dispensaries, medical marijuana growers and a powerful union drafted the proposed measure in the face of an ongoing federal crackdown on California's \$1.5 billion medicinal pot trade.

But a top campaign director said today initiative planners instead have decided to run television and radio ads to urge lawmakers and Gov. Jerry Brown to enact rules governing how

medical marijuana outlets operate in the state.

“We’re not doing the initiative. We’re pulling the plug on it,” said Dan Rush, director of the Medical Cannabis and Hemp Division for the United Food and Commercial Workers, which has been organizing California pot workers for the past two years.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County film event features local who worked on ‘The Artist’

By Mark Anderson, Sacramento Business Journal

The El Dorado Lake Tahoe Film & Media Office is hosting its annual film industry mixer, and this year the featured speaker is a local resident and Hollywood veteran who worked on “The Artist”, the film that won the Best Picture academy award last month.

The I Love Film mixer is from 4 to 8pm on March 16 at the El Dorado County Fair Grounds in Placerville.

Admission is free and open to the public, said Kathleen Dodge, El Dorado County film commissioner.

Read the whole story