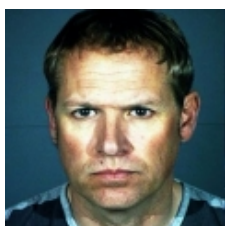


No contest plea by retired El Dorado County sergeant

By Max Ehrenfreund, Sacramento Bee

Don Atkinson, the former president of the El Dorado County Deputy Sheriff's Association and a retired sergeant, pleaded no contest on felony counts of embezzlement, fraud and perjury, according to Lynda Gledhill, a spokeswoman for the California Office of the Attorney General.

Prosecutors allege Atkinson stole money from the Deputy Sheriff's Association, filed perjured campaign finance reports and stole \$100,000 from an elderly woman by securing a loan from her under false pretenses.



Don
Atkinson

As part of a plea agreement, Atkinson will be sentenced to five years in state prison. He will pay \$338,348.14 in restitution to the Deputy Sheriff's Association, and he will repay the \$100,000 he is accused of stealing from the woman, Gledhill said. In addition, she said, he will direct the California Public Employees' Retirement System to pay \$1,000 per month from his retirement account to the victims while he is in prison and on parole.

Atkinson was arrested in March after an investigation by the California Attorney General's Office and the El Dorado District Attorney's Office. He will receive his sentence July

30, Gledhill said.

Atkinson spent a number of years patrolling streets in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

He is the detective who in 2006 handled teacher Karsten Gronwald's child pornography case on the South Shore. 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. Atkinson was vocal with the Board of Supervisors when it came to budget cuts.

– Lake Tahoe News contributed to this story.