

Tahoe, Carson docs duped in mega scam

By Matt Gutman, Chris Kilmer and Lauren Effron, 20/20

When Navy veteran Carol Roberts first met A.J. Dicken, who boasted about being the most decorated Navy SEAL ever, she was in awe of him, and she wasn't the first.

For years, Dicken, 57, claimed he was an ex-Navy SEAL who had served in dozens of covert combat missions, from the jungles of Vietnam to the caves of Afghanistan. He proudly wore the SEAL trident insignia and loved to show off his numerous awards. He would regale listeners about his mission to assassinate Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar and his death defying sloop into Pakistan to make the kill shot on Osama Bin Laden. He also carried discharge papers that included two Medals of Honor, and even a laudatory email from Col. Oliver North. He's actually a former Lake Tahoe bartender

But it was all an elaborate lie, one that he would allegedly use to take hundreds of thousands of dollars from his victims – and something else harder to put a price on: their honor.

Roberts met Dicken at a military-style self-defense training school he started in an airplane hangar in Carson City, where she took some shooting and self-defense classes, along with Greg Ginn, a surgeon in South Lake Tahoe, and Brian Romaneschi, an ear-nose-throat specialist in Carson Valley.

The business was popular with the locals, and seemed to be booming. But Dicken's dream to launch his own international security firm was expensive. He convinced Ginn and Romaneschi to invest upward of \$850,000 in the new venture.

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