

# Man Jailed For Forging Checks

By Glenn Barr, Reporter | Posted: Thursday, December 22, 2011 12:00 am

An unemployed Crestline construction worker whose family's financial woes have been detailed three times in this newspaper in the past two years has been arrested for allegedly forging checks belonging to his disabled mother, who had entrusted him with her finances.

Richard Dean Duncan, 33, was booked at Central Detention Center in San Bernardino on Dec. 7 after a bank employee notified authorities about a problem with the victim's account.

Bank authorities declined Wednesday to explain exactly what led to the discovery of the alleged forgery, citing customer confidentiality policies.

"Our associates are trained to identify peculiarities in the account activity of our customers," said Tammie Mueller, manager of the Crestline branch of California Bank & Trust. "Protecting our customers is a responsibility we take seriously.

"In this particular case we are not in a position to discuss the specifics of the account or what occurred in order to protect the customer's privacy," Mueller added. "We are cooperating with police officials who are in the midst of their investigation."

But Sheriff's Deputy Nate Newsom, who investigated the incident filled in the details.

Newsom said Wednesday the incident began when a check for \$400, drawn on the victim's account, was presented to a teller at California Bank and Trust in Crestline by a woman named Jeana Lynn Reitz.

Reitz, Newsom said, is the 28-year-old girlfriend of Joseph Medina, 39, of Crestline, to whom the check was made out. Newsom arrested Medina on Dec. 15 and booked him for possession of a controlled substance. He remained in custody Wednesday at West Valley Detention Center on \$25,000 bail.

## NO-BAIL WARRANT

Jail records show Medina, whom Newsom said had about \$20 worth of methamphetamine in his possession when arrested, was also being held on a no-bail warrant for a prior incident of inflicting corporal injury on a co-habitant.

Reitz, who pleaded guilty on Nov. 21 to being under the influence of a controlled substance and was placed on three years' probation, has not been arrested in connection with the allegedly forged check.

After Newsom investigated the check incident, he arrested Duncan at 8:30 a.m. the following day at his home in the 700 block of Forest Shade Road. He was booked on four felony charges, including elder abuse by a caretaker, commercial burglary, forgery and possession of stolen property.

Duncan's bail was set at \$50,000, but he was later released without posting it, a practice sheriff's officials say is becoming common under California's new inmate-release policy, which was occasioned by a federal court order to reduce prison overcrowding.

Asked Monday whether it was unusual for someone booked for four felonies to be released without posting bail, Twin Peaks Sheriff's Lt. Rick Ells replied, "Welcome to my world."

## **FELONY FILED**

According to court records, the district attorney's office on Monday filed a felony charge of theft from an elder/dependent adult of an amount over \$400 against Duncan. It was not immediately clear whether Duncan would face the other charges as well. His arraignment is scheduled for Feb. 9.

Sheriff's deputies said Duncan has for some time been designated by his disabled mother as the person to handle her financial affairs. The woman reportedly moved recently from the one-bedroom-and-a-loft home she has shared for more than two years with Duncan, his wife and their five children.

On Dec. 6, a sheriff's report says, an employee at California Bank and Trust's Crestline office phoned authorities concerning the woman's account. Newsom said the call was made when Reitz attempted to cash the \$400 check.

When Newsom went to Duncan's residence, he said, he found Duncan's mother's checkbook, which Newsom said had been stolen from her, hidden in a cabinet.

According to court records, Duncan pleaded guilty in February 2005 to a misdemeanor count of theft of personal property, reduced from a felony charge of receiving stolen property. He was sentenced to three days in county jail.

## **GUILTY PLEA ENTERED**

Three months later, in a case where he was charged with misdemeanor counts of making criminal threats, assault with a deadly weapon not a firearm, inflicting corporal injury on a spouse or cohabitant, inflicting injury on a child and battery, Duncan pleaded guilty to the battery and inflicting injury on a spouse charges.

He was sentenced to 90 days in jail and fined \$180, court records say.

In a story published in this newspaper on Dec. 24, 2009, the Duncan family's struggles were detailed. After Richard Duncan was laid off from three construction jobs in less than 18 months and the family was evicted from two homes because they couldn't pay the rent, the Duncans were forced to move in with his mother on Forest Shade.

Two weeks before the article was published, Duncan's car, which he couldn't afford to register after Sacramento nearly doubled auto-registration fees, was impounded after a California Highway Patrol officer noticed the out-of-date tags on the rear license plate.

Two weeks after the article appeared, the Crestline Courier-News reported how several readers had responded to the earlier article, offering cash and work to Duncan.

Then, on Oct. 14, 2010, this newspaper published a story describing how Duncan, returning after dark on Highway 189 from a temporary construction job in Twin Peaks, had tumbled off a bicycle borrowed from his employer after being harried by an impatient truck driver who came up behind Duncan, honking his horn and flashing his headlights.

Duncan suffered a broken collar bone and couldn't work for several weeks. He said the driver did not stop to render aid.