

Stolen: The Moores name

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Head varies

In our land of Elvis impersonators and celebrity look-alikes, there are wannabes with sinister designs on prominent names.

In December, for instance, Tiger Woods testified against a con artist who ran up \$17,000 in credit card charges in his name. Last week, S.D. police arrested someone masquerading as a son of Padres owner John Moores.

Claiming to be Robert Moores (never mind that Moores' son is John Jr.), this suspect convinced a local car dealer to sell him a fully loaded \$45,000 Jeep Cherokee on credit. He stayed in a \$400-a-night hotel and ran up the room service tab.

He tried his act at a jewelry store, insisting that a purchase order had been sent over from the Padres. Unable to find it, the salesclerk refused to make the sale. Using fake checks, he allegedly convinced a fast-cash agency to do a \$10,000 electronic transfer. The ploy failed, however, because the clerk couldn't get the transfer system to work.

A warrant led to the arrest of the suspect, now in jail facing charges of auto theft and forgery. But here's the twist. He insists his brother was the impersonator. Investigators are checking out the story.

Crime story II

After David Kusumoto's truck was stolen from a Third Avenue parking lot last week, he was delighted to learn from police that it had been recovered less than an hour later.

The thieves, having driven the wrong way on First Avenue, crashed into the curb of a state Route 163 off-ramp in Hillcrest and fled. While writing up a report, police heard a cell phone ring inside the truck, so a cop answered it. The caller was a woman in search of the owner of the cell phone -- who wasn't the owner of the truck. Could that person be the thief? Alas, investigators instead found another victim whose car and cell phone had been stolen a couple of days earlier.

A judge is eulogized

This week's funeral service for Judge Earl Gilliam, the first African-American to sit on S.D.'s judicial bench, packed Bayview Baptist Church with his friends and colleagues. Assistant U.S. Attorney Tom McNamara, who prosecuted Valerie Stallings, found himself sitting in the same pew as Stallings' attorney, Frank Reagan. So many politicians wanted to speak that the Rev. George Walker Smith, who conducted the service, limited them to two minutes each . . . Smith and Judge Gilliam's son, Derrick, both noted that Judge Gilliam was frequently late to church. That was a revelation to defense attorney Michael Crowley, who said, "Now I understand why Judge Gilliam never chastised me for being late to

court."

Election news

Richard Babcock, one of a dozen candidates vying for Juan Vargas' S.D. City Council seat in an election Feb. 27, has found an effective way to exercise. Since Dec. 1, he's lost 32 pounds just walking door- to-door in the district -- about three hours each weekday and eight to 10 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. As of last Saturday, he had covered 185 miles. His wife, Alma, who sometimes joins him, has lost 15 pounds.

Diane Bell's column appears Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays. Fax items to (619) 293-2443; call (619) 293-1518; e-mail to diane.bell@uniontrib.com.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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