



## Sentencing deferred in bank embezzlement

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November 22, 2006

Sentencing was deferred Tuesday for a year for a 47-year-old Gardnerville woman who admitted gambling away \$15,000 from the account of a 78-year-old Bank of America customer.

Janet Lee Turner was a clerk at the Gardnerville Raley's bank branch when the incident occurred. She made two unauthorized withdrawals from the recently widowed customer's account in April.

She has made complete restitution and prepared apologies for the bank and the victim, lawyer Tod Young said Tuesday.

Clinical psychologist Joseph McEllistrem testified about the similarities between what he called "pathological gambling" and other addictions in explaining Turner's behavior.

She has no prior criminal record and her attorney said she was unlikely to re-offend.

That prompted Judge Dave Gamble to discuss the ongoing debate between the legal and medical professions over responsibility for behavior.

"That's the quandary I find myself in. The next thing is we'll have people in here justifying the pleasure they get from beating people," he said.

Young said his client never benefited from the money because she gambled it away.

"Before the police were even involved, she called me and said, 'I've done something really, really bad.' She told her employer. She borrowed money to make restitution," he said.

According to Young, Turner became dependent on the dopamine that was released when she was gambling.

"She put herself at a terrible risk with the legal system and her husband. She had to hide what she was doing like any addict," he said.

Turner tearfully apologized.

"I am so sorry for what I did," she said. "I let gambling get so out of control it consumed me. I was stealing and lying. I hurt people I know and didn't even know."

Turner said she had been attending regular meetings of Gamblers Anonymous and wanted to work with other problem gamblers.

"My life is open to help people," she said.

In deferring Turner's sentence for one year, Gamble said she was in "a very narrow group of cases" involving defendants with no prior criminal history.

He said he would wait a year to decide her sentence and whether the crime would be considered a gross misdemeanor or felony.

He ordered her to remain in treatment and to continue to attend Gamblers Anonymous meetings.

She is forbidden to gamble "and that includes playing poker for toothpicks," and must stay out of establishments where gambling is the primary business.

Gamble also told her to carry through on her desire to help other gamblers and be prepared at her sentencing next November to report on her activities.

Turner also must inform any employer where she handles money, credit cards, checks or accounts of her crime.

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