

Business

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KEEPING A WATCHFUL EYE

Retired detective takes his skills to private investigations

BY NAT LEVY

Bellevue Reporter

A man steals hundreds of thousands of dollars from a large airline company where he works. It's not out of reasons of pure greed, but the need to pay for rising medical bills for his family.

Raj Johal, a retired Bellevue Police detective turned private investigator, understands the plight of the man trying to provide for the family, but he has a job to do.

"He was under a lot of pressure," Johal said. "He's a good person, but he succumbed to financial pressures and made some bad decisions and did this over a period of three years."

The case was one of Johal's first, and most difficult investigations since he opened his own firm, Be Prepared Investigative Services and Survival Supplies, last fall. The California-born Johal combined his years in the police force, along with his emergency training, to build a business with a wide array of services.

Along with contracting for traditional PI cases, Johal also sells emergency supplies to help people build kits in the case of a disaster. He also served with the city of Bellevue as a compliance officer, giving him a strong knowledge of building code, housing and zoning issues. Johal's prices depend on the type of case, but his bread and butter, white collar crime investigations, will cost clients approximately \$100 an hour.

Johal's variety of skills and interests date back to his childhood. Growing up in Los Angeles, he was always interested in police work, but another craft lured him as well: acting.

As a child, Johal said he starred in several commercials for Kool-Aid and did a number of infomercials as well. He even rode an elephant in the Disneyland parade. He thought about pursuing acting as a career.

But he was driven by the "service gene" that many in the public sector speak so fondly of. He had been a Boy Scout and Life Scout, and he enrolled in the Los Angeles Police Academy, where he learned paramilitary training that enhanced his survival skills. Soon after becoming a police officer it became clear he had a knack for interrogation.

He did not play the role of the rough, brash cop often seen on TV, but a sympathetic ear. His acting



Raj Johal, founder and owner of Be Prepared Investigative Services and Survival Supplies, is putting his experience as a detective to good use. The veteran officer from Los Angeles also sells survival supplies and emergency kits through his business. NAT LEVY, *Bellevue Reporter*

SEE PI, 8

T-Mobile layoffs continue

BY NAT LEVY

Bellevue Reporter

T-Mobile USA will shed another 900 jobs in the midst of a massive restructuring.

T-Mobile officials said the job loss will be offset by hiring 550 new employees, primarily in the marketing sector as part of an aggressive advertising campaign.

"While difficult choices had to be made, restructuring our organization will help us better respond to market and customer demands and bring opportunity for continued career development and growth for many of our employees," T-Mobile Chief People Officer Larry Myers said in a statement.

T-Mobile officials did not respond to followup questions related to which departments would be affected by the job losses, and how many employees from the Bellevue headquarters will be subjected to layoffs. The organizational changes will not affect the technicians in engineering, customer service representatives in the 17 remaining call centers, or front-line retail employees in the company's stores.

The mobile company, which was set to combine with AT&T before a \$39 billion deal fell through, previously announced a decision to close seven of its call centers, resulting in a net loss of 1,900 jobs.

Simultaneously, the company has hired approximately 1,000 people to help prepare and strengthen T-Mobile's 4G LTE wireless network.

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Classes take place at YES Bellevue.
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PI

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skills came in handy, and Johal presents a comfortable demeanor, which makes an open dialog less painful.

“The goal is to appeal to the goodness of their soul,” said Johal. “In every person there is good, so once you have struck that cord within their soul, you have opened the door of two-way communication. Everyone wants to purge themselves of guilt and wrong doing, and it’s a horrible thing to carry that in your body.”

Johal’s talent became clear during his time in Los Angeles. Johal moved to Bellevue in 1982 to be with his wife and was quickly scooped up by D.P. Van Blaricom, former Bellevue police chief. The chief knew Johal had abilities in pursuing white collar crime. After years of working together on the force, the former chief didn’t hesitate to use Johal’s services when he opened up shop late last year.

“He had always expressed an interest in economic crime and has well prepared himself to professionally assist clients in both victim prevention and recovery of already lost assets,” Van Blaricom said. “I personally used his services to investigate an elderly lady’s housekeeper, who was stealing from her, and the result was a criminal conviction with a sentence to prison.”

The other half of the business, survival supplies, just came to Johal in a dream. After visiting family in Utah, he thought of it as a good way to supplement his income while doing investigations. Johal

BE PREPARED

Raj Johal offers a number of investigative services for clients. The former Bellevue police detective can take on almost any type of case.

- Due diligence investigations
- Asset research and recovery investigations
- Background checks
- Surveillance
- Fraud investigation
- City code guidance
- Process server

Johal sells an intensive variety of emergency kits online, as well. The site carries packs for a mixture of instances, such as blackouts and earthquakes. Prices begin as low as \$9.99 for a one-day kit for an individual, to \$239.99 for a food storage kit. For more information visit, <http://bepreparedis.com/>

is a one-man show, so he can only take on one, perhaps two cases at a time. From his website, Johal sells a number of kits and he wants to give back as well. For every sale of more than 20 items, he gives two to the Chief Seattle Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Johal’s goal to build his one-man operation around a number of sources fits his overall personality of wearing a number of hats. During his 30 years at the city, he not only bounced between a variety of occupations, he even opened a coffee shop in Mill Creek.

“I was a crazy guy, just a workaholic,” he said. “I would get up at 3:30 a.m. and do paper work and go to work at city.”

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Business Roundup

Businesses and business people making news

Bellevue Chamber to hold job fair next week

The Bellevue Chamber of Commerce will host a job fair May 22 at Lexus of Bellevue.

Potential candidates are encouraged to dress for success and bring plenty of resumes for the numerous companies that are looking to hire. Starting at 10 a.m., job seekers will get a chance to meet with representatives from companies such as ARC-Seattle, BarclayDean, Bellevue College, Cbeyond, CleanScapes, Express Employment Professionals, Harbor Freight Tools, Hyatt Regency Bellevue, Kelly Services, KeyBank, Puget Sound Energy, Uwajimaya, Walmart, and Wells Fargo. These companies have job openings in management, sales, operations, maintenance, customer service, IT, business services, and administration.

For an update on participating employers or more information visit www.bellevuechamber.org/2012_job_fair.html or call 425-454-2464.

MetLife employees volunteer on Earth Day

Associates of the Financial Planning Division, an office of MetLife, in Bellevue, spent a day volunteering as part of the city of Bellevue Parks & Natural Resources Division’s Arbor Day/Earth Day 2012 on April 21.

Twenty-one employees and their family members worked to clean, cover and

beautify trails in the Lakemont area.

Andersen joins GA Creative



Tess Andersen

Tess Andersen has joined Bellevue-based GA Creative as a senior designer. She serves clients in technology, health care, and education. She graduated Cum Laude from Biola University with a BS Degree in Art with emphasis in Graphic Design.

Gunderson promoted at Fortune Bank



Cheryl Gunderson

Cheryl Gunderson, manager of the Fortune Bank’s Bellevue Office, has been promoted to the executive management team position of EVP and Chief Lending Officer.

Gunderson is a resident of Sammamish and has had more than 30 years of experience with various financial institutions in the area. She is a graduate of Seattle University and has been very active in several local community organizations including Bellevue LifeSpring and the Bellevue Rotary Club.

WEEKLY SPECIALS

May 16-22, 2012

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