

32 years after vanishing, 'dead' man pleads guilty

Chicago commodities broker left debts, family for 'fresh start' in Vegas

[LAS VEGAS](#) — A former Chicago commodities broker who disappeared for 32 years, abandoning his wife and three children for a new life working in a Las Vegas casino, has pleaded guilty to felony identify fraud on Monday.

Under the plea deal, Arthur Gerald Jones, now 73, was expected to be placed on probation for three years and pay \$70,000 restitution to the Social Security Administration and to a man whose name Jones had used, [the Chicago Tribune reported Monday](#).



Jones was found working as a sports book writer at the Rampart Casino in the upscale Las Vegas neighborhood of Summerlin, a job he had held for a decade, the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles said.

The DMV said Jones disappeared over three decades ago from Highland Park, Ill. Police believed he may have been a victim of foul play, citing gambling debts and possible links to organized crime. He was later declared dead.

But after Jones resurfaced, a DMV investigator concluded that he had "voluntarily left his family and friends in 1979, possibly fleeing the mob" to start a new life, an affidavit by investigator Doug Staubs said.

Jones, who once held a seat on the Chicago Board of Trade, told authorities that following a trading mistake, he had been forced to sell his seat to pay his debt. He then decided to leave his family, citing a troubled marriage, unemployment, and a desire for a "fresh start", the affidavit showed.

But his former wife gave a different story, telling authorities he sold his seat to pay personal gambling debts. She said he once bet \$30,000 on a basketball game and at one point took out a second mortgage to pay gambling debts, the affidavit said.

She said he appeared nervous the day he disappeared.

Jones, who was found living under the name Joseph Richard Sandelli, was declared dead in 1986, and his wife and three children collected Social Security benefits worth \$47,000 as a result.

Jones might have gotten away with his vanishing act had the real Joseph Richard Sandelli not complained to the Social Security Administration that his statements showed income from Las Vegas casinos where he had never worked.

That triggered an investigation and Jones was arrested last July on four felony charges related to identity theft and fraud.

The DMV said he claimed to have purchased a false Illinois driver's license, birth certificate and Social Security card for \$800 before slipping out of Chicago for Florida. He spent time in California before settling in Las Vegas in 1988.

Jones later used those documents to obtain a Nevada driver's license, the DMV said. DMV spokesman Kevin Murphy said Jones appeared to have posted \$20,000 bail and was released from custody.

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