The gambling fever of Truax

Fur coats and thousands handed out to girls, private jet zips him home — this was ABAG aide’s double life in Las Vegas

By Ivan Sharpe
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REPORTER: Ivan Sharpe spent three days in Las Vegas and several days in the Bay Area piecing together this unreported story of the fascinating double life of ABAG aide Tom Truax.

Certain names are withheld for obvious reasons of libel and to save informants embarrassment — or even possibly being fired.

Smilingly dodging at the sharp-faced dealers as he sat down at the caricature table in Las Vegas’ elegant Caesars Palace, Troy Thompson looked like a farmer up from the country for his first big fling.

“He would come strolling wearing a $10 pair of shoes, a J.C. Penney white shirt and pull out $10,000 as if it were nothing,” a dealer observed.

Reticent, quiet-spoken Thompson, in fact, never looked like a high roller. If he just $50,000 or so, he would give a weak grin, shuffle and move away if he won many thousands — and he often did — he was equally placid. Never frivolous, utterly unassuming. He was an enigma, even in plastic, shadowy Las Vegas where oddballs are as common as one sees broken doors.

The truth was that the young, unkempt aide was in love with bacchus, a fast, high-stakes game popular in European casinos as chemin-de-fer or chemin. Playing black jack was a compulsion. Winning or losing was a deep fever; the thousands of dollars involved was incidental.

Lots of money

Yet Troy Thompson had to have money to indulge his obsession. Lots of it.

And so, on Sunday nights, he would reluctantly fly back to Berke- ley to his other life, to reenter with regional problems of sewage disposal, buy TV and mass transit. Here he revered back to his real name of Thirmo Neilson Truax, the 2-year-old retarded and weight-lifted N. 2 man for the ambitious As- sociation of Bay Area Govern- ments.

He has been missing since Feb. 8 when investigators discovered $11,000 in federal grants had never made it into official ABAG accounts. Instead they went into — continued on page 3.

The newspaper strike is ended

By our correspondent

Newspaper executives, union officials and newsmen sat nervously eyeing the clock, waiting with television cameras, pacing across the deep red carpet of Mayor Joseph Alioto’s outer office. It was Sunday, Feb. 25, and after 52 days, it finally would end — that very evening.

Or would it? The scheduled time of announcement came — 5:30 p.m. — and still no word. Then 6, 6:30, 6:45. Suddenly, the mayor burst out of his inner office.

“I am very happy to announce,” he told his anxious audience, “that the newspaper strike is ended. Labor-management does suddenly turned friends. Together, they’ve made immediately for re- sumption of publication; they’d get the papers on the streets again by Wednesday.

But when it ended that evening in the mayor’s office, it ended with one of the most significant strike settlements in years, one that assures the public of uninterrupted daily newspapers publication for at least three years.

Unions, seeking the unity necessary for maximum bargaining power, had proposed to negotiate their contracts and extend them to a common expiration date.

The newspaper strike, seeking to avoid constant labor strife as one union contract and then another expired, had agreed to the peace plan.

But before this could be done, 15 union contracts had to be re-negotiated, agreements had to be reached on wage increases, and other new provisions for all of them.

Amazing enough

That it was done at all was amazing enough. But it was done in only 16 days of negotiations.

The major credit goes to a brilliant mediator named Sam Kapel and to Louis Goldblatt, the equally brilliant secretary-treasurer of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union.

Goldblatt, whose union represents some newspaper employees in Hawaii, had come to the union’s joint strike committee with the plan. He saw it as the way to end the labor-management scrap- ping that started with the merger of The Chronicle and The Examiner into the Printing Company in September, 1965.

But, most important, it was the way to shoo-up the unity of the unions in a strike that, until Goldblatt’s brainchild, had been moved by wage increases, and other new provisions for all of them.

Gov. Reagan answers The Bay Guardian’s disclosure in its last issue that the utilities get their own man appointed to California’s powerful P.U.C.

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Kapel moved in, was a battle of only one union, the Mailers, for a new contract.

Unions discussed the plan for nearly a week with Goldblatt and Kapel, chief architect between the ILWU and the Pacific Mar- itime Association. Once the unions agreed, Kapel got agreement from the newspaper publishers.

Then the unions proposed to Mayor Alioto that he name Kapel as his mediator in conduct negotiations. Alioto agreed and, on Feb. 8, Kapel began around-the-clock sessions with union and publisher negotiators in the City Hall.

The talks ended with agreements that were recommended unanimously by the unions’ individual negotiating committees. The Came to that anoint in the mayor’s office. All 15 unions had to vote on the committee recommenda- tions at membership meetings that Sunday. All had to ratify the agreement or there would be no settlement.

One left

The unions met at different times throughout the day, starting at 10 a.m. by mid-afternoon, 14 had approved their new contracts overwhelmingly, just one union left — the Mailers, which held it.

The mailers began meeting at 3 p.m. and deadline at 3:45 p.m. while others passed that red carpet, then the words: 213 for ratification, only 10 against.

Despite the anxiety, the Mailers’ vote didn’t surprise those who were aware of the terms in the union’s