



# *Butte County*

LAND OF NATURAL WEALTH AND BEAUTY

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **CHICO MAN SENTENCED IN LAKE OROVILLE BOATING DEATH**

Chico resident and businessman Robert Henry Bauman, 51, was sentenced today in the death of a female companion caused by a boating accident on Lake Oroville in August, 2004. Bauman was the owner and operator of a large pontoon boat which struck a rocky outcropping at high speed. Debra Lynn Ramirez, 44, Chico was fatally injured in the crash and died at the scene.

Bauman had pleaded no contest to charges of misdemeanor manslaughter on May 18, 2006. In exchange for the plea to the manslaughter charge, a related charge of being under the influence of a controlled substance was dismissed.

Judge James Reilley imposed a 120 day jail sentence and placed Bauman on 3 years of formal probation. Baumann was also ordered to comply with any directions from the probation department regarding substance abuse treatment and NA meetings.

The wreck occurred in a remote area, and it was just by chance that off-duty Chico firefighters happened upon the crash site about half an hour afterward. Bauman was seriously injured in the crash, which took law enforcement and medical personnel over an hour to reach. Baumann subsequently tested positive for methamphetamine and had a small amount of alcohol in his system. Bauman claimed that he and Ramirez had been changing positions on the boat and were kissing. When he looked up, it was too late to avoid the collision.

The remote location and lack of witnesses made the case problematic for the District Attorney's Office. Supervising Deputy District Attorney Michael Sanderson informed the court that "literally hundreds of hours of investigation, analysis and discussion went into this case before it was charged." "The defendant was charged with the most severe crime that the evidence supported," he added.