



Butte County

LAND OF NATURAL WEALTH AND BEAUTY

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PRESS RELEASE

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A 46 year-old Chico resident was sentenced today to spend 25 years to life in state prison pursuant to California's "Three Strikes" sentencing law after driving a stolen vehicle head-on into another vehicle while running from police in Chico. The life term was ordered to run consecutive to an additional five year, four month sentence on three other felony narcotics charges in separate cases.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced that Scott Eugene Ethridge was sentenced after having been convicted for evading a peace officer and causing injuries to an innocent family in another vehicle. Ethridge came within the provisions of the "Three Strikes" law because he had been previously convicted of two residential burglaries in 1992 which are classified as "strikes." Two victims in the innocent vehicle sustained significant injuries; one sustained two broken vertebrae, the other sustained a deep forehead laceration and a broken wrist. Two others received contusions, a lacerated tongue, leg, back and head pain.

On February 24, 2007, around 8:30 p.m., Chico Police Officers responded to a residence on Nord Avenue based on a report of a possible burglary in progress. Officers noted that a secured box on the rear patio of the residence had been pried open and was empty and a window screen was ajar. A neighbor previously heard what he thought was metal striking wood outside of his home and saw Anthony Rafael Salzman, 47, and Ethridge enter the rear patio of the victim's home immediately followed by more noise. The neighbor immediately called 911 to report the crime. He saw the two men leave in a white Honda Accord. Chico Police officers were alerted to the description of the vehicle and direction of travel.

Within minutes, officers saw the Honda being driven by Ethridge. The officers attempted to stop Ethridge on East Lassen near the Esplanade to no avail. Officers followed as Ethridge accelerated to over 55 mph after passing under the Highway 99 overcrossing. Ethridge ran a stop sign and passed through the Cohasset Road intersection just as the traffic light turned from red to green. Ethridge then accelerated and ran the stop sign turning onto Eaton Road. From Eaton, Ethridge turned southbound on Floral, but was traveling too fast causing the Honda to jump the center median and land in the opposing lane of traffic. Ethridge continued driving southbound in the northbound lane of traffic. Ethridge ran a red light at Floral and East Avenue, where another Chico Police officer was positioned with lights and sirens activated. Ethridge continued traveling at speeds close to 60 mph when he entered the intersection of Floral and Manzanita colliding head-on with a vehicle turning onto Manzanita.

The collision rendered the Honda inoperable and Ethridge and Salzman were ordered to remain in the vehicle. Both men attempted to flee on foot but were detained after a short pursuit. A search of the Honda uncovered numerous power tools that had been taken from the Nord Avenue victim's residence. The Honda was a stolen vehicle. Ethridge admitted recently using heroin and test results showed he was under the influence of methamphetamine at the time of the collision. Salzman was convicted of grand theft and placed on probation.