



Butte County

LAND OF NATURAL WEALTH AND BEAUTY

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PRESS RELEASE

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MAN JAILED FOR STRIKING POLICE HORSE

A 24-year-old Chico man was convicted of Assault on a Police Horse yesterday in Butte County Superior Court. Even though the horse was not injured in the 2005 Labor Day weekend incident, Robert William Huff was sentenced to 24 hours in county jail. Huff had been scheduled for a jury trial on the charge but changed his plea to “no contest” just before jury selection began.

The assault charge stemmed from an incident shortly after midnight in which the Chico Police Mounted Unit assisted by the Modesto Police Mounted Unit was attempting to clear a large crowd which was blocking Hazel Street near West 3rd Street as the result of a fraternity party in the area. As mounted officers and their horses were moving the crowd on the sidewalk in front of the fraternity toward the south, Huff began moving north. Officers instructed him to move south with the rest of the crowd on the sidewalk, but Huff then tried to go into the street between parked cars. Officers told him to remain on the sidewalk, but Huff attempted to push past a mounted Modesto Police officer and his horse “Bailey.” Huff was again told to move back to the sidewalk and he did so. However when he stepped back up on the sidewalk, Huff struck Bailey in the face with the back of his hand.

The Modesto officer reported he felt the blow on his horse’s bit and Bailey jerked his head up. The officer and Bailey then pinned Huff against a nearby fence and other Chico officers took him into custody. Huff reportedly immediately apologized for “pushing” the horse away, claiming the horse was standing on the back of his foot.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey stated that although police horses are trained to remain calm in crowded and dangerous situations, striking a police horse is nonetheless a serious crime which his office will not tolerate. Although his office had asked the judge for more jail time for Huff, Ramsey said the judge did add 20 hours of community service work time to the sentence. Ramsey hopes it can be arranged for Huff to do his community service hours shoveling horse manure at the Chico Police Mounted Unit’s training grounds.