



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

MICHAEL L. RAMSEY
District Attorney

MARK MURPHY
Chief Deputy District Attorney

JASON WINES
Chief Investigator



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
June 16, 2022

Man Sentenced to Life for Killing His Daughters and Brother-in-Law

A Sacramento man, who drove his truck into a local canal on Easter 2020, killing his two infant daughters and brother-in-law, was sentenced to a life term today in Butte County Superior Court.

Judge Corie Caraway sentenced **Colby Brookman, 29**, to the maximum term of 37 years to life in state prison for felony Gross Vehicular Manslaughter While Intoxicated. Brookman also admitted that this was his fourth “strike”, which resulted in the life sentence.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said on April 12, 2020, Brookman drove his truck into the canal at the end of Grand Avenue in Oroville. Brookman’s wife, J’lynne Stothers, was a passenger in the front seat and their two infants – Arianna, 17 months; Ava, 7 months; and Smothers’ autistic brother, Matthew Stothers, age 32 – were passengers in the rear of the quad cab truck.

Ramsey said Brookman was drinking numerous beers throughout the day and had been told multiple times not to drive. A blood test taken two hours after the crash showed his blood-alcohol level to be 0.12 percent.

California Highway Patrol’s Multidisciplinary Accident Investigation Team (MAIT) investigated the incident. The MAIT team was able to determine through the truck’s internal “black box” computer that Brookman was driving at over 80 mph just before the road ended at the canal. The truck launched over the canal’s levee into the waters below. The children were strapped in their car seats in the rear seat with Matthew Stothers between them.

Brookman and his wife got out of the truck and swam to shore. Ramsey said Matthew was also able to get out of the truck but struggled to swim. Family members said Matthew did not know how to swim and was deathly afraid of water. A witness saw Matthew treading water next to Brookman. The witness, who was standing on a levee overlooking the water, told Brookman to help Matthew, but Brookman refused. The witness said he then saw Matthew struggle and sink below the water’s surface. Ramsey said the evidence showed Brookman also never made any attempt to save Arianna or Ava.

Butte County Search and Rescue later recovered the bodies of Matthew, Arianna, and Ava from the canal waters.

Ramsey said the courtroom was filled with family and members of the law enforcement

community. Matthew's sisters, aunts to Arianna and Ava, read victim impact statements in court. They described Matthew as the "type of person that would light up the room." They shared stories of his goofiness and his love for his family. The family described the innocence of Arianna and Ava and their disappointment that the girls never got a chance at life.

Ramsey said Brookman read a statement to the judge, but showed no emotion. After the family spoke, the assigned prosecutor, Ashley Furry, provided a statement to the court outlining Brookman's lack of remorse. Brookman interrupted her at one point and yelled "were you there, b***h!"

Furry continued that "Brookman lacks insight, empathy, and accountability. He cannot be fixed. The only person who has ever mattered to him – is himself. The only way to protect the community and prevent him from committing more atrocious acts is to incapacitate him."

Before ultimately handing down the sentence, Judge Caraway told Brookman, "I share Ms. Furry and the family's concern that you don't have remorse. That is on you."

Brookman will be housed in the Butte County Jail until he is transported to the California Department of Corrections to begin serving his life sentence.

