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PRESS RELEASE

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Two Paradise Men Sentenced For The Robbery Of Camp Fire Victim

Two Paradise men were transferred to state prison this week after they were sentenced in Butte County Superior Court for the second-degree robbery of a Camp Fire victim's insurance settlement.

Nicholas Fitzgerald, 27, and **Jesse McLaughlin**, 33, both of Paradise, were sentenced last month respectively to three and five-year terms in prison for a robbery they conspired to and did commit on a girlfriend of Fitzgerald.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said that on April 28, 2022, the Chico Police Department responded to a report of a robbery that occurred in the parking lot of the Chico Marketplace. The female victim had been shopping at the mall with Fitzgerald, her then-new boyfriend.

Fitzgerald had insisted he and the victim exit out the north door of the mall and walk to the nearby Kohl's department store. While both the victim and Fitzgerald were walking across the parking lot, a masked adult male walked up to the couple, punched her in the face knocking her unconscious, and stole her purse. The masked suspect then fled the scene in a vehicle. The victim's purse contained approximately \$60,000 in cash and debit cards, proceeds from her Camp Fire settlement she had cashed earlier that afternoon.

Immediately after the robbery, the victim told law enforcement she believed Fitzgerald was involved because he was continuously on his phone prior to the robbery and would not let her see his phone. Witnesses also said Fitzgerald appeared to walk alongside the "robber" as the robber went to his getaway vehicle.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey said an investigation by the Chico Police Department lead to text messages and Facebook messages between Fitzgerald and McLaughlin. It was determined Fitzgerald had contacted McLaughlin the day of the robbery and set up a plan to rob the victim.

At the sentencing hearing, the victim submitted a statement to the court describing how she lost everything in the Camp Fire. She went on to explain how Fitzgerald, a man she thought loved her, and McLaughlin took away her ability to start a new life with her son when they robbed her of her insurance settlement.

McLaughlin was sentenced to the five years in state prison as he was on parole out of Tehama County for convictions of illegal gun, methamphetamine and stolen property charges.

The court awarded to the victim restitution against both men for the loss of her insurance settlement.



