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PRESS RELEASE

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Man Faces Life in Prison for Killing His Children and Brother-in-Law

A Sacramento man, who drove his truck into a local canal on Easter in 2020, was in Butte County Superior Court today where he admitted to the evidence that he killed his two children and his brother-in-law.

Colby Allen Brookman, 29, pleaded no contest this afternoon to felony Gross Vehicular Manslaughter While Intoxicated. Brookman also admitted that it was his fourth “strike” making him eligible for a life sentence in prison.

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’lynn Stothers, was a passenger in the front seat and their two infants – Arianna, 17 months; Ava, 7 months; and Stothers’s 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 “black box” 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. A witness saw Matthew treading water next to Brookman and his wife. 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.

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

Ramsey said this conviction would be Brookman’s fourth “strike” under California’s “Three Strikes and You’re Out” law. Brookman had previous convictions for two counts of felony assault with a motor vehicle and a count of grand theft with great bodily injury. All his previous strike counts were in Sutter County. Brookman’s sentencing is scheduled for May 23, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. Brookman is facing 37 years to life in prison and remains in Butte County Jail without bail.

