



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Emma Rose Freeman in court Wednesday.

'She's a scared kid'

UCSC freshman arraigned on robbery, conspiracy, gun charges

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Crime + Crimmo

SANTA CRUZ — The UC Santa Cruz freshman accused of taking part in two brazen holdups trembled in court Wednesday as a judge told her the charges could put her in prison for the rest of her life.

Though the judge was unintentionally exaggerating, the lawyer for 18-year-old Emma Rose Freeman described his client as "petrified."

"She's a scared kid with no record whatsoever,"

court-appointed attorney Doug Fox said outside the courtroom.

Prosecutors later said they had misinformed the judge about the maximum sentence. It's actually 26 years, not 25 years to life. Nonetheless, the penalty would be a surprising detour for a young poet and National Merit Scholar.

"The girl had such great prospects," Fox said. "She's intelligent, attractive. If you were to picture your average armed robber, you wouldn't picture this young woman."

Freeman is accused of using a .380-caliber Beretta semiautomatic handgun during a heist at a Capitola hair salon Jan. 16 and a Costco store in Santa Cruz five days later. Wednesday, she was arraigned on two counts of armed robbery and two special allegations of personal use of a firearm. She's scheduled to enter a plea Friday.

Her boyfriend, 23-year-old Anthony Cristofani, a senior philosophy major at UCSC, was her alleged part-

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ner in crime. The gun believed to have been used in both heists was registered to him. When police recovered the weapon last week, it was loaded.

Another friend, 24-year-old Craig Dickson of Santa Cruz, an elementary school teaching aide, allegedly drove the getaway car. All three suspects were arrested Friday after a police officer spotted the suspected getaway car near the two men's downtown apartment.

While Freeman remains in custody, the two men were released after posting \$25,000 bail and are scheduled for arraignment Feb. 9 on two counts of armed robbery.

A law-enforcement official said the suspects joked about who would make the first telephone call after being booked in jail. At one point, Freeman reportedly told correctional officers, "Don't treat me that way, I'm college-educated."

But she was quiet Wednesday when Superior Court

Judge Heather Morse raised her bail from \$25,000 to \$150,000.

Freeman's father, Alan Freeman of Glendale, sat by himself in the courtroom, watching quietly as his daughter's hands shook uncontrollably. Her feet were shackled.

The young woman blotted at her tears. Each time she sneaked a glance at the bank of television cameras aimed at her, she heaved a big breath.

Her father declined to talk to reporters.

"He's stunned," Fox said.

"When your daughter graduates from high school and receives the appropriate accolades, and the next thing you hear is, 'Daddy, I'm in jail,' that's something no one wants to hear."

The story of the alleged coed bandit is already capturing the attention of the tabloid TV shows.

Police officials have said Freeman told investigators she had turned to crime because she wanted to pursue

her art interests and did not have time to work.

When the judge asked how she was financing her education, she said she was receiving student loans.

Authorities allege that in the hair salon robbery, Freeman and the whistling Cristofani strolled into the business.

"Tell her what you want, honey," Cristofani reportedly told Freeman, who allegedly was pointing the handgun at a hair stylist. They escaped with less than \$100.

At the Costco warehouse store, police said, the couple tried to leave with unpaid merchandise, including a boombox, a Walkman-style radio and a telephone. When an employee confronted them, Freeman allegedly brandished the gun and told the worker to "not do anything stupid."

The victims were still "terrified," prosecutor Gretchen Brock said Wednesday.

"All they could think about is how the gun was pointed at them."