

UCSC student's diary aired in court

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■ **Robberies:** Prosecutor says she wrote of 'surreal' experience and wanting to do it again.

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A Santa Cruz university student charged with brandishing a gun in two armed robberies wrote in her diary that the experience was surreal and that she needed to do it again.

Emma Rose Freeman, 18, was somber as her lawyer entered not-guilty pleas Friday in Santa Cruz County Superior Court to the charges, which could send her to prison for 26 years.

Freeman, a National Merit Scholar and freshman at the University of California-Santa Cruz, is accused of robbing a Capitola hair salon Jan. 16 and a Santa Cruz Costco on Jan. 21.

Also charged in the case are Freeman's boyfriend, UC-Santa Cruz senior Antonio Louis Cristofani, 23, and his roommate,

Craig Alan Dickson, 24, an elementary school teaching aide.

Assistant District Attorney Gretchen Brock said that after the salon caper, Freeman wrote in her diary that pulling the gun on the stylist was "surreal" and expressed "having to do it again."

"She feels some need, some requirement, to continue to rob and continue to point guns at people," Brock said. "She did do it again. I believe she's a threat to the public. Anybody who's willing to brazenly pull a gun on someone is a threat. The victims were terrified."

Freeman's court-appointed lawyer, Doug Fox, said her diary needs to be considered in context, as it is filled with abstract writings.

"This diary isn't just a recitation of what she's done and will do," Fox said. "It isn't so

much reporting as it is musings, lyrics, poetry."

Fox added that the .380-caliber Beretta pistol Freeman is accused of brandishing was not loaded and expressed "her sorrow and remorse for terrorizing these people."

Judge Heather Morse declined Fox's request to lower Freeman's \$150,000 bail, citing Freeman's Southern California roots and the gravity of the charges.

Freeman came to UC-Santa Cruz from the Southern California town of La Crescenta, and her father, Alan Freeman, has attended her court hearings. Dressed in a gray suit and tie, he quietly watched Friday's proceeding from the gallery and deferred comment to her lawyer.

Freeman, described by friends as an attention-seeker who liked the Spice Girls, dancing and cutting class for road trips, has remained in jail since her arrest a week ago. Because she is accused of using a gun, she faces additional charges and higher bail than her alleged partners.



Emma Rose Freeman is accused of brandishing a gun during two holdups.

Cristofani and Dickson each posted the \$25,000 bail set at the time of their arrest. The court Thursday raised their bail to \$100,000 each, but Cristofani's family was able to post the higher bond and he remains free. It was unclear Friday whether Dickson would be able to make the higher bail as well.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled Feb. 16.

Police allege Freeman and Cristofani sauntered unmasked into the Emerald Igua-na Hair Salon near the bustling Capitola

Mall and that Freeman pulled a pistol on the stylist. Cristofani allegedly urged: "Tell her what you want, honey," and they fled with the cash box — less than \$100 — with Dickson driving his new maroon Acura with paper taped over the license plate.

Five days later, Freeman and Cristofani allegedly filled a shopping cart at Costco with a boom box and other stereo goods and headed straight for the door. When a security guard stopped them, Freeman allegedly pulled a gun and said: "Don't do anything stupid" and they fled in Dickson's waiting car.

Attorneys on both sides of the case said they are still trying to figure out why three young people would put promising futures at risk in a dangerous, amateurishly executed and low-yield crime spree. University officials are weighing Freeman and Cristofani's possible expulsion.

"The fact that she didn't think it through is astounding, given how smart she is," Fox said.