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ESCAPEE RECEIVES A 35-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR CRIME SPREE

An escapee received a 35-year prison sentence today after he admitted to assaulting a Spartanburg County man during an armed robbery and leading police on a dangerous high-speed chase.

Thomas Osborne, 24, pleaded guilty to armed robbery, assault of a high and aggravated nature and failure to stop for a blue light and siren. He will serve the balance of an unrelated 20-year prison sentence before he begins serving the new sentence.

Osborne escaped from the Livesay Correctional Institute on April 25, 2009. He ran from a guard who caught him using a cell phone in his dorm. He jumped several fences at the Broadcast Drive prison and ran into a nearby neighborhood and confronted a 67-year-old man outside of a Brock Street home. The 67-year-old man said Osborne climbed over a fence in his back yard and asked if he could use the telephone when he approached. Osborne threatened the elderly man with a screw driver and took his cell phone. Osborne fled the scene in the victim's 1997 Buick Park Avenue.

Minutes later, two Duncan police officers spotted Osborne driving the stolen car southbound on I-85. The Duncan officers initiated a chase that reached speeds of more than 110 mph before Osborne exited on Highway 101. Osborne's car collided with a second vehicle at the intersection of Highway 80 and he continued driving until he wrecked at the Old Woodruff Road intersection. Osborne climbed out of the wrecked car and attempted to run again from the pursuing officers. The stolen cell phone was found inside the wrecked car.

Principal Deputy Solicitor Barry Barnette played an in-car police video of the pursuit.

"The old saying that picture is worth a thousand words couldn't be any more true in this case," Barnette said. "The video clearly shows that Mr. Osborne put many people's lives at risk when he tried to elude the police."

Osborne's prior criminal included convictions for second-degree burglary, common-law robbery and assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature out of Anderson County.

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