

CAREER CRIMINAL RECEIVES LIFE PRISON SENTENCE FOR ARMED ROBBERY CONVICTIONS

A Spartanburg County man received a life prison sentence today after a jury decided that he robbed a Greer-area convenience store at gunpoint and stole a getaway car during his flight from police.

The jury deliberated for 40 minutes before it convicting Bruce Mathis, 51, of two counts of armed robbery, assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature and failure to stop for a blue light.

Mathis robbed the Spinx convenience store at 1820 Highway 101 South on March 19, 2002. He entered the store about 10:05 p.m. and pointed a pistol at the clerk. He hit the clerk with the weapon before he grabbed about \$380 and the cash drawer. He crashed his getaway car into a pickup truck driven by Albert Lakeman at the intersection of Plemmons Road and Duncan-Reidville Road. Mathis and his passenger, Bobby Varner, used the pistol to steal the pickup truck. The fleeing robbers wrecked the stolen truck minutes later when officers from the Greer Police Department attempted to stop them. Spartanburg County sheriff's deputies and Greer officers arrested the men near the accident scene. Varner, who sustained several serious injuries in the wreck, still has an armed robbery charge pending against him.

Circuit Judge Larry Patterson sentenced Mathis in accordance with the state's two-strike law for serious violent crime. Mathis' criminal record spans more than 30 years with convictions for aggravated assault and battery, burglary and grand larceny.

"He is a career criminal," Assistant Solicitor Bob Coler said. "The state's two-strike law was made for people like him."

For more information, contact Coler at 809-0308.