

Ohta Frazier Trial Starts Monday

By CLIFF JOHNSON
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The murder trial of John Linley Frazier, 25, accused of the slayings of Dr. Victor Ohta, his wife, Virginia, their two sons and his secretary, Dorothy Cadwallader, begins in San Mateo County Monday, almost exactly a year from the night firemen discovered their bodies in the Ohta swimming pool.

Soquel Firemen were called about 8 p.m., Monday, Oct. 19, 1970, to fight one of the largest residential fires in the department's history. When they arrived at the top of the driveway at 999 Rodeo Gulch Road, they found their access blocked by a car which had been parked across the drive, its doors locked. The car, and the way the \$250,000 mansion was burning made them suspect arson. The Live Oak Fire Department was called to help.

The pumpers began to run out of water. The heavy insulation of the structure was hindering control of the blaze.

Soquel Fire Chief Ray Negro had arranged for a hydrant connected to the swimming pool to be installed when Dr. Ohta was building the home in 1966. It was the search for that hydrant that revealed the crime.

Live Oak Fire Chief Dick Pound decided he could locate the hydrant by finding the other end of the pipe. "I went to the pool to see where the end of the pipe came through," he said. "And my flashlight beam spotted one of the kids. I don't think I'll ever forget it."

Sentinel Photographer Pete Amos arrived at the scene about that time—the only newsman allowed on the hilltop that night.

"I met a deputy coming down the drive when I got

near the top of the hill," Amos said. "He said, 'We've got more than just a fire,' and told me not to take any picture in the pool area."

Amos was told the same thing by firemen, and then was shown the pool, and the bodies floating in it.

"No one there knew who it was for sure," Amos said. He had met Virginia Ohta on a photo assignment once, and thought one of the women might be her. He saw that her hands were tied with a scarf. Both of the Ohta boys, Taggart and Derrick, were at the bottom of the pool. A stream of blood four or five inches wide ran across the pool bottom to the drain.

Amos took his pictures of the fire and left. He avoided the pool area as requested.

As he left, Sheriff Doug James and District Attorney Peter Chang arrived and sealed off the hill. Sentinel and other newsmen stood at the base of the drive for four hours before the sheriff agreed to hold a press conference.

Early Tuesday morning, Oct. 20, the first sketchy details of a multiple slaying were disseminated by the press, and newsmen from all over the world converged on Santa Cruz.

Sheriff James launched the largest investigation of his career.

Acting on information from the Soquel Fire Department, deputies began to search for Mrs. Ohta's green station wagon, which was not in the garage. The car that firemen had to move to get to the burning house was Mrs. Cadwallader's. Dr. Ohta's car was blocking the other driveway. Where was the green Olds?

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John Linley Frazier