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Murder Suspect's Trouble-Filled Past

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SAN FRANCISCO — The street where murder suspect David Joseph Carpenter grew up winds along the contours of a steep hill in the Diamond Heights district here.

A group of neighborhood kids play catch in the street, and a few residents walk their dogs along the sidewalks.

It looks like a typical middle class neighborhood, and most of its residents say they are shocked by the idea that a man who may be connected to as many as six murders lives in their midst.

"I'm absolutely speechless," said a young woman who lives across the street from the house Carpenter shared with his elderly mother and stepfather. "I guess not all murder (suspects) live in dingy tenderloin motel rooms."

(See photos, story on page 15.)

Carpenter is charged with killing Ellen Hansen, 20, and wounding her companion, Stephen Haertle, 20, as the two hiked through Henry Cowell Redwood State Park on March 29. He will be arraigned on the charges Monday.

Additionally, Carpenter is under investigation in connection with seven other slayings committed during the past 21 months in Marin County parks, according to Marin County Sheriff Al Howenstein.

San Francisco police are checking to see if Carpenter may have been involved in two murders here, a department spokesman said Sat.



a department spokesman said Saturday. One case is the October 1979 killing of Mary Bennett, 23, who was stabbed two dozen times before being buried in a shallow grave.

Carpenter came under suspicion in the traiside cases last week as San Jose police were probing the May 2 disappearance of Heather Scaggs, 21, who worked with Carpenter at Econo Quick Print in Hayward.

Deputy Police Chief Eusevio Hernandez said Ms. Scaggs has not been seen since she left to go car shopping in Santa Cruz with Carpenter.

Hernandez said his department noted that Carpenter fit the suspect

in the Santa Cruz case and notified Santa Cruz authorities.

Most of the residents along Sussex Street knew little about Carpenter. They remember him as a quiet man who walked his mother's dachshund, "Herman," almost every day.

"I'd see him walking down the street reading a book and walking

his dog," said Darrel Hutchinson, a longtime neighborhood resident. "He always seemed lost in thought. Actually, there isn't much you can say about the guy."

"According to Hutchinson and others, Carpenter never talked much — probably because he suffers from a speech impediment. "He'd just say 'yes' and 'no,'" said

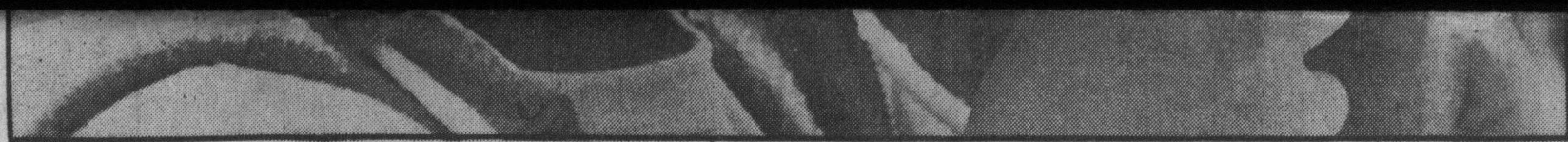
Hutchinson, who carried in his hand a newspaper with a story about Carpenter's arrest.

Carpenter, now 51, grew up in the Sussex Street neighborhood, although his parents lived in another house several blocks away from their current residence.

"He had a beautiful sister," said Ray Gorrebeeck, a man who has

lived nearly all his life on Sussex Street and is generally regarded as the man who knows about everything that happens in this quiet neighborhood. "You turn on the television and read it in the newspapers, and here it is right in your

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(Sentinel photo by Bill Lovejoy)

Kersten Furnoy of San Francisco holds a gun keychain given to him by the murder suspect.

Traskidi murders

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TRAILSIDE MURDER SUSPECT

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own block," said Gorrebeeck, shaking his head in amazement. "I'd wave to him everyday when he walked Herman."

According to records, Carpenter was born in San Francisco, the second of three children, and attended schools here.

In a 1970 probation report — prepared following his guilty plea to charges of rape and armed robbery in Santa Cruz — Carpenter told a psychiatrist that he was a rebellious child and his mother was domineering.

According to that probation report, Carpenter said he went to school with black and blue marks as a result of his mother's beatings. He said he began stammering when he was seven years old, and that he was born lefthanded, but school officials made him change to using his right.

"He was always made fun of in school because of his stammering and his inability to get out answers, even though he was brighter than most of the children in school," wrote Dr. Ralph Allison, a psychiatrist who interviewed him in 1970.

Carpenter went to Balboa High School in San Francisco and started

working for the Pacific Far Eastern Steamship Lines as a purser trainee at the age of 21. Two years after he started his job, he married his first wife. He and his wife had three children — one boy and two girls. But Carpenter told the psychiatrist in 1970 that this was an unsatisfactory marriage.

He said his wife was interested only in neighborhood gossip and that he was bored with her. Carpenter worked his way up from purser trainee to assistant to the vice president at the steamship lines.

At the age of 30, (in 1960) Carpenter attacked a woman acquaintance with a hammer at the Presidio. He was charged with assault with intent to commit murder and sent to U.S. prison on McNeil Island in Washington state. There he earned his high school diploma. Court records said he worked as a clerk for most of his time in prison, then began doing welding work during the last six months of his sentence.

He was paroled in April, 1969.

Carpenter married his second wife in August, 1969, but the ill-fated marriage had grown rocky by 1970.

On Jan. 27, while Carpenter was driving home from a party, his car rear-ended a 21-year-old woman's

Austin-Healey. Carpenter tried to offer her money for the damage and asked her not to report the accident because he was a recent parolee, according to probation reports.

When the woman told him she didn't care if he had to go back to the penitentiary, Carpenter forced her up a hillside and stabbed her as she tried to run away.

Then, he told her she was "hurt and bleeding," gave her his jacket to cover herself and offered to go with her to help her bandage her wounds. The woman managed to escape in her own car as Carpenter drove is, said reports.

The next day, Carpenter attacked an Empire Grade woman and raped her. A month later, Carpenter robbed a woman in Calaveras County and kidnapped another. He pleaded guilty to rape and robbery charge in Santa Cruz County and was found guilty of robbery and kidnapping in Calaveras County.

He was sent to Folsom Prison, where he took part in group counseling, got help for his stammering and appeared to be making progress, according to letters from the chief psychiatrist at the prison.

"It is interesting that this man feels he made more progress since he

has been at Folsom than he has at any other time in his life," wrote Dr. J. Paul McKenney to former Judge Charles Franich of Santa Cruz.

Carpenter was released from prison on Feb. 28, 1977, but was returned to federal authorities for violating his parole.

Carpenter was released from federal custody on May 21, 1979, and entered Reality Halfway House, located in the center of San Francisco's Tenderloin district.

He stayed there for 60 to 90 days.

Residents at the halfway house, located at 380 Eddy St., declined to talk about their program, and referred all questions to the state prison board. A dark-haired man who sat in the lobby of the hotel that houses the program said he had been there for two years, but did not remember Carpenter.

After his release, Carpenter moved back in with his parents in their dark brown shingled house with brick-red trim. He worked as a printer for the California Trade School in Hayward.

One neighbor who did not wish to be identified said she remembered seeing Carpenter loading cardboard boxes from a station wagon into the house on many occasions and figured

the goods had something to do with his printing job.

Neighbors said Carpenter was friendly and one youth said the man had given him a keychain with a toy gun dangling from the end. He said Carpenter gave similar keychains to several other kids on the block.

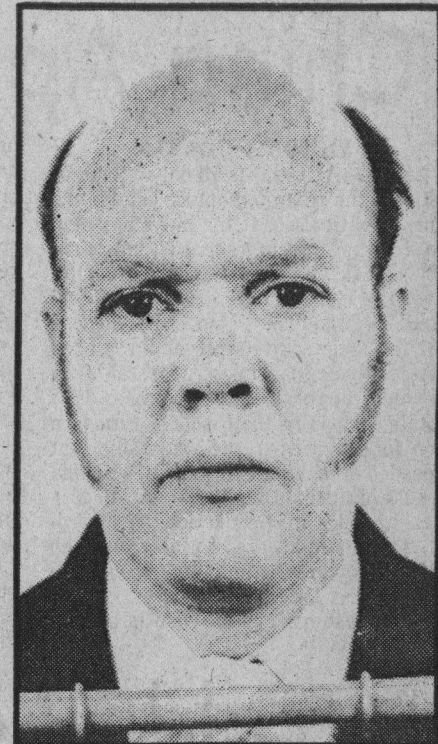
Other neighbors said Carpenter's stepfather spent much of his day sitting before the home's large picture window. "He watches everything that moves on this street," said Peter Goetsch, a medical student who lives across the street.

Carpenter's mother was described as a friendly and nice woman by those who know her.

"His mother is a beautiful woman," said Gorrebeeck. According to neighbors, her eyesight is failing and she is nearly blind. "She is a wonderful person," said Gorrebeeck. "My heart goes out to her."

The curtains in the Carpenters' house remained closed Saturday morning. No one answered a knock at the door, although someone pulled aside a portion of the curtain to look out.

Residents said the neighborhood was flooded with reporters Friday after news of Carpenters' arrest, and



(AP Laserphoto)

This is a 1976 photo of David Joseph Carpenter.

sightseers have been driving through the area.

"Last night someone drove through the alley behind their house screaming 'Murderer! Murderer!'" said Gorrebeeck with sadness. "I think it's disgraceful. Why don't they leave the family alone."