

Jury convicts Trailside killer

By JOHN McNICHOLAS
Sentinel Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — David Joseph Carpenter was convicted of two first-degree murders this afternoon.

An eight-woman, four-man jury returned the verdict shortly after 2 p.m. in Los Angeles Superior Court.

Carpenter faces the gas chamber as

a result of the jury's finding of special circumstances of multiple murders, lying in wait and murder during a rape or attempted rape.

The victims' mothers joined hands and smiled as the clerk read the verdicts to the tense, packed courtroom.

Carpenter showed no emotion. He sat deep in his chair, one finger cover-

ing his lips, as he has throughout the trial.

District Attorney Art Danner said before the verdict was read that a first-degree conviction would leave him "elated and relieved."

An obviously-relieved jury met and laughed with Assistant District Attorney Jim Berglund in the hall after

the verdict was read.

The verdict came after some eight hours of deliberation. The jury was handed the case Tuesday afternoon, and took a break Wednesday for the July 4 holiday. Jurors spent the day Thursday deliberating, and announced at 11 a.m. today they had reached a verdict.

Carpenter had been charged with two counts of murder in the killings of Ellen Marie Hansen and Heather Scaggs, and with attempted murder in the shooting of Hansen's boyfriend, Steven Haertle, in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 1981. All the victims were 20 years old.

The prosecution also charged

special circumstances of lying in wait, rape and attempted rape and multiple murders. Any one of those circumstances, if found true, makes

Please see back of section

Carpenter guilty

Continued from Page A1

Carpenter eligible for the death penalty.

A separate jury, which sat through the six-week trial in a roped-off section of the courtroom's spectator area, will decide if Carpenter deserves to die, or if he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

The verdict came as no surprise. Public Defender Larry Biggam had admitted in court, with Carpenter's concurrence, that the 54-year-old ex-convict had murdered Hansen and Scaggs and had shot Haertle in two separate 1981 attacks in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

But he denied Carpenter had committed first-degree murder. His client is "a mess," he said, incapable of the premeditation required for a first-degree conviction.

Instead, the killings were second-degree murder, he argued. He also denied that special circumstances were present.

Had he been convicted of second-degree murder, Carpenter would have faced a mandatory prison term of 15 years to life.

It has long been expected the defense would be perfunctory in the face of overwhelming evidence. It was ex-

pected the defense team of Biggam and Deputy Public Defender Steve Wright would concentrate their efforts on saving Carpenter's life during the penalty phase.

"This has always been a trial for David's life," Biggam said at one point.

He said he will present evidence during the penalty phase that Carpenter is "a damaged human being," who was "out of control" during the killings.

Carpenter is suspected of 12 murders in the Bay Area, Danner has said, and was charged with seven — two in Santa Cruz County and five in Marin County.

He has not been arraigned in connection with Marin murders, at least three of which were committed with the gun Biggam has admitted Carpenter used in the Santa Cruz killings.

The Santa Cruz killings came at the end of a string of rapes and killings on hiking trails in the Bay Area, dubbed the Trailside Killings. The killings ended with Carpenter's arrest in 1981 for the Santa Cruz murders.

The trial was held in Los Angeles because of extensive pretrial publicity in Northern California.

STAX
PUBLIC LIBRARY
SANTA CRUZ
Late
edition