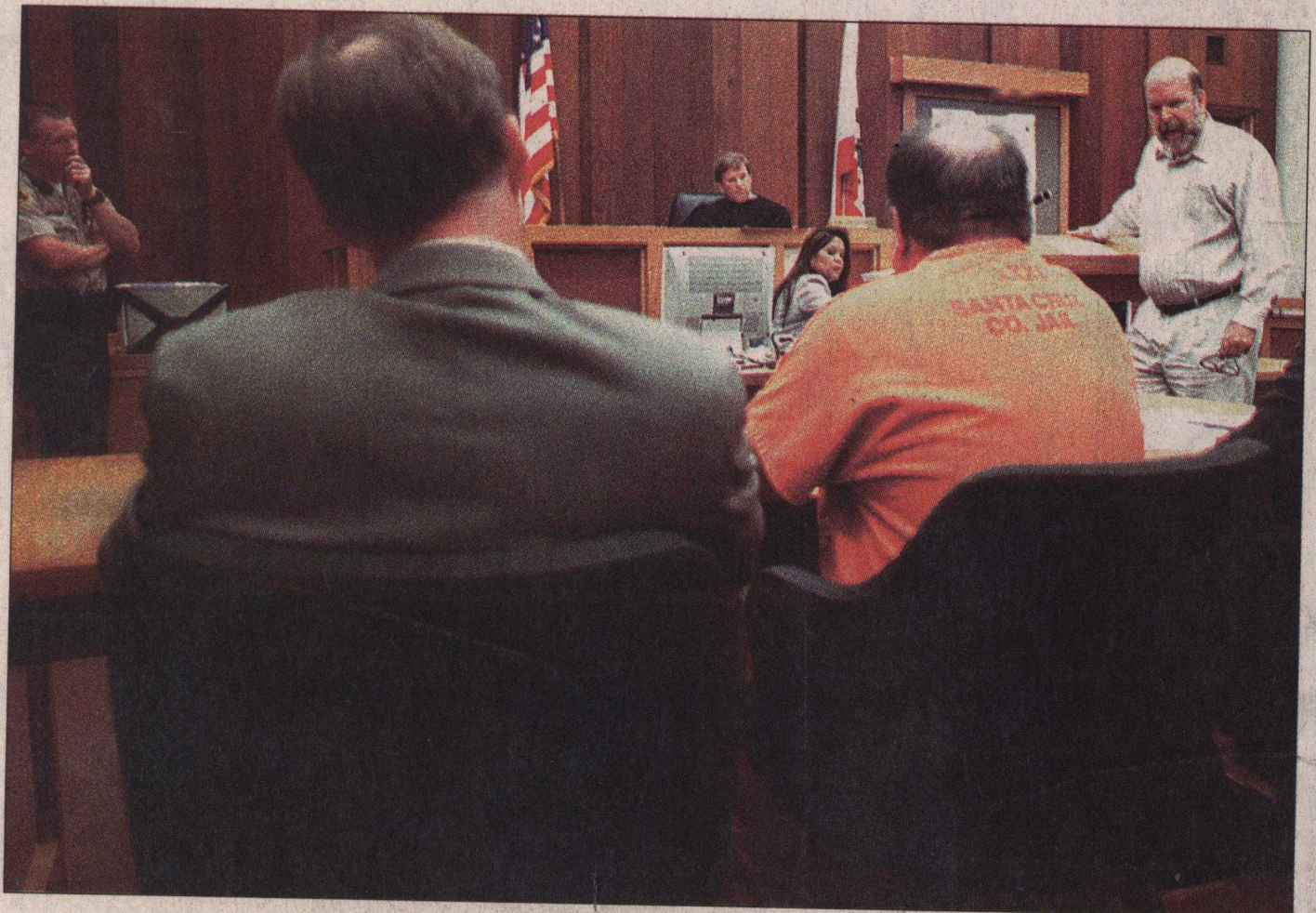


Double-killer gets two life terms



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

'There cannot be justice until you are either dead or handed over to the family or myself.'
murder

DAVID GARRISON,
BROTHER OF MURDER VICTIM KELLY ANN REBER

Dennis Richesin, 49, to
serve without parole for
murdering two women

By JASON SCHULTZ
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — In a hearing filled with anger, rage, pain and tears, family members of two slain women told a former teacher's aide that they wanted him to rot in prison for killing their girls.

A judge's ruling Tuesday will make their request a reality.

Dennis Lee Richesin, 49, was sentenced by Judge Art Danner to serve life in prison with no possibility for parole.

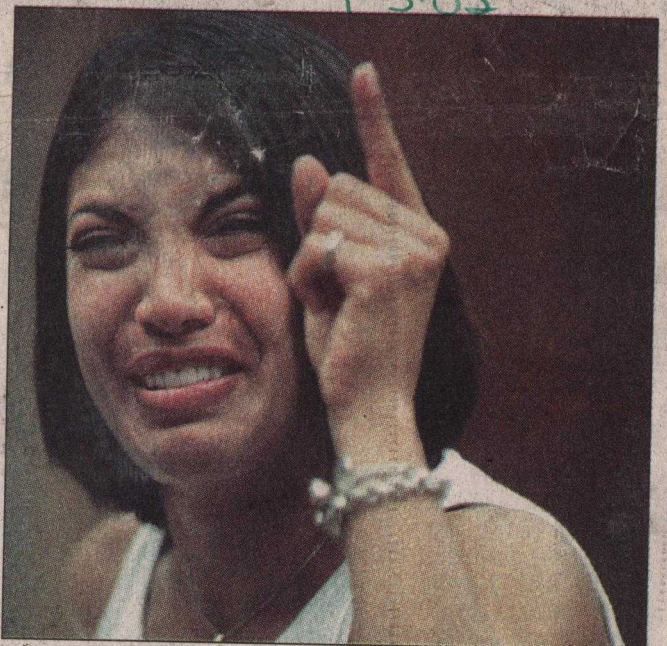
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PEREIRA-MERCHANT



REBER



TOP: James Reber faces convicted murderer Dennis Richesin, center, during Richesin's sentencing Tuesday.

ABOVE: Michele Pereira, sister of murder victim Heather Nicole Pereira-Merchant, gestures toward Richesin in court on Tuesday.

Sentence

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Richesin bludgeoned to death 25-year-old Heather Nicole Pereira-Merchant of Watsonville with a fire extinguisher in August 2000. In May 2001, Richesin used a rock to kill 21-year-old Kelly Ann Reber, a former Sobquel High School student. He buried the bodies of the girls near Renaissance High School.

Richesin shed a few quiet tears, but otherwise showed little emotion and said nothing as the victims' families talked of their pain, showed videos of the women and yelled at Richesin in rage.

able."

Prosecutor Christine McGuire has said Richesin apparently killed the two women because his girlfriend had told him to stop spending time with them.

Richesin and his attorneys chose not to make a statement to the court or the victims' families.

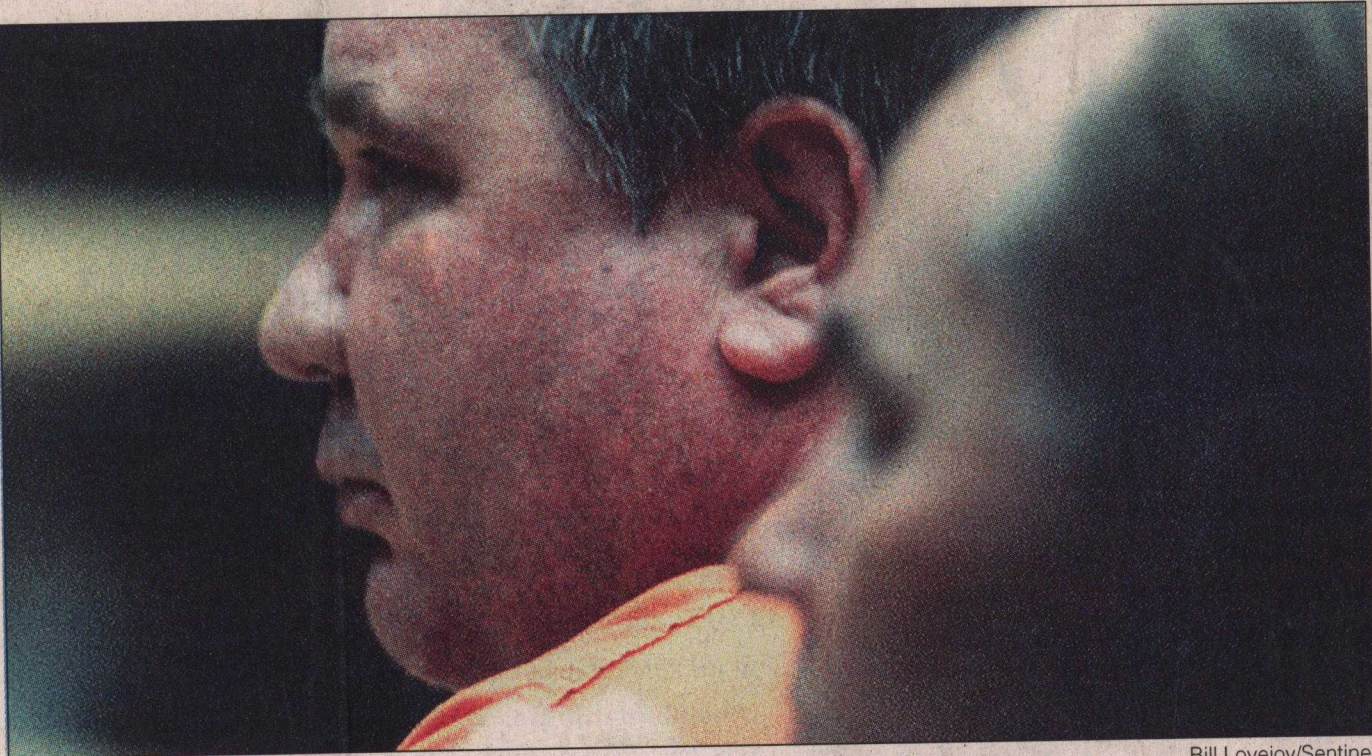
One by one, the two slain women's family members filed up to the podium.

"Your actions clearly speak that you have no idea who God is," said Michele Pereira, Merchant's sister. "Unfortunately for you, he knows exactly who you are."

Merchant's mother, Arlene Merchant, showed a video of pictures and music that made the families, who filled an entire side

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"I hate you. I hope you rot in hell," said Merchant's stepfather, Jim Merchant. "I hope your days in prison are miser-



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Convicted killer Dennis Richesin watches impassively as a video recounting the life of one of his victims is played during his sentence hearing Tuesday. Richesin will spend the rest of his life in prison.

of the courtroom, cry and occasionally laugh at the memories. Reber's uncle, Dan Reber, showed a video of Reber at 10 years old, twirling a red umbrella in the rain and telling jokes.

"You may have killed her body, but you didn't kill her spirit," Dan Reber told Richesin.

Investigators have said the two victims knew Richesin because all three used methamphetamines.

Another of Reber's uncles, James Reber, said his niece was born to drug addicts. He said she was beaten and molested as a child. She was taken away by child protective services after she turned her abusive mother in to police, but went back to her mother at the age of 15. He said Reber's

mother, who has attended only one of Richesin's court hearings since the murders and was not present Tuesday, introduced her daughter to drugs and introduced her to Richesin.

James Reber blamed Richesin and Reber's mother for introducing her to drugs and the state for placing her back with her mother as a child.

Danner said he knew the life-imprisonment term would not be enough to satisfy some family members, but it was the most the court could do. The District Attorney's Office had decided not to seek the death penalty before Richesin entered his plea in May. Reber's brother, David Garrison, said nothing short of death would punish Richesin enough for him.

"He should not be able to breathe," Garrison told Richesin. "There cannot be justice until you are either dead or handed over to the family or myself."

After the hearing, James Reber said his family has filed a wrongful-termination lawsuit against Richesin's live-in girlfriend, Linda Viera, because under California law she could be held liable in civil court for Richesin's actions since they had lived together for so long. She has not been charged criminally, and investigators do not believe she played a part in the crimes.

The Pereira and Merchant families were unsure if they would file suit.

Contact Jason Schultz at jshultz@santa-cruz.com.