

Scaggs
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Park Shooting Victim Thought 'It Was A Joke'

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Steven Haertle, the only survivor of the so-called trailside slayings, said he first "thought it was a joke" when he heard the shots that killed 20-year-old Ellen Hansen on a trail in Henry Cowell Park March 29.

But the shots were no joke and a split second later, Haertle felt a bullet strike him in the neck.

"All of a sudden I felt like somebody had hit me with a sledge hammer," said the dark-haired UC Davis student during a preliminary hearing in September.

"I remember falling to the ground and

then I remember my arm feeling like it had been blown off my body."

He got up and saw his companion lying on the ground with blood streaming from her head.

"I picked her head up and turned it to see if she had been shot in the face," said Haertle. "I said, 'Oh, Ellen,' and then, Haertle said, he started running.

Haertle's description of the shooting attack in Henry Cowell Park was released to the public for the first time Wednesday afternoon when Superior Court Judge Chris Cottle unsealed the transcripts of

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TRAILSIDE TESTIMONY

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the preliminary hearing for trailside killer suspect David Joseph Carpenter.

The transcripts — which contain hundreds of pages of testimony — paint a portrait of Carpenter as a man who liked ballet, subscribed to the Wall Street Journal, proposed marriage to a woman on their first meeting and used iron-willed concentration in an attempt to keep from stuttering.

The transcript also included testimony about murder victim Heather Scaggs' tearful reluctance to accompany Carpenter on a trip to Santa Cruz the day before she disappeared, and details of how Carpenter befriended two bank robbers who later turned the suspected murder weapon over to police.

In the early portion of the preliminary hearing, Haertle described how he and Hansen passed the killer on the popular Ridge Trail, then later met him again as they returned to camp for supper.

The man said, "I see we meet again," as he walked toward them on the trail.

"The next thing he did was pull a gun out of his coat," Haertle said.

The young man said he put his hands into the air, but the killer ordered him to put them down.

"Do what I say if you don't want to get hurt," the killer ordered, according to Haertle.

Haertle pleaded with the man to let them go, but Hansen was defiant.

"Steven, he's going to shoot us anyway, don't listen to him," Hansen said.

The killer then ordered them off the trail and said "all he wanted to do was rape Ellen," Haertle testified.

At that point, the killer began to put his gun back under his coat. When the couple took a step toward him, the killer pulled out the gun again, however, and for a second time said he wanted to rape Hansen.

"No, I'm not going to let you do it," said Hansen.

Haertle said he began to step off the trail and lost his footing. Suddenly two shots rang out. The next thing Haertle knew, he was also being hit by gunfire, he testified.

He fell to the ground and thought "I'm alive," according to testimony. He got back up, looked at Hansen and then took off running.

Haertle said he ran up the trail to an observation deck where a woman and several hikers began giving him aid.

As he lay on the deck, he spotted the killer walking up the trail toward him. "I screamed to the woman (who was helping him) that it was the man that shot me, 'run!'" Haertle testified.

He said he got back up and ran to the main campsite area from where he was taken to a hospital.

Mary Joan Scaggs, mother of the 20-year-old woman who Carpenter is accused

of killing, testified about a tearful telephone call from her daughter the night before she was to meet with Carpenter for a trip to Santa Cruz.

Heather Scaggs told her mother Carpenter offered to take her to Santa Cruz to help her get a job at a print shop and look at a 1974 Volkswagen that was for sale at a reasonable price.

He also told her they were going to stop in the Santa Cruz Mountains to get a fern for the owner of the print shop and warned her not to tell anyone about their trip to Santa Cruz.

During the telephone call with her mother, Scaggs sobbed and said she didn't feel right about going to Santa Cruz with Carpenter, but thought she shouldn't pass up the opportunity of getting a job, Mrs. Scaggs testified.

At that point, she was still undecided about going to Santa Cruz, according to testimony.

Later that night, Mrs. Scaggs said she called her daughter and warned her not to go. "Heather, please do not go tomorrow morning. Don't go with this man at all, and she said, 'Don't worry, don't worry about it, mom. I'll call him in the morning,'" Mrs. Scaggs testified. She took that to mean Heather wasn't going to keep the appointment, she said.

Heather left her apartment the following morning and was never seen alive again. Her body was found May 24 with a single gunshot wound to the head.

Candace Townsend, Carpenter's girlfriend, testified she met Carpenter in January, had sex with him on their first meeting and that he asked her to marry him.

She said she didn't love Carpenter, but agreed to move into his parents' house with him. Later, she decided not to marry him. She said Carpenter was in tears when she told him and wanted her to keep in touch.

Townsend also testified she noticed Carpenter's stuttering becoming worse as the months wore on. The last time she saw him — five days after Scaggs disappeared — Carpenter was stuttering very badly, she said.

"... He did stutter when I first met him, but not nearly as bad as that," she testified.

The testimony also included statements from two bank robbers who said Carpenter got a gun for them, showed them how to use it and even helped them plan robberies.

After Carpenter was arrested, they figured the gun he had given them was the murder weapon and so buried it in a vacant lot in San Francisco.

Later, when they were arrested for robbery, they decided to turn it over to authorities in hopes it would give them a break in their own cases, according to testimony.