

'I don't know what happened'

Former chief deputy DA must compete for prosecutor's job

By **ROBIN MUSITELLI**
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Jon Hopkins had it all. He was a hot-shot trial lawyer — some say the best in the District Attorney's Office. As the No. 2 guy under Art Danner, he was to be the heir apparent whenever Danner moved on. But that was pre-K.C. — or before Kate Canlis came to town.

Consider Hopkins' fortunes now: unemployed, running hard among a pack of lawyers wanting the job that once seemed to be all but his.

Danner, within an hour of being appointed to the bench late last month, fired Hopkins to pave the way for Canlis to be appointed as district attorney until an election in March 2000.

"I don't know what happened," Hopkins said. "I don't have a good answer for it. I think it's real complex. This doesn't sound good, but somehow she came between us."

"She" is Canlis, whom Danner hired in 1990 as an assistant district attorney. Her authority grew as Hopkins' diminished, until she eclipsed him with her promotion to a second chief deputy position in 1997.

Until then, Hopkins had been Danner's right-hand man. A graduate of California Western School of Law in San Diego, he had come from Los Angeles to join the office in 1979.

He had been a public defender in Southern California and wanted a similar job in the Santa Cruz area. The public defender's office didn't have an opening, but Rob Atack was leaving his job in the District Attorney's Office to go into private practice.

Hopkins quickly distinguished himself as a trial lawyer. Over the years, he has prosecuted more than 20 homicide cases along with other high-profile cases.

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good.

"He's definitely an excellent trial attorney," said public defender Jerry Christensen.

"He's comfortable, articulate and persuasive," agreed public defender Larry Biggam, who has tried several murder cases against Hopkins.

Danner appointed him chief deputy of criminal operations in 1986. Four months later, Hopkins resigned to become executive director of the California District Attorneys Association, a job Canlis had held previously.

At the time, the association was working to oust state Supreme Court Chief Justice Rose Bird.

Hopkins' role lasted less than a year. He said he and the organization became political targets because of their campaign against the liberal Bird. He said he also wanted to return to Santa Cruz, where his children lived. Hopkins said he felt he and the organization would be better off if he resigned.

The Los Angeles Daily Journal, a legal publication, reported a different version, saying the association was conducting an internal investigation into allegations of poor performance by Hopkins. There were contentions he was about to be fired when he left.

Danner rehired him and he returned to winning cases. He also married Annette Becker, who shared his political ambitions. She later ran unsuccessfully for county supervisor against Mardi Wormhoudt.

While he was convicting criminals, Hopkins' reputation as an administrator didn't keep up with his reputa-

tion as a prosecutor.

Shortly before becoming a judge, Danner said that he felt Hopkins had not completed assigned tasks. Danner said it was out of frustration that he had moved Canlis to a position equal to Hopkins. He said he had hoped that Hopkins' performance would improve because of the competition.

Danner said Canlis was able to finish projects, including setting up a training program, that Hopkins could not. Danner said Canlis was soon outperforming Hopkins as an administrator.

Another reason Hopkins had to go, Danner said, was that he and Canlis did not get along.

Danner said he offered to help Hopkins find a job elsewhere in California but Hopkins never followed through on the leads.

Dennis Wong, an assistant district attorney who has taken over some of Hopkins' responsibilities, said it was common knowledge in the office that Hopkins was on his way out, and that "it was a long time coming."

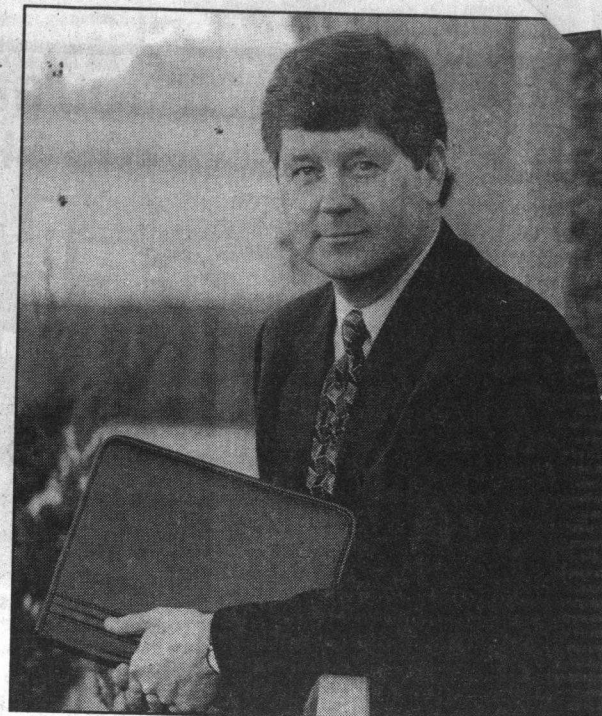
Danner said that until the last day, he remained hopeful Hopkins would accept another job. Danner said he truly felt Canlis was a superior administrator, that it was his responsibility to leave a clear leader in the office. Within an hour of being appointed to the bench, Danner called Hopkins and fired him.

Hopkins defends his administrative abilities by pointing to his performance as a trial lawyer on big cases.

"It's like running a production," he said. "You're not able to do it year in and year out without being a highly skilled administrator."

Hopkins declined to discuss the deteriorating relationships between him, Danner and Canlis.

"I don't want to take that approach. The issue isn't who was Danner's better subordinate. The issue for a D.A. is about leadership."



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Jon Hopkins is one of nine lawyers who are seeking to fill former District Attorney Art Danner's position.

Hopkins said he looked into other jobs, but stopped because Danner told him he would not seek the judgeship.

Hopkins said Danner offered him a deal to stay in the office, with a demotion, if he agreed not to run for the top job. Hopkins said he took that as a "threat to fire me if I didn't back down from the race."

He wasn't surprised when Danner fired him. Nor did he think Danner acted alone.

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DISTRICT ATTORNEY CANDIDATES

Christine McGuire

Age: 47

Education: Bachelor's degree in political science from the California State University at Long Beach in 1975; juris doctorate from Southwestern University School of Law in 1977.



McGuire

Occupation: Senior trial attorney since 1985 in the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office. A member of the Special Prosecution Unit handling homicides and sexual assault cases.

Previous experience: Deputy district attorney in Tehama County from 1979-84.

Other accomplishments: Co-founder of the county's Domestic Violence Commission; co-founder of the county's Child Death Review Team; past director of Women's Crisis Support; lecturer at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va.; lecturer at the Sexual Assault Response Team Institute; public relations director of the Women's Lawyers of Santa Cruz County; VISTA volunteer with Nevada Indian Legal Services; author of five novels.

Bob Lee

Age: 41

Education: Bachelor's degree in public administration from California State University at Sacramento



Lee

in 1980; juris doctorate from the University of Santa Clara School of Law in 1984.

Occupation: Assistant district attorney since 1988 in the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office. Handles sexual assaults and murders and has supervised various felony teams.

Previous experience: Assistant district attorney in Monterey County from 1985-1988; law clerk in Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office in 1981.

Other accomplishments: Lecturer at the Sexual Assault Response Team Institute; lecturer on administration of justice and sexual assault prosecution at Cabrillo College and area high schools; board member of the Community Action Board; and former board member of the Youth Resource Bank.

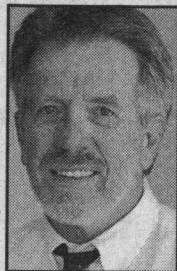
Ed Frey

Age: 58

Education: Bachelor's degree in history from the University of Southern California in 1962; Juris Doctorate from Boalt Hall School of Law at UC Berkeley in 1967.

Occupation: Private practice in civil and criminal litigation in Santa Cruz County since 1994.

Previous experience: Civil litigator with Baskin & Grant law firm in Santa Cruz from 1988-94; private



Frey

practice in Mendocino County from 1974-84; Legal Services Foundation of Mendocino County from 1972-74; antitrust and criminal litigation with Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison in San Francisco from 1968-72.

Other accomplishments: Former candidate for district attorney with 42 percent of the vote in 1994; congressional candidate in 1993.

Ariadne Symons

Age: NA

Education: Bachelor's degree from Queen's University, Ontario Canada, in 1978; St. Andrews University, Fife, Scotland; juris doctorate from Boalt Hall School of Law at UC Berkeley in 1982.

Occupation: Senior trial attorney since 1996 in the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office. A member of the Special Prosecution Unit handling homicides and unsolved homicides.

Previous experience: Assistant district attorney in Rowan County, N.C. from 1991-95; deputy district attorney in Orange County from 1988-1990; special trial attorney with the



Symons

U.S. Department of Justice organized crime strike force in 1987; assistant U.S. attorney in Washington D.C. from 1983-87; judicial clerkship with U.S. District Court Justice Albert Coffrin from 1982-83; legislative assistant in Gov. Brown's office in Sacramento, 1979-81.

Other accomplishments: Adjunct professor, Wake Forest University School of Law, 1991-95; instructor at UCLA and UNC Chapel Hill; seminar instructor for the National District Attorney Advocacy Center in South Carolina, Hastings College of Law in San Francisco and various district attorney associations; founding committee member of the Orange County Sexual Assault Response Team; board of director of D.C. Rape Crisis Center.

Peter Chang

Age: 61

Education: Bachelor's degree in 1958 then a law degree in 1961, both from Stanford University.

Occupation: Private practice in criminal defense in Santa Cruz County since 1975.

Previous experience: District attorney of Santa Cruz County from 1966-75; deputy district attorney in Monterey County from 1961-1965.

Other accomplishments: Board of directors of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers;



Chang

lecturer and seminar instructor in advanced cross examinations and final arguments at universities and professional programs in about two dozen cities across the nation; faculty member at National Criminal Defense College in Georgia in 1990; co-chair of the Federal Judicial Relations Committee; and fellow with the American Board of Criminal Lawyers.

Steve Muni

Age: 47

Education: Bachelor of arts degree in Southeast Asian Studies in 1973 from Yale University; juris doctorate in 1976 from California Western School of Law; master of law degree in International Law in 1977 from the University of London.

Occupation: Deputy District Attorney in Amador County since 1996 handling narcotics cases, sexual assaults, and serious felonies.

Previous experience: Private practice in criminal defense and civil litigation in Santa Cruz from 1990-1995; alternate traffic court referee in Santa Cruz County from 1992-95; Juvenile Court Judge, pro tem, of Santa Cruz County from 1994-95; criminal and civil litigation as a senior trial associate with Alexander Anolik's law firm in San Francisco from 1987-90; assistant



Muni

district attorney in Santa Cruz County from 1977-1987.

Other accomplishments: Commissioner on Santa Cruz County's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commissions; commissioner of the City of Santa Cruz Downtown Commission; board of directors of Court Appointed Special Advocates; Municipal Court Judge, pro tem, in Santa Cruz County from 1990-96 and Municipal Court Judge, pro tem, in Alameda County from 1994-96.

Ron Ruiz

Age: 62

Education: Bachelor of arts in English in 1957 from St. Mary's College; Boalt Hall School of Law at UC Berkeley; bachelor of laws degree in 1964 from University of San Francisco Law School.

Occupation: Private practice in criminal defense in San Jose since 1980.

Previous experience: Appointed twice by Gov. Brown as a board member of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board from 1975-80; staff attorney with the ALRB in 1974; private practice in San Jose from 1966-1974; deputy district attorney in Alameda County from 1965-66.

Other accomplishments: Author of two novels.



Ruiz