

Mass killer from '70s loses bid for parole

MAN CONVICTED IN 11 DEATHS
SAYS 'I'M A GOOD PERSON NOW'

Mullin, Herbert
By David L. Beck

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IONE — Herbert Mullin, admitted killer of 13, thinks he should be free "to live in the free society of Santa Cruz County"

The Board of Prison Terms disagreed Thursday, and sent him back to prison for at least another four years.

Mullin is "not suitable for parole and would pose an unreasonable threat to society," said Commissioner Jones Moore speaking for himself and Deputy Commissioner Ernie Coldren.

The hearing, Mullin's ninth bid for parole, was held at Mule Creek State Prison in Amador County, where he has spent the past eight years after two decades at the California Men's Colony near San Luis Obispo.

The panel cited his "cruel and callous multiple murders" and his "exceptionally callous disregard for human suffering," and noted that he continues not to accept full responsibility for his crimes.

"Blamed it all on your father," Moore said. At the time of the killings, in 1972 and '73, Mullin has said, his father was commanding him telepathically to kill. He calls it a "delusion" now, but he believed then that he was preventing earthquakes by doing so.

Mullin displayed little emotion during the hearing and upon learning its result. He sat quietly across the L-shaped table from Moore with his lawyer, Rhonda Skipper-Dotta of Galt, by his side. Arrayed around the table from Moore's left were Coldren, Santa Cruz County Assis-



Mullin

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tant District Attorney Ariadne Symons and Santa Clara County Deputy District Attorney Rod L. Braughton.

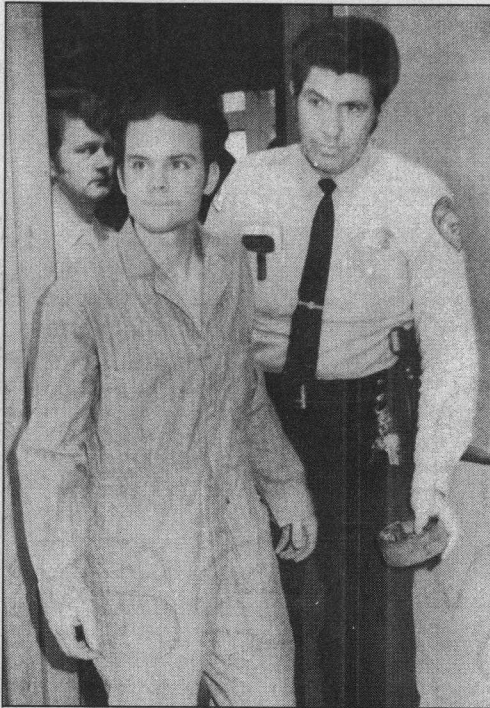
Mullin was convicted of 10 murders in Santa Cruz County, and of one — a priest whom he stabbed in a confessional — in Los Gatos. He confessed to killing two other people, but was never charged in those cases.

No members of Mullin's family or any of his victims' families attended the hearing.

At 54, Mullin is a slight figure, his prison-issued blue shirt hanging loosely around his neck. His brown hair is cut short and receding slightly in front. The mustache he wore for a television interview in the spring is gone. The oversize tortoiseshell eyeglasses he sometimes wears hung from his neck by a white cord Thursday.

One thing hasn't changed: His insistence his family and friends, but especially his father, are as much to blame for the murders as he is.

"They used their influence to cause me to enter into several different psychiatric facilities," he said — a reference to repeated attempts at treatment in the late 1960s and early 1970s — "and after four years of that confusing condition, they caused me to kill."



Herbert Mullin, shown in a 1973 photograph, was convicted of killing 10 people in Santa Cruz County and an 11th in Los Gatos. He claimed responsibility for two other deaths, but said his father telepathically commanded him to kill, to prevent earthquakes.

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He said he feels "remorse and sorrow" for his victims and their families. But he added that since he, like 80 percent of Americans, believes in God and an afterlife, he believes God will "reimburse" the victims.

Perhaps, he said, God will allow them to "enjoy the beauty of Santa Cruz County," and even graduate from the University of California-Santa Cruz in their next lives.

Asked to expand upon his plans for enjoying that beauty himself should he be paroled,

Mullin recalled his first job, at Johnnie's Super Market in Boulder Creek when he was a teenager.

"That town I don't think hates me," he said. "That town would welcome me as a

hardworking person . . .

"Now, sure, I got confused," he went on. "But I don't think that should last my entire life . . . If I get to Boulder Creek, I'm going to know those people. It's a tight-knit, closely structured town. I can work there. I can think there.

"I'm a good person now."

Symons disagreed. She urged the panel to remember his crimes — the baseball bat,

the knife, the guns, the victims as young as 4 years old. "The magnitude of these offenses simply cannot be overstated," she said.

Commenting on his successful prison record, she said, "He needs that structure to do well." As for life on the outside: "He's got no plans. He's got no support. He doesn't have any idea what he's going to do."

The 28 years he has so far served, she said, "doesn't begin to pay" for what he did. All those Americans whom he says believe in God also believe in hell.

"Mr. Mullin," she finished, her voice breaking, "deserves to rot in hell."

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