

Second trial witness testifies Carpenter is 'trailside slayer'

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The second witness in the murder trial of David J. Carpenter identified him Thursday as the assailant described by the survivor of a 1981 Northern California park shooting.

Carpenter, 57, of San Francisco, already sentenced to death for the attack, is on trial for five Marin County murders linked to the "trailside slayer" who terrorized Northern California parkgoers.

Leland Fritz testified about meeting Carpenter while resting at an observation deck in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park in Santa Cruz County, where Fritz and his son were hiking March 29, 1981.

Several minutes after Carpenter left, Fritz said he heard several gunshots from the direction in which the defendant had gone.

"There were two shots in succession, then a hesitation, then a volley of two or three, maybe four, shots," said Fritz, 52, of Fresno. "I thought it was a (park) ranger killing a snake because there were signs posted in all the restrooms that there had been problems with snakes."

As Fritz and his son started down the same trail, however, they encountered a bloodied Steven Haertle, who had been hiking in the park with his girlfriend, Ellen Hansen.

"He was staggering, kind of running up the trail and holding his throat with his hands. There was blood all over his hands and throat, and he said he'd been shot," Fritz said.

"He said someone who came up the trail wanted to rape his girlfriend and had shot her, and he thought she was dead. I asked him if I should go up the trail and see and he said, 'No, there's a crazy man up there with a gun.'"

Fritz told jurors that when he asked Haertle what his attacker was wearing, he described the same clothing, including a baseball cap and gold jacket, that Carpenter was wearing when they met minutes earlier on the observation deck.

Carpenter has been sentenced to die for the murder of Hansen, 20, and another woman killed in March 1981 at the Santa Cruz County state park.

A pretrial ruling prevents jurors from being told about the conviction. But Marin County Deputy District Attorney John Posey told jurors in his opening statement Tuesday that he will show the same .38-caliber revolver used in the Santa Cruz attack also was used in each of the five Marin County killings.

Carpenter, who also is charged with two counts of rape and one count in connection with three of the murders, could face another death penalty if convicted.