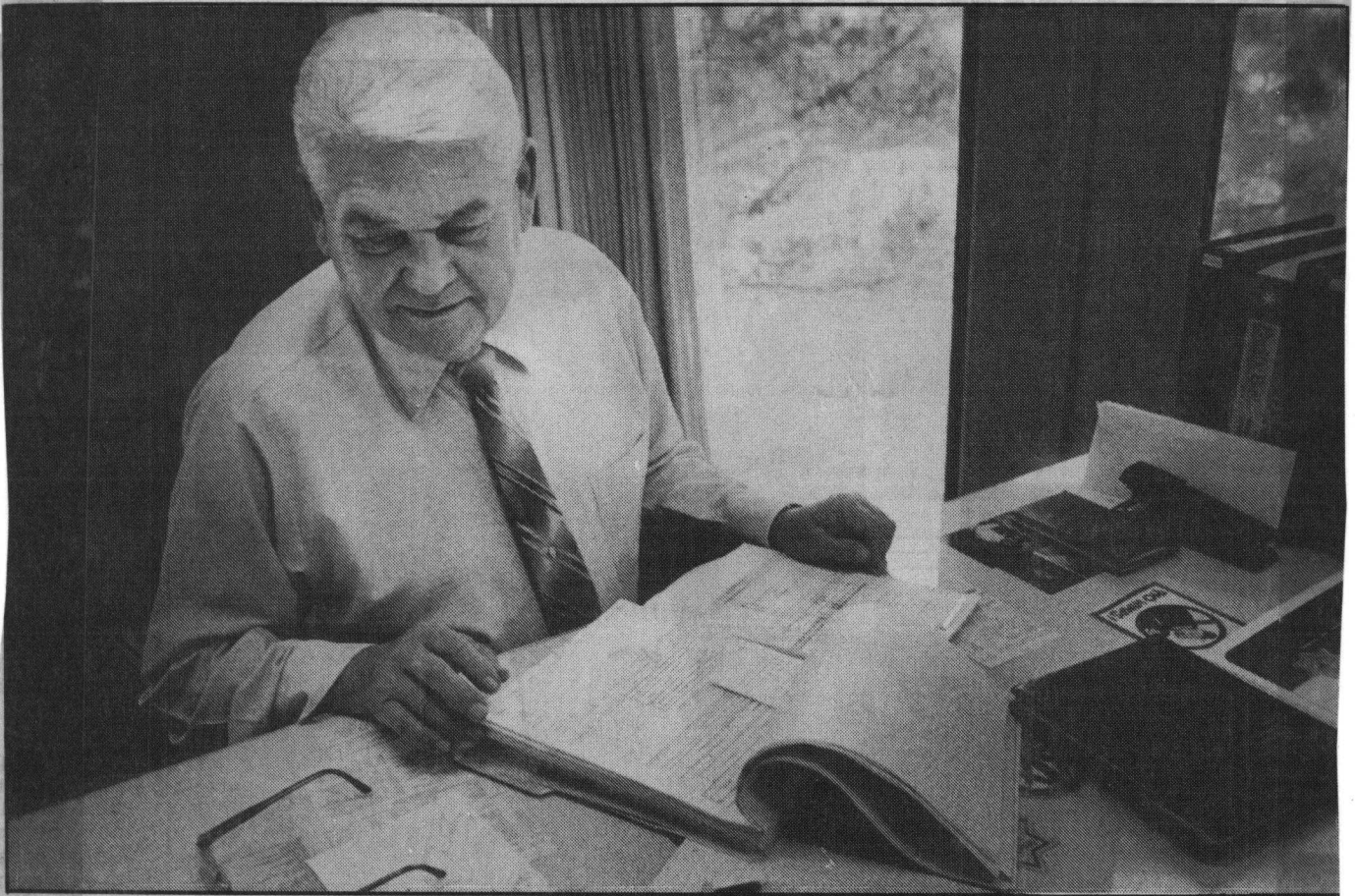


# Lawman retires



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel file

Dick Verbrugge, the District Attorney's chief of inspectors, joins private industry after 35 years.

## Chief inspector hangs up badge

By DONNA KIMURA  
Sentinel staff writer

**SANTA CRUZ** — The man who worked to solve the most notorious Santa Cruz murders has put away his badge.

Dick Verbrugge, 57, the meticulous chief of inspectors for the District Attorney's Office, has retired after 35 years in law enforcement to enter the more pedestrian world of private business.

"He can do more in his office with a telephone than most officers can out in the field," said county Supervisor Ray Belgard, the former Watsonville police chief and chief administrator in the District Attorney's office.

Raised in San Francisco's Mission District, Verbrugge began his career at age 22 as a California State Police patrolman. His assignments included everything from serving as a bodyguard for state Supreme Court Justice Phil Gibson to working as a narcotics agent in Haight-Ashbury during the psychedelic era.

"He has no college education," said former District Attorney Peter Chang. "He has street smarts. He would probably rate an IQ of 145 if you measured it."

As an investigator in Chang's office, Verbrugge worked to help convict John Lynley Frazier, Herbert Mullin and Edmund Emil Kemper III of Santa Cruz's infamous mass murders.

Frazier was convicted of the 1970 ex-

ecution murders of Dr. Victor Ohta, his wife Virginia, their two young sons and Ohta's secretary, Dorothy Cadwalader.

Verbrugge combed the state for information on witnesses in the trial, recalled Chang.

"I think we had 95 witnesses," he said. "We had to piece it together with evidence that criminalists brought us such as copper wire found on Frazier's knife."

It was Verbrugge who led lab workers to find the microscopic shreds of metal. The copper nicks turned out to match the telephone line that was cut at the victims' home.

Verbrugge also searched the country for information on a criminalist testifying for the defense.

"What Verbrugge did was go around and get copies of every case this guy testified in from San Diego to Seattle, and he even got his grades from an elementary school in Hawaii," Chang said. "We knew everything about him. It was a wealth of material we used to destroy him."

Despite all his experiences, Verbrugge doesn't talk about himself. When asked about his career he said, "You don't want to hear those old stories," smiling and lighting another one of his cigarettes.

Others, however, relay their experiences with him as if recalling memorable war days.

District Attorney Art Danner said it was Verbrugge who put together a

chronological history of Mullin. It identified the schools he attended as a boy and the priest who knew him while growing up.

"That document showed more insight into Mullin than the psychological material," Danner said.

After joining the DA's office in the late '60s, Verbrugge became chief of inspectors in 1982.

"He is probably one of the most organized law enforcement agents I've ever met," said Bob Swaynie, a former DA inspector. "He had every piece of paper involved in a case cataloged and could put his finger on it at a moment's notice."

Edmund Kemper confessed to killing eight women in 1972 and 1973, including six college students, whose body parts turned up in three counties. He also killed his mother and her friend.

Verbrugge was "the organizer" in the Kemper case, Belgard remembered.

The investigation involved murders in several counties, and it was Verbrugge who methodically coordinated the different police agencies to work together, Belgard said.

Verbrugge went to Colorado to pick up Kemper after he called Santa Cruz police from a phone booth to confess.

Despite becoming so indelibly linked to Santa Cruz County law enforcement, Verbrugge said he looks forward to life in the private sector. He will be an investigator and security consultant for the Houston-based company Guidry and Associates.