

Serial killer to stay put

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY MURDERER WAIVES PAROLE HEARING

Kemper. Edmund
By David L. Beck

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Ed Kemper, the Santa Cruz serial killer who butchered six young women, his mother and another woman in 1972-73, will stay in prison at least five more years.

Scheduled for a parole hearing Wednesday, he notified prison officials last week that he would "stipulate to a five-year denial," according to Board of Prison Terms spokeswoman Denise Schmidt.

He explained his reasons in a brief statement: "Public sentiments don't support in any way the release into society of a mass or serial murderer. Parole consideration for me would just devolve into a media event and sound-bite opportunity for the district attorney's office."

His action was not unexpected. He has declined to appear at several previous parole hearings, including 1997, when he

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Kemper

Ed Kemper has been a model prisoner, officials said.



Pesce



Luchessa



Koo



Schall

Kemper was charged in the mutilation murders of Mary Ann Pesce, Anita Luchessa, Aiko Koo, Cynthia Schall and four others, including his mother, in the early 1970s and was sentenced to life in prison. Most of the young female victims were picked up while hitchhiking.

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wrote: "The severity of my commitment offenses, I believe, precludes realistic consideration for parole at this time. Although I am programming responsibly and productively, the 'climate' toward violent offenders in general is not supportive of parole."

At the age of 15 Kemper murdered his grandparents, an act for which he was committed as a juvenile to Atascadero State Hospital. He was released five years later. In May 1972 he picked up two hitchhikers in the East Bay, Mary Ann Pesce and Anita Luchessa, both 18, stabbed them to death, took their bodies to his apartment in Alameda and cut their heads off. He disposed of the bodies and heads in the Loma Prieta area of Santa Cruz County.

He repeated those acts, with variations, with four more young women. Sometimes he shot them. Sometimes he had sex with them while they were unconscious or dead. One he dismembered. Aiko Koo, 15, was hitchhiking from the East Bay to her ballet class in San Francisco. Cynthia Schall, 19, was heading for Cabrillo College. Rosalind Thorpe, 22, and Alice Liu, 21, were on the University of California-Santa Cruz campus, where Kemper's mother worked, when he picked them up.

He murdered his mother, Clarnell Strandberg, 52, at her Santa Cruz apartment, using a hammer. Then he invited her friend Sarah Hallett, 58, over and strangled her.

Kemper, 53, now suffers from diabetes and, according to prison records, has curtailed his extracurricular activities for health reasons. He has done well in prison, though, taking hospice training through the University of California-Davis Medical Center, making book tapes for the blind and working as a library clerk. He has been at California Medical Facility, Vacaville, since 1973.

In Santa Cruz, he remains something of a legend for the sheer enormity of what he did and the affability of his personality. "Friendliest guy in the world," recalled his court-appointed defense attorney, James Jackson.

"Oh, yeah," said Joe Henard, "I remember old Ed. He used to be drinking over at the old Jury Room," an off-duty hangout for Santa Cruz police officers. He was "a Casper Milquetoast, you know? Big, gentle old giant. Wannabe cop."

Like most people who dealt with Ed Kemper back in 1972 and 1973, Henard, now a district attorney's inspector but then a deputy sheriff, has vivid memories of his size. "I'd see him over in the jail," says Henard. "His feet would be sticking out of the bars. He was too tall for the bunk."

Prison records list Kemper as 6 feet 9 and 280 pounds at the time of his incarceration.

"He's huge!" said Peter Chang, who prosecuted Kemper. "You don't realize how big he is until you walk with him."

If Jackson, Henard and Chang seem to speak about Kemper with ironic humor, it's a humor born of close familiarity with

horror. Jackson became a prosecutor after the Kemper case, and Chang a defense attorney. None of the three has the slightest interest in seeing Kemper released.

Henard, who as a deputy ferried Kemper back and forth from the Santa Cruz jail to San Mateo, where he was tried, remembers Kemper telling him about a guy he almost shot over a \$50 debt.

And Chang says he had nightmares after listening to Kemper relate, "in meticulous detail," what he had done.

"His acts were extremely heinous," said Chang. "There are a lot of people now sitting on death row for a lot less than what he did. The death penalty wasn't in existence then. He deserves to spend his natural life in prison for what he did if this system is to have any symmetry at all. ... And I say this as a person who's been *defending* death penalty cases for the past 30 years."

Edmund Emil Kemper III, child of a broken home, fantasized killing his domineering, belittling mother long before he actually did.

His notoriety arises in part from his timing: He committed his murders at the same time as Herb Mullin, baffling and terrifying authorities. Mullin was convicted of a dozen murders and has admitted a 13th. Kemper was convicted of eight.

But the two men could not be less alike.

Mullin was withdrawn and refused to speak about his crimes. Kemper "couldn't wait to blather," according to Jackson, who defended both of them.

Mullin killed because he believed he was receiving psychic orders from his father to do so, and because he thought killing would prevent earthquakes.

"Herb Mullin was actually suffering from real delusions and hallucinations," said Chang. "Ed Kemper ... knew exactly what he was doing."

What he was doing was searching for just the right hitchhikers to kill.

"It was all coeds and it would only be if they were a possible candidate for death," he told authorities, "which would mean that they were young, reasonably good-looking, not necessarily well-to-do but, say, of a better class of people than the scroungy, messy, dirty, smelly hippie-type girls ... I suppose they would have been more convenient, but that wasn't my purpose."

"My little social statement was, I was trying to hurt society ... by taking its valuable members."

After killing his mother and her friend, Kemper drove to Colorado. From there he placed several calls to Santa Cruz police, asking for officers he had known from the Jury Room. He made at least one of them collect; it was refused, and he was told to call back in the morning. When he finally convinced them he was serious, he waited by the side of the road on the east side of Pueblo, Colo., for local police to come and get him.

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