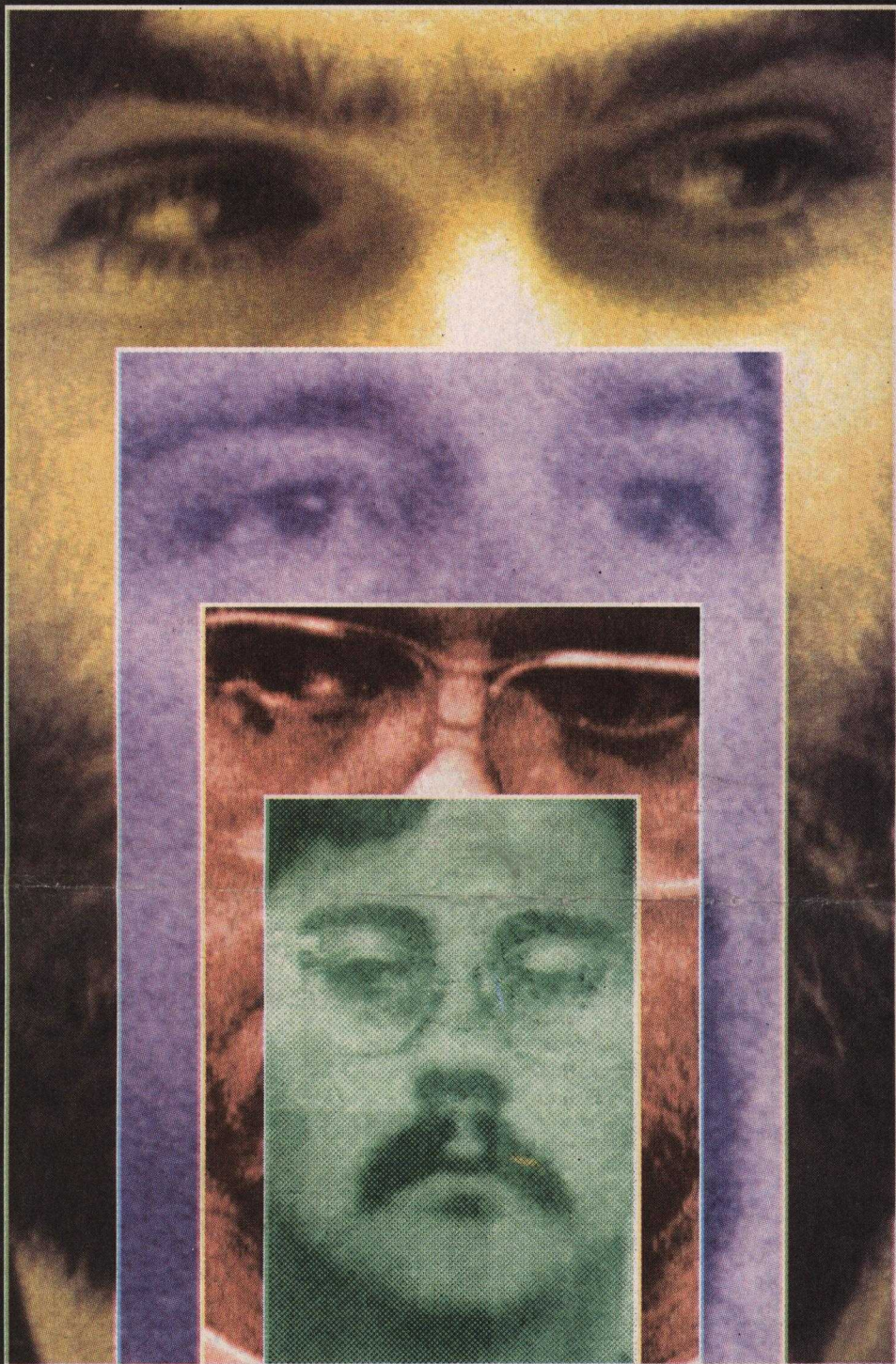


The Killers Next Door



BILLY MANSFIELD, HERBERT MULLIN, DAVID CARPENTER AND EDMUND KEMPER

THEY HAD POLICE OFFICERS FOR FRIENDS, BELONGED TO THE SIERRA CLUB AND HAD KIDS. SANTA CRUZ'S SERIAL KILLERS WEREN'T MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE BTK SUSPECT.

By **PEGGY TOWNSEND**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

There were things about the men that would have made them stand out.

One was 6-foot-9, one stuttered. Still another had pale blue eyes that were so striking, he never had problems bringing women home with him.

Still, there was nothing, really, that would make you think they were any thing other than the guy-next-door; that these men, who made their homes in Santa Cruz at one time, were responsible for the deaths of close to 40 people.

These were Santa Cruz's serial killers, four men who lived among the community from 1969 to 1981, all but one as unremarkable to their neighbors as 60-year-old Dennis Rader, recently accused of being the BTK killer who murdered 10 people in Wichita, Kan.

Rader, a code enforcement officer, was married, a churchgoer and a former scout leader.

Santa Cruz's serial killers seemed equally innocuous; a guy who went on Sunday hikes, a guy knocking back a beer on a Saturday night.

They hid behind masks of normality.

"You want them to be Hannibal Lecters.

We want to demonize them," says Public Defender Larry Biggam, who represented David Carpenter, suspected of killing as many as nine people on hiking trails in Central California. "...But life is far more gray than that."

There may be as few as 20 and as many as 300 serial killers across the country, according to a story by the Associated Press.

They lurk, true crime writer Ann Rule told the AP, "just below our level of awareness." Just like David Carpenter, Billy Mansfield,

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Killers: Santa Cruz in the '70s was home to four notorious murderers

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Herbert Mullin and Edmund Kemper — Santa Cruz's serial killers did two decades ago.

Carpenter, for instance, was a polite, respectful man who took his mother's dachshund for walks each day and gave novelty key chains to the children in his block.

Kemper hung out at the same Santa Cruz bar where cops would gather after their shift. After awhile, they nicknamed him "Big Ed."

And Mansfield seemed like a good-old Southern boy.

Only Mullin might have stood out, a man who was strange even by the standards of the early '70s.

"The FBI thinks they can spot people with all that (profiling) psychology bull ...," says Jon Minsloff, a longtime public defender whose office has represented both Mansfield and Carpenter.

"I've been doing this for 33 years, and I can't pick them out."

And then, of course, there's the biggest mystery of all: Why did all of these killers wind up in Santa Cruz?

David Carpenter

When David Carpenter was arrested in 1981 as the Trailside Killer, neighbors described him as a quiet man.

They would see him outside his mother's plain wood and brick house in the Diamond Heights area of San Francisco most days, walking her dachshund, Herman, and reading a book at the same time.

No one suspected him of being the same man who would be convicted of accosting and killing hiker

openness to dealing with his problems before those problems explode in massive proportions.

"I would thus think that Mr. Carpenter's days of criminality are over."

Billy Mansfield

Billy Mansfield rolled into Santa Cruz from Tampa with his brother, Joe, in the fall of 1980.

He was a trim man, not any taller than 5-foot-10, but he had startlingly pale eyes that those who knew him described as almost a turquoise blue.

He was handsome, with long dark hair and a mustache that fell over the corners of his mouth.

He came from a little town called Weeki Wachee in Florida where his family lived in a cramped trailer home on five acres filled with old refrigerators and rusting junk. The family was poor; his dad was in prison.

Like a lot of guys around, Mansfield hunted, fished, drank.

Still, "Mansfield had a high degree of native intelligence," said his attorney Jon Minsloff of the Public Defender's Office. "He wasn't a dumb hick. He was con-wise and savvy."

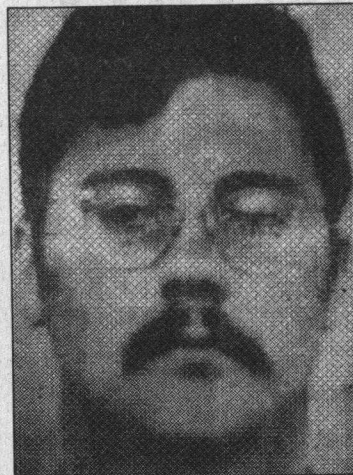
When he came here, he rented a tent at the KOA Campground on San Andreas Road.

On a December night in the Wooden Nickel Too, a working-class bar in Watsonville, Mansfield met 29-year-old Renee Salings.

He looked like any other guy on the prowl in a bar.

She wore an Indian-made blouse, jeans and brown knee-high boots, according to the book "Murders in the Swampland."

Earlier Mansfield had tried to



EDMUND KEMPER

his hair short like them — the closest he could get to his dream of being a law enforcement officer. At 6-foot-9, he was just too tall to meet the height requirements.

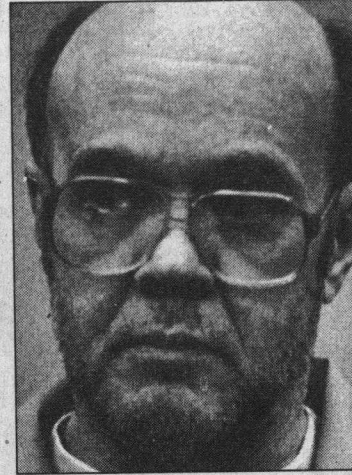
In May 1972, Kemper picked up two Fresno State University students who were hitchhiking to Stanford from Berkeley and killed them.

Then another young woman was killed.

No one suspected the polite, conservative son of a UC Santa Cruz administrative assistant as bodies began to be found — especially not one young hitchhiker who saw the UCSC parking sticker on his car and climbed right in.

Two days after Kemper had killed a young dancer who was hitchhiking to class, a psychiatrist examined him. Kemper's motorcycle, said the psychiatrist, "was more of a threat to his life and health than any threat he is presently to anyone else."

On Easter weekend, Kemper killed his mother and her friend



DAVID CARPENTER

Jackson as his lawyer because he wanted an attorney "who looked more like Richard Nixon."

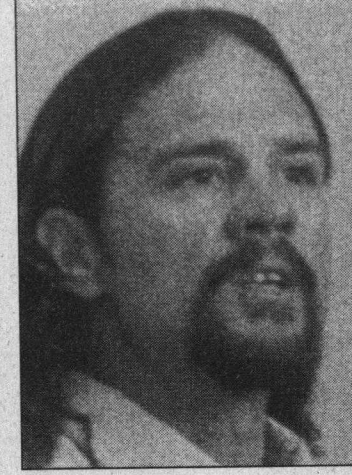
"But at the same time, he was naive and law-abiding if you can believe it," Jackson said. "He was very concerned about obeying the law."

"He just had this freak side."

Why Santa Cruz?

Why did serial killers suddenly appear in Santa Cruz during the dozen years around the '70s?

Maybe it was the air of murder in the rest of the country. Killings by Charles Manson, Ted Bundy

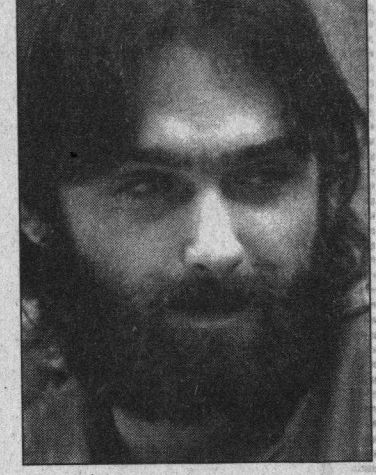


HERBERT MULLIN

and David Berkowitz, the so-called Son of Sam, were happening about the same time.

Maybe it was, as some suggest, that someone tipped the United States and all the nuts rolled to California, and then they folded the state and they ended up in Santa Cruz.

Or maybe it was just that Santa Cruz was changing from a laid-back retirement and vacation town to a place where you could do anything and still be accepted, where you could always count on finding trusting hitchhikers or people who like to hike in the wilderness.



BILLY MANSFIELD

Or maybe it was simply coincidence.

Carpenter lived in San Francisco but spent summers in Santa Cruz and knew about its wooded hills and remote trails.

Kemper's mother moved to town and got a job at UCSC. After he was paroled for killing his grandparents, he came to live with her.

Mullin grew up in the area, and Mansfield simply headed West and ended up right at the ocean's edge.

Or maybe, as some say, it was just bad luck.

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of San Francisco most days, walking her dachshund, Herman, and reading a book at the same time.

No one suspected him of being the same man who would be convicted of accosting and killing hikers in Marin and Santa Cruz counties from 1979-1981 — once forcing two women in Point Reyes National Seashore to strip and kneel down before he raped one of them and then shot them execution style.

He was just a middle-aged balding guy, the neighbors said — a man who had three grown children, belonged to the Sierra Club and sold novelty goods like the tiny pistol keychains he would sometimes hand out to kids on the block.

He stuttered, so he usually didn't say much, they said.

Most of them didn't know about how he would come to school as a child with black and blue marks from his mother's beatings or that sometimes he would be locked in a closet as punishment.

They also didn't know about his incarceration for sexually attacking a 3-year-old girl when he was a teenager and later for raping two women in Santa Cruz.

Friends of Carpenter said he was pleasant, funny and smart. A psychologist put his IQ at 125.

On Sunday, March 29, 1981, Carpenter was supposed to help a friend move, but he never showed up.

Instead, police say, he went for a hike on the Ridge Trail in Henry Cowell Park in Santa Cruz and shot 20-year-old Ellen Hansen, a UC Davis student, in the head, and then shot Steve Haertle, 20, in the back.

Haertle managed to escape, flagging down two hikers for help.

"In his older years, David Carpenter reminded you of someone's grandfather," said Stoney Brook, an investigator with the Sheriff's Department who worked the case. "But he had a deep-seated evilness to him.

"In my 30 years of being a cop, I have only met a handful of folks who were truly evil people, and David was a truly evil person.

"He was evil incarnate."

Yet, a month after investigators believe he had already killed his first victim — a 44-year-old hiker on Mount Tamalpais — a counselor at the halfway house where he was living said Carpenter "seems to possess an incredibly optimistic attitude about himself and his life ... I think that he has developed a very beneficial perspective on himself and has an

the prowl in a bar.

She wore an Indian-made blouse, jeans and brown knee-high boots, according to the book "Murders in the Swampland."

Earlier Mansfield had tried to pick up another woman, but she said something didn't feel right about him. It was the way he held her a little too close when they slow danced.

But Mansfield wasn't discouraged. He had a long string of conquests behind him.

The mother of three small children, Salings had come into the bar looking for her husband when Mansfield spotted her, according to reports at the time.

It wasn't too long before she left the bar with him. Her body was found half-naked in a ditch by the Buena Vista dump the next day.

Four months later, authorities in Florida began to dig up human remains on the Mansfield property — to the surprise of most of his neighbors.

Mansfield pleaded guilty to strangling four women and burying their bodies in his back yard in Florida and was convicted of the Watsonville murder, but it took two times to do it.

The first jury deadlocked, seven of the 12 jurors believing him to be innocent.

"Billy is like a Jekyll and Hyde," his mother told the Associated Press in 1981. "...He's real nice when he's sober. When he's drunk, he's nasty, but not with me."

In jail, awaiting trial, Mansfield wrote:

"There are certain circumstances from which God seems to absent himself, concrete circumstances of violent action and response from which there is no retreat, and in which man is left alone and in darkness to make his own life or death decisions."

Edmund Kemper

Most of the off-duty officers who hung out at the Jury Room bar, had no idea the man they called "Big Ed," had shot his grandmother as she sat at her kitchen table and his grandfather when he returned home from a trip to the supermarket as a teenager.

"Big Ed" — Edmund Kemper — was always polite and respectful to the officers. He liked to talk to them about their arrests and the merits of certain types of guns and ammunition.

He rode a motorcycle and wore

examined him. Kemper's motor-cycle, said the psychiatrist, "was more of a threat to his life and health than any threat he is presently to anyone else."

On Easter weekend, Kemper killed his mother and her friend and fled to Colorado where he called one of the cops he knew from his days in the Jury Room and began to confess to the slayings of eight women.

"He confessed all the way from Colorado to California by way of Montana," said his attorney Jim Jackson.

One of the officers on that trip called Kemper "rather likable, believe it or not."

"Kemper was," said Jackson, who also represented serial killer Herbert Mullin, "perfectly normal except for when he killed people."

Herbert Mullin

Unlike Santa Cruz's other serial killers, Herbert Mullin wasn't the guy next door.

He was, said many who knew him, obviously mentally ill.

There were stories of him wearing a sombrero, reading a Bible and speaking with a fake Mexican accent during boxing lessons he took in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. Once, said witnesses, he punched a speed bag until his knuckles began to bleed.

Sometimes, he walked around on his toes.

He was even too weird, said Jackson, for his friends in Haight Ashbury where he lived during a time when nearly everyone in the neighborhood let their freak-flags fly.

Roommates told of him waking them up at night as he prayed loudly to God, once screaming, "God, we need more marijuana in the world." Another time he interrupted a church service to tell the congregation what they were doing was wrong.

Mullin was arrested after a killing spree in Santa Cruz that included a woman and her two children, a young couple, a 72-year-old man who was working in his yard and four young campers.

Charged with 10 murders, the short-haired, meek-looking Mullin admitted to three more slayings, and said he had killed because voices had told him the deaths would prevent a major earthquake from hitting California.

It was time, he said, "to sing the die song."

In court, he once tried to fire