

Trailside shooting victim points finger at Carpenter

By JOHN McNICHOLAS

Sentinel Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — The key witness in the Trailside Killer case pointed across the courtroom Thursday and identified David Joseph Carpenter as the "gentleman" who shot him and murdered his girlfriend on a Santa Cruz hiking trail three years ago.

Steven Haertle, 23, calmly described for jurors how a cool, sunny Sunday in Henry Cowell State Park turned into a nightmare of gunshots and murder.

Haertle was the second witness called in the trial, which began Wednesday. Carpenter, 54, is on trial for murder, at-

tempted murder and attempted rape in the shooting of Haertle and the killing of Ellen Marie Hansen March 29, 1981. He is also charged with raping and murdering Heather Scaggs, 20, May 2, 1981.

The 54-year-old defendant listened intently, his brow furrowed and his chin resting on his fist. He watched Haertle steadily as the tall, broad-shouldered PG&E economist spoke with a voice left slightly hoarse by a bullet from the attack.

Responding to the questions of Santa Cruz County District Attorney Art Danner, Haertle matter-of-factly told how he and Hansen, both 20-year-old UC Davis students at the time, had camped in the

park campground off Graham Hill Road the day before the shootings.

They went to town Saturday, he said, and wandered up and down the Boardwalk. Sunday morning they drove to Monterey and returned. At 4 p.m., they set out on what would turn into a fatal hike along Cowell park's Ridge Trail, he recounted.

As they walked down the sandy trail toward a towering cathedral grove of redwood trees, they passed a man wearing a green cap and a gold jacket, Haertle told the rapt jurors.

The couple returned on the same trail about a half-hour later, he said, talking and enjoying the view of the roller coaster at the Boardwalk. Suddenly, the man they previously had passed "came around the corner" from off the trail.

"He said, 'Ah, we've met again,'" Haertle said. "Then he pulled out a gun from his jacket and he pointed it at Ellen and I."

The gunman held the two on the trail for some minutes, and told them several times, "Do what I say," as Haertle begged him for their lives. "I said, 'Be careful El, he's got a gun.'"

"You called her El?" Danner asked. "Yes I did," Haertle responded. "He directed me to go down the trail. I took a step backward. Then Ellen said, 'Don't listen to him, Steve. Don't do as he says.'"

Please see Page A7

Trailside victim identifies Carpenter

Continued From Page A1

"I pleaded with him to let us go. I said, 'Please let us go. We won't tell anyone...' He said, 'I want to rape you.' He was looking at Ellen. She said, 'No. I'm not going to let you.'"

The gunman, just three feet away, began herding the pair toward the bushes at the edge of the trail, and Haertle said he could see the lead bullets resting in the revolver's cylinder.

Haertle said he was backing toward the

edge of the trail when he lost his footing. He looked over his shoulder, "and then shots went off ... I heard at least four."

"I heard two shots and didn't feel anything. And then I felt like somebody hit my neck with a sledgehammer, and I felt something hit my right hand."

"I remember waking up and looking at Ellen. Ellen was lying face down on the ground and her head was in a pool of blood. I picked up Ellen's head to see if she was alive, and she wasn't."

He fled down the trail while the gunman's back was turned, he said, bleeding from his neck, and found help from other hikers.

"Steve, is the man you saw on the 29th of March, the man who shot you and Ellen, present in this courtroom?" Danner asked.

"Yes he is," the survivor replied. "Would you point him out for all of us?"

Haertle stretched out his arm and pointed to Carpenter: "It's that gentleman

sitting right there, in the brown sweater and the glasses."

The bullet which damaged facial and vocal nerves, smashed a major artery and nicked Haertle's jugular vein, and the two slugs removed from Hansen's head were fired from gun linked to Carpenter, Danner has said.

That gun also fired the bullets which killed Scaggs, and five other hikers in Marin County, authorities have said.

Carpenter is charged with those killings, but has not been arraigned.

Haertle is set to resume his testimony Tuesday, Danner said. Defense attorneys Larry Biggam and Stephen Wright plan to cross examine him, they said.

Danner has said he is determined to send Carpenter to the gas chamber.

The trial may last through the summer, attorneys have indicated.

'I remember waking up and looking at Ellen. Ellen was lying face down on the ground and her head was in a pool of blood. I picked up Ellen's head to see if she was alive, and she wasn't.'

— Steven Haertle, Trailside shooting victim