

KING, Ernie  
Murder

# Hearing in killing set today

By MARK BERGSTROM  
Sentinel staff writer

7-14-88

SANTA CRUZ — A preliminary hearing is scheduled for today for Gregory Kern, one of three men charged in connection with the death of Ernie King.

Kern, 34, of the Summit area is charged with assault with intent to cause great bodily injury for allegedly jumping on and kicking King shortly before King's death on June 24.

Kern's friend and co-worker, Robert Spedding, 29, is accused of the murder for allegedly forcing King out of the back of a moving pickup truck after attempting to rob King. A third man, Brett Erickson, 24, who was driving the truck, is charged with leaving the scene of a fatal accident.

According to authorities, King, 38, was returning home to Live Oak from a graduate class at San Jose State the evening of his death. King, the father of two, was legally blind and did not drive. He rode to and from school with a classmate who lives at the summit.

Authorities say the classmate let King off at the park-and-ride lot, where King's habit was to seek a ride down Old San Jose Road from one of the commuters who use the lot.

King approached a group of men standing around a car drinking on June 24. One of those men was Spedding, who allegedly stepped forward and punched King, knocking him to the ground.

Authorities say that Erickson and Kern pulled up in the truck and that Kern jumped out and joined in assaulting King.

Detectives allege that after the attack, Spedding somehow forced King to get in the back of the pickup. Witnesses reportedly have said it appeared that King got in under his own power.

A short time later, King died of injuries suffered when he struck the pavement on Summit Road. Authorities allege that Spedding forced King out after attempting to rob him.

A preliminary hearing for Spedding and Erickson will be conducted later.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Municipal Court Judge Tom Kelly will decide whether sufficient evidence was presented to order Kern to stand trial on the charges.