

Serial Murders in Santa Cruz County

By Sharon Yamanaka

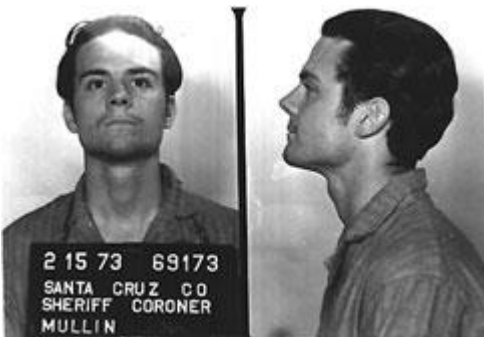
In 1973, with the discovery of four bodies in Henry Cowell State Park, then District Attorney Peter Chang mumbled a comment about "Murderville, USA." It was picked up by a reporter and went to wire service as "Murder Capital of the World." Santa Cruz was stuck with the nickname for many years because of local serial killers, Herbert Mullin, Edmund Emil Kemper III and John Linley Frazier.

Ohta murders, Oct. 19, 1970



Dr. Victor Ohta, a prominent Santa Cruz County ophthalmologist; his wife, two sons and his secretary were slain at the family residence in Soquel. John Linley Frazier of Soquel was arrested 4 days later. There was a grand jury indictment Oct. 28, 1970. The trial started Oct. 18, 1971 and Frazier was convicted Nov. 29, 1971 for the murder of five persons. He was declared legally sane and sentenced to die in San Quentin's gas chamber. California abolished the death penalty in 1972, automatically commuting the sentence to life imprisonment.

Mullin, Herbert



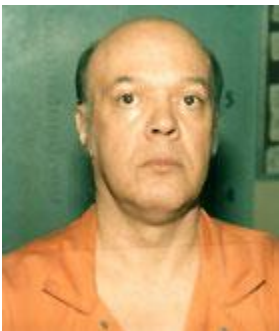
Between Oct. 12, 1972 and Feb. 13, 1973, thirteen murders were committed by Mullin. He was arrested on Feb. 13, 1973. During the trial which started in July 1973, Mullin stated he heard "die songs", messages that told him to commit human sacrifices to prevent massive earthquakes on the San Andreas Fault. Mullin was charged and convicted of 10 murders and was sentenced in Sept. 1973 to a life in prison.

Kemper, Edmund Emil III



In 1964, 16 year old Kemper shot and killed his grandparents and was committed to Atascadero State Hospital. He was released into his mother's custody in 1969. Dubbed the "Co-ed Killer", Kemper murdered 8 women, including his mother, between May 1972 and April 1973. He was arrested April 24, 1973. The trial started Oct. 15, 1973. He was convicted on Nov. 8, 1973 and sentenced to 8 concurrent life-prison terms with possibility of parole.

Trailside Killer



A woman hiker was killed in Henry Cowell State Park on Mar. 29, 1981. A second body was found in Big Basin State Park. David Joseph Carpenter was arrested May 15, 1981. He was convicted of both murders on July 6, 1984. In a separate trial, he was convicted of 5 murders in Marin County. He was sentenced to the gas chamber on Nov. 16, 1984.

Sources

- *Ohta – Santa Cruz Sentinel. Oct 23, 1970; Nov 11, 1970; Oct 17, 1971 and Dec. 6, 1971. Encyclopedia of World Crime, Vol. II., p 1229.*
- *Mullin – Santa Cruz Sentinel. June 14, 1985. Mid-County Post. Oct 6, 1992. Encyclopedia of World Crime, Vol. III., pp. 2249-50.*
- *Kemper – Santa Cruz Sentinel. April 25, 1973; Oct 15, 1973; Nov 9, 1973 and June 13, 1997. Encyclopedia of World Crime, Vol. III, pp. 1791-2.*
- *Trailside – Santa Cruz Sentinel. May 26, 1981; July 6, 1984; Nov. 16, 1984 and Jan. 21, 1998.*

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