

# Blood RIVAL

Santa Cruz in the 1970s was in trouble. Mental hospitals were closed down, disgorging patients into a world they could not cope with. One such patient committed numerous murders in the belief that he was averting an earthquake.

**S**anta Cruz District Attorney Peter Chang referred to his jurisdiction as the 'murder capital of the world' in the early 1970s, when three mass killers were operating there. A schizophrenic religious fanatic, John Linley Frazier, murdered five people there in a single berserk outburst in 1970, while Kemper claimed five victims in 1973.

The third Santa Cruz mass murderer, Herbert Mullin, killed 13 people in four months. He had a unique motive. Mullin declared he killed to save lives; by 'sacrificing' strangers, he was convinced he was preventing the destruction of California by an earthquake.

## Anniversary birth

He was born on 18 July 1947, the anniversary of the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake, but there was little in his early life to predict what he would become.

His parents, Martin, a war hero who worked as a furniture salesman, and Jean, lived in or near San Francisco while Herbert was growing up. To all outward

► *Convicted on two counts of first-degree murder and nine of second-degree murder, Herb Mullin (seen here) will be in prison until 2025. He confessed to a minister that 'Satan gets into people and makes them do things they don't want to.'*







appearances he was a normal child, though he later maintained that his parents, especially his father, tormented him. He was convinced his father had sent telepathic threats to other children so that they would not play with him.

### Good scholar

In 1963, the Mullins moved to Santa Cruz where Martin got a job with the Post Office. Herbert did well at high school as both an athlete and a scholar, and was voted Most Likely to Succeed from his graduating class. His happiness was tempered, though, when his best friend was killed in a motor accident. Soon after this, another friend, Jim Gianera, introduced him to drugs.

Mullin took a two-year course in road engineering at Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, then in 1967 went to San Jose to take a course in Eastern religions. He spent just three months at San Jose, where he started taking LSD regularly.

He began acting strangely, and became subject to temper tantrums. In 1969, he had his first psychotic episode. He was admitted to a mental hospital, where he was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. He left after six weeks, refusing to take any after-care medication, and drifted aimlessly from job to job.

### Hopeless case

He talked of hearing voices which told him what to do and was committed to a

mental hospital. For the next two years, he was in and out of institutions with no noticeable improvement in his condition; in fact he was getting worse.

▲ In the 1970s, Peter Chang, the Santa Cruz district attorney, regarded his jurisdiction as the world's murder capital. By 1998, this notorious reputation had long gone.

AP/Wide World

### GOD'S MESSENGER

On 19 October 1970, an eye surgeon, Dr Victor Ohta, his wife, their two sons and his secretary were found shot to death in the pool of their home overlooking Santa Cruz. A note ascribed the killings to an anti-materialist and anti-environmental group, the 'pepole [sic] of the free universe'.

Four days later, John Linley Frazier, 24, a mechanic who lived in a

cowshed down the hill from Ohta's luxury home, was arrested for the shootings.

Clearly schizophrenic, Frazier felt he had a religious mission – he believed that the Book of Revelations was specifically addressed to him – to save the world from materialism and pollution, and the murder of the Ohta family was the first step of his crusade. Found legally sane, Frazier was sentenced to life imprisonment on five counts of murder.



In 1972, he returned to live with his parents in Santa Cruz. They tried to find a hospital for him, but the state government was busily trying to close down all the mental hospitals.

At this time, Herbert worked up his theory of preventing earthquakes by human sacrifice. He heard voices commanding him to go out and kill somebody. The voices sounded like his father.

### First murder

On 13 October 1972, he was driving in the Santa Cruz mountains when he saw an old man standing by the side of the road. Mullin battered him to death with a baseball bat.

His next victim was a hitchhiking student, Mary Guilfoyle, whom he stabbed. Then, on 2 November, he stabbed to death a Catholic priest, Henri Tomei, in a

church confessional.

By this time, Mullin was convinced people were offering themselves up telepathically as victims. On 16 December, he bought a gun, lying about his past when he filled in the form.

On 25 January 1973, he went looking for Jim Gianera. He found he had moved, but the new tenant gave him a forwarding address. Mullin went straight there, shot Gianera and his wife dead, then returned to their old house to murder the young woman who had given him the address, and her two small sons.

### Shot down

At the beginning of February, Mullin went hiking in Santa Cruz's state park. Here he found four teenage boys camping, and killed them all before they could react – he was a crack

shot, having won prizes from the National Rifle Association as a boy.

Less than a week later, on 13 February, Mullin killed his last victim, a 72-year-old man who happened to be at work in his garden as Mullin drove by. This time, he was seen, and arrested soon after.

### Paternal fault

Mullin attempted to blame his father for all the killings – he was just his tool, driven by fate: 'A rock doesn't make a decision while it's falling, it just falls.'

The only issue at Mullin's trial in August was his sanity. Defence and prosecution agreed that Mullin was a textbook case of paranoid schizophrenia, but this was not enough to win him a verdict within the legal definition of insanity. He was accordingly sentenced to life imprisonment.

## In focus

### REAGAN'S FOLLY

In the early 1970s, at a time when several mentally ill murderers were plaguing California, State Governor Ronald Reagan (below) was industriously closing down the state mental hospitals.

This was done to cut costs and to take advantage of promised federal funding of community-based health centres. However, these funds did not materialize, and many mental patients were simply turned out into low-rent 'psychiatric ghettos' in Californian towns.

Despite this, Governor Reagan persisted with his short-sighted policy. However Herbert Mullin's case caused a public outcry and, in 1974, the state legislature passed a bill preventing any more hospitals being closed.

