

Edmund the CONFESSOR

Edmund Kemper's recorded confession – a long, dispassionate account of each slaying that would be played back in court months later – sickened the police and the victims' families. His trial produced one inevitable verdict.

Later in the day on which Kemper gave himself up, a party of police from Santa Cruz flew out to Colorado. It included Sergeant Aluffi, who had been to the house in Aptos and discovered the bodies, Lieutenant Scherer, and District Attorney Peter Chang.

They found Kemper keen to talk. He waived all his legal rights and began to confess on tape. There was nothing halting, reluctant or inarticulate about his confession, which he repeated at even greater length back in Santa Cruz.

He paraded his gift for observation and memory for detail with some pride. This

▲ Police dig up the small garden outside Kemper's apartment building in Alameda in the search for evidence. After his arrest, Kemper directed the police to many spots where he had hidden his victims' remains.

Corbis-Bettmann/UPi

24.4.73 Ed Kemper is arrested by the police in Pueblo, Colorado. The Santa Cruz police fly up to interview him. He gives a lengthy account of the murders

25.10.73 Kemper's trial opens at Santa Cruz before Judge Harry F. Brauer. It lasts three weeks

14.11.73 Kemper is found guilty on eight counts of first-degree murder. He is sent to the Vacaville Medical Facility in Solano County, near Sacramento

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was his final triumph. He luxuriated in it, enjoying the sensation of making experienced policemen blanch.

Female victims

He told them about the six young women he had killed, and about several more whom he had picked up and delivered safely to their destinations because something was not quite right; he was not

in the mood, did not have an opportunity to use his weapons, or had simply been touched by them in some way.

He told the police where to find the

would sometimes insist that they leave before he pointed out the exact locations to detectives.

As far as the police were concerned, he

“ Because I want help. If I go to a penitentiary, I’ll be locked up in a little room... and I’ll be left to my fantasies. ”

Kemper on why he confessed so easily

▼ Kemper (left, with hand on hip) shows police the wooded area in the Santa Cruz mountains, above the town of Boulder Creek, where he buried the head and hands of Aiko Koo. The rest of her was not found.

bodies he had so painstakingly hidden, and took them there when they went back to California. On these expeditions, they were trailed by a gaggle of reports, and Kemper

was co-operative in every way he could be, volunteering to take a lie-detector test about the crimes. He had no illusion about what was happening, insisting ‘this whole



In focus

THE LAWYERS

District Attorney Peter Chang (right) was small in stature but large in his political ambitions. His deputy, Christopher Cottle, had led the prosecution of killer Herb Mullin, and Chang saw the trial of Kemper as an excellent way of increasing his public profile.

James Jackson, a flamboyant and persuasive speaker, handled the defences of John Frazier and Herbert Mullin as well as that of Kemper.

Jackson's defence speeches, and conduct at the trial, were influenced by his hearty contempt for the profession of psychiatry. This is particularly true of his exchanges with Doctor Joel Fort, a court-appointed medical witness.

process is merely a matter to decide by which method I won't see society again. And I certainly wouldn't trust me in society again.'

It seemed he simply could not stop talking, compulsively explaining it all: 'I had some Accounts Payable,' he commented, 'and I had to balance the accounts... Emotionally I couldn't handle it much longer.'

Kemper's friends at the Jury Room and elsewhere could not believe the news. He was seen there as a gentle giant, an outgoing, friendly man averse to violence or outbursts of temper.

Psychiatric pow-wow

The psychiatrists who had worked with him at Atascadero organized a meeting in order to try to understand what had gone wrong. Apart from the fact that they had said all along that Kemper should have been kept from his mother, their findings were inconclusive.

The whole profession of clinical psychiatry was under attack. Herbert Mullin, another mass murderer who operated in Santa Cruz at the same time as Kemper, had likewise been released from a mental hospital. This caused a major breakdown in public confidence, and psychiatrists were forced to admit that every decision to release a mental patient with a history of violence was a calculated risk.

Back in Santa Cruz, Kemper was locked up in the next cell to Mullin. Kemper detested Mullin who, he asserted, had killed people 'for no good reason', and



took particular exception to Mullin's singing voice, which he would exercise to the annoyance of all the other prisoners on the block.

Kemper threw water over him to shut him up. But he also remembered: 'When

psychologist ready to testify for his client.

Together with a young private investigator, Harold Cartwright, Jackson interviewed Kemper in his cell for hours, trying to find some evidence of legal insanity. Both men had the impression that

“ I think he could best be described as a sex maniac...The second theme was a tremendous range of hatred, rage or aggressiveness. ”

Dr Joel Fort, psychiatrist, on Kemper

he was a good boy, I'd give him peanuts. Herbie liked peanuts... That's called behaviour modification treatment.'

James Jackson, the chief public defender for Santa Cruz County, was given the job of defending Kemper. It was a huge task. Kemper had admitted everything, and Jackson could not find a psychiatrist or

Kemper was holding something back, but never discovered what it was.

Nevertheless, Kemper pleaded 'not guilty by reason of insanity' when his trial opened in Santa Cruz in October 1973 before Judge Harry F. Brauer.

The first thing the prosecution did was play back the tapes of Kemper's

► Detectives remove the shovel that Kemper used to bury parts of his dismembered victims. He would often visit the burial sites weeks after the murders; he also kept their belongings for some time.

confessions. Families and friends of the victims heard Kemper describe dissections, beheadings, the planning of yet more murders, the buying of weapons, stabbings, shootings and burials. The defendant had asked to be absent from the courtroom while the tapes were played, but the request was turned down. Forensic experts then testified to finding large puddles of dried blood in the Ford Galaxie, and police witnesses gave details of Kemper's arrest.

Suicide attempt

On 29 October, Kemper appeared with a bandaged wrist. The previous day, a Sunday, he had tried to commit suicide for the second time since he was arrested, opening a vein with a pen given to him by a journalist and then fighting all attempts to help him until he was overpowered.

Much of the three-week trial was taken up by medical witnesses. Dr Joel Fort, a well-known psychiatrist from the Bay Area and a lecturer on crime at the University of California, described Kemper as a 'sex maniac', but concluded that he was legally sane, though a psychopath. Other psychiatrists called by the prosecution broadly agreed with him.

Fort suggested that the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia made when Kemper was 15 was a mistake. After the



trial, psychiatrists who had examined young Kemper and seen his record were to suggest that the original finding was correct.

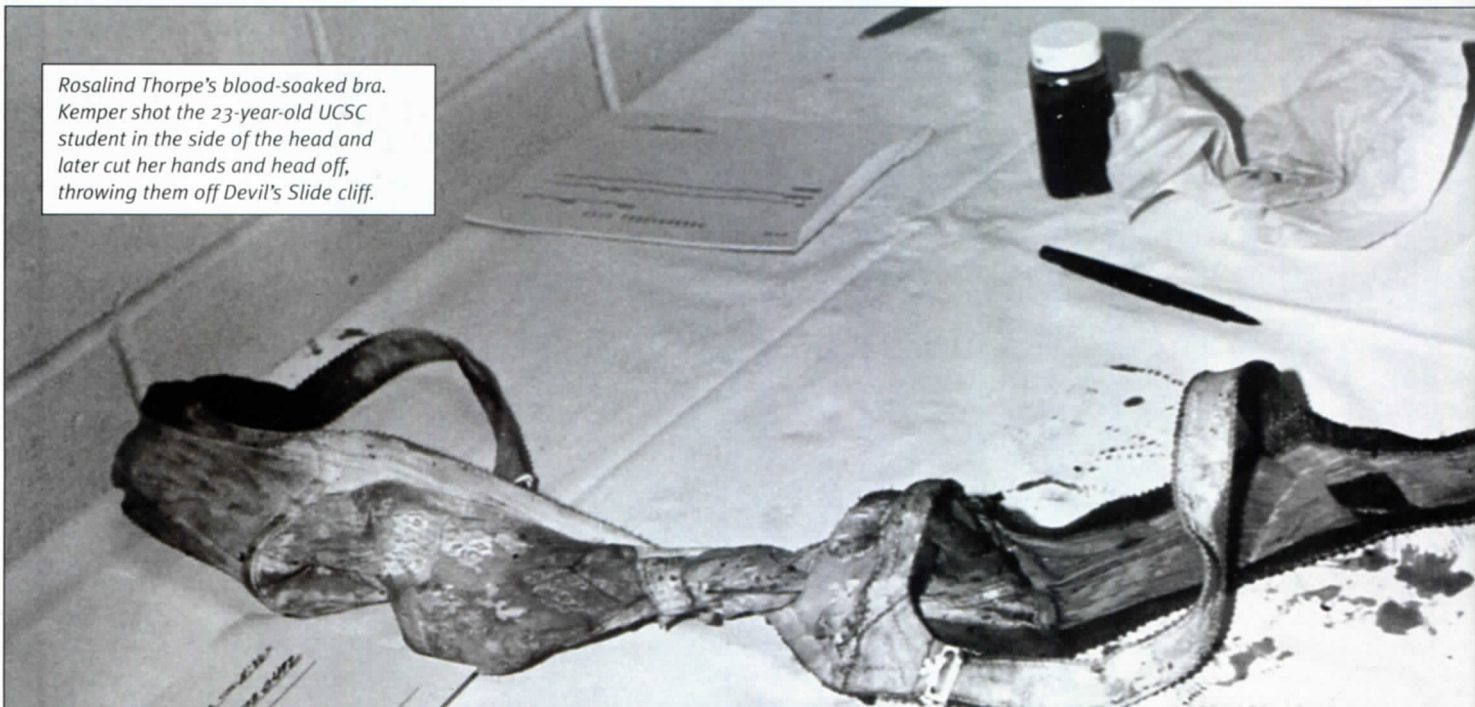
Family suspicions

The best witness his defence team had was his sister, Allyn, who remembered strange

episodes from his childhood, such as the torture of the family cat. She guessed Edmund might have been involved, she said, when she heard that Cindy Schall had been beheaded. Her mother, too, had suspected him, and had questioned him about the killings.

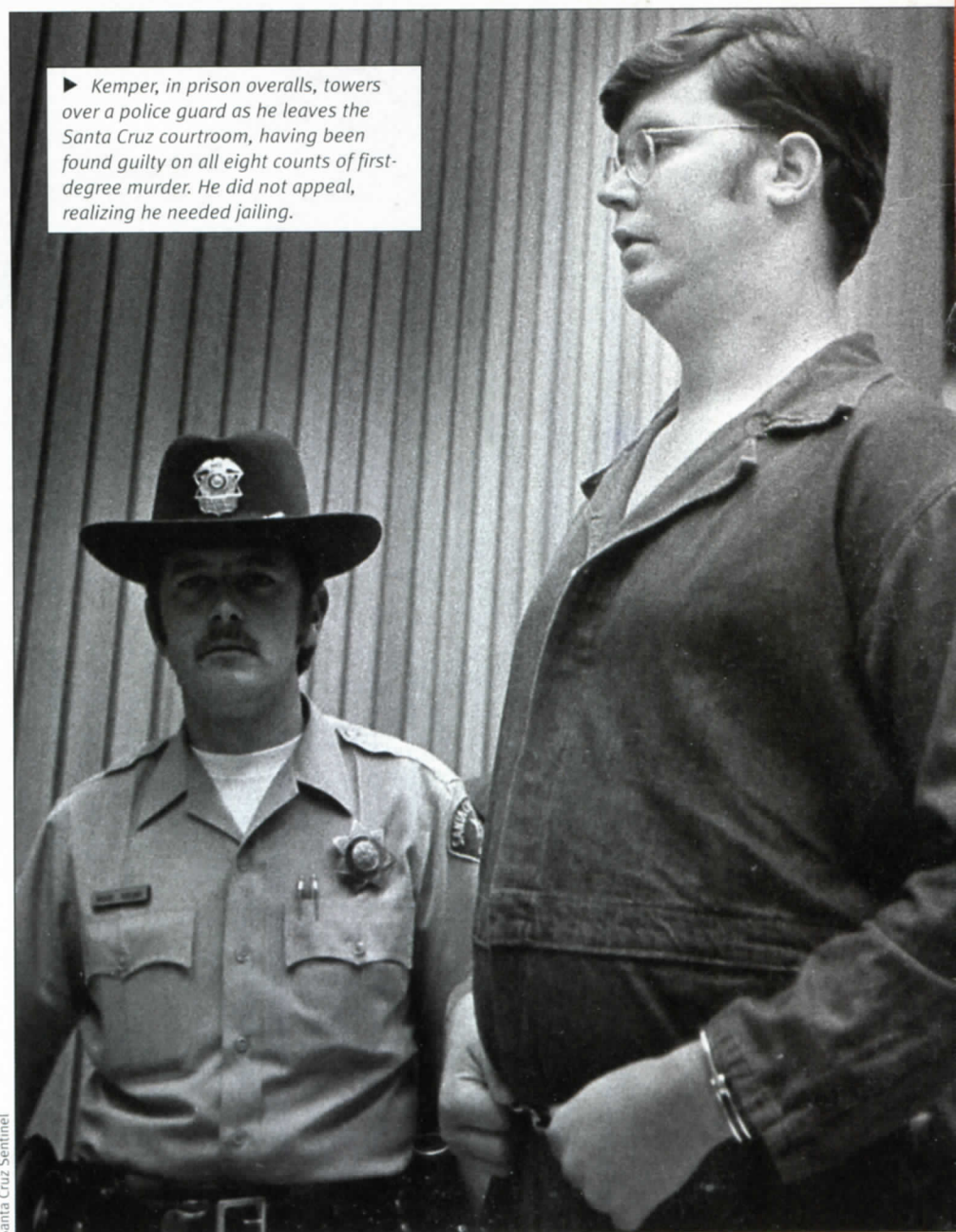
Kemper took the witness stand on 1

Rosalind Thorpe's blood-soaked bra. Kemper shot the 23-year-old UCSC student in the side of the head and later cut her hands and head off, throwing them off Devil's Slide cliff.





AP/Wide World



► Kemper, in prison overalls, towers over a police guard as he leaves the Santa Cruz courtroom, having been found guilty on all eight counts of first-degree murder. He did not appeal, realizing he needed jailing.

Santa Cruz Sentinel

November. He was emotional, at times tearful, and nervous in a way that he had never been when confessing to the police. When asked why he had confessed, he claimed 'I want help. If I go to a penitentiary, I'll be locked up in a little room where I can't hurt anybody and I'll be left to my fantasies.'

Hesitantly, he attempted to describe his fantasy world, beginning with visions of peace and contentment in early childhood and going on to outline his perverted adolescent sexual fantasies at Atascadero and his later lurid dreams of wholesale slaughter.

Jackson, in his closing arguments, presented his client as a battleground of good and evil, where one side of his character 'is fighting to be there with us and the other is slipping off to his own little world of fantasy where he is happy'.

The verdict

Despite Jackson's eloquence, the jury were out for just five hours before finding Kemper sane and guilty on all eight counts of first-degree murder. Since the death penalty was suspended in California at the time – it was reinstated at the beginning of 1974 – Judge Brauer sentenced Edmund Kemper to life imprisonment, strongly recommending that he never be let out.

There was no appeal.

■ Since he was convicted on 14 November 1973, Ed Kemper has been serving his eight life sentences at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville.

■ At the time of his sentencing, California law provided for the possibility of parole for lifers after only six years in prison. Parole hearings for Ed Kemper began in 1978, but he has been denied a parole date on each occasion that he has come before the board. In 1988, the board rejected a psychiatric evaluation by Dr Jack Fleming,

describing Kemper as 'suitable for release'.

■ In 1977, Kemper went to court seeking permission to have a portion of his brain operated on. Kemper wanted to 'reroute electrical circuits in his brain' but this request was denied. Dr Hunter Brown of Santa Monica, California, had offered to perform the surgery free of charge.

■ In 1981, Ed Kemper received a public service award for his work recording books for the blind. He was supervising 15 inmate workers.