

Suspect: ex-con and escapee

By James A. Finefrock

David Joseph Carpenter, the suspect arrested today in the trailside killings, is an ex-convict and jail escapee who once called himself the "Zodiac" killer.

In 1970, Carpenter, now 51, was convicted of two counts of robbery and kidnap and spent the next seven years in state prisons until he was paroled on Feb. 2, 1977.

While he was serving time for those offenses, Carpenter was convicted in the fall of 1970 for an earlier forcible rape in Santa Cruz County.

Before his commitment to state prison in 1970, Carpenter and four other men cut their way through the cell bars of the Calaveras County Jail and escaped.

It was then that newspaper accounts said Carpenter called himself the "Zodiac," although they also said that police did not take him seriously.

Carpenter was paroled to the state's interstate parole unit in 1977, according to state prison records, and was discharged from parole on July 1, 1978.

His assignment to the interstate unit means, state prison officials said, that he lived out of California during that period.

The 1970 charges against Carpenter in Calaveras County stemmed from a series of robberies that ended with his capture in a Modesto bus station.

Carpenter's police record, according to 1970 newspaper accounts, dated



DAVID JOSEPH CARPENTER
1960 arrest photo

back to 1947, when he was sent to the California Youth Authority on a morals charge.

Federal court records show that a David J. Carpenter was convicted in 1960 of assault to commit murder and assault with a dangerous weapon. He received a total sentence of 14 years. San Francisco police said they believe he is the same man arrested this morning.

Carpenter, who then lived in Pacifi-

ca, was sentenced in March 1961 for those crimes, based on the hammer beating of a secretary in the Presidio the previous summer. Federal Judge Louis E. Goodman based the sentence on a 90-day psychiatric study that showed he should be locked away "in the interests of society."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, Carpenter remained in federal prison at Lompoc for the next eight years, until his April 7, 1969, discharge under the mandatory release program. He was returned to federal custody in Feb. 28, 1977 and served until Sept. 6, 1979 when he was paroled.

The earliest killing authorities positively link to the so-called Zodiac killer was in December 1968, when Carpenter was still in federal custody.

Prisons officials said that Carpenter, under a parole expiring Oct. 28, 1982, was reporting once a month to a parole officer in San Francisco.

Napa County Sheriff's Capt. Ken Narlow, longtime Zodiac murder investigator, said that Carpenter's period in prison would seem to rule him out as a suspect, because Zodiac possibly committed a Riverside murder in 1967, and definitely committed a murder in December 1968.

Records of the state Department of Motor Vehicles show that Carpenter, who lives at 38 Sussex in San Francisco, is the registered owner of a 1969 Chevrolet station wagon bearing the personalized license plate, DJCARP.