

Photos by Gary Fong

EDWARD NEVIN III, THE VICTIM'S GRANDSON
'Incredible—the scientific method gone mad'

Family Stunned by Germ Revelation

SFChronicle

By Robert Bartlett

DEC 23 1976

A close-knit San Francisco family was shocked and bewildered yesterday to learn that their patriarch died after a secret U.S. Army bacteriological warfare experiment here in 1950.

The man, Edward J. Nevin, an immigrant from County Kilkenny, Ireland, died at the old Stanford Hospital on Nov. 1, 1950, of a heart infection caused by *Serratia marcescens*, a bacterium of the same species released here by Army chemical warfare experts shortly before Nevin's death.

Nevin was the only known fatality suspected of being connected with the biological warfare tests in eight American cities and military installations between 1950 and 1966.

"My feeling is that of bewilderment and shock — at being forced to relive a very trying time for our family," said Edward J. Nevin Jr. of Glen Ellen, a retired San Francisco policeman and one of the victim's six surviving children.

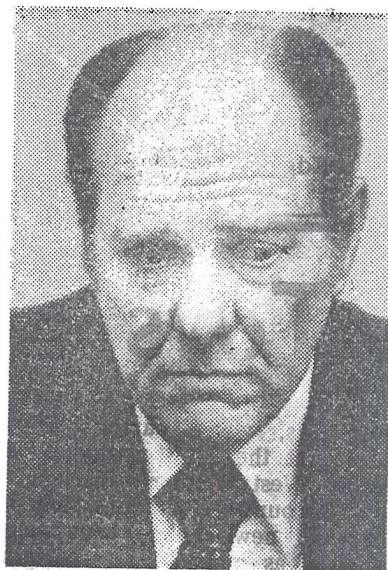
Despite his age, the elder Nevin was in good health, his son recalled yesterday.

"My father was operated on for a prostate condition in September, 1950," Nevin added. "He seemed to recover but then apparently had a relapse, and was readmitted to the hospital."

Then followed three weeks of "intense pain and suffering" before the elder Nevin's death, his son said, which the family ascribed to complications from the operation.

Although the *Serratia marcescens* infection was eventually diagnosed by doctors of the retired Pacific Gas and Electric Co. employee, "No one, of course, had the slightest idea where it came from," Edward Nevin Jr. added.

The son sat in the office of a San Francisco law firm founded



EDWARD NEVIN JR.
Father's pain recalled

by three of his children as he spoke.

Edward J. Nevin III, one of the lawyers, a grandson and namesake of the suspected victim of the chemical warfare experiment, then spoke for the entire family:

"It is just incredible — the scientific method gone mad — Dr. Strangelove, but it is not fiction. The Department of the Army completely disregarded the dignity of the individual."

He continued:

"There is absolutely no justification in our society for the Defense Department to act in reckless disregard of the very people it is supposed to protect."

His law partners — brother James and sister Margaret Mary Johnston — nodded solemnly.

The three attorneys "have no idea" whether the family will sue — "but a lawsuit would have some value in getting the truth of this sorry episode into the open," the grandson concluded.