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Trial Told Of Killing In Soledad

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SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 6—

A black convict who said his life was in danger for testifying against the "Soledad Brothers" gave an eyewitness account at their trial today of the killing of Soledad prison guard John V. Mills.

Thomas A. York, serving time for manslaughter, said he saw "brothers" Fleeta Drumgo and George Jackson pounding Mills with their fists Jan. 17, 1970, in the prison's "Y" wing.

He said he also saw Jackson beat the guard with a flashlight and slide him between the bars of the third tier of cells, from where he fell to the floor of the first tier.

York said he had been "directly told that if I testified I would be killed." He also said it was suggested that he testify falsely.

York said further that attorney Faye Stender had interviewed him and told him it was "in her power to pass along the word that I was okay or not." Mrs. Stender represented Jackson at the time and York said he considered her remark "coercive."

York's account of the beating of Mills placed the third "Soledad Brother," John Clutchette, at the scene, but he did not mention any blows by Clutchette.

Jackson, the black revolutionary, was later killed in a bloody rampage at San Quentin Prison Aug. 21, 1971.

Clutchette and Drumgo are on trial for murder.

York said he observed the beating from Cell 344, across the wing. He said that he first noticed what was going on while in the company of another inmate named "Eschew." He said he told authorities what he had seen only after finding out that Eschew had given his versions and "I realized he would have to incriminate me."

York said at his first glimpse of the altercation he saw Jackson with an armlock on Mills and Drumgo "punching at him toward the face area" with his fists.

He said Mills fell to the floor of the tier face up when Jackson released him and later "Jackson knelt in the area of his chest and chopped him so to speak" with his open hand.

Later Jackson beat Mills with the guard's own flashlight, York said.

York said he had been moved around from prison to prison by authorities since "the word went out" at Soledad that he would be a witness, and he once escaped to try to avoid testifying.

He said a Soledad official had told him he would be "put back on the main line," if he didn't testify.