

# Guard Describes How He Shot Jackson

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SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 30—

Warden L. S. Nelson of San Quentin Prison said today that George Jackson was killed by a prison guard who was trying to shoot his legs, who had seen the gun Jackson carried and who was in a position to shoot only because he was moving from one gun station to another.

Mr. Nelson made these points in an interview as he reported previously undisclosed facts about the killing of Jackson, a convict-author, in a prison uprising Aug. 21. Three guards and two other convicts were also killed.

Jackson was reported shot as he ran out of the Adjustment Center at San Quentin, accompanied by John Larry Spain, another inmate. Mr. Nelson quoted this passage from the report of the guard whose bullet killed Jackson:

"He [Jackson] ran around the corner. It looked like he stumbled. He started running again. At this time I tried to aim for his legs, but he was running in a crouched position. I fired one round, and he fell."

## Report Revised

The warden would not disclose the guard's name. Mr. Nelson's remarks were given in explanation of contradictions in earlier accounts of Jackson's death. The initial coroner's report stated that Jackson had died from a bullet that entered the top of his head and coursed down through his back to emerge at the 10th rib.

This would have been unlikely, if not impossible, with the bullet coming from behind Jackson, some observers believed. Before the final autopsy report was issued, it was detected by the autopsy surgeon that the bullet had entered the convict's back and come out the top of his head.

The bullet was fired by a guard who was prone on a gunwalk at the corner of a cellblock 271 feet 6 inches from where Jackson was hit, Warden Nelson said. Previously, it was understood that the bullet had been fired from Guntower No. 2, which was farther away but in the same direction.

The gunwalks are passageways about 20 feet off the ground. They connect the cells and the guntowers with a balcony that gives access to the outside and through which guards with rifles pass to and from their duty stations. No

guns are allowed on the ground level, where prisoners might reach them.

The guard who shot Jackson had been on duty in a gun station that overlooks the prison's lower yard and the interior of the gymnasium. The prisoners had been moved out of that area, and he was returning to the gunwalk access area to turn in his rifle.

"I heard a person holler, 'Inmate with a pistol,'" the guard said in his official statement, which was read by Warden Nelson. The guard dropped to the gunwalk floor and saw two

men run from the Adjustment center into a paved roadway. He fired at the one with the gun, not knowing that he was George Jackson, the warden said.

Another shot was fired by a guard in Gun Tower No. 1, which is called "the balcony" and overlooks the Adjustment Center door. Warden Nelson said that it was thought this bullet, or a ricocheting fragment of it, had struck Jackson's left ankle and caused him to stumble.

Only two bullets were fired by the guards, the warden said.

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## Warden's Version

# How Jackson Was Killed

George Jackson was killed by a bullet that traveled 271 feet in an "almost horizontal" trajectory, San Quentin Warden Louis S. Nelson disclosed today.

Nelson explained that Jackson, who sparked an abortive escape attempt Aug. 7 in which he, two trusty inmates and three guards were killed, had been hit in the left ankle by another bullet only seconds earlier.

As the warden reconstructed the action today, Jackson and a fellow-convict, John Larry Spain, dashed out of San Quentin's adjustment center about 2:30 p.m., leaving the dead men behind.

## Running to Wall

Running toward the north wall, swerving to the left and to the right, Jackson came immediately into view of an armed guard at Gun Post 1, Nelson said.

That guard, on a balcony about 175 feet to the east, had already been alerted by a shout of "inmate with gun" — but neither he nor the guard who fired the fatal shot knew the convict was Jackson, the warden said.

The balcony guard fired the shot that struck Jackson in the ankle, and reported that he saw the fugitive as he "stumbled, fell to one knee, and then regained his balance."

## Second Guard Fires

Jackson disappeared from that man's field of view, but he and Spain then entered the view of a second armed guard who had taken a prone

position atop the gun wall to the south.

The second guard, too, reported Jackson "appeared to stumble, hit the ground, and then start running again," Nelson said.

Seeing a weapon in Jackson's hand, the second guard fired "seconds later" as the convict ran in a "crouched" style, he continued. Spain took cover in some bushes and was not hurt.

## Coroner's Report

A final coroner's report by Dr. Donovan O. Cooke said a high-velocity bullet struck Jackson in the middle of the back, hit two ribs and traveled on through the top of the skull. That was a reversal of the direction of the preliminary autopsy report, also made by Cooke.

Nelson cited scale drawings to show that the shot fired by the guard prone on the wall traveled almost parallel to the ground across the 271-foot distance.

He declined to name either of the guards involved. Their accounts, he said, are contained in a three-inch-thick report on the outbreak that has been compiled by prison authorities.