

10/4/71

Dear Js,

Having tired from wading hillside wet grass, I've been reading the clips sent 9/30 as I removed them from envelope. Having come to those of 8/24 from the NYT & SFC and two interesting unanswered ? is the 3rd graph of the Times story, I decided to make some notes that might be informative to you and thus also to me and others.

From here on I'll be commenting as I read to save time. Can lead to misunderstanding.

Jackson had, handled and used the pistol. Impossible without leaving prints. With grip off, chances are better, not worse, because grips are rough-finished, the clip this exposed quite smooth. The pistols and finished well, so the only questions are whether the prints were clear or smudged and whether they were identified. I have seen nothing but the claim that Jackson used the pistol. Perhaps he did, but there has not been even the claim to proof, aside from prison-guard allegations of having been him with a pistol.

This gun was used to shoot two prisoners in the back of the head. If it happened, the nature of the evidence would depend on a number of factors, one the character and design of the ammo and another the point of impact. In turn, such things determine the nature of the injuries. If soft or bullets without hardened cases were used, there should have been extensive fragmentation, including of dustlike particles that would glow in X-rays and that, by the modern tests, could be tied irrefutably to each other and to the manufacture of the ammo. If there was not extensive fragmentation, then a ~~particle~~ particle large enough to permit ballistics identification should have been piece or pieces large found. And all the bits in the bodies save the dust-size could and should have been removed. One of the curious things here is that there has been no reference to the nature and results of these autopsies. The tests should have include neutron-activation, which is more definitive than the older and less sensitive spectrographic analysis.

Rifle bullet hitting Jackson's clothes before it killed him left identifiable of microscopic traces on his clothing, which is what led to my early apprehension that something would happen to the clothing, as eventually you sent a clip showing it did.

If Jackson has been stripped, then the ammo in the pistol had to have been with it when he got it, which can be limiting on evidence that may later be alleged.

"Another officer discovered the gun in his hair"-Parks. Pretty wild and useful in future need to discredit Parks and officers. And if the lawyer interview was private and Jackson not being paraded around naked, even if the wig would have concealed the weapon, there seems to be no reason for not having preferred a pocket or the belt. If it was in the hair is is not possible that J. "seized the gun before the officer could get it."

Released autopsies: texts potentially valuable if you know anyone who has or can get without too much trouble. I do not presume the only errors are those reported.

"Outside help expected"? What? Tanks? Gas attack? Nonsense. The only kind that could have been expected is not relevant to this context-transportation.

Why waste precious ammo after throats are slashed?

If this is accurate reporting, there is more error in this first autopsy report, like one broken rib only.

Too much of this makes so little sense it can't be explained away as the normal emotional reaction to great stress. The SFChron story fortifies this. In its quote within quotes it is helpful: it limits the possibilities of the cause of death to a single bullet whose trajectory is impossible. Rather, path. It is specific in saying a fragment was recovered from the ankle.

(the word used both by inmates and custodians and the perfect word) you return not for six years but, once again, for life.

You are back on the treadmill and you likely have not committed a crime. You may have been violated for "bad companions" or equally vague offenses. Your return is not accompanied by a hearing at which you can confront your accuser or introduce evidence. None of those technicalities save you this time.

Parole

The prisoners' obsession with this perverted system is understandable and their brief, is, as I say, good. It is good but not nearly as effective as the description by a narcotics offender of his yearly meetings with the Adult Authority and his conviction, each time, that they cannot conceivably deny him parole. They do. Or the tale of the inmate who had his parole revoked for a robbery of which he had been acquitted. The Adult Authority, every year, wants to know why he committed it. It is surprised, every time, to discover that he was acquitted. And concludes, every time that the acquittal is beside the point.

These accounts of appearances before the Adult Authority are typical of the book. Aside from the concluding brief, *Inside* is free of legalisms. The essays and poems, all by prisoners, communicate an unsettlingly vivid picture of prison life in California. The arbitrariness, the isolation, the frustration, the emptiness, the homosexuality, the autosexuality, the fear, the

gallows humor that is gallows humor—it is almost all there. Almost, because what *Inside* lacks is the thoughts that are today primarily associated with prisoner-rebelliousness: the thoughts of black militants.

There are, I suspect, two reasons why *Inside*, although it has writings by blacks, provides us with none of the thoughts of the caged black militants. In the first place Minton, the editor, is white, and the writings are the product of a five-year program of inmate self-expression carried on under semi-official auspices. The writings assembled by Minton obviously are not the sort of writings that the officials had in mind when they let him conduct his program, but the circumstances of that program would almost surely deter black militant participation. Secondly, the events mentioned in *Inside* strongly suggest that most of the writings were composed before 1968, the year when black militancy began to become a significant voice in the prisoner-revolt chorus.

Militancy

Happily, *Black Voices* fills the *Inside* void. *Black Voices* begins with a lengthy introduction by Robert Giammanco who, we are informed, is an Italian sociologist.

Skip the introduction. It is a series of turgid, Marxist clichés followed by—turgid, Marxist clichés. But, to our good fortune, the introduction is nothing like the book.

Etheridge Knight, the editor of this slender volume, contributes the best writing. Some of his poems are excellent. They are a crisp, clean, naked enterprise. But artful writing is not the point of the book. It is designed to give us some insight into the world which confronts the caged black and his theories about ways to cope with it.

Not surprisingly, there is a lot of bitterness and rage here. But you may be surprised to discover that the rage is not directed at the daily racism of the prison institution but at the society which has caged the black and spawned the institution. It is a consistent thread running through all the writings' be the author young, old, literate or unaccustomed to putting his thoughts on paper.

The younger blacks, it is true, wish to challenge the inhumanity and racism of the prison institution directly, something their elders think they are not, how-

challenged wherever one happens to be and challenged now.

No Waiting

This breach between the young and older black prisoners is illustrated in an exchange of correspondence between Knight (an older prisoner) and a group of young blacks who were transferred to the Indiana State Prison after holding a sit-in demonstration at the Indiana Reformatory. The non-violent demonstration brought a very violent response, one dead, 46 wounded and the transfer of 55 to the hole in state prison.

Knight, a prison mainliner, cautions them that fruitless confrontation will delay the day of their release and, consequently, the day when they can join the liberation struggle on the outside where they can accomplish something. Their answer: "When you die, they should put on your tombstone, *He Waited*."

This is but one of many strident criticisms of himself which the editor has put in his book. (The word "Tom" is bandied about rather freely.) It is a measure of Knight's integrity that they appear. He must be one hell of a man. It is also, of course, a measure of the unswerving determination of young blacks, inside as well as out, to refuse acquiescence in racism no matter what the time, place, or consequences.

The fashionable civil libertarian analysis of society is that our institutions are more repressive than ever but that the objects of the repression, by their disinclination to be repressed, are subverting the government's program. Neither *Inside* nor *Black Voices* undermines that thesis.

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