

Warden Reports Jackson Had Gun Before Killings

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By WALLACE TURNER AUG 23 1971

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SAN QUENTIN, Calif., Aug. 22—George Jackson had a gun when he returned to his cellblock from a visit with a lawyer yesterday, Louis S. Nelson, warden of San Quentin Prison, said at a news conference today. Jackson and five others were killed when he attempted to escape immediately on re-entering the cellblock.

The warden would not identify the man who he said was Jackson's only visitor yesterday. In a slip of the tongue, as he described the security precautions taken with visitors, he said the visitor had been an attorney.

He would say no more. Nor did the warden flatly say that the gun Jackson carried in his dash for the prison walls had been smuggled to him by the visitor.

John E. Thorne, a San Jose attorney who has represented Jackson, was not the attorney involved in the visit. Mr. Thorne said he had not seen his client since last Monday, and the warden confirmed that Mr. Thorne was not yesterday's visitor.

Mr. Thorne, and Ed Bell, attorney for Mrs. Georgia Jackson, mother of the dead prisoner, raised a question that in some way the prison authorities had been responsible for Jackson's escape attempt and death.

"I can tell you exactly what happened," Mrs. Jackson said. "They set him up to kill him and they killed him. They'd been trying for 10½ years to do it and they did it."

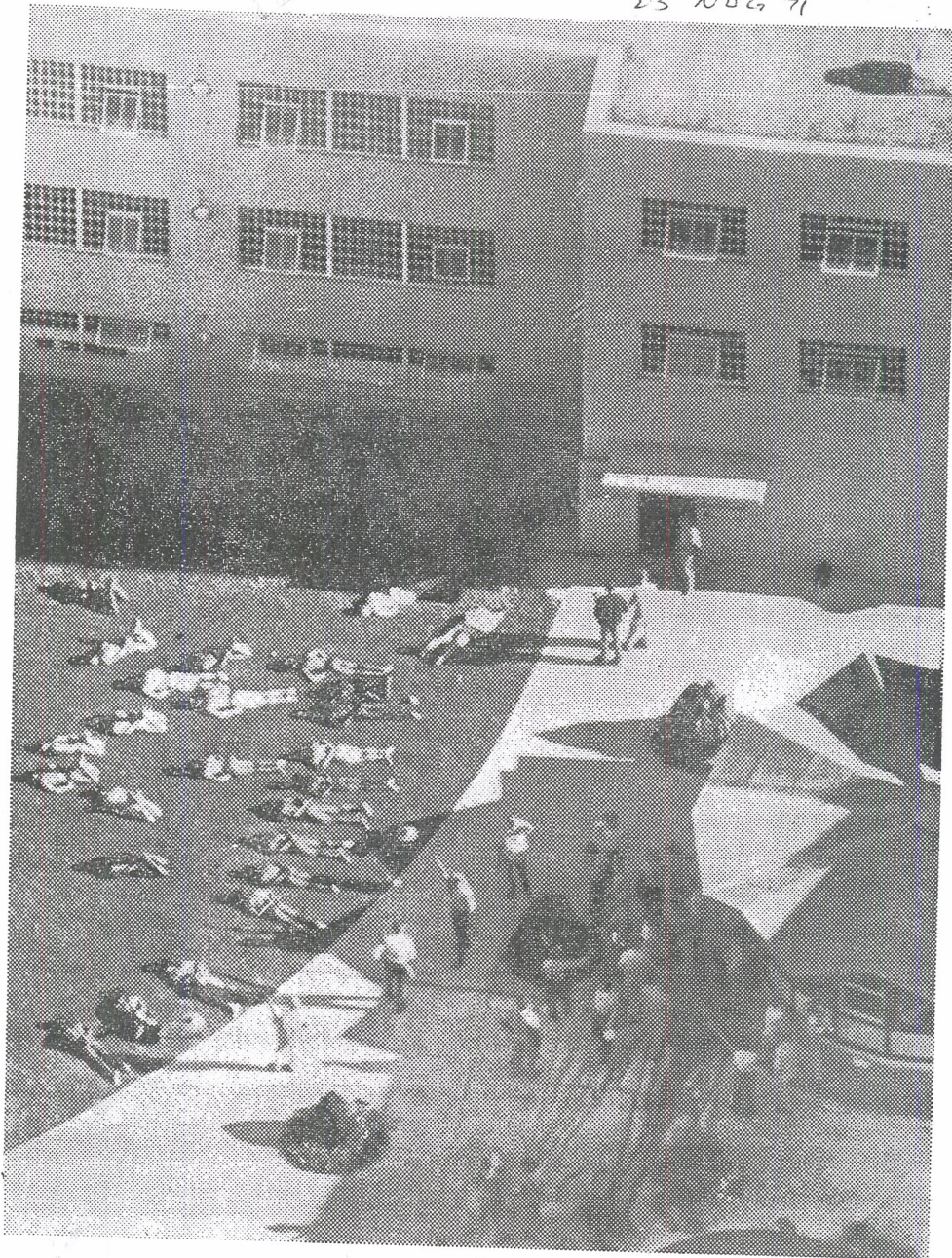
Warden Nelson denied that any prison officer would have taken part in such a plan. He pointed out that the escape attempt had left three guards dead and three others wounded.

"If it was set up, it was set up by people on the outside," the warden said. "He was a victim of their and his beliefs."

The warden said Jackson, one of three black prisoners known as the "Soledad Brothers" who are accused of murdering a guard at Soledad State Prison, was searched to the skin before being released from the maximum security cellblock

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Russ Reed /The Oakland Tribune via Associated Press
AFTER ATTEMPTED ESCAPE: Twenty-five prisoners lying undressed and handcuffed outside adjustment center at San Quentin as prison guards search for weapons.



Associated Press

BODIES REMOVED FROM SAN QUENTIN: Hearses leaving the maximum-security prison with bodies of the six men slain in the attempted escape Saturday. The escape attempt occurred in the adjustment center, which is behind the towers at center of the picture.

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called the Adjustment Center.

Jackson had no gun then, Mr. Nelson said. The prisoner was escorted to a visitors' center where he was placed in a room with one other person.

'Across From Attorney'

"He was seated across the table from his attorney," said Mr. Nelson said as he explained the physical surroundings. The warden immediately broke off his sentence and showed chagrin.

The warden was asked if he was searching for the visitor, and said that he assumed other authorities were trying to find him. The visitor left the prison before the gates were closed after the escape alarm was flashed, he said.

During the visit, Jackson and the visitor faced across a table, Mr. Nelson said. He said there had been no barriers to prevent them from touching.

Guards could look into the room but did not have it constantly under surveillance.

After the visit, Jackson was escorted back to the Adjustment Center and was undergoing another "skin search" when, the warden said, he produced the gun and announced: "This is it!"

The gun was a 9-mm. foreign-make automatic pistol, the Warden said. Earlier it had been described as a .38-caliber weapon. It was found beside Jackson's body after he was shot down as he ran toward a wall. State investigators are trying to trace its ownership.

Jackson Produced Weapon

"We do know that the gun was brought into the Adjustment Center by George Jackson," Mr. Nelson said. "As soon as he went into the Adjustment Center he produced the weapon and said, 'This is it!'"

Three officers were on duty

in the Adjustment Center's first floor, where were housed 27 prisoners who included those the warden called "the worst of our incorrigibles."

The prisoners included Jackson, 29 years old; Fleeta Drumgo, 26, and John W. Cluchette, 28, the Soledad Brothers; and Ruchell Magee, 32, a co-defendant with Angela Davis, charged with conspiracy to murder in connection with a gun battle at the Marin County Court House on Aug. 7, 1970.

In that incident, George Jackson's 17-year-old brother, Jonathan, smuggled guns into a courtroom and touched off the escape attempt in which he was one of four killed.

Other Officers in Area

Two other officers were in the cell corridor, having escorted inmates back from visits, the warden said. A sixth officer, a sergeant, was also there to assign one of the escorts to another duty detail.

At the moment that Jackson pulled his gun, the warden said, there were six officers and 27 inmates in the cells, or in the 100-foot long corridor outside the cells. Jackson was the only prisoner outside a cell. The warden said it was assumed Jackson had opened the other cells before he fled.

When there was a delay, Mr. Nelson said, an officer outside the corridor opened a door to check, and a shot was fired. He retreated and summoned

help. Officers outside heard another shot. Then Jackson, followed by Larry John Spain, 22, a lifer from Los Angeles, sentenced for murder, burst out of the cellblock door and ran across the prison yard.

An officer in a tower shot Jackson with a rifle from about 60 feet away. Spain stopped and was captured in the yard.

30 to 40 Seconds Elapsed

From the time Jackson entered the cellblock until he came running out it has been estimated that 30 to 40 seconds elapsed.

The warden said another 15 minutes had elapsed before guards went back into the cell corridor. They found 23 of the prisoners alive and moving in the corridor.

In Jackson's cell, they found the bodies of two slain guards, a wounded guard and a dead prisoner. Another guard and another prisoner were dead in the corridor, where there were two more wounded guards. Both of the dead prisoners were white.

The throats of the dead and wounded had been slashed. A

search turned up the probable weapon — half a razor blade fitted into a toothbrush handle. Another half razor blade was found in the cellblock.

The dead guards were identified by the prison authorities as Sgt. Jere Graham, 39, a guard since 1964 and a recent transfer to San Quentin; Frank DeLeon, 44, a guard for four years, and Paul Krasnes, 52, a guard for 22 years.

The wounded guards were Charles Breckenridge, 21, in critical condition from throat slashes; Sgt. Kenneth McCray, 39, in good condition, and Urbano Rubiaco, 24, who was treated and released.

The two white prisoners who were killed were John Lynn, 29, convicted of second-degree murder in a deputy sheriff's death, and Ronald L. Kane, 28, who had used force in an attempt to escape.

'Someone Didn't Like Them'

The associate warden, James W. L. Parks, said "maybe someone didn't like them," when he was asked why the prisoners were killed. Mr. Nelson said he did not know at what point in the escape attempt the killings of the guards and prisoners occurred.

"It could have been in retaliation for the shooting of Jackson," he said.

Last night Mr. Parks said that "dilettante revolutionary" talk had been responsible for creating tensions in the prison.

Today Mr. Nelson displayed copies of The Berkeley Tribe, an underground paper, and the Black Panther party paper as illustrations of publications he felt should not be permitted inside the prison because of the inflammatory effect he believes they have on prisoners.

"I am going to see that this stuff does not come in," he said. He is required by state law to allow prisoners to receive any publication accepted by the United States Post Office for mailing.

Mr. Thorne, George Jackson's attorney, said in a telephone interview last night that "I cannot conceive of him trying to escape."

He went on: "He had a trial facing him in which he was positive his innocence would be established." [Today he

called for a commission to investigate the killings, United Press International reported.]

Jackson and the other two Soledad Brothers faced murder charges in the death of a Soledad Prison guard who was killed by being thrown over a cellblock railing three stories above a concrete floor.

Mr. Thorne also said that Jackson "had a belief that getting out of prison alive was something he didn't expect."

The lawyer last saw Jackson Monday at a joint meeting with Angela Davis in the Marin County Jail, he said. Miss Davis won the right to confer with Jackson on the argument that it was necessary to her own defense.

The Monday meeting was the third, Mr. Thorne said, and included him and Margaret Burnham, an attorney for Miss Davis. At a previous meeting, Ruchell Magee, Miss Davis's co-defendant, also attended.

Jackson in Chains

For all three meetings, Mr. Thorne said, Jackson was in chains and handcuffs. He also said that, in so far as he knows, those three meetings are the only times that Jackson and Miss Davis ever met.

In a telephone interview today, Jackson's mother said the whole story of the prison break had been a fabrication to cover the murder of her son, the second son to die before a barrage from law enforcement officers.

"They killed him and set him out in the yard and photographed him, and then said he tried to escape," Mrs. Jackson said. "I don't know what happened to those other men, but they wouldn't have cared about them."

Mrs. Jackson said: "There's no way he could have left that [visiting] room with a gun, because when he takes one step out of that room, they put those chains on his feet and his hands. As soon as they open that door and let him out, the first thing they do is search him."

"Angela Davis Is Next"

In a telephone interview last night, Jackson's father, Robert Lester Jackson, of Pasadena, Calif., said he believed the prison break story had been a fabrication because of a series of incidents ascribed to his son. "Who's next?" asked Mr. Jackson. "Angela Davis is next."

In denying the statement that the escape had been a fabrication to cover the killing of George Jackson, the warden said that "we're likely to face the situation again because people on the outside are willing to help" prisoners attempt to escape or riot in the name of revolution.

Mr. Nelson said he remembered a time many years ago after a riot when many officers refused to come to work the next day. But, he said proudly, "This morning only one man did not come in, and he called to say he was sick."

He also said that as he walked through the prison today, "we got the usual hoots and catcalls" in some cell-

blocks, but in others he heard convicts say, "Warden, don't give up."

There are 365 uniformed guards at the prison, which today housed 2,622 inmates.