

Father's Theory of Smuggling

By Peter Stack

Attorney Stephen Bingham may have been duped into passing a gun to convict George Jackson who died in the tragic and abortive San Quentin escape attempt, his father said last night.

In an unusually candid press conference, Alfred M. Bingham, himself a lawyer and former Connecticut State Senator who resides in Salem, Conn., said:

"It is perfectly possible that Steve could have brought a pistol to George Jackson without knowing it."

FEAR

The 66-year-old Bingham, speaking at his brother's home in Berkeley — which young Bingham reportedly visited shortly after seeing Jackson at San Quentin on Saturday — said he fears his son's disappearance may be the result of "foul play."

"He may be the victim of foul play, or he may be in some kind of detention in which he is not a free man," the elder Bingham said.

Young Bingham, described by his father as "dedicated radical," seemed "perfectly normal" during a visit with his relatives Saturday after seeing Jackson.

UNCLE

He arrived on his motorcycle about 4 p.m. at the Berkeley home of his uncle, Woodbridge Bingham, a retired professor of history at the University of California.

During the visit of an hour and 15 minutes, the uncle said yesterday, Bingham participated in "pleasant, relaxed conversation."

As the visit took place, San Quentin was recovering from one of the bloodiest episodes in its history: A desperate escape attempt in which three guards and three

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convicts, including Jackson, died.

Bingham said of his son: "He is one of the radicals of this generation. But his dedication has been to non-violent change, though he believed in the inevitability of profound change and insurgent movement."

BOOK

The son gave a copy of Jackson's book, containing his prison letters, to Bingham for Christmas last year. Young Bingham admired Jackson, the father said.

"There is no rational reason for his staying out of communication," Bingham said. "Some of his radical friends indicate he could be framed even if he was innocent."

"I'm worried about him. He's in a horrible spot," Bingham said, adding that District Attorney Bales also shared his "extreme anxiety over Steve's well being."

The breakout try began only minutes after Jackson left the visiting room where he had spent half an hour with Bingham. The young lawyer — a graduate of Yale — was doing research on behalf of the militant black convict accused of murdering a Soledad prison guard in 1970.

SON

Bingham's father said last night that his son appeared at San Quentin Saturday morning. He was with a young black woman, identified as Vanetta Anderson.

The white-haired attorney said his son may have carried an attache case into the visitor's room when he saw Jackson and that the attache case may have contained a tape recorder in which a gun

was secreted.

"When in the visiting room he went out for a few minutes, leaving the attache case there," the father said last night. He claimed that the possibility this had happened was confirmed by Marin County District Attorney Bruce Bales.

Bingham said his son owned only a motorcycle for transportation, and that after leaving his uncle's home Saturday he went to his home in Oakland for a brief period.

"He left shortly before 6 o'clock," Bingham said. The younger Bingham's motorcycle is still parked at his home, the father said.

"I have not been in touch with Steve and I have been able to find no one else who has," Bingham said.

On his return to San Quentin's Adjustment Center — where the most troublesome cons are celled — Jackson whipped out a small pistol and took command.

Investigators determined Jackson had been given a "skin search" (in which all clothing is removed and all body cavities are examined) immediately before his conference with Bingham.

They felt the most logical explanation as to how the convict obtained the 9-mm automatic and two clips of ammunition was that he somehow picked them up in the visiting room. It was noted that Bingham had been carrying a briefcase and also tape recorder.