

Guard Describes How He Shot Jackson

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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 decided 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 walls 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 area of 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.