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Marin DA Still Wants Bingham

Though nobody is holding his breath awaiting the arrest of Stephen Bingham, the lawyer and son of a prominent Connecticut family who disappeared after the bloody 1971 San Quentin incident, the law is still after him.

"Sure, we're still looking for him — and so is the FBI," said Marin district attorney Bruce Bales yesterday.

Bingham disappeared following the alleged George Jackson escape attempt on Aug. 21, 1971, in which Jackson and two other inmates, along with three prison guards, were killed.

The young lawyer, living in Oakland at the time, is officially wanted for five counts of murder, as contained in an Marin grand jury indictment. He is suspected of having smuggled a gun to George Jackson that touched off the alleged escape attempt.

During the 2½ months preceding the San Quentin incident, Bingham had visited Jackson six times. Jackson, a hero to many left-wing political radicals, had been accused of murdering a guard at Soledad prison, and Bingham had visited him in connection with that case.

After Bingham left Jackson on the day of the incident, authorities said the inmate returned to his cell with a gun hidden in a wig. According to prison authorities, he was stopped by a suspecting guard, overpowered him, and set free other inmates.

After three guards and two inmates were slain,

Jackson was killed, according to prison authorities, trying to escape across the prison yard.

Details of the official account have been challenged by other reports of what occurred. Experimental reenactments of the events have shown it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Jackson to have held a gun under a wig.

District Attorney Bales said yesterday that he has often received, via tipsters and rumors, conflicting reports that Bingham was alive and well, or, as many had suspected for a long time, that he was dead.

The murder indictments against Bingham also were returned against six of the convicts who allegedly participated in the escape attempt from the prison's adjustment center.

But early this year, the indictments were quashed in Marin Superior Court, by a visiting jurist from Nevada county.

The judge, Vernon Stoll, stirred up a legal hornet's nest by ruling that the membership of the grand jury that handed down the indictments did not reflect Marin county's racial population mix.

But because Bingham had never appeared for any court proceedings, the indictment against him still stands.

The quashing of the indictments against the inmates by Stoll are currently under appeal by the Marin district attorney and the state attorney general's office.