

Bloody Clash Disrupts The Soledad Hearing



DORIS MAXWELL, (CENTER), THE MOTHER OF JOHN CLUTCHETTE
Mrs. Maxwell's eviction sparked the angry crowd to action

By Stan Creighton

Police Tac Squad Called In

By Tim Findley

A bloody melee erupted in a Soledad Brothers court hearing here yesterday after bailiffs tried to remove the nearly hysterical mother of one of the defendants.

The bailiffs were confronted by two black men as they led Doris Maxwell, mother of John Clutchette, down the aisle of the bitterly tense and bullet-screened courtroom.

Both black men and at least six law officers were bloodied in about four minutes of screaming, struggling confusion. Tough tactical squad policemen charged through an angry crowd outside the doors and into the courtroom before order was restored.

BROTHERS

Two brothers, Phillip J. Price, 24, and Earl M. Price, 27, both of 154 Santa Clara avenue, Oakland, were charged with assaulting police officers when they tried to block sheriff's deputies from taking Mrs. Maxwell out of the courtroom.

The action came at the peak of bitter verbal skirmishes in the courtroom as

attorneys for the two surviving Soledad Brothers — Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo — tried, and failed, to get Judge Carl Allen to issue orders protecting their clients from alleged brutality by San Quentin correctional officers.

“Kill me now, man, you’re going to kill me anyway,” Drumgo burst out at one point in the proceeding.

His attorney, Richard Silver, claimed later that Drumgo “is convinced they will kill him today.

“Personally, I don’t believe he will be alive tomorrow,” Silver told reporters later.

The hearing, already thick with tension from months of angry pre-trial proceedings and the death of defendant George Jackson in Satur-

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day’s violence at Quentin was made even worse yesterday.

For the first time, members of the press were not allowed to sit inside the specially-erected bullet-proof glass screen separating spectators from the court. Instead they took the first two rows formerly reserved for families of the defendants.

Mrs. Maxwell, dressed in a trim red suit, was forced to sit four rows back from the glass, and from the start she and other family members and supporters of the “Soledad Brothers” were bitter.

Mrs. Maxwell was alternately sobbing and shouting obscenities at the judge. Others in court shouted also as

Allen denied the series of motions to remove Clutchette and Drumgo from San Quentin for one day and confine them in the county jail here for medical examinations and talks with their lawyers. Twice the judge warned spectators to be quiet.

John Thorne, attorney for the dead Jackson, sat in the spectator section and at one point jumped up and shouted to the judge “You have jur-

isdiction over San Quentin, you should start acting.”

COURTROOM

The judge warned him to sit down, and Thorne shouted back, “This is not a courtroom, and I’m leaving now,” as he stormed out the door.

The attorneys for Clutchette and Drumgo charged

their clients were beaten again by at least three correctional officers after they returned from a tumultuous court hearing Tuesday. Drumgo stripped off his khaki shirt to show what he said were bruises from the most recent beating.

Silver began making a motion for a challenge for cause against Allen’s presiding over the case, opening his statement with “Your honor, . . .”

“What’s honor, you’re no honor,” Mrs. Maxwell half sobbed, half shouted.

AISLE

Two bailiffs moved toward her aisle seat and began to escort her out.

“Don’t touch me,” she shouted, and two black men moved to stop the deputies.

In an instant, the tense room exploded into chaos. Spectators fought with sheriff’s deputies and with tactical squad officers who rushed in, clubs swinging, to help the bailiffs. One officer said he was hit by a rock.

A pair of eyeglasses spun crazily up out of the brawling confusion. Mrs. Maxwell was shoved hard to the floor, weeping uncontrollably but apparently unhurt.

The two defendants were quickly taken out of the courtroom to a holding cell. Minutes later, Phillip Price, his face bleeding was shoved through the door of the glass screen and taken away. He was treated at Mission Emergency Hospital and charged with two counts of assaulting a peace officer. His brother was taken out the other door and charged with one count of assaulting a peace officer.

CROWD

Outside the courtroom, the crowd of 50 to 60 persons heard the sounds of the scuffle and were shoved aside as tactical squad officers charged in. Women out there began screaming.

A woman later identified as mother of the Price brothers was dragged out of the courtroom shrieking, “They’re killing my babies.”

Another woman stormed almost pointlessly through the crowd screaming, “the racists, the dirty mother f--- racists!”

Other courtrooms on the third floor of the Hall of Justice were locked and persons inside forced to stay there until the trouble was over.

In minutes, Allen’s courtroom was cleared and spectators both inside and out were hustled down to the main lobby by police. In the courtroom, there was blood on the floor, on some of the seats and in spots on the wall.

REPORTER

When the hearings resumed at 11:30 a.m., reporters were let in first, then spectators. It went quietly, with a heavy mood of bitterness and anger through that session and, later, after lunch, in another round of motions.

They were all denied.

A motion to remove the glass screen — “an incredible monstrosity,” said Clutchette’s attorney Floyd Silliman. Allen said it had proved its necessity earlier yesterday.

A motion for court-appointed investigators and psychologists — we’re broke,” said Silliman. Denied for lack of proof.

A motion for separate trials for the two defendants, a motion to examine grand jury members individually, a motion to continue the matter to allow attorneys more time to research recent developments — all were de-

nied.

DATE

Allen set September 20 as the date for trial on the charge — that the two men killed Officer John Mills at Soledad Prison in 1970. But the trial has been set over and over again in the last 15 months.

One change of venue from Monterey county has already been granted. Four judges have been disqualified, and no judge has yet been appointed for September 20.

Allen said later that he had ordered Mrs. Maxwell removed from the courtroom when a deputy soundlessly mouthed a question to him and "I nodded."