

2nd Autopsy Report

Jackson Was Shot in the Back

By Tim Findley

A final autopsy report revealed yesterday that Soledad Brother George Jackson was shot in the middle of the back not, as authorities first reported, in the head.

Marin county pathologist Dr. John Manwaring's second autopsy report completed September 7 and released yesterday exactly reverses the original report of the path of a guard's bullet that killed Jackson as he allegedly sprinted for a prison wall in an escape attempt August 21.

Five others, including three guards and two inmates were killed in what officials say was an abortive escape attempt led by Jackson.

Despite the new autopsy report, San Quentin authorities yesterday stuck to their original report that Jackson was shot by an officer from a 20 foot high gun railing.

Jackson's family and other prisoners in the San Quentin adjustment center have insisted that the 29-year-old author and prison revolutionary was "set up and murdered."

Jackson's attorney, John Thorne, said the revised report increases the urgency for an independent investigation of the incident.

The fatal bullet, according to the final autopsy report, struck Jackson in the middle of his back, broke three ribs and coursed up his spine, crashing through his brain and exiting at the top of his skull.

In his first report made the day after the incident, Manwaring concluded in his diagnosis that Jackson suffered "a gunshot wound in the head with a fracture of the skull."

Manwaring himself was on vacation yesterday, but Marin county Coroner Dr. Donovan O. Cooke said Manwaring revised his conclusions

after consulting with ballistics experts and examining Jackson's clothing.

Cooke said, however, he did not know who those ballistic experts were and ballistic reports on the incident were still not available to the press.

The first wound in Jackson's body appeared to be one suffered in the Achilles tendon of his left foot.

First reports said that

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wound was from a bullet fragment — possibly the same bullet that killed Jackson.

But prison officials yesterday said Jackson was first hit in the foot and knocked down, then fatally shot when he got up and began running.

"According to our reports,

Jackson was struck by a bullet fragment and was knocked down and he got up and was running in a crouched, bent-over, position," Warden Louis Nelson said yesterday.

Nelson said Jackson ran out of the prison adjustment center with a pistol in his hand, firing shots at guards in a tower and on a gun railing overlooking the prison mall.

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Jackson, Nelson claimed, "was trying to shoot down that guard on the railing so he would have a clear shot over the wall. The officer on the wall dropped down on his belly and fired."

Another guard in a tower at the opposite end of the mall also began shooting, and Jackson's position would have been in a cross fire, according to this version.

But Nelson said once Jackson was hit and knocked down, then began running in a crouch, "it sure as hell would be possible," for a bul-

let fired by the guard on the gun rail to hit Jackson in the back and exit out the top of his skull.

Other officials were less willing to make judgments about the angle of fire.

Marin county Deputy Coroner E. R. Fontaine, who examined Jackson's body immediately after the incident, carefully noted that "once they hit, bullets can alter course depending on where they strike, particularly if they strike bones."

Attorney John Thorne, who represented Jackson, immediately attacked Nelson's report.

"It is interesting to see the changes in the story now that the facts have been changed," Thorne said. "By the time we get the full facts the prison officials will still be coming out with new theories to make their original story stick."

Other prisoners in the adjustment center have insisted that Jackson was "murdered" after guards ordered him to run out of the adjustment center.

"They shot George in the back and then when he wasn't dead they came up and shot him in the head," Soledad Brother John Clutchette shouted during a court hearing after the incident.

Last Friday, Thorne produced a deposition from inmate Allen Mancino in which the San Quentin convict was quoted as saying that prison authorities wanted him to murder Jackson.

The new autopsy report was reminiscent of the confusion in autopsies on the bodies of nine Attica, New York, prison guards which revealed they were shot, not stabbed to death as had been reported.

It was also the second time in a month that Dr. Manwaring was forced to admit an error in judging the trajectory of a bullet.

A court hearing earlier this month revealed that Manwaring, nearly a year after the incident, concluded that two of the four people killed in the Marin County Courthouse shootout were shot in the back, not from the front as he had reported initially.

In both that case and in the examination of Jackson's

body, Manwaring indicated he was hampered by the fact he could not immediately see the clothing of the victims.

His first report on Jackson's body noted that the wound in Jackson's back was "remarkably like an entry wound also," and concluded at the time that "it is impossible to be certain of the direction of the bullet pending consultation with ballistic experts and an opportunity to see the clothing."

Nevertheless, his diagnosis at the time reported "a gunshot wound in the head . . ." and Dr. Cooke and prison officials sounded certain when they reported the next day that Jackson had been shot in the top of the head.

Cooke said the trajectory of the bullet from the back through to Jackson's head was obvious "from the coning effect in the skull." He did not explain, however, why such a coning effect was not noted in the initial autopsy.

Jackson was wearing prison denims, high topped prison shoes, a blue wool jacket and a green cloth belt.