

ACLU Suit in Soledad Case

'Humiliating' Searches

By Charles Howe

The price spectators have to pay to attend the trial of the Soledad Brothers is not only too high but humiliating as well — especially for women — the American Civil Liberties Union charged here yesterday.

In an action filed before the State Court of Appeal, the ACLU, represented by Paul Halvonik, sought to void a security order issued by Superior Judge S. Lee Vavuris on September 14.

Vavuris is presiding at the trial of Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette in the Hall of Justice here. The two are accused of murdering a Soledad Prison guard in January, 1970.

Specifically, Halvonik complained about search procedures conducted on women seeking admission to the court.

His written complaints were identical to ones made to Vavuris — which he rejected — by attorneys defending Drumgo and Clutchette.

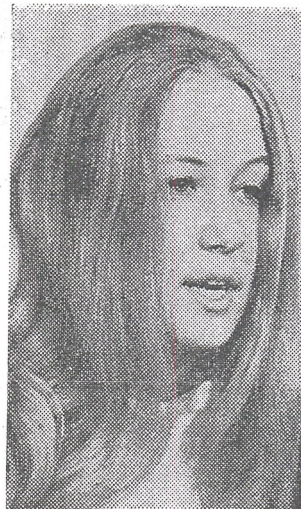
'SUSPECT'

"Surely things have not gotten to the point where the exercise of the constitutional right to attend a public trial is a 'suspect' activity, empowering the state to conduct degrading skin searches," Halvonik said at a press conference.

With Halvonik yesterday were three women who collectively agreed that the search techniques conducted on them by sheriff's matrons was "humiliating . . . de-



AGNES McFADDIN
'Pantyhose tops'



SUSAN FINE
'Sanitary napkin'



MARIE CHAPMAN
'Am I the criminal?'

grading . . . an attempt to intimidate us and keep people out of the courtroom . . ."

Agnes McFaddin said that she decided not to bother going into the courtroom after a matron wanted her to remove not only her panties but "two pantyhose tops as well."

REMOVAL

And Suzan Fine charged that police ripped one side of a tote bag in which she was carrying a hot water bottle after they said they were "suspicious" of its contents.

Miss Fine, a student, said the bag had earlier been examined by a matron. She explained she carried the hot water bottle to ease pain of menstrual cramps and added that she had been obliged to remove her sanitary napkin during a search.

"The men don't have to go through searches like that," Miss Fine said. "They just

get pat searches of their clothing."

Men attending the trial are not, in fact, asked to remove any of their inner garments; their clothed bodies are "frisked" by deputies after they have removed everything from their pockets and placed it on a table for inspection.

PHOTOS

Marie Chapman objected to the police technique of "mugging" or photographing every spectator seeking admittance to the trial.

She said that she complained when her photograph was being taken, asking a policeman: "Am I the criminal?"

"You're right," she said the officer replied. "You are the criminal."

Vavuris issued his extraordinary security order — the tightest ever to be in effect in California — after two brawls had taken place in court, one a near-riot.