

Expert's Testimony in Murder Trial

Soledad Fingerprint Story

By Charles Howe

A fingerprint expert called as a prosecution witness testified here yesterday that the only identifiable prints at the scene of a Soledad Prison guard's murder did not match those of two inmates on trial for his killing.

And during the seventh day of the trial of the so-called "Soledad Brothers" a guard testified under cross-examination that shortly after the murder of John V. Mills on Jan. 16, 1970, he found a pair of bloodstained trousers and a towel showing traces of blood among the property of an inmate named Donald Poole.

Fingerprint expert Spiros P. Vasos said he found a partial print near the lens of Mills' flashlight but determined it did not belong to George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo or John Clutchette.

KILLED

Jackson was killed at San Quentin last August 21 in an apparent escape attempt. Drumgo and Clutchette are on trial for the murder of Mills, who was thrown from the third tier of the 146-man Y Wing at Soledad.

Vasos summed up his labors — including the examining of partial prints found on a piece of railing covered with Mills blood — by saying:

BEATEN

"No, I could not identify" the fingerprints of the two surviving defendants in any

of the evidence. He also added that a palm print found on the wall near Clutchette's cell on the third tier definitely was not made by the defendants.

Earlier, the prosecution has said evidence will be produced — apparently though the testimony to come from about 20 inmate-witnesses to the slaying — that Mills was beaten on the face with the flashlight by Jackson.

The flashlight was apparently thrown through a cell window after the killing. Guards later found it in rain-soaked grass outside Y Wing.

BLOOD

Gerald J. Harr, a member of the prison's Security Squad — nicknamed the "goon squad" by inmates — told of discovering the suspicious trousers and towel while making a property inventory on January 20.

Harr said there was a wet spot on the belt area of the trousers and a towel also appeared to show traces of blood. These materials were later identified as belonging to inmate Donald Poole.

Neither the prosecution nor the defense pursued this matter further.

Monterey county Assistant District Attorney Ed Barnes attempted to introduce evidence showing that Harr had, in an experiment,

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outside Y Wing — where it had apparently been thrown after the guard's death.

Superior Court Judge S. Lee Vavuris, who agreed Harr's testimony about the throwing experiment was premature, said "I want you to put this witness back on (the stand) later," to tell the results of his experiments.

thrown a flashlight and a wristwatch belonging to Mills through several cell windows to see where they landed.

BLOCKED

But the defense, led by Floyd Silliman, blocked the testimony by objecting that it was "out of order and would confuse the jury at this time."

Harr had testified earlier he had found a Waltham watch belonging to Mills in a pool of water on the ground