

Quentin Escape Attempt Case

Clashes as Trial Opens

By Jim Brewer

Six men, five of them chained and shackled to their chairs, went on trial yesterday for their alleged participation in a bloody escape attempt at San Quentin prison 3½ years ago.

They are blamed for the deaths of three guards and two convict workers in the prison's Adjustment Center. George Jackson, the nationally-known prophet of prisoner unity, was shot and killed by a guard on that Saturday in August 1971.

Strict security measures — metal detectors at two locations — were in effect in the Hall of Justice at the Marin Civic Center.

Among the spectators

was Angela Davis, acquitted three years ago of any involvement in another San Quentin prisoner escape attempt that left a judge, two convicts and Jackson's younger brother dead outside the Marin Civic Center.

It was the opening of court drama that may last nine months — in a courtroom where participants and spectators are separated by a bulletproof screen and where all who enter must submit to a body search.

From the outset, it was apparent that the trial will be slow and laced with confrontation.

The moment the trial opened, defendant Luis Talamantez, 30, demanded to

be removed from the courtroom. "I will not sit here wearing chains," he told Marin Superior Court Judge Henry Broderick. The judge called a recess and granted Talamantez' request.

(In 1972, Talamantez was acquitted in a Marin trial of stabbing another prisoner at San Quentin. He was not chained during that trial.)

Talamantez' attorney, Louis Hawkins, demanded to be taken off the case. Broderick told him to put the request in writing.

Defense attorney Lynn Carman got into a shouting match with the judge when he attempted to argue a motion seeking a neurological examination of his client,

Hugo Pinell, 31. Broderick found Carman in contempt and fined him \$100.

"You'll find that during the trial I'll be presiding and you'll be defending," Broderick later told all the attorneys. "I'm sure you won't mistake our functions."

Broderick spent the rest of the day questioning prospective jurors who had asked to be excused because of personal hardship. Sixteen were questioned, one was excused and 40 remained to be queried.

The case, delayed for three years by dozens of defense motions, has become a radical cause celebre. It is viewed by the far left as a symbol of convict rebellion

justified by conditions in California prisons.

Authorities view it as a product of leftwing influence on the prison population which, they claim, led convicts to believe the outside world welcomes open rebellion inside the walls.

Ironically, the key defendant in the case has never been found. He is Stephen Bingham, a radical attorney and scion of a prominent Connecticut political family, who allegedly smuggled into prison a pistol that started the rebellion.

The other defendants in the case are: Fleeta Drumgo, 29; David Johnson, 28; John Larry Spain, 25, and Willie Tate, 30. Tate was released from San Quentin three months ago after serving out his ten-year sentence and is now free on bail. He is the only defendant not shackled in court.

Jury selection, expected to take nearly a month, will resume tomorrow.