

How Jurors Reached Verdict

The prosecution theory that George Jackson smuggled a gun under an Afro wig in a bloody prison escape attempt five years ago was apparently considered as "only a possibility" by the San Quentin Six jurors.

"I tried it — I put the gun under a wig and carried it around right there in the jury room, and so did another juror," said Cara Shipley, 29, of Corte Madera.

Mrs. Shipley was the forewoman of the jury that deliberated 24 days before reaching a verdict on Thursday in the trial that went on almost 16 months.

"The gun and the wig stayed on pretty good. But even so, it seemed only a possibility that Jackson did it that way," said Mrs. Shipley.

"I wouldn't say that anybody was absolutely certain he took the gun in there in that manner. It was like it was possible but not necessarily plausible," the forewoman said.

Regarded in the same light was the defense theory that Jackson was given a gun by guards as part of a law enforcement scheme to assassinate him, Mrs. Shipley said.

"It's difficult, really, to explain how we reached the verdicts," she said, "but I can tell you that there wasn't a single point that we didn't argue about feverishly, and everybody got a chance to share their opinions."

Basically, when the jury was given the case on July 16, they assembled in the deliberation room, and just sat there for a while staring at each other, and asking, "Now what do we do?" she said.

Soon, however, the ice was broken by a juror who suggested that "we better organize ourselves and figure out exactly how best to proceed."

Mrs. Shipley said that the jury decided to deal first with the lesser charges against the six defendants — John L. Spain, Hugo Pinell, Fleeta Drumgo, Louis Talamantez, Willie Tate and David Johnson.

Tate, Drumgo and Talamantez were acquitted; Spain was found guilty of murder, and Pinell and Johnson were convicted of assault.

"Somehow we decided to deal with the assault charges against all the men, and we began then to go into minute detail with the evidence," Mrs. Shipley said.

She said that the bulk of the jury's deliberations involved the consideration of bits and pieces of evidence and testimony, and that "we looked at each defendant as a person all by himself and tried our very best not to be swayed by any emotion we might have felt or by anything sensational, like some of the pictures we saw."

Over all, she said, the jury seemed to give a back seat to the competing theories in the marathon case, and tried to look at "what we felt might have been real and probable and human," she said.