

Jury Says 'Guilty' In Chinatown Killing

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Chol Soo Lee, 21, went wild Wednesday moments after a Sacramento County Superior Court jury found him guilty of first-degree murder in the 1973 gangland execution of a Chinatown gang leader in San Francisco.

As the jurors were filing out of the courtroom, the small but muscular defendant suddenly spit at the San Francisco prosecutor and lunged toward him.

Several deputies jumped the yelling and cursing Lee, holding his twisting body aloft momentarily before carrying him to an adjoining holding tank.

Tears welled in Lee's eyes as he was restrained in the doorway as the proceedings were postponed to July 10 for formal sentencing. Lee faces life in prison for the June 3, 1973, street corner assassination of Yip Yee Tak, 32, also known as Dr. Yang, a reputed leader in the Wah Ching gang in San Francisco.

The trial, which began on the anniversary of Tak's slaying, was before Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Robert W. Cole. The trial was moved to Sacramento by order of the 1st District Court of Appeal in San Francisco because of the massive San Francisco publicity concerning the nearly two dozen Chinatown gang slayings since 1970.

The prosecutor, James A. Lassart, a San Francisco deputy district attorney,

and San Francisco homicide inspector Frank Falzon portrayed Lee as a hit man working in the Ski Mask Gang, a reputed group of young and dangerous robbers.

Tak was shot three times about 7:20 p.m. on Sunday June 3 as he stepped off the curb at Pacific and Grant in San Francisco. Lassart said three persons who saw the shooting picked Lee's picture out of a mug book and Lee was taken into custody four days later. The murder weapon, a small pistol, had been discarded in an alleyway.

According to Lassart's theory of the case, Anton Wong, leader of the Wah Chings, and Robert Louie, leader of the Ski Mask Gang, were in jail together in early 1973 on separate charges of assault with a deadly weapon.

The prosecutor said Wong had made arrangements with Louie to have Tak

killed because he suspected Tak of pocketing \$10,000 he had reportedly raised as a defense fund for Wong.

Wong, 24, was killed by a teenage Chinese youth who was later convicted and sentenced to the California Youth Authority. Tak was killed a few weeks later.

Lassart said the witness, Wing Fung, testified against Louie but was later killed himself.

The jury in Lee's case began deliberations Tuesday. Sacramento attorney Hamilton Hintz Jr., who was appointed to represent Lee after the case was transferred, questioned the eyewitnesses' identification of Lee as the killer.

Lee denied he was a member of the Ski Mask Gang. However, Lassart said that in early 1973, Lee was arrested with other gang members that had some money taken in a bank robbery.

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