

Chesimard firing tests negative

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Chemical tests of JoAnne Chesimard's hands made within hours of the 1973 gun battle on the N.J. Turnpike failed to show whether she had fired a weapon that early morning.

Neutron activation analysis testing was equally inconclusive in determin-

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ing if her companions or the late Trooper Werner Foerster used firearms.

Charles R. Midkiff Jr., a chemist for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and firearms who conducted analysis of state police samples, testified yesterday, "On none...did I find sufficient residue to indicate they had handled or discharged firearms."

The chemist explained to the jury hearing murder and other charges against Mrs. Chesimard that there could be many reasons why the tests would not prove positive, even if a person had discharged a firearm.

Midkiff said the presence on the hands of dirt or blood or washing the hands would probably remove any residue of barium or antimony used in primers for ammunition. It is those elements that the neutron activation testing is intended to disclose.

Traces of the elements can also disappear by rubbing the hands or perspiring. And he said tests conducted after three to six hours have little degree of success.

Mrs. Chesimard, 29, is accused of murdering Foerster and trying to kill Trooper James Harper on the early morning of May 2, 1973, on the N.J. Turnpike at East Brunswick.

The gun battle started after Harper stopped a car in which Mrs. Chesimard was a passenger. Clark Squire, the driver, is serving a life prison term plus 24-to-30 years as a result of his role in the shooting.

Mrs. Chesimard is also charged with responsibility for the death of James Costan, the third occupant of the vehicle who was shot to death by Harper during the fire fight in which she was also wounded. Costan also was known as Zayd Malik Shakur.

State Police Detective Sgt. Louis Parisi told the jury that he took chemical samples from Mrs. Chesimard while she was in the x-ray room at Middlesex General Hospital following her capture.

Both her hands and face were bloody, according to the sergeant, who was questioned by Assistant Middlesex County Prosecutor Nicholas Stroumtsos.

Parisi then used cotton swabs to make similar tests on the hands of Foerster and Costan, whose bodies were in the hospital mortuary.

The tests of Squire were not made until the following day, some 39 hours after the gun battle. He was at large for that period of time.

Under cross-examination by defense counsel Lawrence Stern, Midkiff agreed that the tests of Mrs. Chesimard failed to detect any residue indicating that she had used a gun.

The afternoon session was devoted to testimony by Detective Sgt. Edward Wilke, a state police identification officer, who identified many of the items of evidence recovered after the shooting—two of the weapons, bullets, spent slugs, flashlights owned by Harper and Foerster and other exhibits.

First Assistant Middlesex County Prosecutor Edward J. Barone will continue his examination of Wilke today in preparation for testimony by other experts in such fields as ballistics and blood types.

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