

Seguin Concealed Poison In Body To Cheat Gallows

By The Canadian Press

CORNWALL, Ont.—Henri Seguin concealed the poison he swallowed to take his own life and escape the gallows in his body, perhaps as long as nine months, a coroner's inquest was told Wednesday night.

The five-man jury absolved jail officials and other last-minute visitors to Seguin's death of all blame. The jury, who heard testimony from 29 witnesses in the 2½-hour hearing, took only 20 minutes to return a verdict of self-administered death from cyanide poisoning.

He kept the vial of poison in a slender aluminum container, found on his cot after he died in agony only an hour before he was to be hanged for the murder of taxi-driver Leonard Hurd.

His determination to cheat the hangman was expressed in the 32nd and final page of a letter to his sister. The letter, rambling and ungrammatical, was completed the day of his death and read by police only after Seguin was in his death throes.

CONDEMNED AS DOG

As written, it said: "Justice has condemned me as a dog, they will try and hang me like one, but I will try my best not to, I will cheat them to the very last end, if I do succeed to cheat them in the end I will only be too glad to do so, if I don't cheat them it will not be because I did not try to do."

The letter, Seguin's last request, was to be turned over to jail authorities at 11 o'clock for delivery to the condemned man's sister. By the time provincial police inspector Robert Wannell reached the end of page 32, Seguin was dead.

PECULIAR HABITS

The bulk of evidence at the inquest concerned Seguin's peculiar toilet customs, his refusal to use facilities outside his cell and his preference for a pail. He had told guards that his sanitary habits were irregular and that he preferred the greater privacy of his cell.

Dr. Ward Smith, director of the Ontario Medical Legal Laboratory, Toronto, testified that from the condition of the aluminum container he estimated that it could have been secreted in Seguin's body for at least six months.

Other stomach contents made possible a reconstruction of the suicide. Seguin pierced an orange with the glass vial, then bit the orange several times to break the glass and release the poison. He then consumed the orange in large gulps.

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