



# Hung Jury: The Diary of a Menendez Juror

*Hazel Thornton*

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It is Wednesday, November 17, 1993. Okay, now we've heard the tape, the real 'confession' tape in which Dr. Oziel recorded part of an actual session with the boys, with their cooperation, on 12/11/89. This is supposedly the most damaging evidence against them but, in my own mind, the way things have been developed over the past four months, it only served to strengthen their defense! True, they never directly mentioned self defense or abuse on the tape, but it could be construed (and was construed by Ms. Abramson and Dr. Burgess) that there were many allusions to both...The taped session was very unprofessional and non-therapeutic and it is clear to me that Oziel was trying to provoke them into saying incriminating things. On June 28, 1993 Hazel Thornton showed up for the first day of jury selection. She didn't know she would spend the next seven months as a juror on one of the year's most high-profile murder trials: The People v. Erik Menendez. Erik Menendez and his brother Lyle were on trial for shot-gunning their parents to death in their Beverly Hills home. Hazel Thornton began keeping her journal as a way of getting the trial out of her system every day, so she could sleep at night without being haunted by the day's testimony. And, sworn to shoulder the burden of silence, she also used the journal to help sort out the barrage of details. A behind the scenes witness, Thornton describes with lucidity, charm, and humor the day-to-day experiences of a juror: the riveting emotional testimonies, the deluge of minutiae, and the unpleasant graphic evidence. Going far beyond the reportage of the print or electronic media, her diary gets inside the thoughts, discussions, and actions of the jury, and the trial process itself. She writes about the jury's deliberations, and eventual dead-lock, with revelatory insight into what really happens on a 'hung jury'. Author note: Hazel Thornton is a senior Engineer at Pacific Bell in Pasadena, California. Lawrence S. Wrightsman is Professor of Psychology at the University of Kansas. Amy J. Posey holds a M.A. in Social Psychology from the University of Kansas. Alan W. Schefflin is Professor of Law at Santa Clara University Law School.

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