

'Worst Day of My Life'

John Frederic Edland

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By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

When Dr. John Frederic Edland is feeling effervescent, when he is in the mood for linguine with white clam sauce or a victory by his beloved football Giants, he wears his rimless eyeglasses.

When the world seems grim and somber, when Dr. Edland's mood is serious and

businesslike, he

Man wears his horn

in the rims. Yesterday,

Dr. Edland, the

News Medical Examiner

of Monroe County,

N. Y., was wearing his horn rims. At a news conference in Rochester, the dark-haired 36-year-old forensic pathologist declared that his examinations had disclosed that the hostages killed at Attica Prison died of gunshot wounds and that their throats had not been slashed, as previously reported by the state correction officials.

Appearing cool and calm although a bit ruffled after long hours of work and a night in which he had only an hour's sleep, the doctor admitted later that the sudden attention focused on him was a bit unnerving.

"This is sort of embarrassing," he said, "all this attention, especially in this tragedy." Of his findings, he said: "You have to call them as you see them. I'm used to not finding what people tell me I'll find." Of his work, which mingles medicine and the law, he said: "This field is my whole life. And this is the worst day of my life."

Weighed Football Career

It is a life that might have led to another profession had not Dr. Edland broken a knee and torn an Achilles tendon at Fairport High School outside Rochester, where he was an all-county guard on the football team.

"If I hadn't done that, I probably never would have been a doctor," he said. "If I had an opportunity to play football in college, I never would have opened a book."

The football injury enabled him to continue toward a life's work that he had actually begun to plan for as a boy.

"It was a choice between the law and medicine"—and he chose medicine, his wife, Gwendolyn, said yesterday. "In order to get a taste of

both worlds, of law and medicine, he combined the two by going into legal medicine."

Gearing his curriculum to his plans, Dr. Edland qualified for admission to the State University of New York's Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse after three years at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, and was awarded his medical degree in 1960.

In the next three years, he was an intern, assistant resident, instructor and resident fellow in pathology at the University of Rochester. In 1963 and 1964, he was a fellow in forensic pathology and instructor in pathology at the Medical Center of Virginia in Richmond.

The next year he spent in Rochester, as a resident and instructor at the university and as assistant medical examiner of Monroe County. After two years in the Navy, he continued his work at the University of Missouri, and in 1968 was appointed chief medical examiner for Monroe County.

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Dr. Edland, the son of the former Ruth White, a retired school teacher, and Frederic Edland, an inspector of optical instruments, was born in Rochester on Oct. 25, 1934. In December, 1959, he was married to Canadian-born Gwendolyn Phillips, whom he met at a wedding in Ontario.

Still a Sports Fan

The Edlands make their home with their three daughters—Gretchen, 9; Gretel, 7, and Gaele, 6—in a colonial-style house in Brighton, N. Y., a suburb of Rochester.

Dr. Edland, who favors bright shirts ("He isn't exactly mod, but he sure is not conservative," said a colleague) and spicy food, is still an avid sports fan. "I'm a crazy New York Giants fan," he said, "but they lead me down that primrose path every year."

As he spoke, he held his shoulder stiffly. It was broken two weeks ago in a touch football game with his daughters—in particular by Gretchen.

"I was running for a pass," said Dr. Edland, "and my daughter bent over and I went over her back." It was the kind of misfortune both Alex Webster and Walter Mitty would have understood.