

# Students in Town of Attica Are Recovering From Shock

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ATTICA, N.Y., Sept. 23—In the Junior-Senior Attica Central School, the students—many of them children of guards at Attica prison—are just beginning to shake off the shock of the uprising and the bloody assault in which fathers of some of their classmates were killed or faced death.

At first, many who returned to school this week could not recall the combination on the locks of their lockers. Others even forgot where their lockers were. They had not been in school since Sept. 13, when they were stunned by the sirens of ambulances and the roar of helicopters.

"They are still quite and subdued," said the principal, Alfred Feeney, a husky former athlete. "I have told the teachers: 'Keep them busy. Load them down with work.'"

## Words of Understanding

Today, for the first time, children of slain hostages were back in class. Teachers expressed sympathy. The principal chatted with the students, his arms around their shoulders as he walked with them, asking how they felt, how mother was, usually saying: "If you need any help, you know where I live."

Conversations were muted in the corridors and very often the children were silent as they moved to the clang of bells from class to class. There was no running, no horseplay.

Some of the school's 831 students, who are 14 to 18 years old, were shocked not only by the bloodshed and the resulting notoriety for the town, but also by rumors that the school would be seized by prisoners or

by invading blacks from other cities and that they would be held hostage.

Another rumor last week was that school buses would be seized and the children taken to school. Some mothers drove to school in panic on the Monday of the assault on the prison and took the children home at once, not waiting for school to end.

## Parents Concerned

Even after school was resumed this week, some mothers telephoned the school to make sure that a teacher stood by while their children got on the school bus.

Moved by a desire to restore serenity to the town, members of the student council called on Mr. Feeney yesterday and talked with him for more than two hours. They decided to take up a collection that would be shared equally between families of dead hostages and inmates.

Council members plan to write letters of condolence to survivors of inmates; they have already written to the families of hostages. A minute of silence will be observed before football games played here, the council decided.

"I want to live here and I want my children to live here," a girl told Mr. Feeney. "We want something good to come out of all this."

At the same time, the youngsters are confused and angered by charges in the news media that the guards are brutal and that the town is bigoted.

Barbara Slawatycki, a 17-year-old senior, whose father is a guard, burst into tears today as she assailed criticism by the press.

"They mock the town," she said. "They cut it down as a big hick town. They mock the

guards. They don't really know what it's like."

Scott Gerhardt, president of the student council, denied that the town was racist. He pointed out that a couple of years ago, Marie Mays, who was then the only black student in the school, was elected president of the student council and was very popular. She has since moved to Buffalo.

He said: "It is only natural that many should feel bitter against the prisoners who organized the uprising. They had fathers there."

The state troopers, who previously were not too highly regarded by students, now are esteemed, and many of the boys say they are thinking seriously of becoming troopers.

"Thank God, the state police were around," said Janet Holbrook, 17, president of the senior class.

She and young Gerhardt agreed that prison reforms were needed, and this feeling seemed to be prevalent among many students who discussed the subject today.

These students said they favored smaller prisons and separate prisons for hard-core criminals. Repeatedly, they insisted that Attica was being blamed for problems that had been created elsewhere.

"The guards are not brutal," said a student. "They are good men."

## Closeness to Students

The relationship between students and teachers in this school is close. Many teachers have known the families of the students for many years. They know them outside the school—in churches, in sports, and the scouting movement. A mathematics teacher,

Lowell B. Fox, who was named state teacher of the year two years ago, is now teaching the third generation of some families. Teachers know students by nicknames. At the funeral of one of the hostages, Mr. Feeney drove the widow's car.

On a plaque over the show-case of sports trophies in the sportless 13-year-old school—a swimming pool and planetarium were added a year ago—is a plaque. On it are engraved the names of four graduates who died in Vietnam. No one knows how many graduates went to Vietnam, but one Christmas packages were sent to 25 alumni in the war zone.

Thirty per cent of the graduates go to college and another 35 per cent go to community college. Many of the students from farms get up at 4 A.M. and do farm chores before they leave for school. The school district covers an area of 246 square miles.

Chalotte Brayer, a social studies teacher, who has commuted here from Rochester for 20 years, said: "This is a unique school. And it is a very firm town."

While agreeing, Miss Holbrook, the senior class president, added: "It will take the town a long time to get over this."