

Prison Negotiator

Archibald Stevens Alexander Jr.

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

"Overcrowding in New Jersey's prison system has reached the point where it is impossible to maintain even pretense of rehabilitation," Archibald Stevens Alexander Jr. wrote nearly two years ago.

"In one wing of the maximum security prison in Rahway, for example, 25 men live in a cell-less dormitory where plumbing facilities are insufficient and double-decker beds, by blocking guards' vision, make it easy for the strong to terrorize the weak.

"We cannot afford to ignore the impact of a deteriorating prison system on human dignity as well as the crime rate. The media can help by providing prominent coverage, and every serious citizen must demand that conditions like overcrowding be remedied without delay."

Early Thanksgiving morning, the telephone rang in Mr. Alexander's off-white stucco home in Princeton, N. J., summoning him to the state prison at Rahway, where rebellious inmates held the warden and several guards captive.

Key Role in Release

There, in his role as president of the Board of Managers of New Jersey State Prison, the tall, lean 38-year-old lawyer played a leading role in negotiating the release of the hostages in return for assurances of reform from Gov. William T. Cahill.

One official present during the tense hours at the prison described Mr. Alexander yesterday as "impressive" and "forceful and tactful."

The board, consisting of seven members, including its president, is appointed by the Board of Control, the citizen board of the Department of Institutions and Agencies, with the consent of the Governor. It is designed to establish policy and to supervise the operations of the state's prisons.

Mr. Alexander's membership, which dates back to Oct. 21, 1964, reflects a concern with prisons that is characteristic of his family, one of New Jersey's oldest and most prominent.



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"Forceful and tactful"

entered Princeton, where he rowed, majored in English and the humanities and earned his bachelor's degree in 1955.

The brown-haired, blue-eyed Mr. Alexander, who had been enrolled in the Reserve Officers Training Corps then entered the Army and served for slightly more than two years, mostly with the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N. C., as a lieutenant.

Returning to civilian life, Mr. Alexander, who is known as Archie or sometimes young Archie, entered Harvard Law School in 1957 and was graduated in 1960. He spent the next year as law clerk for Joseph Weintraub, the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New Jersey, and the following year in the Ivory Coast under a program administered by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and financed by the Ford Foundation to aid developing countries.

Unsuccessful Candidate

When he returned to the United States, he joined the Newark law firm of Lum Biunno & Tompkins. He is now a partner in the Newark firm of Lowenstein, Sandler, Brochin, Kohl & Fisher, handling trial work, corporate cases and representing defendants in cases that involve civil rights.

A Democrat, he has been unsuccessful in campaigns for Mayor of Princeton and the State Assembly.

Mr. Alexander has been married since Feb. 15, 1964, to the former Eleanor Hallowell Lapsley. The Alexanders live on about a half acre of land in Princeton. The household includes their three children—Benjamin, 7; Jocelyn, 6, and Christopher 4 — a dog of mixed ancestry called Toby, an anonymous cat and two anonymous gerbils.

Mr. Alexander enjoys reading, growing roses, playing a little tennis and snorkeling and spear fishing on vacations to various places in the Caribbean.

He missed Thanksgiving dinner at his father's home in Bernardsville Thursday, but at around 4 A.M. yesterday he returned home from Rahway for what Mrs. Alexander called a "Thanksgiving sleep."

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Mr. Alexander is a direct descendant of John Stevens, who came to America in 1699 from England and was one of the original settlers of New Jersey to receive a grant of land from Queen Anne. The Stevens family of Hoboken founded Stevens Institute of Technology. Another of Mr. Alexander's ancestors was Col. John Stevens, who obtained the first railway charter granted in America on Feb. 6, 1815.

Mr. Alexander, who was born in New York City on Feb. 18, 1933, is the only son of the late Susan Tilton Alexander and Archibald S. Alexander, a lawyer, former Under Secretary of the Army, assistant director of the Army's Control and Disarmament Agency and unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the United States Senate in 1952.

After graduation from St. Paul's School, Mr. Alexander