

Governor Frees Attica Inmate Who Gave Medical Aid in Riot

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By LINDA CHARLTON

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Walter (Tiny) Swift, a convicted murderer who has been serving a life sentence in the Attica Correctional Facility since 1956, was granted clemency by Governor Rockefeller yesterday for volunteering to give medical aid to hostages and inmates during the uprising at the prison in September.

The commutation, one of seven Christmas pardons announced yesterday, means that Swift will probably be released next month after the Parole Board meets to act formally on the Governor's order. He would not otherwise have been eligible for parole for several years.

The Governor's statement announcing his decision to grant clemency to Swift, who is 47 years old, said:

"During the disturbance Mr.

Swift volunteered to leave the secure area to enter the yard controlled by the inmates to treat medically both inmates and hostages. For four days and nights he risked his own safety to render continuous and quality medical service."

The statement also noted that recommendations for Swift's release came from the State Parole Board; Vincent R. Mancusi, the superintendent at Attica; the president of the Attica guards' union, and the supervising physician.

Another who urged the release was Dr. Warren H. Hanson, a surgeon at Wyoming County Community Hospital in Warsaw, about 15 miles from Attica. He was one of the civilian physicians who volunteered

Continued on Page 29, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

to go into the beleaguered prison.

Dr. Hanson said in a telephone interview yesterday that he had told Swift's parole officer: "My impression of him was that he was capable, competent, sincere and hardworking."

In an article in The New York Times Magazine in October, Dr. Hanson described Swift—known universally as Tiny—as "a large, gray-haired man dressed in a dirty white uniform who had volunteered to come in from the secure area of the prison to treat both inmates and hostages."

"Cheerful and industrious, he was apparently respected and trusted by inmates and prison officials alike," the article said.

The murder Swift was convicted of took place on New Year's Eve, 1951, and he was arrested in October, 1952. At the time he was reported to have admitted to the police that he had served time previously, on a morals charge in Pennsylvania and a larceny charge in Illinois.

Sentenced in 1953

Swift got a life sentence in 1953—despite his plea that he be sent to the electric chair—for killing a young man with a baseball bat in a Central Park holdup that netted him and his accomplice \$1. He went first to Sing Sing, but was moved to Attica in 1956.

While there, Dr. Hanson said, Swift earned a high school-equivalency certificate and, after training, has served as head nurse in the prison hospital.

Emmet J. Cochrane, the prison clerk, said that at one point during the revolt, Swift "was sitting there with his head down, the picture of exhaustion, but there was no holding him—he went right back to the yard."

Dr. Hanson said that he recently received a letter from Swift asking "if there was any chance" he could ever get

job in our hospital" as a nurse's aide or an orderly while taking courses to qualify as a licensed practical nurse.

In reply, Dr. Hanson said, he wrote to the inmate telling him that, while he would recommend his employment, the Warsaw hospital did not have a suitable training program, and suggesting he might apply to the two Batavia hospitals, which do give such training. He said he had written to the personnel directors there on Swift's behalf.

Several hostages said he put his own life on the line to persuade the Attica rebels to release four badly injured hostages so they could get hospital care.

The six other inmates—in other institutions—who were granted executive clemency were as follows:

John Closter, 30, serving a 25-to-50-year sentence.

Betty Joy Ebert, 27, serving 20 years to life.

Al Keshner, 62, serving 40 years to life.

James Mason, 71, serving 40 years to life.

Louis Rivera, 51, serving 40 years to life.

John Simmons, 50, serving 40 years to life.

All but Closter had been convicted of murder; he was convicted of manslaughter.

A spokesman for the state Correction Department said Swift was given the news yesterday by Mr. Mancusi, the Attica superintendent, with his "personal congratulations."

Dr. Hanson was asked if he thought he might have played a part in obtaining Swift's release. He replied: "I hope so—and I like to think so."

Las Vegas Rich in Churches

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (UPI)—Las Vegas is known for more than its gambling—it also boasts churches—150 of them, representing 35 different denominations. It is the highest ranked metropolitan area in the country on a churches-per-capita basis.