

# Attica artifacts returned to families



A ceremony marking the 43rd anniversary of Attica riots was held on a gloomy Saturday. Video by Lauren Petracca

Gary Craig, Staff writer 6:56 p.m. EDT September 13, 2014



(Photo: LAUREN PETRACCA@LaurenPetracca/, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

The badge Raymond Bogart wore as an Attica prison corrections officer when he was badly beaten during the 1971 uprising now looks as spic-and-span fresh as if brand new — on its front, that is.

On the rear of the badge — number 13 in the corrections officer ranks at the time — are small splotches of crusted blood, reminders of the trauma of that Sept. 9, 1971, day when hundreds of inmates overpowered officers and civilian workers and gained control of the Wyoming County prison.

**2011 feature:** [Attica 40 years later \(http://roc.democratandchronicle.com/section/ATTICA/Attica-Prison-Riot\)](http://roc.democratandchronicle.com/section/ATTICA/Attica-Prison-Riot)

"This badge and I, we were a part of the worst prison riot in the United States," Bogart, now 78, said Saturday as he displayed the palm-sized badge in the moments before an annual remembrance ceremony outside of the maximum-security Attica Correctional Facility.

Saturday morning started as gray and gloomy as was Sept. 13, 1971, the day when State Police and other law enforcement seized the prison back from the inmates in a retaking so violent that 39 men — 29 inmates and 10 prison employee hostages — were killed by police gunfire. Several of the riot survivors and their relatives remarked Saturday about how much the weather harkened back to that day.



**Raymond Bogart, 78, holds his old badgeduring a ceremony on the 43rd anniversary of the Attica riots.**(Photo: LAUREN PETRACCA@LaurenPetralca/, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER )

Each year since 2001, a group called the Forgotten Victims of Attica has held a solemn memorial on prison grounds. The group consists of riot survivors and the families of slain and deceased prison workers.

But this year marked several firsts for the ceremony, which was assisted by a breakthrough of sunshine shortly before the noon start.

For one, Anthony Annucci, the acting commissioner of the state's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision attended, the first chief of New York's prison system to do so. The corrections department holds its own memorial later in the day.

Speaking of the work of the Forgotten Victims, which successfully pushed for restitution and counseling for its members, Annucci told the crowd, "Perhaps above all else, your greatest accomplishment is this: You will never again be forgotten. Never.

"That is my promise," said Annucci, who has worked closely with the group.

Second, the state corrections department brought hundreds of artifacts — hats, shoes, shirts, badges — to return to families. The artifacts were among nearly 2,000 found unprotected in 2010 in a Quonset hut at a State Police barracks. They were sent to the State Museum for restoration and indexing.

The artifacts ranged from prisoner letters and handmade weaponry to the inmate clothing that prison employees were forced to wear while held hostage. This year, the corrections department took control of the artifacts believed to be those from prison workers, and has been working to return them to families.

The corrections department identified items specifically for 17 families, returning them in stylish oak boxes with insignia engraved with the names of the Attica employees.

Former State Museum curator Craig Williams helped determine which employee wore badge 13 at Attica, and ensured that it was returned to Bogart. Bogart wore the badge on his corrections hat, which also was returned.

On Sept. 9, 1971, Bogart tried to help a superior who was being assaulted by inmates in the minutes after the riot erupted.

"The inmates stopped beating the lieutenant and started beating me," he said. "I passed out."

He remembered awakening to a warm feeling, thinking the sensation was an omen that he had died. Instead, he was covered in his own blood, from "head to toe."

An inmate whom he had known got him to safety, ensuring he was released from the prison for medical treatment. As post-riot investigations determined, a contingent of Muslim prisoners helped get some of the seriously injured hostages released.

Those same inmates worked as peacekeepers during the next five days of tense impasse between New York officials and prisoners who were making demands of the state: Some of the demands were rational, such as improved conditions and religious freedom, and some of them less rational, such as "transportation (for some) out of confinement to a non-imperialist country."

Though a reminder of a painful day, Bogart said he was overjoyed at seeing his badge, and the number 13 that his fellow officers use to joke to him was an unlucky one. Instead, Bogart said, he feels lucky that he was one of those who survived the nation's deadliest prison riot. A total of 43 men died during the five days.



On Saturday, Patricia Lewis and her husband, John Stocksclaeder, were among those who left prison grounds after the ceremony with a box of troubling memories.

Lewis' father, Richard Lewis, was severely beaten during the uprising, then held hostage. He was shot in the back by police gunfire during the retaking, and died from his wounds.

Like other hostages, Lewis was given prison-issued inmate clothing while held captive, and forced to wear it. The box returned to the Lewis family Saturday included some of those clothes, such as socks and shoes that were not Lewis' size but which he'd worn in the prison yard.

Patricia Lewis said she has her plans for those clothes. While some may cherish the memories provided by the artifacts, Lewis sees the return of the clothes as a way to try to banish, as much as humanly possible, some of the anguished memories of 1971.

"I want it destroyed," she said. That destruction, she said, may help provide some semblance of closure.

Her intent: She will bring her family together and burn the clothes.

GCRAIG@DemocratandChronicle.com

[Twitter.com/gcraig1](https://twitter.com/gcraig1) (<http://twitter.com/gcraig1>)

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A helicopter dropped tear gas on the prison yard and chaos erupted. Video by Shawn Dowd



"What good came out of the riots?" asks former inmate James Young. The changes, good and bad, following the Attica prison riots. Video by Shawn Dowd

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