

## 3 Bodies Dug Up at Prison

By GARLAND BRADSHAW  
Of The Commercial Staff

**CUMMINS STATE PRISON FARM** — Three human skeletons were found in unmarked graves yesterday afternoon by inmates digging in a pasture on the prison less than two miles from the prison's main gate.

Dr. Edwin N. Barron Jr. of Little Rock, the prison physician, said he felt "reasonably certain that there are more bodies out there." He said "as many as 100, if not more," bodies might be found.

A missing rain delayed the resumption of digging this morning. Prison Superintendent Thomas O. Murton ordered an investigation yesterday after hearing of rumors among the inmates that former prisoners had been killed and buried there. He said he had no idea how many bodies might be found.

"We will continue to dig as long as we have graves to dig," Murton said. He said an inmate led searchers "right to the spot" where the three bodies were found. The graves were about five feet deep and four feet apart. He said the inmates dug until their shovels hit wood and then found the bodies in crude wooden coffins.

Two of the bodies had been decapitated, Murton said, and one had a thigh bone broken. He said the skull of one of the skeletons had been crushed. Murton said he assumed the bodies had been mutilated because "it was easier to shorten the man than lengthen the box" each was buried in.

Barron said no identification of the bodies had been made, but Murton said a comparison of the teeth in the skeletons with prison dental records might be the key.

Murton said the condition of the skeletons led him to believe that their burial predated the administration of former Prison Superintendent O. E. Bishop and that they might have been buried as early as 25 years ago.

He said the names of more than 200 convicts, dating back to 1900, were on the prison's list of unapprehended escapees. He said he wanted to check inmate rumors that some of the men had not escaped but had instead been killed.

Barron said a Negro inmate named Reuben Johnson came to him about a month ago and told him that he had helped bury the body of an inmate, Jake Jackson who was supposed to have escaped in December, 1944. Barron said Johnson told him he had witnessed the burial after Jackson was beaten to death.

It was Johnson who led Harold A. Porter, the chief security officer at the prison, and a party of inmates to the pasture where they dug up three suspected graves and found a skeleton.

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## Murton Threatens To Resign

By TOM PARSONS  
Of The Commercial Staff

Prison Superintendent Thomas O. Murton yesterday threatened to resign "later on in the spring" unless certain restrictions that had been placed on him were removed.

"There are some people that have got in our way, and they're still in the way," Murton said. "And there are some situations which have developed, either accidentally or whatever, that make it impossible for me to do my job."

He indicated that unless these situations were changed he would be resigning his post, to which he was named at the beginning of this month, sometime after next week's special session of the legislature.

Murton's ultimatum came after Penitentiary Board Chairman John H. Haley, made public a letter from Murton in which Murton said he intended to resign "for reasons which I don't care to disclose at this time." The letter was dated last Saturday.

Haley made the disclosure at the end of a 90-minute presentation on prison financial problems before the Legislative Council at Little Rock. Asked after the council session if he knew why Murton intended to resign, Haley said: "No, I really don't."

He said he did not think it was because of some situation at the prison because "the situation at the prison has never been better."

"The only problem," Haley said, "is we would be completely out of funds April 1."

Murton, however, said last night that money had nothing to do with his action.

At the opening of a Jaycees panel discussion here last night, Murton was asked for comment on Haley's disclosure of his impending resignation. He said he was "firmly convinced, as the situation exists now, which I don't wish to describe... I cannot do what I think needs to be done to reform the Arkansas State Penitentiary to my satisfaction, to the board's satisfaction, or the governor's." He continued:

"There are some limitations placed upon me which I think aren't necessary. In the present situation, I don't see how it's going to get the job done. I'm not talking about moving too quickly or steaming things up."

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**SUPERINTENDENT THOMAS O. MURTON ANSWERS A QUESTION**  
Louis L. Ramsey Jr. is at Left at Jaycee Panel Discussion

## Prison Audit Is Requested

Special to The Commercial

**LITTLE ROCK** — The Legislative Council today asked the Legislative Audit Division to make "an immediate and thorough search audit" of the state prison system.

The request came in a resolution introduced by State Senator Max Howell of Little Rock.

State Senator Knox Nelson of Pine Bluff, who opposed a search audit of the prison system when it was proposed by a member of the state Penitentiary Study Commission, was a cosigner of the resolution.

Nelson said this did not mean he had changed courses on the need for a search audit. He said the reason he opposed the audit as a member of the Study Commission was that it did not specify what agency would make the audit. The resolution adopted by the Legislative Council today, Nelson pointed out, is an improvement because it fixes the responsibility for the audit on the Audit Division. Nelson said this gives the job to a body that has subpoena powers.

The resolution is designed to yield information the legislature can use to weigh prison legislation that will be presented during the special legislative session that begins next week.

## ton Examined

on physician, holds the jawbone  
I yesterday at Cummins State  
son pharmacist, is at left.

## Ceasefire

## Terrorize il Capitals

ighter bombers, cargo planes,  
servation aircraft and helicopters.  
oss was estimated at more than  
25,000,000.

At Da Nang, the fighter base was  
hit by 40 Russian-built 122-millimeter  
ockets, destroying 13 jet fighterbombers  
sed in air strikes against North  
Vietnam. At the same time Communist  
runners shelled the Marine heliport  
cross the river, damaging 19  
helicopters.

To the north of Cam Ranh Bay at  
Xong Ba Thin (175 miles northeast of  
Saigon), Communist demolition teams  
sneaked into the American airfield and  
slew up several aircraft with explosive  
charges.

Casualty totals were incomplete but  
partial reports relayed by American and  
South Vietnamese spokesmen showed: 18  
American military personnel killed and  
11 wounded; 29 South Vietnamese troops  
killed and 54 wounded; and four South  
Vietnamese civilians dead and many  
others wounded.

More than 250 Viet Cong were  
estimated killed, and casualty tolls were  
expected to increase.

## Murton, 2 Antagonists Put On a Caustic Show

By HARRY PEARSON  
Of The Commercial Staff

There were verbal fireworks last

Murton and two of the panel members,  
Henry and Nelson, but from the divided  
viewpoints held by the members of the

## Was It Too Much Advice?

By TUCKER STEINMETZ  
Of The Commercial Staff

Why would Prison Superintendent Thomas O. Murton resign?

A principal reason may be disappointment on his part over not being assigned a central role in over-all planning for the future development of Arkansas's prison system.

It was last summer that Murton irritated Governor Rockefeller by continuing to criticize the then prison superintendent, O. E. Bishop.

Rockefeller and Murton made up, however, in a closed-door session at the Capitol.

When the reporters were invited in, Rockefeller declared that he was solidly behind Murton and that Murton would speak for the administration on prison matters.

This was taken to mean that Murton, a penologist both by training and experience, would be the state's top consultant on the subject of prison reform.

Since then, however, the ideas of Austin McCormick, one of Murton's colleagues in the field of penology, have emerged as the recommendations of the state's Penitentiary Study Commission. The commission is a panel of legislators, judges and lawyers that has prepared

McCormick, of New York, is a consultant for the Osborne Foundation, a nonprofit group devoted to studying penitentiary matters. It is said that Murton feels his own advice on prison matters is just as valuable as McCormick's, if not more so because he is so close to the situation.

Another irritant is that Murton and McCormick disagree over the answer to a question that is vital to the future direction the prisons take: Should the penitentiary continue its farming operation?

McCormick favors the agricultural system; Murton does not.

McCormick is expected to be back in Arkansas next month to appear before a special session of the legislature. His purpose will be to urge passage of a

package of reform legislation.

Could it be that Murton would like to be playing this role?

Murton also may be upset over possible interference in the everyday management of the penitentiary.

Since Murton has been in the prison system, Dab Scott, an aide to the governor, has played an active role in prison administration.

Also, John H. Haley of Little Rock, chairman of the state Prison Board, can be safely said to have been more active in prison administration than any member before him.

Haley and Scott have to be counted among Murton's most loyal defenders.

But the deep involvement of them — and perhaps others — may make it seem to Murton that his own role becomes more peripheral every day.

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