

## Herbert Day Alexander (Jr.) ( - 11 Feb 1971)

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### **Wife, Child Slayer Kills Himself In Cell**

*By Paul G. Edwards*

*Washington Post Staff Writer*

Herbert D. Alexander Jr., who pleaded guilty 21 years ago to the murder of his wife and baby daughter, hanged himself in the Alexandria jail Wednesday while awaiting a hearing his request for a new trial, a jail official said yesterday.

City Sergeant Raymond E. Fogele said a jail guard discovered Alexander's body hanging by a bed sheet about 6 p.m. One end of the sheet was tied to a horizontal bar on his cell door and the other around his neck.

Alexander, 45, was serving two concurrent life sentences for fatally strangling his 21-year-old wife, Gloria, and 18-month-old daughter, Bonnie in the bedroom of their Alexandria home at 3908 Elbert Ave., on October 22, 1948.

According to newspaper accounts at that time, Alexander telephoned city police and said, "Come and get me. I've killed my wife and baby." When police arrived, they said, they found the two bodies in the bedroom and Alexander sitting on a living room couch. He had slashed his wrists with a razor blade.

The slayings took place almost two months after Alexander had been released from the Veterans Hospital at Perry Point, Md., where he had been under psychiatric treatment for attempting suicide by an overdose of sleeping pills, news stories record.

Despite physicians' warnings that he was too mentally ill to go home, Alexander's wife insisted upon his release.

His long history of psychiatric disorders began during World War II service with the Navy when he was injured during shipboard gunnery practice and treated for shock. He received subsequent psychiatric care and spent three weeks in a mental hospital a year before the slayings.

After his arrest on the murder charges in 1948, Alexander was committed to a mental institution upon the advice of doctors who declared him insane then and insane "apparently at the time of the alleged offense."

He was ruled competent to stand trial a year later and entered guilty pleas to the murder charges in April, 1950, and was sentenced that May.

Two months before the sentencing, Alexander's father killed himself by slashing his wrists and throat.

Twice during his 20 years at the state penitentiary in Richmond, Alexander was transferred to Southwestern State Hospital for psychiatric care, news stories record.

In a handwritten motion for a new trial filed by Alexander last year, he contended that court records did not include a transcript of his sanitary hearing and that his attorney, now dead, failed to introduce testimony about his confinements in mental institutions.

He also claimed that his guilty plea was not made voluntarily and that detectives questioned him in jail outside the presence of his attorney and in violation of his constitutional rights.

A hearing on the motion had been scheduled in Alexandria Corporation Court next month.