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PRISON LIFE

MARCH 1995

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Contest Deadline: October 15, 1995.

PRISON LIFE

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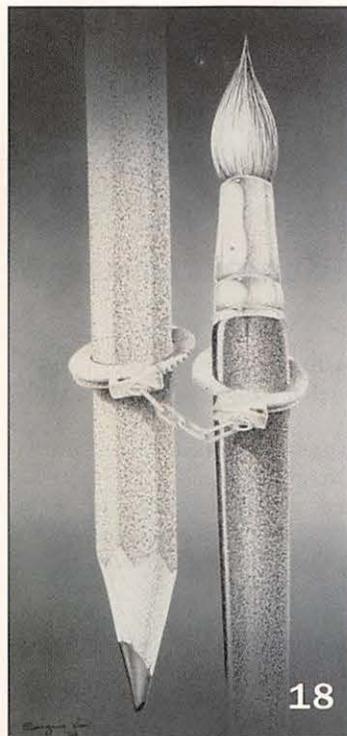
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Voice of the Convict

BANNED IN CALIFORNIA

by Richard Stratton

By the time you read this—if you get it—*Prison Life* will be immersed in the fight of its life. While at home last week working on the March issue, I got a fax from the office informing me that the October *Prison Life* had been banned from all California state prisons.

This is a serious body blow to a struggling magazine. California has the largest and most populous prison system in the United States—over 120,000 prisoners. We shipped out nearly ten thousand copies of the October issue to the members of the California Prisoner's Union. The ban on *Prison Life* in California is equal to barring members of the National Rifle Association from subscribing to *Guns and Ammo*. In one ominous move, the bureaucrats wiped out a potentially healthy percentage of our fledgling subscriber base—and cost us some serious bucks.

Banned in California? I've heard of being banned in Boston, but in California? And the whole state? Why? The memo I got was addressed to all wardens and signed by the Deputy Director, Institutions Division for the State of California, Department of Corrections. Subject: PUBLICATION RESTRICTION—PRISON LIFE, OCTOBER 1994 ISSUE. Dated: December 2, 1994, which didn't make a lot of sense since the October issue had been sent out in September and we were already getting feedback on it from a number of California prisoners. The body of the memo reads:

The above titled publication is not to be allowed into any institution. The October 1994 issue contains

an article which describes escape plans and methodology (attached).

Pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, §3136(d), inmates may not receive correspondence which concerns plans to escape or assist in an escape from lawful custody.

Please advise your mailroom staff to be aware of this publication.

There was no article attached. I recalled the features and other pieces we ran in October and couldn't figure out what article they were talking about. We'd had a lot of problems with the October issue being rejected from different joints all over the nation for a variety of bogus reasons. The warden at the federal prison in Otisville, New York banned it because, "The magazine depicts detailed organizational activities by inmates during several prison disturbances. This information is deemed to be detrimental to the security of this institution and is therefore rejected." It was easy enough to figure he was referring to the piece we did on riots at Attica, Santa Fe and Lucasville. Not so easy was to understand how information that has been widely disseminated in newspapers, books and magazines, in films and on TV news broadcasts suddenly becomes detrimental to the security of any institution simply because it appears in *Prison Life*. At another federal joint in Big Spring, Texas, the warden flat out rejected the whole issue without identifying specific content. Prisoners with subscriptions were notified that Prison

Life would not be allowed at Big Spring because it contained articles that were "anti-B.O.P." They had their cells shaken down and back issues of the magazine were seized as contraband.

Prison Life has had an ongoing struggle with censorship. The State Correctional Institution at Dallas, Pennsylvania has consistently rejected every issue I edited and published. The magazine was banned at a few prisons because of a short story I wrote, "The Great Escape," published in the June '94 issue, about a hapless Indian who tries to escape by burrowing in the trash compactor and ends up getting squashed to death. Great plan, that. We've had the magazine thrown out on the grounds that we print pictures of tattoos and tattooing is illegal in prison. Yeah, right. Another favorite is the old standby: *Prison Life* publishes letters written by prisoners, and as prisoners are forbidden to correspond with each other, the magazine could serve as a means of communication between prisoners. Sure, like we're going to go through the thousands of letters we receive each month and print love notes between some guy in Texas and his crime partner in New York.

Insane, yet in a way, this rationale—banning the magazine because we print material written by prisoners—gets closer to the truth. Some prison-crats—those who loath prisoners and merely want to make them suffer—are not thrilled by the prospect of a national magazine that bills itself as the "Voice of the Convict." Yet we have never had a problem getting the magazine into serious joints like Lewisburg, nor even Marion, for that

matter. I get letters and calls from guards and prison administrators who say they subscribe to the magazine, read it from cover to cover and appreciate what they read. We are, in the words of so many, "telling it like it is" and that can only be good for guards and those who run prisons if they have nothing to hide because, as we all know, they have to live in the prisons as well.

There is a lot going on in the prisons of this country that the free-world has little or no understanding of—much of it as unsettling to guards and staff as it is to prisoners. Just last week, Senator Paul Simon released a national survey of prison wardens who had strong criticism for the politically driven crime-fighting solutions coming out of Washington. (See article in Block Beat.) To quote Bob Gangi, executive director of the Correctional Association of New York, "There are few areas where the public is more misinformed."

Prison Life wants to help right that wrong. The craziest thing about banning our magazine from prisons is that most of what we publish is written by prisoners. Who is being protected from this information? The prisoners already know what goes on behind the walls. It is their voice we want to make heard so that the rest of America might listen up and question the rhetoric of politicians whose only interest is in perpetuating the fear mongering that gets them re-elected and keeps the tax payers shelling out their hard earned money to finance the building of more prisons.

The California ban does not bode well. In law enforcement, as in many other aspects of our culture, as goes California so goes the rest of the union. California is weird. On the one hand it is the most progressive and kinkiest of states. On the other hand it is the land of Ronnie and Nancy and so many of those great moral leaders who say they want to rid us of big government and yet want to control every

aspect of our private lives.

What to do? How to deal with this major kick in the teeth to our plans for growing the magazine?

I called California. "This is Richard Stratton, editor and publisher of *Prison Life* magazine," I said to a reasonable sounding woman with the Department of Corrections who took my call. I had my youngest son, Dash, on my knee and he was gurgling and making baby noises that threatened to drown out my words. Nothing like the sounds of a baby to melt the heart of even the saltiest of bureaucrats. "Mind telling me what it is you folks don't like about my magazine?"

To my amazement I learned that the October issue has been banned in California because of a piece we printed in Block Beat reporting on an escape from a prison in South Charleston, Virginia by a guy who braided dental floss into a length of rope. We picked the story up from the Associated Press news service. The piece appeared in practically every newspaper in America. But when reprinted in *Prison Life*, the same story was miraculously transformed into "escape plans and methodology."

I asked if they couldn't just clip the offending page and let the rest of the magazine through. She replied that in the future they may do this, however it was too late for the October issue. "And January?" I asked. "Has that been banned as

well?" The memo I received had a hand-written note at the bottom saying the January issue was also "not allowed."

"Not from headquarters," she assured me. She also told me that new guidelines on censorship in California prisons were about to be issued and implemented statewide. I asked her to send me a copy.

Not that I intend to exercise any sort of self-censorship. That would defeat the whole purpose of this magazine. But I might think twice about including a piece that appears on one of the newswires if I think it could give the censors an excuse to keep us out.

If you've subscribed to *Prison Life* and been denied your copy, we urge you to fill out the appropriate grievance forms and file them right away. We can't take this lying down. The survival of *Prison Life* depends on penetrating America's many prisons and jails, reaching the imprisoned and giving them a forum. We'll take the censors to court. We'll fight the censorship issue in the mainstream media. We'll keep publishing the truth about crime and punishment in America. We'll keep sending the magazine to prisoners. And we'll keep reminding the rest of the world that what made this country a great nation was the idea of freedom and justice for all. We want to help that idea become a reality. **PL**



Richard Stratton (center) with prisoners' rights attorneys William Kunstler (left) and Ronald Kuby, (right).

TIME TO STEP UP

by

Chris Cozzone

Editorial Executioner

A lot of people ask me why the magazine's got such an attitude, especially recently, when the subject of banning has come up. "Tone it down," these critics suggest, "you won't have any more trouble with the D.O.C. and B.O.P. You'll circulate more . . . Just think of all the money you could make!"

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And maybe we'll start running articles like "Ten Best Ways to Kiss the Man's Ass," or "How I Stopped Being a Convict and Learned to Love the System." Or how 'bout running departments like, "Informant of the Month," or "Best Unicorn Factory Worker?"

Oh yes, I understand now why *I'm serving 20 years for sellin' a couple hits of acid at a Grateful Dead concert, or yeah, I see now why I deserved a Continuing Criminal Enterprise life bid for not tellin' the Man what he wanted to hear or because some rat-fink did.* No thanks.

Sure, we could easily produce a mag like that, maybe call it "Sons of Corrections" or "Inmate Today." We could even include your favorite wardens on the editorial/censor staff. Hell, at least we'd know it'd get into the prisons.

But damn, our assholes would sure hurt from all the bendin' over.

You guys better appreciate us: We much prefer the real deal we've continued to produce since June of last year—the in-yo'-face, fuck-it-if-you-can't-deal-with-reality approach. We prefer the resistance to the Machine if that's the only way we're gonna earn our props and be able to sleep at night, even if it means we gotta tighten our belts and stand tall.

Hell, in more than one prison, *Prison Life* magazine is heavy contraband. I figure if the mag ever goes down, I can get employed at some prison as a guard (if I change my name) and make a ton of money smuggling in back issues of our righteous rag. "Hey, can ya cop me a bag o' weed?" "No man, but I got an

October issue of *Prison Life* here . . ."

The fight goes on, brothers and sisters. We're steppin' up to the Man and we urge you to do the same. We gotta show the world that this mag is the very embodiment of the First Amendment.

The issue you hold in your hand is a living declaration of your Constitutional rights. It's a Pandora's Box crammed with words, images and ideas rarely seen outside barbed wire.

That's why we're leading off with "Silencing the Oppressed—No Freedom of Speech for Those Behind the Walls," by criminal defense attorneys Ronald Kuby and William Kunstler.

We also got the winners of the Art Behind Bars contest—submissions fulla energy, emotion and creative, raw talent no maximum security joint could ever contain. It proves that they can continue the warehousing regime, they can lock up physical bodies, but they can't tame the spirit. Your minds remain free. The men and women who won, and the hundreds of others who contributed, are all worthy cons, as you'll see when you check out the stuff they've produced.

We also got gangs in this issue. Although *Prison Life* is not about promoting gangs, we're certainly not about laying down when it comes to fighting for human rights or freedom of speech. There are always gonna be gangs, whether anyone likes it or not. We see gangs as tremendous potential that could be used constructively, but only if the G's and their leaders can straighten out their acts.

Before anything can be worked out with gangs, be it gang-to-gang or cops/media/society-to-gangs, we feel that the gangs ought to be heard before judgment is made. So we're publishing a two-part series on gangs straight from the G's themselves. We've given 'bangers a chance to say wassup, without someone else's perspective getting in the way.

Keep in mind, though, that this collection (and next issue) is not representative of *all* gangs. Many leaders and G's keep to themselves. We respect that, but remember that if you guys are gonna moan about being forgotten, or even misrepresented, that's because you were too scared or too cautious to speak up. It's not as if we didn't send the word out. (The invites are still wide open. All you gotta do is pick up a pen or the phone. We'll continue to publish material from gangs, maybe even start a column on the subject.)

The rest of the issue leans toward the inspirational. We got kick-ass prison art winners throughout, and most of our usual departments:

Bubba, Iron Pile, Crime-jacker, In-Cell, etc. There's also an interview with Oliver Stone, who wrote the epic prison flick *Midnight Express* and directed the controversial *Natural Born Killers*.

So keep those pens, pencils and typewriters goin', and we'll do the same here in the freeworld. Remember: Hide those back issues—ya never know when the goon squad's gonna be comin' for 'em.



PRISON LIFE

March 1995

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Richard Stratton

EXECUTIVE EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR

Chris Cozzone

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Kim Wozencraft

MANAGING EDITOR

Jennifer Wynn

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR

Karen Cantrell

DESIGN/LAYOUT

Steve Lashley, Bobo Willkie

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Myron "Hadji" Hamilton

STAFF ARTISTS

Rob Sula, Marty Voelker

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS: BEHIND BARS

Michael Davis, D. DiDominicus, Janet Dolber, Aldo Saul Garrido, Thomas Lujan, Andrew Kish, Dan Locke, Joaquin Maus, Jed Miller, Paul Mulryan, Daniel Nicklaus, John Nilsen, Enrique Ortiz, Terry Oulds, Scott Prado, Mark D. Smith, C. Thompson, Sergio Voi

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS: FREEWORLD

Stephen Conway, Deni Javas, Muth

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jasmine Rowbotham, Sarah Willkie

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: BEHIND BARS

Troy Chapman, Chester Cornman, Laron Douglas, Larry Fassler, Figalo, Gregory McMaster, Benton Murray, Ismael Santillanes, Jimmy Tyler

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: FREEWORLD

Thomas Falater, Ronald Kuby, William Kunstler, Brother Rasa

PRISON LIFE EDITORIAL OFFICE

505 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (212)967-9760
Fax: (212)967-7101

CANADIAN SALES OFFICE

Robert Rowbotham,
Canadian Managing Director
Kenny Hudson, Assistant
253 College St., Suite 444
Toronto, ONT M5T1R5
Tel: (416) 536-5641
Fax: (416) 536-7687

JOINT VENTURE MEDIA, INC.

PRESIDENT & CIRCULATION MANAGER

Gary Tustison

OPERATIONS ASSISTANT

Lewis Groce

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION & INQUIRIES

4200 Westheimer, Suite 160
Houston, TX 77027-4426
CALL: 1-800-207-2659

ADVERTISING

JCI
270 LaFayette St, Suite 1200
New York, NY 10012
Tel: (212) 274-0400
Fax: (212) 274-0724

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A WORD TO OUR WOMEN READERS

by Jennifer Wynn
Managing Editor

"You're too macho."

"Why haven't any women been cellmates of the month?"

"Don't we women prisoners have a voice in your mag?"

You sure do. And that's why I'm writing this. That's why I risked bodily harm muscling my way onto Cozzone's page . . . to let you know you do have a voice we want to hear, you do have a place in *Prison Life* and we do want to publish your stories. Problem is, we haven't received many.

Maybe you're shy. Maybe we've scared you with our hardcore, rough-and-tumble style. Maybe that ugly mug of Bubba's turned you off for good.

More likely, it's because you women account for only six percent of America's incarcerated. So naturally, most of the material we get is from men. I'm not saying we've received nothing from women. It's just that the number of submissions we receive from you is miniscule compared to those we receive from men. So the competition is fierce. What's new?

You wanna be heard? Roar! You wanna be published? Write powerful stories. Send an SASE for our guidelines so you get an idea of the kinds of articles we're looking for.

As for the macho tone, think about our audience and our pool of prisoner authors. I'm not saying these guys aren't civilized, I'm just saying they were never the candy-

ass, yes-man types you'd find in, say, corporate America. These outlaws want true crime, gritty writing and hardcore exposés. And we, as the "voice of the convict," are committed to printing their stories in their words. We also gotta make a buck, so we gotta produce a magazine that appeals to our majority audience.

Granted, our first two issues were pretty macho. But when we began getting feedback from female prisoners, we listened to their concerns. We published an award-winning story by author Susan Rosenberg and ran a call-out in our October issue for stories from women behind bars. We put a woman on the cover of the January issue, and in the next issue you'll be pleased to find our first female Celly of the Month.

For any of you men who think we're moving into Affirmative Action territory, lowering our standards so to speak, you're dead wrong. These women earned their way into our magazine. They represent role models to anyone behind bars—male or female.

We feel we're making some headway, but we know we have a way to go. We'd like to hear more from women, because we know you have important, powerful stories to tell and profound insight to offer. Most of all, we want your stories because this is your magazine, too.

THE SELF-DEFENSE BIBLE

The most effective street - fighting techniques revealed by a top professional bouncer .

In a violent street fight , the formal training procedures and flashy moves you practice in the dojo will be useless . Paul Wellard knows . As a top **PROFESSIONAL BOUNCER** , having been attacked by fists , boots , pool cues , guns , and knives , Wellard has learned a thing or two about what goes down in a real fight . As a **MARTIAL ARTS EXPERT** , he has also learned that martial arts training is useful in a brawl , but it is no substitute for real fighting ' know how ' . An active participant in dozens of fights where brawling is quick , dirty and very violent , Wellard has compiled a **unique guide to self - defense** .

In this highly detailed training manuals , Wellard draws on his experience to reveal the psychology , strengths and weaknesses of a street fighter , the characteristics of a real fight (you might be surprised) , ways of dealing with aggressive people and lots of tips and tricks . He presents the basic defense moves that can be applied to most types of attacks , the most effective methods he used dozens of times to defeat stronger and larger opponents . Wellard uses accounts of his own fights to illustrate key points and offers straightforward training programs to improve individual techniques . He also takes a critical and practical look at the effectiveness of the most popular martial arts being taught .

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Prison Life Canadian Managing Director Gets 18 Years

Toronto, Ontario—Robert "Rosie" Rowbotham, Canada's legendary marijuana outlaw and *Prison Life's* main man north of the border, was sentenced to 18 years in prison for conspiracy to traffic in 400 lbs. of pot. The fresh 18 is to run consecutively with a 13-year sentence Rosie was paroled on last July. He'll have to serve a minimum of 17 years before release.

The unprecedented sentence stunned friends, family and loyal supporters who gathered at a federal courthouse in Toronto on December 19, 1994 to hear Judge Bruce Hawkins pronounce sentence. Not two weeks earlier, Rosie was convicted on a five-year-old unsummed or "dry" conspiracy, the result of an undercover sting operation code-named Project Amigo. After the trial, Judge Hawkins allowed Rosie to remain in a halfway house and continue his new job as *Prison Life's* Canadian managing director. All indications were that the judge did not intend to punish Rosie too harshly for what was clearly old business.

Rosie is no stranger to the criminal justice system. He was once described by Royal Canadian Mounted Police and DEA agents as a "hippie godfather" reputed to control an international family of freak

dope dealers. Novelist Norman Mailer and rock star Neil Young are among the luminaries who have testified on Rowbotham's behalf at various trials. He holds the record for the most amount of time given to a pot defendant in Canada and has already done a total 16 calendars out of his 44 years.

At court proceedings over the past 25 years this no-bullshit marijuana martyr has consistently admitted his involvement in the pot trade. He chooses to fight the government on grounds that trafficking in a God-given substance he and many others believe is a sacrament and a medicine is not criminal, the laws against it are.

Rosie's life story is a harrowing, absorbing saga of life in the marijuana subculture worthy of a major motion picture. In the seventies, he emerged as the kingpin of the infamous Rochdale College, a Toronto experimental school that became a mecca for pot and hash smugglers from all over the world. Rosie was known for his primo Lebanese hash. In 1982, he was arrested and sentenced to 20 years (reduced to 13 on appeal) for his role in a massive North American marijuana and hashish smuggling conspiracy. (*Prison Life's* editor and publisher, Richard Stratton, received 25 years in the U.S. on the same case.) Govern-

(continued on page 11)



Rosie and grandson at Collins Bay prison. Photo by Jasmine Rowbotham.

Wardens Criticize Crime Bill Solutions

Prison wardens uniformly reject the popular crime-fighting solutions coming out of Washington, according to a national survey conducted by Sen. Paul Simon's (D-IL) Subcommittee on the Constitution, a panel of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Instead, wardens call for additional prevention programs, smarter use of prison resources, the repeal of mandatory minimum sentences and an expansion of alternatives to incarceration.

Eighty-five percent of wardens surveyed said that elected officials are not offering effective solutions to America's crime problem.

Simon sponsored the survey of 157 wardens and also polled 925 prisoners in an effort to introduce "a reality check" as Congress prepares to renew its debate on crime policy. Noting that Congress will be asked to consider popular but overly simplistic remedies for the nation's epidemic of violent crime, Simon sought the input of those on one front of the criminal justice system: wardens who oversee the nation's prisons. The surveys were distributed by the Department of Corrections in California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. Sixty percent of wardens responded.

"We've just passed the dubious milestone of having 1 million people in prison," said Simon. "But for all the new prisons we've built and filled over the last two decades, we feel less safe today than we did before. Loading our prisons with nonviolent drug criminals means that, today, we are committing more nonviolent offenders to hard time than we are violent criminals, and there's little room left for the violent offenders who should be put away to make our streets safer.

"Chase Riveland, a corrections official in Washington State who looked at the survey results, said that focusing only on prisons and ignoring prevention is 'drive-by legislation,' at best," Simon continued. "He's right."

Despite the current "tough on crime" rhetoric favored by many politicians, the wardens who partici-

pated in the survey generally call for a more balanced approach that mixes punishment, prevention and treatment. For example, when asked how they would spend an additional \$10 million in resources, wardens said they would allocate only 43% to law enforcement, while spending 57% on prevention programs. That ratio contrasts sharply with the spending in last year's crime bill, which allocated only a quarter of the \$30 billion bill to prevention programs. The survey results also raise questions about proposals in the "Contract for America," which call for the repeal of much of the remaining prevention funds.

Wardens also urged a more intelligent use of prison space, expressing concerns that the nation is wasting scarce prison resources on nonviolent offenders. Wardens noted that, on average, half of the offenders under their supervision could be released without representing a danger to society. Similarly, 65% declared that the nation should use prison space more efficiently by imposing shorter sentences on nonviolent offenders and longer sentences on violent ones.

Wardens also questioned the use of a "one size fits all" approach to sentencing: 58% rejected mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenders. And 92% said that greater use should be made of alternatives to incarceration, such as home detention, halfway

houses and residential drug treatment programs. These results were confirmed in general terms by prisoners, who indicated that longer sentences did not represent a particularly effective crime deterrent.

When asked to identify the most effective way of fighting crime, wardens overwhelmingly chose prevention programs, especially those that address basic human development needs. Seventy-one percent said improving the educational quality of public schools would make a major difference in fighting crime; 66% favored increasing the number of job opportunities in the community; and 62% endorsed developing programs to help parents become better mothers and fathers. In contrast, only 54% said longer sentences for violent criminals would have a major effect on crime, and only 8% supported longer sentences for drug users.

Similarly, wardens and prisoners were nearly unanimous in calling for an expansion of rehabilitative programs in prisons themselves. For example, 93% of wardens recommend a significant expansion of literacy and other educational programs. Again, the result stands in sharp contrast to Congress' actions during the last year's crime debate when Congress eliminated all funding for Pell grants for prisoners.

FEDS' NEW TOY: PRISONER STUN BELT

Looks like the Federal Bureau of Prisons has approved a new vehicle of torture: the Remote Electronically Activated Technology (R-E-A-C-T) Stun Belt. (How long did it take them to make up that acronym?)

A Program Statement dated September 30, 1994 from the U.S. Department of Justice outlines the various uses of the device, which is designed to prevent prisoners from escaping while being escorted to court, to the hospital or to another prison. But first—the gory details, as explained in the document:

The Custody Control Belt discharges 50,000 volts of electricity. By means of a remote transmitter, an attending officer has the ability to activate the stun package attached to the belt, thereby causing the following results to take place:

Immobilization, causing you to fall to the ground.

Possibility of self-defecation.

Possibility of self-urination. Only maximum custody convicts "requiring greater security than can be afforded through conventional restraints" can be forced to wear the stun belt. The document states that the officer-in-charge of the escort detail "must exercise sound judgment when making a decision to activate the Custody Control Belt." But it goes on to say that "verbal orders are not required if the staff member reasonably believes a danger of death or grievous bodily harm is imminent." In addition, prisoners can be stunned if they tamper with the belt, fail to comply with staff's verbal order to halt, or if the officer-in-charge experiences "any loss of visual contact" with the prisoner.

Hmmm. Guess the days of handcuffs and shackles are over.

Prison Life Article Enrages Congressman

U.S. Rep. Scott McInnis, R-Colo., is fuming over an article depicting the gory details of life behind prison bars that appeared in the January issue of *Prison Life*.

The "disgusting" article by a former prisoner at the Florence federal prison prompted McInnis to ask an advertiser to boycott the periodical.

Prison officials said although the article was reckless, prisoners have a right to speak their minds.

The offending article details the horrors of living with a "twisted, psychotic, perverted, disgusting, smelly, farting, belching, nose-picking, abject creep."

The author, Thomas Falater, who served 14 months for mail fraud in the minimum security prison, complained that his "celly" used his job in the kitchen to sully the silverware, scratching himself with a spoon and using a fork to pick his nose.

McInnis said he was "stunned" by the article, which arrived on his desk even though he is not a subscriber.

In addition to writing to the prison's warden, McInnis also wrote to the *Prison Life's* largest advertiser—Universal Labs, a company that advertises on the magazine's back cover.

"Given the trash in this magazine and the general public's desire to stop this abuse in the American prison system, I believe that it is irresponsible for a company, such as yours, to advertise in a magazine directed toward prison inmates," McInnis wrote.

McInnis said inmates shouldn't be allowed to write such trash.

"It's not about freedom of speech. You give up that right when you go to prison," said McInnis, a former police officer in Glenwood Springs.

Lee Stennett, executive director of American Society of Newspaper Editors, disagreed.

"That is constitutionally very wrong. In prison, you still have freedom of speech. You don't have freedom of movement, but the Bill of Rights still applies."

The magazine's editor-in-chief, Richard Stratton, said the Falater article is filthy, but termed it "jail-house humor."

"I'd stand by it. I admit it was not the most pleasant of reading, but it does kind of capture an aspect of prison life," Stratton said.

The Denver Post

18 years

(continued from page 9)

ment agents and prosecutors from New York, California, Texas, Maine and Canada charged the Rowbotham/Stratton organization with importing and distributing multi-ton loads of high quality hash and marijuana for over a decade. Some 60 people were arrested after Lebanese heroin dealers caught red-handed with ten kilos of junk flipped and traded evidence on the pot organization for their freedom.

Seven years later, Rosie won an appeal, overturning his '82 conviction. While in a holding cell at Toronto's Don jail awaiting release on bond pending a new trial, he had the misfortune to meet a Uruguayan coke dealer named Saul Spatzner. Unbeknownst to Rosie, Spatzner had been busted twice within a year on a variety of cocaine trafficking charges and had rolled over, agreeing to work for the Mounties and set up alleged members of a Colombian cocaine cartel operating in Canada.

Once the two were both out on bail, Spatzner lured Rosie to a couple of meetings where the informant taped conversations in which Rosie agreed to hook Spatzner up with a friend who would supply him with a

load of weed out of Austin, Texas. The deal never happened. Spatzner's ratted netted 25 defendants in just under a year. Rosie was caught in the cocaine-laced web.

Meanwhile, retrial on the big importing case resulted in a second conviction and Rosie returned to prison, this time with a 13-year bid. He wound up serving a total of 12 years on the '82 beef. The new charges were left unresolved for over five years until after Rosie was released on parole early last summer.

With the '89 case still hanging over his head, Rosie moved into a Toronto halfway house and immediately went to work as *Prison Life's* Canadian managing director, using his solid credentials in the prison culture to spread the Voice of the Convict to our brothers and sisters up north. In the six months he was on the streets, Rosie threw himself into his new career with the same brilliance and gusto he once brought to the pot trade. Within weeks, *Prison Life* had a presence in all Canada's penitentiaries. Rosie put *Prison Life's* editors in touch with Canadian prison writers, editors and activists, and he supplied us with first-hand information to bring us up to speed on the Canadian prison scene.

To everyone's shock and dismay,

Judge Hawkins ignored eloquent appeals from Gayle Gilbert, manager of the halfway house, as well as pleas from Rosie's employers to leave him out of prison so he could continue to pursue his first legitimate career. Instead, the judge chose to sentence Rosie to more time than the heaviest of the coke dealers snagged in the undercover trap. While he said that he found Rosie an engaging and likable enough character, he felt compelled to give him 18 years based on the weird logic that Rosie should get more time than he'd received on the '82 conviction.

Prison Life will continue to work closely with Rosie in-house. The editors plan to cover Canadian prison life with the same frankness and commitment we bring to exposing the vast prison industrial complex dominating the U.S. Still, Rosie is a bro and will be missed sorely. Now we'll be communicating collect via Bell Canada. He called from the Don jail a few days after the sentencing and told us to send magazines.

"Send me ten, twenty, a hundred," he said, as though he were ordering kilos of hash. "I can sell a lot of subscriptions to guys on their way to the different joints."

You can lock 'em up, but you can't keep a good man down. **PL**

Prison Life, HBO plan docu series

by Rex Weiner

Life behind bars will be the subject of a documentary series produced by HBO in association with *Prison Life* magazine, a controversial periodical published for the captive audience.

"Prison Life Presents: Prisoners of the War on Drugs" is the first hour-long installment, according to publisher/editor Richard Stratton. The docu, to be produced and directed by Marc Levin (HBO's "Mob Stories," "Gang War: Bangin' in Little Rock") starts shooting this month. Future series installments will cover a range of issues including death row and sex in prison.

Executive producer for HBO is Sheila Nevins and the coordinating producer is Kary Antholis.

Based in Gotham, the glossy bimonthly has published three issues under Stratton, previously editor of the Fortune Society newsletter and a former inmate of the federal prison system. Listed as editor-at-large is Stratton's wife, Kim Wozencraft, whose autobiographical book about life as an undercover-cop-gone-bad was the basis of the 1991 MGM movie, "Rush."

Oliver Stone is the subject of a featured interview in the upcoming issue of *Prison Life*. According to Stratton, the director speaks of his own jail experiences resulting from a long-ago marijuana bust, and explores his fascination with prison subjects.

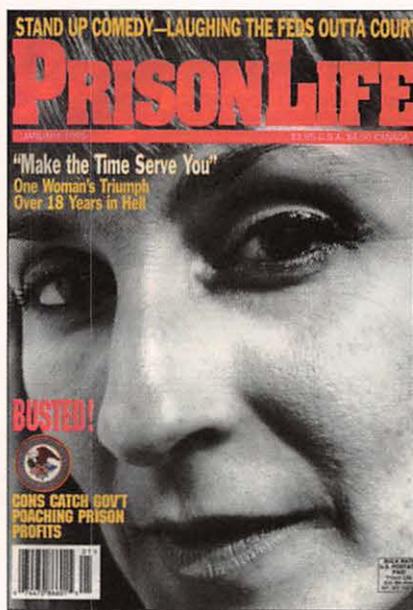
Mostly written and illustrated by prisoners, *Prison Life* was recently banned from the California state prison system. Stratton plans a legal challenge to the ban, and told *Daily Variety*, "What are they going to do next—ban HBO?"

Reprinted from *Daily Variety*.



Stand-up lifer Herby Sperling, featured in the June 1994 issue of *Prison Life*, plays Santa Claus for kids and family members in the visiting room at USP Lewisburg. Herby's been down for nearly a quarter of a century, but still manages to keep his spirits high.

Mail Call



WHAT IS THIS SHIT?

I really like your rag, especially the stand-up, down-on-rats-and-snitches attitude. If it weren't for rats and snitches, most of us would be home with our families.

You can imagine my surprise, then, when I noticed in the October issue a \$200,000 reward offer to snitch! What the hell is going on? Is this an advertisement? Offering a reward to snitch is completely at odds with the mission of *Prison Life*.

The entire scheme that put most of us in prison is based on paid informants, paid by either money, reduced sentences or some other secret consideration. Has *Prison Life* joined the snitch-for-hire scheme?

Supposedly, a "prominent businessman" had two attempts made on his life. Well, as I see it, if any self-respecting con really wanted him dead we wouldn't be talking "attempts." Maybe this prominent businessman ripped someone off. Maybe that's why he's scared. You can bet this guy has suspects. He knows exactly who he burned. The reward even states that "possible" suspects are already known.

If this reward article was in fact a paid advertisement, *Prison Life* has taken the man's money and his side. As convicts, we know the man with the money is usually right no matter how wrong. I don't think taking his side is appropriate for a magazine

that purports to serve convicts. Soliciting rats is best left to the government, the all-time greatest rat-maker working to keep us all down.

Prison Life, as a voice from behind bars, has the potential to bring about positive change. Don't allow the perception that you are just one more shark feeding off the misery of incarceration. Offering a \$200,000 reward to rat takes you too close to the other side.

Respectfully,
Milton E. Robins
Florence, CO

Okay. We admit it. We fucked up. It won't happen again. The guy who let that ad in is no longer with us.

The material for the ad came in at the last minute, and no one reviewed it before sending the film to the printers along with the rest of the ads.

We need all the advertising and subscription money we can get to keep this magazine happening, but we will never run ads that go against the editorial mission of this magazine. Thanks for keeping us honest.

who's weak or evil a "faggot" or "punk," or saying a photo makes a man "look like a homosexual," it turns my stomach. First of all, it's all backwards: Gay prisoners aren't usually the cellblock bullies, and I'll bet that gay prisoners are never the ones who rape other prisoners. Some of the most stand-up prisoners are gay. Look at the people who've fought for AIDS education, counseling, and decent treatment of prisoners with AIDS. Equating gay with "weak" promotes a distorted and sexist view of what strength is.

Prison Life pushes the position that prisoners need unity among ourselves against the enemy—the prison system, guards and prisonrats. So how can you then turn around and insult one sector of prisoners solely because of our sexuality? It sort of reminds me of those who go to the chapel to talk about "God is love," and then turn around and disrespect people of other races, religions and sexual orientations.

Prisoners more than anyone should understand first hand what it means to be disrespected, outcast



STOP BASHING GAYS

I like your magazine a lot and read it cover to cover. I especially like your positions against white supremacy and snitching.

There's one thing, though, that bothers me deeply and it runs through the magazine: the constant attacks on gays. Whether it's calling someone

and stereotyped. It seems to me that our power even inside these cages can grow from our humanity, not from our adopting the inhuman and dehumanizing character of our jailers.

By the way, I'm a political prisoner, a convict and a lesbian.

Laura Whitehorn
Marianna, FL

PRaise FOR UNICOR EXPOSE

Wow! The article in the January issue regarding UNICOR was fantastic! I have been immersed in this project day and night since its birth: July 8, 1992. Hats off and kudos to my co-plaintiffs, Joe Mowish and Donald Sargeant, and big hurrahs to Chris Cozzone and *Prison Life*.

As you probably know by now, Warden Vic Loy of FCI Jesup sent me a memo banning the January issue from the compound. On that same day, a copy of the article, "Busted," all ten pages, was placed in my hand. Some 100 copies were run off, and in two hours, said article was all over the compound. Once again, the staff failed to recognize that they're part-timers and we live here!

With co-plaintiffs like Mowish and Sarge, with courage to tell it like it is and print it, i.e. *Prison Life*, and with the continued assistance of other prisoners, our goal will be achieved! We're all in the same boat, and if we row together, we'll get to where we want to go...home!

Duane R. Olson
FCI Jesup



Chris Cozzone
Prison Life
8th Ave
New York
10018

SUBSCRIBERS FIGHTING BAN

As you can see from the enclosed memo to all wardens, your magazine seems like it's not welcome. I was told that our captain here read an issue and said, "Shit. I ain't letting this mag in!"

Now, I got this from the mail room supervisor. Anyway, do what you feel is best. I filed on this end with a 602 appeal. It's a start!

Woodron Willcoxon
Vacaville, CA

I am a convict at California State Prison and a subscriber to your magazine, which I enjoy very much, whenever the guards don't steal it. I'm not happy with the Screws' larceny. To that end, I have filed suit in Superior Court, Sacramento over the matter.

Please let me know how many copies of *Prison Life* you've sent to me. So far I've received only one issue of your fine magazine since I ordered my subscription. The Screws stole the rest. (They use "facility security" to excuse their theft.)

Sincerely,
John C. Williams
Vacaville, CA

A PLEA FOR HELP FROM THAILAND

Right now there are 31 American women and the same number of men incarcerated in Thailand prisons on drug charges. Justice and impartial legal representation are not part of the equation here. Trials take years; guilt is assumed upon arrest. Some Americans here have received the death sentence. Some people didn't even have drugs in their possession and most of us are first time offenders. The USA has enforced a limitation, but it bans anyone having more than one kilo from ever using it. And Thailand has a mandatory minimum length of stay of eight years for those with life sentences (the majority of us here have received life) and four years for those with a number sentence. Conditions are horrendous, treatment barbaric, language barriers almost insurmountable.

We sleep in quarters the size of cattle pens. The prison has a pay-as-you-go policy: Nothing's free, not even soap or toilet paper.

Exorcism is still a valid medical treatment in Thailand. For example, this past week a poor, hill-tribe woman was suffering from hallucinations and spontaneously bleeding from the eyes, nose, mouth and skin. A monk was brought in to help the officers exorcise the demon from the body! Yet when we need antibiotics for the frequent infections we get from our dirty environment, it's like pulling teeth. Which, by the way, is what the dentist would rather do than fix our teeth.

The worse thing we suffer from is the culture differences and isolation from our own people and country. TV, newspapers and radios are prohibited. We are expected to work in the prison sweat boxes yet have to buy everything we need. The USA has an international trade law banning convict-produced goods from being imported into the country, yet most of the things we make are marketed in America.

Americans should be aware of what is going on here, but most of all we need your support, even if it's just a letter.

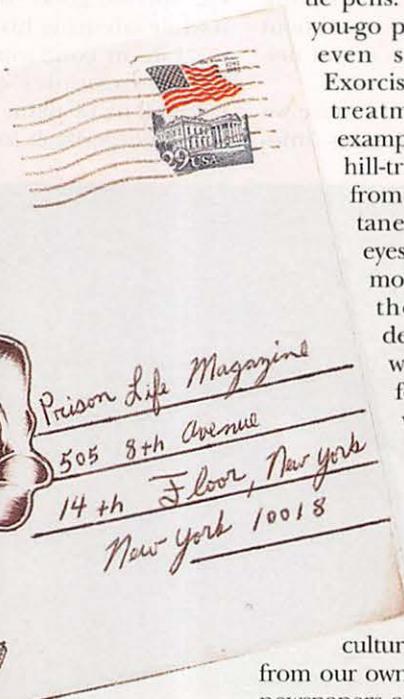
Diana Smith Nwankwo
Jackie Lynn Sample
3313 Ngamwanguan Rd.
Bangkhen, Bangkok
Thailand 10900

MAG MAKES CHANGE

Thanks for running my two articles, especially the Plantation one ("Life is Cheap on the Plantation," Oct. '94). I have heard that changes have already been made at the Florence complex as a result of the publication.

Hopefully, *Prison Life* will continue to be a catalyst for change and the only publication with the guts to print the truth from behind the walls.

Thomas Falater
Recently released from Florence, CO



AMERICA'S OBSESSION WITH PUNISHMENT

By Troy Chapman, Kincheloe, MI

We are a nation that seems to enjoy inflicting pain on other human beings. Mostly, we do it in the name of justice and as a response to crime, but nonetheless we apparently enjoy punishing people. We are entertained by the whole process of inflicting pain.

On TV, we see one long glorification of the process of bringing people to punishment. Shows like "America's Most Wanted," "Crime Stoppers" and "Cops" exemplify the point. We like to tell ourselves these are honest efforts to reduce crime, but who are we kidding? They are entertainment. Walk through any prison at 7:00 p.m. EST and you'll find 70% of the convicts watching these shows. What do they care about reducing crime? They don't, and neither do most other viewers.

We watch these shows because we like crime and violence. To this "info-

tainment" we can add a host of fictional crime drama shows, which have a long history of popularity in America. Today, we have reached the point where it's difficult to find anything on TV that isn't either subtly or blatantly related to some variation on the cops and robbers theme.

Enjoying watching others being hurt or punished isn't restricted to TV. People all across America cheered when Ted Bundy was strapped into the electric chair and thousands of volts of electricity were jolted into his body. And let's not forget the forward-thinking entrepreneur who created "Bundy Que" chicken, nor the good Americans who ate it while admiring his wit.

Life in contemporary America is full of examples of our vicarious enjoyment of pain. How long did it take George Bush to convince us that

Saddam was a bad man who needed to be punished? And when we finished siccing our high-tech whipping machines on the nasty Iraqis, Americans in small towns and large stood around patting themselves on the back, rehashing the bashing, reliving it all and wearing T-shirts that said, "Desert Storm: These Colors Don't Run" and other thoughtful, intelligent social commentaries.

What do our politicians talk about more than anything else? Is it our failing school systems? Is it the poverty and Third World conditions here in America? Is it our children dying? Is it the hatred and racism that poison us like a cancer? No. They talk about two things more than anything else, two things we love the most: money and punishment. They do it because we tell them that's what we want to hear.



We don't discuss crime at all, except as a lead-in to talk about punishment or money.

Any citizen can see that we're obsessed with punishment. We like it like sex, and we will leave no stone unturned in our search to find someone to punish. Why, here's a man in Alaska who likes to smoke a joint now and then. He keeps a little in his house for him and the wife. What but an obsession bordering on addiction would lead Americans in the form of DEA agents to this man's door? Yet there we are. There we are all over the nation with our so-called "war on drugs," kicking in doors, dragging people from their homes, taking possession of their children and their property, with a couple of claps on the back of the head for good measure, shipping them off to overflowing prisons.

The question is not whether a nation needs to enforce its laws. The question is: Are the laws themselves just? And what does it mean when a nation begins to thoroughly enjoy the process of inflicting pain in the name of law and order? When it begins to

be thrilled and entertained by it? The answer is frightening.

Freedom begins to stand as an obstacle to punishment. And depending on which is stronger, the desire to punish or the desire to be free, one of them has to go. Lately, our desire to punish has been stronger, and we not only give up our freedom to get it, we help the government carry this freedom to the truck, load it, shake the official's hands and thank them as they drive away with it.

We're at a point where we need to seriously examine the depths of our desire to punish and what we are giving up in return.

On an individual level, what would we say of parents who derive pleasure from punishing their children? Such people would rightfully be recognized as sick. Such behavior would rightfully be condemned as intolerable. Even if the parent can point to good reasons for the punishment, if we recognize that the motive is self-gratification, we would never condone it.

Why, then, do we apply a different standard to our collective actions?

It is simply a matter of denial.

This denial is so deep and colossal it resembles the smog over L.A. Until one leaves the city, there is no way of knowing how polluted the air is. No reference point exists, so people have grown accustomed to it. But there is such a thing as clean air, and there is such a thing as a clear motive.

No intelligent citizen would make an attempt to defend or exonerate Ted Bundy, but in celebrating his killing by our hand, we become one with him in spirit. At that point, no intelligent citizen would attempt to defend us.

Wanting to hurt people, actually looking forward to it, ritualizing it and taking pleasure in it, for any reason whatsoever, is wrong. It is a sickness that arises from spiritual poverty, from serious disconnectedness.

If we must punish, let it be attended solemnly, with a sense of sadness that it is necessary at all. Whether it be the taking of a life or the imprisonment of a human being—both are designed to inflict punishment and pain—there is no humane way to hurt



people. The idea is perverse.

Punishing people is out of hand in America. It is out of hand because we like it too much, because we are zealous about it. It is no longer about reducing crime, or even about justice. It is simply about getting our kicks. When we begin to see that and reduce our hunger for hurting, we will have entered the first stage of healing.

Meanwhile, our sickness continues. And if crime says something about the moral character of criminals, our response to crime, equally, says volumes about our moral character as a nation. **PL**

Holy Qur'ans

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OUR HOUSE

22 Huron Street, Dept. P-2 Terryville, NY 11776

Bleeding with Words

by Thomas Falater

When *Prison Life* asked me to be a staff correspondent, I jumped at the chance. Even though I've always enjoyed writing, before I was arrested for mail fraud and sent to prison, I never had much to write about.

My experiences over the last two years have forever changed me and the images of incarceration still haunt me: men in grey overalls waiting in line for scraps of tasteless food; long, unending corridors that echo with the sound of keys and slamming doors; and tall rows of fence and barbed wire in an empty field.

In prison terms, my sentence was short, but I ended up paying for it with my life. After the postal inspectors looted my bank account, I lost all my possessions. My family left me and my children forgot my name. While I was imprisoned in Florence, Colorado, I became a jail-house lawyer just so I could be released to my home state of California and have the chance to see my kids again. Prison officials were too lazy to do the paperwork to transfer my release to where I actually lived, and when the court finally forced them to, I was grudgingly sent to a ghetto half-way house over a month late. My property also mysteriously disappeared.

I now have to deal with probation officers who consider it a part of their job to continually harass my employers and landlord. The very people designated and paid to help me get back on my feet could care less. To them, I'm just another number and file of paperwork to be avoided.

What is occurring in our criminal justice system is a perversion of punishment and rehabilitation. Our justice system is like a long, heavy chain choking society and delaying progress. Each link of the chain is unaware of its overall size, shape or destructive power. When the jailer absentmindedly slams the door on a prisoner, he is also closing the door on the man's wife and children; when the probation officer visits a job site, he is ruining the ex-offender's future chances of promotion.

The people entrusted with stopping crime are feeding the fire of recidivism by pulling out the very structure upon which the offender relied to remain even marginally in society. Stripping convicts of possessions, family ties and careers only compounds the original problem and creates more crime.

Society is too muddled in rigidity and near-sightedness to solve the problem. The war on crime is fought with jailers rather than psychologists. The war on drugs is fought with cops rather than doctors and teachers.

Somewhere along the way we have become entrenched. Why does a young man pick up a gun and walk into a liquor store? Why do so many of us become addicted to drugs and steal? Why doesn't our system of justice work? Why haven't we searched for these answers?

Before I went to prison, I never asked myself such questions. I never even knew that such questions existed. And at the same time, I never knew that prisons were a secret place—a place people went to to cut their hearts open and bleed.

Some convicts bleed thick, red blood on the streets and alleys; others bleed tears in their cells for the rest of their lives; some will bleed into dirty needles stuck in their arms. Unfortunately, most bleed more crime that sends them back into the system. We all have our ways of coping, and a few of us, a very few, bleed with words.

Thomas Falater, recently released from prison in Florence, CO, lives in La Jolla, CA. He tells us he works 11 hours a day at a "crummy sales job" in addition to freelancing for Prison Life.

If you'd like to be a *Prison Life* correspondent, send clips, resume (if possible) and an SASE to: *Prison Life* Editorial Department, 505 8th Avenue, NY, NY 10018.

Callouts

INCARCERATED HEARTS SUPPORT GROUP

Incarcerated Hearts, a Corpus Christi, Texas-based organization, sends letters of encouragement and holiday cards to prisoners throughout the country and holds weekly support groups for Texans with loved ones behind bars. Founder Terry Silvas started the group in May 1994 after her daughter and son-in-law were sent to prison for bank robbery, and she became desperate for support herself. "In a way, family members are incarcerated, too," she says. "We walk around with feelings of helplessness, shame and guilt."

During meetings, members display pictures of their captive relatives and friends and share coping strategies. They also write letters, birthday and holiday cards to a growing number of prisoners. The group already has 200 members, mainly in Texas, and is aiming to expand nationally during 1995. To join, write to: Terry A. Silvas, Incarcerated Hearts Support Group, P.O. Box 7086, Corpus Christi, TX 78467-7086. (512) 855-3792. Membership is free.

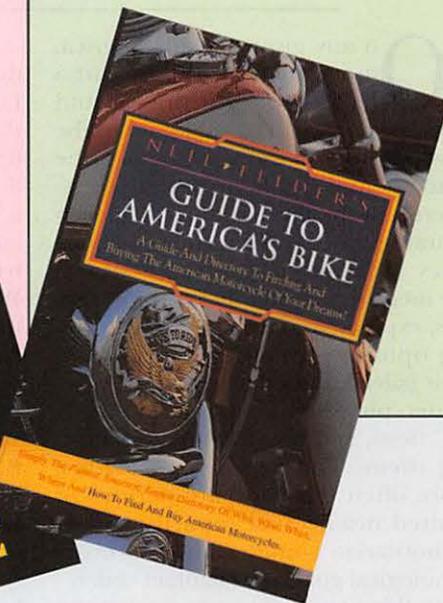
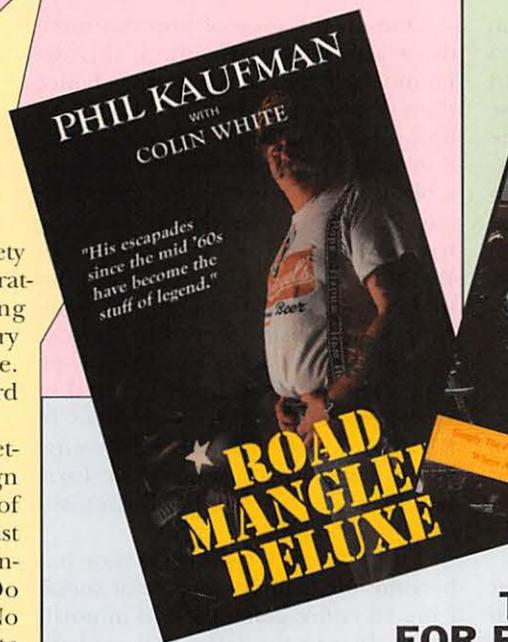
Envelope Art Wanted

The Idaho State Historical Society announces a competition for decorated envelopes and paper. Winning designs will be featured on stationery sets sold in the Old Pen Gift Store. Proceeds from the sales will go toward preserving the Old Pen historic site.

Submit your entry on a white, letter-sized (#10) envelope. The design must be confined to the left half of the envelope. A related design must be submitted on white, unlined standard-sized paper (8 1/2 x 11). Do not fold. Black or blue ink only. No pencil. Include your name, inmate number (must be incarcerated at time of submission), and address.

Winning entries will receive \$50 or the equivalent in Old Pen Gift Store merchandise (as per the requirements of your institution) and one stationery set. Winning designs become the property of the ISHS, which retains the copyright. All other submissions will be returned.

Contact: Old Idaho Penitentiary, Contest, 2445 Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, Idaho, 83712 (208) 334-2844. Deadline: April 28, 1995.



TWO BOOKS FOR BIKER CONS

Road Mangler Deluxe chronicles the life and times of one wack dude: biker Phil Kaufman. The guy's been a jailer, a stunt man, an international drug smuggler and—get this—Charles Manson's record producer. His autobiography will take you on a wild ride. Order from White Boucke Publishing, P.O. Box 551, Montrose, CA 91021-0551. \$9.95.

Dream of buying a gorgeous Harley when you get out? Hoping your old lady will buy you one as a welcome home gift? Neil Felding's *Guide to America's Bike* lists over 2,000 independent and franchised dealers, repair shops, magazines, clubs, organizations and other businesses that specialize in American motorcycles. The step-by-step guide will help you find, evaluate and buy American bikes. It includes an outline of the methods used by successful motorcycle buyers. \$24.95. Published by: Vehicles-In-Motion, 1425 Dunn Drive, Carrollton, TX 75006. 1-800-292-7376.

"8-O'Clock, Local Time" Pray-Ers

*From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.*

Let Light descend on Earth.

*From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.*

May Christ return to Earth.

From the center where the Will of God is known

Let purpose guide the little wills of men—

The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the center which we call the race of men

Let the Plan of Love and Light work out

And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

Convicts in max joints who shared in establishing the "8 o'clock, local time" prayer network: Good job! We're back on the case. It's your turn to write. Linda et al, P.O. Box 1517, Redondo Beach, CA 90278.



SILENCING THE OPPRESSED

No Freedom of Speech for Those Behind the Walls

by **Ronald L. Kuby and William Kunstler**

On any given day in America, more than a million and a half people¹ in prisons and jails² spend their days subjected to the most rigorous censorship, denied the fundamental rights protected everywhere else by the freedom of speech guarantees of the First Amendment.³ They are denied reading material deemed objectionable by their captors, exposed to retaliation for expressing opinions at odds with those of their jailers, refused access to the news media, punished for possessing “radical” views, and rewarded for renouncing them. The prison authorities, more often than not, are persons of limited intellectual capacity and of authoritarian attitudes whose primary penological goal is to maintain order.

As this country abandons whatever liberal pretensions it once had about achieving an equal society, the population of prisons and jails has grown apace with the poor and the dispossessed. The United States now leads the world in per capita incarceration, having finally overtaken the Soviet Union.⁴ Approximately 615,000 persons are confined to state and federal correctional institutions on any given day. More than one million are confined to county or municipal jails, either awaiting arraignment or trial or serving short sentences for petty offenses.⁵

Opposite Page: Art Behind Bars' Honorable Mention: "Censorship," by Sergiio Voiï, Shawangunk Correctional Facility.

Only in the area of imprisonment does a person with black skin or Latino heritage have a better chance than does a white person. More than 63% of the nation's prison population is black and Latino.⁶ Nationally, a black youth between the ages of 18 and 22 has a better chance of going to jail than going to college. In Washington, D.C., on any given day in 1991, 42% of the city's African-American men between the ages of 18 and 35 were in jail or prison, on probation or parole, awaiting trial or sentence, or sought on warrants.⁷ In Baltimore, 56% of the city's young black males were under some form sanction by the criminal justice system.⁸

The nation's penal system has become the primary means for socializing an entire generation of minority youth. It is to the jailer that we have entrusted the task of inculcating in these youth the cherished notions of democracy and the values of a free society, the foremost of these being freedom of speech. The nation's wardens have shown the solicitude for free expression and the marketplace of ideas that one might expect from those whose life's work is caging their fellows. And prisoners have been utterly abandoned by the federal courts, whether the winds of the United States Supreme Court blow left or right.

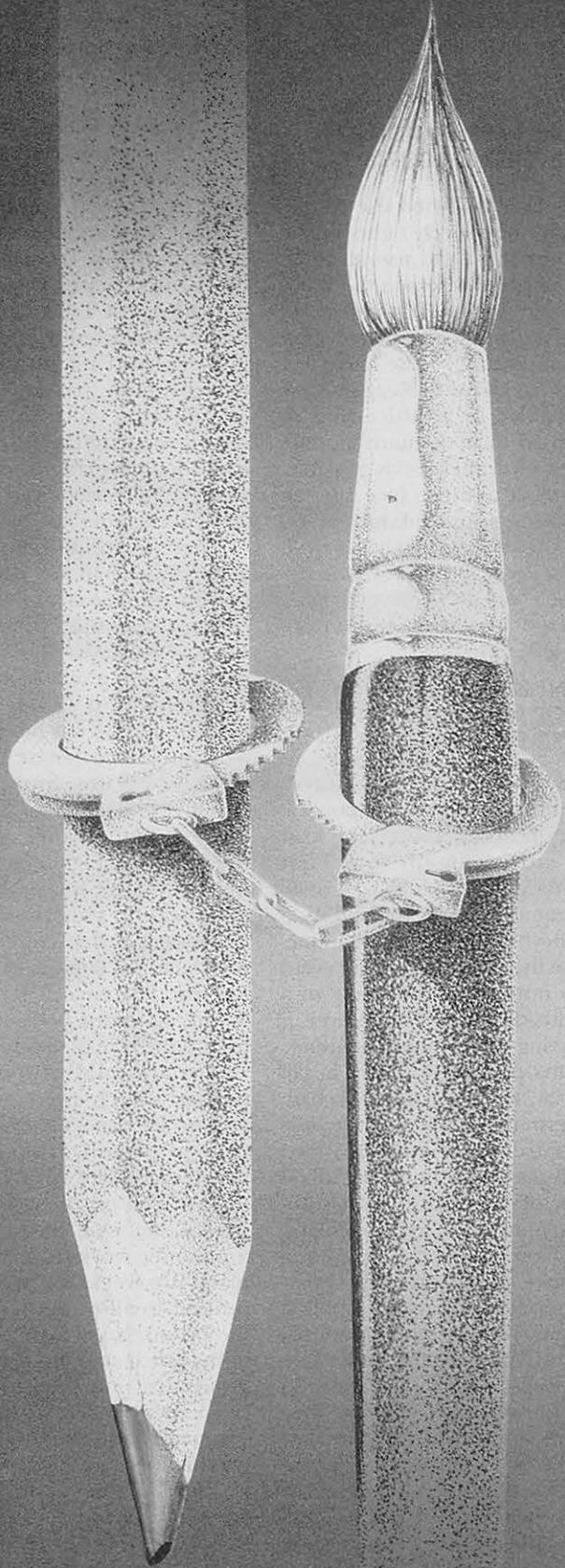
THE SUPREME COURT'S APPROACH TO THE FREE SPEECH RIGHTS OF PRISONERS

The doctrinal infrastructure that has permitted prison officials around the country to crush free expression is not a product of the “gang of five”—the Reagan-Bush appointees to the Supreme Court. Indeed, the foundations were laid in the early 1970s by a Court that was still one of the most “liberal,” in terms of civil rights, of any in the history of American jurisprudence.

In *Procunier v. Martinez*,⁹ the Court faced a variety of content-based restrictions on outgoing prisoner mail. Beginning its analysis with what was to become a familiar paean to the tasks and toils of prison administrators, the Court noted those who run prisons faced “herculean obstacles” that were “too apparent to warrant explication.”¹⁰ Courts are “ill equipped” to deal with these problems, which require expertise “peculiarly within the province of the legislative and executive” officials.¹¹

With virtually no discussion of the over-arching value of free speech guarantees in American history, the Court in *Martinez* stated that a regulation limiting free expression would be upheld if it was directed to one or more “substantial” governmental interests and was “no greater than is necessary or essential to the protection of the particular governmental interest involved.”¹²

The idea that this created a “least



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restrictive means test” of the type that would apply to anyone else’s rights was scotched a few paragraphs later, when, in an often-quoted passage, the Court noted:

*This does not mean, of course, that prison administrators may be required to show with certainty that adverse consequences would flow from the failure to censor a particular letter. Some latitude in anticipating the probable consequences of allowing certain speech in a prison environment is essential to the proper discharge of an administrator’s duty.*¹³

Nowhere did the Court in *Martinez* explain why the standard set forth in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*,¹⁴ requiring proof of some actual harm flowing from the exercise of free speech, should not apply in prisons.

The Court in *Martinez* cited order and discipline, maintenance of security against escape and unauthorized entry, and rehabilitation as interests that would justify limitations on a prisoner’s freedom of speech.¹⁵ The Court did strike down the regulation at issue, largely because of the difficulty it had understanding how *outgoing* prisoner mail could lead to problems *inside* the prison.¹⁶ Other courts were to be more imaginative.¹⁷

Less than two months later, in *Pell v. Procunier*,¹⁸ the Court upheld a blanket ban by the State of California on face-to-face interviews with prisoners.¹⁹ The Court in *Pell* held that “lawful incarceration brings about the necessary withdrawal or limitation of many privileges and rights, a retraction justified by the considerations underlying our penal system.”²⁰

However, a “prison inmate retains those First Amendment rights that are not inconsistent with his status as a prisoner or with the legitimate penal objectives of the correctional system.”²¹ Restrictions on prisoners would be judged “in light of legitimate penal objectives.”²² In two months, “substantial” and “important” interests had fallen to mere “legitimate” ones. And one of those legitimate goals was security and “related administrative problems.”²³

Retreating still further from the suggestion that its decision in *Martinez* required elevated scrutiny whenever the First Amendment is implicated, the Court in *Pell* held that deference would be the touchstone, as security problems in prisons were peculiarly within the province and professional expertise of corrections officials, and, in the absence of substantial evidence in the record to indicate that the offi-

cials have exaggerated their response to these considerations, courts should ordinarily defer to their expert judgment in such matters.²⁴

Thus, the Court decreed that mere administrative problems related to security could be the basis to deny free speech, and that such denials required the deference of the courts.

The decision in *Pell* was widely regarded as establishing a "reasonable relationship" test,²⁵ both by its terms and its result. According to the Court, all reporters may be barred from face-to-face meetings with prisoners by the warden's assertion of security concerns that were so "obvious" that they did not even require explanation. But attorneys and clergy, as well as friends and families of the prisoners, entered the prisons for face-to-face meetings on a regular basis. The Court in *Pell* did not even question why the same security precautions used for those visits could not be used for the press. Nor did the Court consider the fact that excluding the news media, while permitting other visitors, suggested that prison officials had an agenda more directed to the suppression of expression than the suppression of disorder.²⁶

After *Pell*, the Court had no difficulty upholding regulations that prohibited meetings of a prisoners' union, solicitation of other prisoners to join the union, and the distribution of union literature by prisoners. In *Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners' Labor Union, Inc.*,²⁷ the Court deferred to the determination of prison officials that a gathering of prisoners for a union meeting created hosts of fearsome security threats. That those same threats mysteriously evaporated when those same prisoners when to meetings of the JayCeers, Boy Scouts and Alcoholics Anonymous did not trouble the Court.²⁸ Unlike a union, those organizations fulfill a "rehabilitative" function, according to the prison administrators. That North Carolina officials might invoke "rehabilitative" or "security" as a subterfuge to prevent the expression of views different from theirs apparently never occurred to the Court.²⁹

Finally, in *Bell v. Wolfish*,³⁰ the Court held that pre-trial detainees were entitled to no better treatment than convicted mass murderers, and "deference" was enshrined as a value of almost religious magnitude. In the process, the Court in *Wolfish* upheld a rule prohibiting hardback books from entering the institution unless they were mailed by a publisher, book club, or book store. The prison argued that contraband could be secreted within the hard cov-

ers, and screening the books fluoroscopically, although not impossible, would consume "substantial and inordinate amount of available staff time."³¹ Because the rule was a "rational" response to a security issue, it was upheld.³²

THE GRIM APPLICATION BY THE FEDERAL COURTS

These cases established the framework for the free speech rights of the millions of Americans to pass through the American penal system in the 1980s and early 1990s—the decade that would see the greatest growth in prison population in history.³³ The lower federal courts, packed with Reagan-Bush clones and aided by a Justice Department eager to have as many people enjoy as few civil liberties as possible, were free to savage the free speech right of prisoners. Indeed, entrusting trained chimps to paste up clichés from *Pell*, *Martinez*, *Jones* and *Wolfish* able the word "denied" would achieve roughly the same result as seeking redress from the federal judiciary.

CONTENT-BASED RESTRICTIONS: PRIOR RESTRAINTS ON INCOMING MATERIALS

As the Supreme Court has noted, "Prior restraints on speech and publication are the most serious and the least tolerable infringement on First Amendment rights."³⁴ Justifying a prior restraint requires "proof that publication must inevitably, directly and immediately cause the occurrence of an event kindred to imperiling the safety of a transport already at sea."³⁵ However, if you are serving a two-month sentence for marijuana possession or are in jail awaiting trial, too poor to make bail, then a determination by a prison warden, no matter how ignorant, that receipt of a particular book will affect the security of the institution is sufficient for the publication to be banned.

In *Espinoza v. Wilson*,³⁶ officials at a Kentucky state prison prohibited persons from receiving gay rights publications, even an issue-oriented, national publication like the *Advocate*. The prison "officials" determined that if a specific publication *advocated* or *legitimized* a homosexual lifestyle in totality, then it would be withheld.³⁷ The warden put it even more bluntly—anything that could be construed as "condoning homosexuality" would be barred.³⁸

The warden asserted that such materials were a threat to the security of the institution, claiming that prisoners might be physically assaulted for

possessing such materials. Furthermore, he contended that tolerating the expression of opinion tolerant of a homosexual lifestyle could lead to more homosexuality, which he perceived to be a danger in prison. The United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit found the first contention wholly unsupported by the record, but agreed that the second justification fell well "within the wide discretion" accorded the warden.³⁹

Similarly, in *Warden v. Thomas*,⁴⁰ the United States District Court for the District of Texas upheld a regulation promulgated by the Dallas county jail prohibiting publications that depict "nudity, pander to sexual interest, advocate racial prejudice or present a security threat to the jail."⁴¹ Individuals seeking to obtain reading materials were required to consult the "jail commander" before subscribing.

There is no indication that the jail commander had any particular expertise in the areas of comparative or modern literature. Indeed, the opposite was the case. He testified that the commercially available magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* would be banned, but he was not sure about the *National Enquirer* or *Rolling Stone*, because he was "not familiar with [them]."⁴² He claimed that the rule was justified because materials that depict nudes might cause prisoners to fight over the magazines, although there was no indication that this had happened in that jail.⁴³ Nonetheless, the Dallas jail commander was entitled to great deference. There is, apparently, no "ignorant peckerwood" exception to the rule of deference.

Nor are publications expressing political speech given any greater protection. In *Vodicka v. Phelps*,⁴⁴ a prison reform organization published a newsletter called *Inside*, and regularly mailed it to prisoners at a Mississippi state prison. One edition reported that a prisoner work-stoppage had taken place five weeks earlier. The warden refused to allow the publication into the prison, based both on the content of the article and the philosophy of the group that published it. Although the article neither advocated future work-stoppages nor claimed that the past one had been justified, the warden stated that the "tone of the article" sounded as if the group had approved of the stoppage.⁴⁵ He was not more specific.

As to the nature of the group, the warden stated that the article was censored because the group existed to: *Encourage convicts, ex-offenders and friends and families of prisoners to come*

together to make themselves heard and to demand that changes be made by our elected officials and prison administrators. It seeks to empower those who have never had a voice in the system."⁴⁶

The warden determined that the group focused on "redress and/or change of the entire dilemma of incarceration."⁴⁷ This created a "potential for trouble. That potential must be avoided."⁴⁸

Incredibly, the Sixth Circuit agreed, finding that under *Pell* and *Martinez*, the prison's determination of likely adverse consequences was enough to justify the exclusion of the article.⁴⁹ And the court in *Vodicka* deferred to the prison authorities even though news stories substantially similar to the one in *Inside* had already entered the institution from mainstream newspapers which covered the work-stoppage.⁵⁰

In the same vein, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, in *Pittman v. Hutto*,⁵¹ upheld the prison administration's suppression of one issue of an award-winning prison newspaper. Assistant Superintendent Sue Kennedy determined that some of the articles were not "factually correct," "out of line with good taste," and not "fair to the administration."⁵² Kennedy was particularly concerned with the truth of the articles. Relying on *Jones*, the Fourth Circuit tossed away two hundred years of First Amendment doctrine regarding the search for truth in a democracy, and upheld the ban.⁵³

PUNISHMENT FOR THE EXPRESSION OF UNPOPULAR VIEWS

In the demonology of the free speech violations, retaliation for the expression of unpopular views ranks second only to prior restraints. But prison officials have not hesitated to use their position of total control over every aspect of a prisoner's life to punish⁵⁴ an inmate for expressing unpopular views. And the federal courts, usually on guard against the natural tendency of the powerful to lash out against the voices of the powerless, show unbecoming credulity when administrators dutifully insist that their goals were proper.

In *Caruth v. Pinkney*,⁵⁵ Alsansa Caruth, a black prisoner, working as a

law clerk at an Illinois state facility, was told that some guards and white inmates were soliciting membership in the Ku Klux Klan. Caruth obtained a copy of a KKK application as proof. He surreptitiously photocopied it and sent it to corrections officials and to the news media. Prison officials, after an investigation, charged Caruth with improper use of the prison copier, placed him in solitary confinement for 30 days, and dismissed him from the position of law clerk. The United States Courts of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit upheld the punishment, holding that the regulation was a reasonable time, place and manner restriction, and that the punishment was not a pretext for letting the public

unsupported by any evidence.⁶⁰

Prison officials received some threats after the article was published, observed an increase in tensions, and noticed an unusually large number of prisoners in clusters.⁶¹ The district court somewhat sheepishly noted that these manifestations may well have been responses, not to the article, but to the action of prison authorities in placing Martin in solitary confinement. Whether or not the prison's censorship created the very security threat that was being used to justify the censorship in the first place was irrelevant to the district court.⁶²

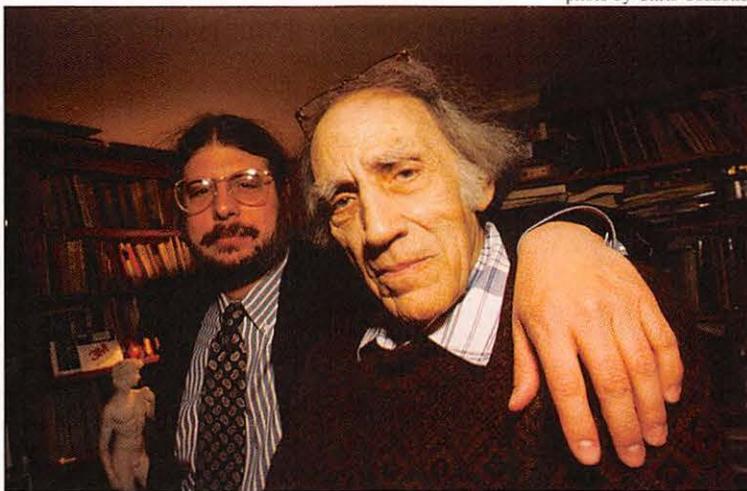
Prison officials also are free to punish prisoners for showing "disrespect."

In *Scarpa v. Ponte*,⁶³ the prisoner wrote a letter to a guard which was "arguably mocking, taunting and disrespectful."⁶⁴ That provided a suitable basis for imposing discipline, as long as the officials themselves were acting with a good faith belief that the punishment was necessary to maintain order. Similarly, in *Gibbs v. King*,⁶⁵ the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld a prison regulation prohibiting a prisoner from making or

writing "derogatory or degrading remarks about an employee," finding that the "clear purposes" of the rule were to "prevent the escalation of tension" and to allow guards to work without "verbal challenges to their authority."⁶⁶ The United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit went one step further in *Hadden v. Howard*,⁶⁷ permitting internal prison discipline for "insolence," "disrespect," and "lying to an employee," even when such conduct took place in the form of an official grievance filed by a prisoner.⁶⁸

VIOLATION OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

If punishing someone for expressing certain views is odious to a free society, inflicting torture until one renounces his or her views is medieval, yet permitted by the federal judiciary. In *Baraldini v. Meese*,⁶⁹ prisoners challenged the conditions at the federal High Security Unit ("HSU") for Women, at Lexington, Kentucky, as well as the criteria by which they were



Ronald Kuby and William Kunstler

photo by Chris Cozzone

know about KKK activity. Sure.

But the prize goes to the United States District Court for the Northern District of California in *Martin v. Rison*.⁵⁶ Dannie Martin, a federal prisoner, wrote a feature for the *San Francisco Chronicle* entitled "The Gulag Mentality," sharply criticizing prison officials. Immediately after the publication of the piece, he was placed in solitary confinement, and then transferred to another institution. Prison officials alleged that Martin had violated rules that prohibited conducting a business while confined, and acting as a reporter or publishing under a byline.⁵⁷

The district court held that "engaging in writing activities is not a constitutionally protected right...Such activities are delegated by Congress to the discretion of the Bureau of Prisons."⁵⁸ As long as the restrictions are rationally related to promoting prison security, they will be upheld.⁵⁹ The district court had no difficulty coming up with fistfuls of possible harms that the regulation was geared to prevent, all of them speculative and

placed there. The HSU was a prison within a prison, located in a specially modified basement. Little, if any, natural light entered the institution. The prisoners had no personal contact with each other and virtually no visitors. They were monitored by cameras 24 hours per day, even when they showered. Every time they left their cells, even for medical care or for a shower, they were handcuffed and shackled. After a year in the HSU, the women experienced mental deterioration, sensory disturbances, perceptual distortions, and concentration difficulties.⁷⁰ Experts, including the former Secretary of Maryland's Public Safety and Correctional Services, testified that such conditions were improper for anyone.⁷¹

How were prisoners selected for this treatment? Bureau of Prisons Director Michael Quinlan acknowledged that "a prisoner's past or present affiliation, association or membership in an organization which . . . attempts to disrupt or overthrow the government of the United States. . . is a factor considered" regarding placement.⁷² Another BOP official was more blunt, noting that placement was based on "committed alliance to terrorist-oriented ideals and politically-revolutionary organizations."⁷³

The women were specifically informed by prison staff that the only way they would be able to merit a transfer was if they would "disavow any association with leftist political groups."⁷⁴ BOP officials admitted that "if they received reliable outside information that plaintiffs were no longer affiliated with such organizations, they would consider relocating them."⁷⁵

In finding both the conditions of the prison as well as the criteria used for placement unconstitutional, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia held: "Consigning anyone to a high security unit for past political associations they will never shed unless forced to renounce them is a dangerous mission for this country's prison system to continue."⁷⁶ The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit reversed, finding that the right of the prisoners to "continue to hold violent, revolutionary views...do[es] not require prison administrators to ignore those views...in assessing the dangers of their escape from custody with outside help."⁷⁷ Renunciation of those views simply meant that the security threat had diminished. The fact that two of the plaintiffs had no prior escape history, while many other prisoners with prior escape history remained in gen-

eral population, did not affect the analysis.

In *Nickens v. White*,⁷⁸ prison officials at a medium security institution placed an inmate in solitary confinement and then transferred him to a maximum facility when he refused to take his name off a petition. The petition, signed by about two hundred prisoners, was directed to a state official and protested prison conditions. The United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit upheld both the policy against petitions as well as its peculiar enforcement. The court found no First Amendment problem in punishing a prisoner for refusing to renounce his prior speech.⁷⁹

RESTRICTIONS ON PRISONER-TO-PRISONER CONTACT

A judiciary that permits the punishment of a prisoner for writing an unflattering news story for a national publication on the ground of "institutional security" has had no trouble permitting prison officials to deny persons within the prison community the right to communicate with each other. In *Jones*, the Supreme Court held broadly that whatever rights prisoners retained to associate with each other could be "curtailed whenever the institution's officials, in the exercise of their informed discretion, reasonably conclude that such associations...possess the likelihood of disruption to prison order or stability, or otherwise interfere with legitimate penological objectives."⁸⁰

Prison officials are free to deny prisoners any right of association with each other by confining them in solitary confinement.⁸¹ But as a practical matter, few prisons are run under such conditions; it is inevitable that prisoners will come into physical proximity, or at least sight, of each other. Prison officials are still given vast authority to regulate the communication among them. In *Dooley v. Quick*,⁸² two prisoners were placed in different modules within the prison, following unproven allegations of homosexual contact between them. This placement ended their physical contact, although they still tried to communicate. They were then punished for attempting to pass a letter and for twice "wig-wagging hand signals...through a glass window."⁸³ The United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island upheld the punishment, ruling that "this is at bottom, precisely the sort of administrative decision which is best left to the trained custodial professionalism of correctional managers, rather than to

the courts."⁸⁴

The decision in *Dooley* presaged the Supreme Court's ruling in *Turner v. Safley*,⁸⁵ which upheld a general ban of letters between prisoners in different institutions. Overturning the lower court's strict scrutiny analysis, the Court in *Turner* placed its imprimatur on the reasonable relationship test already in general use.⁸⁶ The Court then found that the security justification—preventing transmission of escape plans and planning of assaults—warranted the ban.

Even when prisoners are allowed to communicate with each other, prison officials are entitled to censor the content of their communications and punish critical speech. In *Adams v. Gunnell*,⁸⁷ three prisoners were placed in solitary confinement, and then given an institutional "trial" where they were convicted and sentenced to loss of all "good time"⁸⁸ because they had signed and supported an "illegal petition."⁸⁹ The petition, gentle in tone,⁹⁰ alleged that black prisoners were denied some opportunities granted to whites, and requested that "avenues and strategies" be developed to address this problem.⁹¹ The petition was sent to the warden, a local paper and the ACLU.⁹² The Fifth Circuit, noting that the warden had cited several constitutionally impermissible reasons for the rule, nonetheless found one of the reasons acceptable—the fear that some inmates might coerce others into signing the petition.⁹³ Faced with this invocation of prison security rationale, the Court upheld the restriction, finding that First Amendment rights were "touched, but not seriously infringed."⁹⁴

NO RIGHT OF ACCESS TO THE PRESS

It should come as no surprise that whenever there is a prison rebellion, one of the key demands is direct access to the news media. Prisoners and prison officials alike know the importance of a free, investigative press in exposing wrongdoing and arousing the public conscience. They seek it and shun it, respectively, for this same reason. In both *Pell* and *Saxbe*, total bans by the prison of face-to-face interviews were upheld by the Supreme Court. When prison officials do permit some reporters access to prisoners, they are free to deny access to others. In *Jersawitz v. Hanberry*,⁹⁵ a journalist who had produced a public access cable television show wished to interview Father Raymond Bourgeois, an outspoken critic of the United

States foreign policy imprisoned for civil disobedience. Prison regulations permitted the entry of only those reporters who worked for media holding an FCC license. The United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit upheld the ban, finding that the prison's desire to ensure that the reporters who entered the prison were "responsible persons" who were accountable "to recognized media organizations" was legitimate.⁹⁶

OTHER RESTRICTIONS

Even a prisoner who has no desire to obtain, distribute or even discuss anything objectionable faces grave impediments in pursuing his or her own intellectual star, however innocuous. A plethora of prison regulations, designed to facilitate prison administration, impose formidable restrictions of a prisoner's access to ideas and information.

In *Wolfish*, the Court upheld a rule permitting entry of hardback books only if sent from a publisher, book store, or book club.⁹⁷ In *Wagner*, the district court approved a similar rule for all books and magazines, citing the same justification—administrative time and effort to leaf through every single page.⁹⁸ Going even further, the Third Circuit, in *Hurd v. Williams*,⁹⁹ allowed to stand a rule that required all publications to come only from the publisher.¹⁰⁰

Neither can prisoners expect any privacy in their incoming or outgoing correspondence. In *Jackson v. Norris*,¹ incoming mail that was not privileged was read by the jail staff. In upholding this practice, the United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee refused to require the prison to make any particularized showing that the correspondent or the recipient posed a danger. In *Norris*, the writer was presidential candidate Reverend Jesse Jackson whose letter were read (for escape plans?) by the staff.¹⁰² And in *Gaines v. Lane*,¹⁰³ the Seventh Circuit allowed prison officials to read all outgoing correspondence, noting that the regulation was designed to foil the transmission of escape plans or other, unspecified security threats. The certainty of harm did not have to be shown.¹⁰⁴

There is also no general constitutional right of access to the telephone, at least for calls to person other than lawyers. In *Benzel v. Grammar*,¹⁰⁵ the Eighth Circuit upheld a Nebraska regulation that permitted prisoners in the punishment unit to call only three people,

two of whom had to be family members, and the third, if not a relative, had to be a female. No male nonfamily members could be called. The Eighth Circuit upheld the determination of the prison officials that "male to male" telephone contact served no important rehabilitative value, and posed potential security problems.¹⁰⁶

TWO DECADES OF SUPREME DISHONESTY

For almost two decades, the Supreme Court and the lower federal courts have created an *apartheid* application of the First Amendment. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the history of prison free speech litigation is the general absence of any genuine First Amendment analysis. There was no acknowledgement in *Martinez, Pell, Jones* or *Wolfish* that free speech rights hold some special place in American society or that they fulfill some unique role in the democratic process. To the contrary, the courts have treated such claims, both analytically and rhetorically, in the same way they treated claims that prisoners are entitled to single cells or to conjugal visits. Two centuries of high-minded judicial language about the primacy of the First Amendment is conspicuous for its absence in prison opinions.

It is a truism that the freedom of speech values of the First Amendment have endured and flourished because of their value to *all* individuals and, by extension, to society as a whole. But all of the justifications that have been advanced for free speech guarantees over the ages of American law should apply with equal, if not greater force, to persons in prisons. Prisoners do not value freedom of speech any less than free citizens, nor is the right of any less use to them than to nonincarcerated people.

The quest for self-fulfillment, recognized as a central value protected by the freedom of speech guarantees of the First Amendment,¹⁰⁷ does not end when sentence is pronounced. Given the limitations upon a prisoner's other means of personal advancement, reading, speaking, writing and painting often become the central focus of daily life. Malcolm X noted: *I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive...My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness,*

*dumbness and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America.*¹⁰⁸

Among others, John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, Oscar Wilde wrote the *Ballad of Reading Gaol* and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote his *Letters From A Birmingham Jail* while behind bars. Alexander Berkman wrote a political manifesto;¹⁰⁹ Caryl Chessman exposed the tyranny of the criminal justice system;¹¹⁰ and Bobby Sands wrote poetry and songs while incarcerated.¹¹¹

Closely related to personal fulfillment is the First Amendment's protection of the quest for political and social truth, and the concomitant idea that such truth is only discoverable when people are free "to think as they please and...speak what they think."¹¹² Prisoners have no lesser need for truth than free citizens, nor is truth ascertained differently behind prison walls than across the street from them. The prisoners in *Pittman* no doubt believed the truth of their criticism of penal authorities, as did the plaintiffs in *Vodicka*. Indeed, if one proceeds from the assumption that persons are in prison because they have erred in some way, then granting them the same tools possessed by the rest of us to search for truth is an unquestionable penological good.

Free speech rights are also cherished as a vaccination against tyranny and abuse of governmental power.¹¹³ Underlying this "checking value" is the well-founded suspicion that every government has a natural tendency to suppress the unpopular and maintain the status quo. Within a prison, the hand of government is far heavier and more frequently involved in one's daily affairs than outside the walls. Prisons, after all, are total institutions with every aspect of life regulated by the state. In *Martin*, the prisoner wanted to alert the public about prison conditions; in *Caruth*, the prisoner wanted to alert the public that the KKK was recruiting. The potential for abuse when one has complete control over other people needs little explanation.

Effective participation in the political process is also dependent upon freedom of speech. While prisoners, by virtue of their own incarceration, sometimes have no access to the ballot box, voting is but one means of participation. Writing, speaking and seeking to influence public sentiment are activities of equal use to prisoner and free person alike. The prisoners in *Nickens* and *Gunnell* attempted to petition corrections officials, while the plaintiffs in *Baraldini* maintained

their belief in communism and refused to denounce their comrades.

Lastly, freedom of speech has been conceived of as a "safety valve." "Punishing people for speech does not discourage the speech; it only drives it underground, and encourages conspiracy. In the battle for public order, free speech is the ally, not the enemy."¹⁴ If this is true outside the walls, there is no reason to think that the opposite rule applies once sentence is pronounced. Unfortunately, prison wardens have been permitted to proceed from the opposite assumption—that punishing speech will prevent that speech and, accordingly, prevent the realization of the ideas advocated by the speakers.

The courts have never evaluated the importance of free speech rights in light of the values protected by the First Amendment, preferring instead to address the other side of the equation, invoking the familiar shibboleths that prisons are difficult places to run, that running them requires the exercise of judgments uniquely suited to corrections officials, and that courts are unsuited to make these determinations. But these arguments cannot withstand analysis.

Running a prison certainly is difficult and dangerous. But this hardly supports the conclusion for which it is invoked. The difficulty of the government's task has never provided a basis for suppressing the free speech rights of the citizenry. Courts, despite two decades of blather about difficult tasks, have yet to articulate the reason why administering three cells in a

county jail, for example, is so much more difficult than, say, running the City of New York that the managers of the former should be given vast powers that are denied to the latter. Nor has any evidence appeared in the record of any prison case that proves running a prison is so much more difficult than running a nuclear power plant, the Center for Disease Control, a satellite research facility, or some other enterprise which leaves the free speech rights of its members more or less intact. Of course, when speech raises some grave risk of imminent danger, then and only then is the government free to act, in the narrowest of fashions, to avert that danger. The courts have never explained why a "least restrictive means" test, striking the proper balance between order and rights in the outside world, is unsuited for prison free speech.

Nor have they ever explained why the managers of all prisons and jails are given the same authority to suppress free speech rights, despite obvious differences among institutions that directly affect the difficulty of the task of administration. Some prisons are huge institutions housing thousands of people; others are only a few cells in a municipal building. Some prisons contain maximum-security prisoners serving long sentences for violent crimes, while others house a population of low security, nonviolent offenders who participate in work release programs by day. Many, indeed most, incarcerated persons have not been convicted of anything. Yet the Supreme Court accords exactly the same authority and

requires precisely the same deference to the Podunk County Sheriff as it does to the head of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. A prisoner with a perfect record, serving the last weeks of a short sentence in an honor camp can be treated, for First Amendment purposes, the same as a death-row prisoner on the eve of execution.

It also is simply untrue that prison administrators, as such, possess some mysterious expertise that requires deference from the federal courts. Prison administrators differ widely in background, education, skills and social attitudes. There is no penological consensus that literature "condoning" homosexuality, for example is dangerous to institutional security. The Kentucky warden in *Espinoza* was more likely motivated by his own prejudices than any generally shared expertise. Indeed, the mayor of New York City recently signed legislation permitting gay and lesbian "domestic partners" of jail inmates the same visitation rights as heterosexual married couples.¹⁵

And even assuming that prison administrators as a whole do possess training and education different from that of the citizenry as a whole, no court has ever suggested that such training is so far beyond the ken of the federal judiciary that the former are incapable of being understood by the latter. Every day, federal courts deal with the intricacies of everything from giant financial empires to DNA research. They deal with bodies of knowledge far more specialized than that required for an associate's degree in prison management.

ENDNOTES [1]. See Colman McCarthy, *Thornburgh's Solution: Lock 'em Up* Wash. Post, July 13, 1991, at A19. [2]. Cf. Black's Law Dictionary 1194 (6th ed. 1990) defining "prison" as "[a] public building or other place for the...imprisonment of persons convicted of the more serious crimes, as distinguished from reformatories and county or city jails". [3]. See U.S. Const. Amend. I. The First Amendment provides in relevant part, "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech." Id. [4]. See Stuart J. Taylor, *Locked Up in Jail, Locked Out of Court*, Legal Times, June 24, 1991, at 27. [5]. See Eugene H. Methvin, *An Anti-Crime Solution: Lock Up More Criminals*, Wash. Post, Oct. 27, 1991, at C1. [6]. See *Violence Threatens Dream*, Atlanta J. & Const., Jan. 20, 1992, at 10; Richard Prince, *The Forgotten Prisoners...Hispanics Behind Bars*, Gannett News Serv., Dec. 13, 1992. [7]. National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, *Hobbling A Generation: Young African American Males in the Criminal Justice System of America's Cities*: Baltimore, Maryland (1992), cited in 2 Washington Digest, National Ass'n of Criminal Defense Lawyers, (Nov. 1992). [8]. Id. [9]. 416 U.S. 396 (1974). [10]. Procnunier v. Martinez, 416 U.S. 396, 404 (1974), overruled by *Thornburgh v. Abbott*, 490 U.S. 401 (1989). [11]. Id. at 405. [12]. Id. at 413. [13]. Id. at 414. [14]. 393 U.S. 503 (1969). [15]. *Martinez*, 416 U.S. at 412. [16]. Id. at 418-19. [17]. See *infra* notes 56-62 and accompanying text (discussing *Martin v. Rison*, 741 F. Supp. 1406 (N.D. Cal. 1990), vacated sub nom., *Chronicle Publishing Co. v. Rison*, 962 F.2d 959 (9th Cir. 1992)). [18]. 417 U.S. 817 (1974). [19]. In the companion case of *Saxbe v. Washington Post Co.*, 417 U.S. 843 (1974), the Court upheld a similar blanket ban established by federal authorities. See *Saxbe*, 417 U.S. at 850. [20]. *Pell v. Procunier*, 417 U.S. 817, 822 (1974) (quoting *Price v. Johnson*, 334 U.S. 266, 285 (1948)). In *Martinez*, the Court noted that the issue before it was not only the First Amendment right of prisoners but also those to whom the correspondence was addressed. Accordingly, it left for another day the issue of "prisoners' rights." The Court in *Pell* heralded the coming of that day. [21]. Id. Thus, free speech rights are not taken away as part of the punishment imposed by society upon the malefactor. Indeed, although some civil rights are expressly withdrawn from the incarcerated by statute, no penal law has attempted to abrogate freedom of speech as a penalty. It also should be noted that many of those persons behind bars are pre-trial detainees who have been convicted of nothing and cannot be "punished" consistent with the Due Process Clause. [22]. Id. at 823. [23]. Id. at 826. [24]. Id. at 837. [25]. See *Turner v. Safley*, 482 U.S. 78, 88 (1987). Following *Pell*, the elevated scrutiny suggested in *Martinez* was limited to analysis of restrictions on outgoing correspondence, *Thornburgh v. Abbott*, 490 U.S. 401, 424 (1989), and sometimes not even those. See *Martin*, 741 F. Supp. at 1409. [26]. The Court in *Pell*, in a neat piece of constitutional prestidigitation, actually created the opposite of a least restrictive means test for such claims, articulating a sort of "least intrusive rights" test. The fact that prisoners could communicate with the press through the mails led the Court in *Pell* to uphold the ban on face-to-face meetings. *Pell*, 417 U.S. at 827-28. [27]. 433 U.S. 119 (1977). [28]. *Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners' Labor Union, Inc.*, 433 U.S. 119, 122-23 (1977). [29]. That North Carolina officials regarded a prison labor union as subversive is hardly a surprise, given that State's dismal record toward organized labor generally. [30]. 441 U.S. 520 (1979). [31]. *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 549 (1979) [32]. So efficiently did this quartet of cases demolish the free speech rights of prisoners, the Reagan-Bush Court felt the need to address the question only twice, wreaking comparatively minor damage. In *Turner*, the Court upheld a flat ban on prisoner-to-prisoner correspondence. And in *Abbott*, the Court ratified the right of prison administrators, already widely recognized by lower federal courts, to censor incoming written materials that threatened the security of the institution. [33]. See *Peter Applebone, With Inmates at Record High, Sentence Policy is Reassessed*, N.Y. Times, Apr. 25, 1988, at A1, C4. [34]. *Nebraska Press Ass'n v. Stuart*, 427 U.S. 539, 559 (1976). [35]. *New York Times Co. v. United States*, 403 U.S. 713, 726-27 (1971) (Brennan, J., concurring). [36]. 814 F.2d 1093 (6th Cir. 1987). [37]. *Espinoza v. Wilson*, 814 F.2d 1093, 1095 (6th Cir. 1987) (emphasis added). [38]. Id. at 1096. [39]. Id. at 1098-99. Permitting a ban on free expression to stand as long as one of the asserted justifications for it is constitutionally valid hardly promotes honesty and integrity either in the promulgation of regulations or in federal litigation. [40]. 608 F. Supp. 1095 (N.D. Tex. 1985). [41]. *Wagner v. Thomas*, 608 F. Supp. 1095, 1097 (N.D. Tex. 1985) (quoting Dallas County Jail Policy No. 211.80.41(IV)(A)(7)). [42]. Id. at 1097 n.6. [43]. Id. at 1103. [44]. 624 F.2d 569 (5th Cir. 1980). [45]. *Vodicka v. Phelps*, 624 F.2d 569, 573 (5th Cir. 1980). [46]. Id. at 572. [47]. Id. [48]. Id. [49]. Id. at 574. [50]. Id. at 574. [51]. 594 F.2d 407 (4th Cir. 1979). [52]. *Pittman v. Hutto*, 594 F.2d 407, 409 (4th Cir. 1979). [53]. In 1989, the Supreme Court in *Abbott* approved such censorship whenever a warden finds that printed material would be "detrimental to security, good order, or discipline of the institution, or might facilitate criminal activity." *Abbott*, 490 U.S. at 403 n.1 & 404 (quoting 28 C.F.R. 540.71(b) (1988)). Given the practice of the lower federal courts, the decision in *Abbott* broke little new ground. [54]. Prison administrators have a wide variety of means to punish prisoners who violate institutional rules. These include (1) limitation or suspension of mail, telephone, commissary, and recreational privileges; (2) isolation in solitary confinement for anywhere from a few days to decades; (3) transfer to a more "secure" facility or to a more restrictive department within the prison; and (4) loss of statutory "good time." Depending on the jurisdiction, every day of good behavior can reduce a sentence by as much as one day. Hence, loss of all good time can effectively double the sentence that a prisoner actually must serve and, accordingly, is considered by staff and prisoners alike as one of the harshest punishments. And any institutional infraction could affect a prisoner's parole. [55]. 683 F.2d. 1044 (7th Cir.

The argument that federal courts are unsuited to running prisons also unravels when pulled a bit. In the first instance, protecting the free speech rights of prisoners should not require the federal court to "run" the prison. It simply requires in this country, something the federal courts presumably are suited to do, even in this benighted era.

Of course, sometimes the intransigence or incapacity of the prison administration requires courts to assume responsibility for day-to-day functioning. Federal courts are as unsuited to run prisons as they are to operate public schools, large financial institutions, airlines, newspapers, grocery stores, or bus companies. However, they do end up running such institutions, usually quite capably, when the original managers are unwilling or unable to meet their obligations.¹¹⁶

The notion that the judgments of prison administrators are entitled to wide-ranging deference is a concept utterly alien and antithetical to the rest of First Amendment jurisprudence. Prison administrators are the persons who are least likely to be trusted with the power to censor inmates. It is they who feel the lash of prisoners' freedom of speech most keenly; it is they who are called to task when corruption and brutality are exposed. The idea that governors, by virtue of their roles as governors, should have the power to silence the governed is absurd in any other context but penal institutions.

Lastly, if the suspension of First

Amendment rights was somehow justifiable because prisons are so unique and so dangerous that some special rule should apply, the free speech rights of all members of the institution, including prison guards, administrators, as well as prisoners, could be suspended or adjudicated under a separate constitutional standard. Not surprisingly, this has not been the case.

In *Curle v. Ward*,¹¹⁷ New York's Third Appellate Division applied a "strict scrutiny" standard to a prison regulation prohibiting staff members from belonging to the Ku Klux Klan. The Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services determined that such membership was a threat to the administration, programming and security of the institution. In *Curle*, there was no talk of the difficulty of running prisons or of "deference" to a method that "treads too broadly on constitutional" choices.¹¹⁸ There was no *Baraldini*-type analysis, permitting prison authorities to take preemptive action based upon organizational affiliations. The difficulty of running the prison could not permit the abridgment of fundamental rights of guards.

Similarly, in *Babcock v. Michigan Department of Corrections*,¹¹⁹ the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan held that prison administrators could not punish a guard who spoke to the press regarding prison conditions, notwithstanding the contention by the warden that the statements were false, reflected poorly on the department, and caused a security threat. The

court held that the guard's "statements concerned potentially illegal drug activity occurring in a publicly funded institution, and the treatment of persons who disclose such activity. These are, by any standard, matters of public concern."¹²⁰ In *Harris v. Evans*,¹²¹ the Eleventh Circuit struck down a prison policy prohibiting staff members from communicating directly with the parole board regarding the merits of any particular case. The prison authorities' invocation of the talismanic phrase "security" left the court in *Evans* unmoved as it held that "citizens who comment on individual parole decisions are offering input on the working of the state's criminal justice system."¹²²

CONCLUSION

Prison free speech cases demonstrate, in the starkest possible terms, the hypocrisy of the federal judiciary and its high-minded pronouncements when the liberty of the poor and oppressed is at issue. Our prisons are vast warehouses for entire generations of black and Latino youths who are being taught the meaning of power and authority, but most certainly not the meaning of democracy, or the importance of free expression. There is every reason to believe that these youths emerge from prison imbued with the same tolerance for ideas and discourse as their wardens. A frightening thought.

PL

1982). [56]. 741 F. Supp. 1406 (N.D. Cal. 1990). [57]. *Martin v. Rison*, 741 F. Supp. 1406, 1410 (N.D. Cal. 1990), vacated sub nom., *Chronicle Publishing Co. v. Rison*, 862 F.2d 959 (9th Cir. 1992). [58]. Id. at 1420. [59]. Id. at 14. According to the district court, heightened scrutiny under *Martinez* was not required because the ideas did not just exit the institution, they also returned through the newspaper. Id. at 1412. [60]. See id. at 1414-15. These harms included creating a danger of threats of violence, focusing attention on an individual prisoner, which could lead to unrest, creating fear on the part of the staff that their statements might be reported, encouraging a prisoner to be more loyal to his paper than to the prison, and preventing a prisoner from becoming too well known, which could result in his having disproportionate influence in prison. Id. There was evidence that the "prison staff was upset about the article." Id. at 1415. [61]. Id. at 1414. [62]. Other facts that would, in any other context, have called into question the sincerity of the prison in even-handed application of prison rules were that two other federal prisoners had written under by-lines but were not punished, and that Martin had written about eighteen prior articles for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, that were published as regular Sunday features. Martin's writings were known to some prison authorities and cited favorably in his parole file. Id. at 1420. [63]. 638 F. Supp. 1019 (D. Mass. 1986). [64]. *Scarpa v. Ponte*, 638 F. Supp. 1019, 1020 (D. Mass. 1986) (footnote omitted). [65]. 779 F.2d 1040 (5th Cir. 1986). [66]. *Gibbs v. King*, 779 F.2d 1040, 1045 (5th Cir. 1986), cert. denied, 476 U.S. 78 (1986). [67]. 713 F.2d 1003 (3rd Cir. 1983). [68]. *Hadden v. Dooley*, 713 F.2d 1003, 1006 (3d Cir. 1983) (citing Pa. Code 95.102a(b)(25), §31). [69]. 691 F. Supp. 432 (D.D.C. 1988). [70]. *Baraldini v. Meese*, 691 F. Supp. 432, 445 (D.D.C. 1988), rev'd sub nom., *Baraldini v. Thornburgh*, 884 F.2d 615 (D.C. Cir. 1989). The conditions of the Lexington HSU and the effect they had on the women confined there was documented by filmmakers Nina Rosenblum and Alexandra White in the Public Broadcasting Network film *Through the Wire*. [71]. *Baraldini*, 691 F. Supp. at 445. [72]. Id. at 437-8. [73]. Id. at 438. [74]. Id. at 443 [75]. Id. at 449. [77]. *Baraldini v. Thornburgh*, 884 F.2d 615, 620 (D.C. Cir. 1989). [78]. 622 F.2d 967 (8th Cir. 1980). [79]. *Nickens v. White*, 622 F.2d 967, 971-72 (8th Cir.), cert. denied, 449 U.S. 1017 (1980). [80]. *Jones*, 433 U.S. at 132 (1977). [81]. See *Baraldini*, 884 F.2d at 618. [82]. 598 F. Supp. 607 (D.R.I. 1984). [83]. *Dooley v. Quick*, 598 F. Supp. 607, 611 (D.R.I. 1984), aff'd, 787 F.2d 579 (1st Cir. 1986). [84]. Id. at 612. Prison officials are also free to curtail discussions among prisoners while they are in the mess hall, prison corridors, and working. See *Lamar v. Coffield*, 353 F. Supp. 1081, 1082, 1084 (S.D. Tex. 1972). [85]. 482 U.S. 78 (1986). [86]. *Turner*, 482 U.S. at 91. [87]. 729 F.2d 362 (5th Cir. 1984). [88]. *Adams v. Gunnell*, 729 F.2d 362, 365 (5th Cir. 1984). [89]. Id. at 364-65. [90]. Id. at 364. [91]. Id. [92]. Id. [93]. Id. at 368. [94]. Id. at 367. [95]. 783 F.2d 1532 (11th Cir. 1986). [96]. *Jersawitz v. Hanbery*, 783 F.2d 1532, 1534 (11th Cir.), cert. denied sub nom., *Jersawitz v. Noonan*, 479 U.S. 883 (1986). [97]. *Wollish*, 441 U.S. at 550-51. [98]. *Wagner*, 608 F. Supp. at 1102. [99]. 755 F.2d 306 (3d Cir. 1985). [100]. *Hurd v. Williams*, 755 F.2d 306, 308 (3d Cir. 1985). [101]. 748 F. Supp. 570 (M.D. Tenn. 1990). [102]. *Jackson v. Norris*, 748 F. Supp. 570, 573 (M.D. Tenn. 1990), aff'd, 928 F.2d 1132 (6th Cir. 1991). [103]. 790 F.2d 1299 (7th Cir. 1986). [104]. *Gaines v. Lane*, 790 F.2d 1299, 1304 (7th Cir. 1986). The Court in *Gaines* upheld the regulation under the *Martinez* elevated scrutiny standard. Id. See *Burton v. Nault*, 902 F.2d 4.5 (6th Cir.) (allowing prison officials to read outgoing mail, even if privileged, to learn whether drug use played any role in a prisoner's unsuccessful suicide attempt), cert. denied, 111 S. Ct. 198 (1990). [105]. 869 F.2d 1105 (8th Cir. 1989). [106]. So much for *Damon* and *Pythias*. [107]. See *Martin H. Redish*, *The Value of Free Speech*, 130 U. PA. L. Rev. 591, 593 (1982). [108]. *Alex Haley & Malcolm X*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* 179 (1965). [109]. See *Alexander Berkman*, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (2d ed. 1920). [110]. See *Caryl Chessman*, *Cell 2455*, *Death Row* (1954). [111]. See *Skiykrj Sing Your Lonely Song: An Anthology of Prison Writings of Bobby Sands* (1982). [112]. *Mary H. Maguire*, *Attack of the Common Lawyers on the Oath Ex Officio*, in *Essays in History and Political Theory of Charles Howard McIlwain* 212-13 (1936). See *Thornhill v. Alabama*, 310 U.S. 88, 95 (1940) (stating that the First Amendment "safeguard[s]... The rights to the ends that men may speak as they think on matters vital to them"). [113]. *John E. Nowak & Ronald D. Rotunda*, *Constitutional Law* 16.6, at 940 (4th ed. 1991). [114]. Id. 16.6, at 941. [115]. *N.Y. Newsday*, Jan. 27, 1993, Part II, at 50. The legislation went into effect on March 3, 1993, and applies to all 20,000 persons, mostly pretrial detainees, in New York City's jails. [116]. Actually, federal courts have shown themselves to be quite good at running prisons. Throughout the 1970s, numerous prisons and jails were placed into federal receivership, and run by the federal courts, because they were unable to meet the constitutionally minimum standards of health, safety, and dignity required by the Eighth Amendment. The termination of those receiversships in the 1980s says more about the lowering of constitutional standards than it does about the upgrading of prison administrations. [117]. 399 N.Y.S.2d 308 (N.Y. App. Div. 1977). [118]. *Curle v. Ward*, 399 N.Y.S.2d 308, 312 (N.Y. App. Div. 1977), modified, 399 N.E.2d 1070 (N.Y. 1979). [119]. 1990 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 3644 (W.D. Mich. Apr. 2, 1990) (unpublished decision). [120]. *Babcock v. Michigan Dep't of Corrections*, 1990 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 3644, at *7 (W.D. Mich. April 2, 1990) (unpublished decision). [121]. 920 F.2d 864 (11th Cir. 1991). [122]. *Harris v. Evans*, 920 F.2d 864, 867 (11th Cir. 1991).

INSIDER OUTLOOK

TEXAS SUCKS, TOO

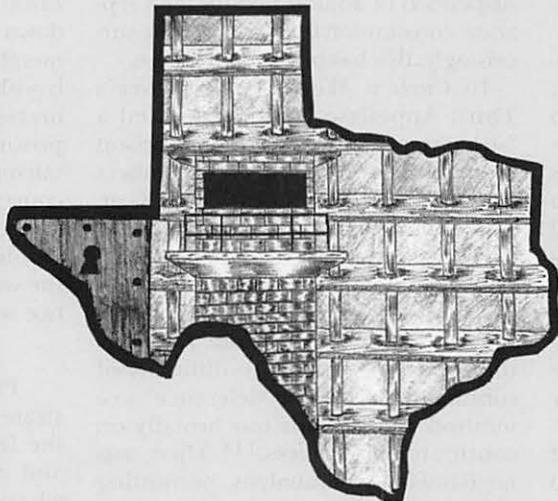
I'm a three-time loser doing 25 on a Bitch (25-99). From everything I saw in *Prison Life*, I was very surprised there were no letters from Texas. You have all these supposedly stiff convicts who bitch every day but have no nuts to be heard.

Not me: I want all my fellow convicts out there to know that their ratholes ain't the only piece-o-shit prisons around. Texas brags about being the largest prison system but can they run it? Hell no. We're treated like cattle here, only they care less about us. It's all about money, not rehab.

We got big problems with our system. Crooks are running it. In our state, we have law enforcement officers getting busted for stealing cocaine, sheriffs getting nabbed, too—all kinds of shit. Our governor is an old drunk.

In Texas, law officers credit themselves with good work. But they don't do shit. The law here can't bust no one without stool pigeons. Ha! I can go on and on. Our country is hurting with homeless and hunger and these punks are over there plucking Cubans outta the water. Know what they see? Dollar signs. Those fucks will be in prison in no time.

Texas has a system no better than the other states. Soon, our mayors will all be wardens and all Texans will have a pre-# for the Texas Department of Corrections. They'll



need to put a fence around Texas.

I know what I'm speaking about. I was arrested with a judge in '89 in south Texas. We were importing 2,000 pounds of dope from South America.

You have nothing but rednecks as guards in Texas prisons. The few Spanish guards have all turned cowboy and the black guards are Uncle Toms.

The circus goes on.

Alfredo Gonzales

Alfred Hughes Unit, Texas

WHAT LITTLE WE HAVE

People who don't have much get ugly and mean when they have to give up what little they have.

Back in 1970, when I started doing time, the prison yard was divided into little courts. Every clique had one—the Italians, whites, Latins and Blacks. It didn't break down just to race. Bank robbers hung out together, con men had their own spot, the iron freaks didn't mix with the basketball junkies. If you stepped into another's court, you did it the same way you'd come into another's cell without an invite—with a shank in hand.

Survival means thinking about and seeing those around you. And that includes knowing each prison "shift."

On the first shift, cons are on their best behavior because that's when the visitors are allowed in and freeworld people come around: the jerkoff therapists, counselors and religious nuts.

The second shift is when you settle all your disputes—if you're serious about them. Prison fights usually last only a few seconds, someone dies and someone walks away. If the guy you stab lives, he's entitled to a rematch.

The third shift is when you check out of the hotel if you can't stand the room. It's when the weak ones hang it up in their cells. Prison, just like the freeworld, is bullshit, violence and death. Only here it's on a tighter schedule.

Inside the walls they don't leave you with much. That's why the bodybuilders treasure their measurements more than any fashion model. You can die for stepping on another man's little piece of space, or his name. You either stand up to what they throw at you or you go down. It's that simple. And in prison, if you go down, you stay down.

Clayton Phillips

Colorado State Prison

STOP BASHING PECKERWOODS

I'm writing this from Peckerwood's Hell. My name's Wess, and I'm doing a 27-year bid for robbery and assault here at the Mississippi D.O.C. I've been down for seven and have another seven to go.

I noticed in the October issue's article on Attica, it said "a white man has little chance of making it . . ." Damn straight!

I'm sick and tired of everyone bashing the Peckerwoods and Featherwoods with cheap shots every chance they get.

You want to know what rough is, asshole? Try doing a bid here where 94% of the population is Black—the police as well as the prisoners. Try being thrown in an open dorm with 75 and only two are white and 50 are gang members.

Let me tell you something: The Peckerwoods I have done time with here know what it's like to have their backs to the wall. We know what trust, honor and survival are all about. Men like Psycho, Maniac, Hobo, Hollywood, Cat Daddy, Hoss, Oz, Snake, C. Pope, Roy H., Danny W.,



Billy J., Larry O. and myself have earned every ounce of respect and honor our names carry.

It's not about your time, place or race. It's about your heart. Without heart, you don't have honor, and without honor, you ain't got jack in this Hellhole.

So stop bashing us and our women. Stop telling us where we can and can't make it. Speak for yourself, not us! Us Peckerwoods are here for the duration and we ain't running.

So put that in your pipe and smoke it! Tell 'em Wess said that, too!

*Kenneth Bowers
Unit 32/C, Parchman MS*

MADE IN PRISON

I'm a 50-year-old doing two life sentences in Arizona: one for murder, one for assault by a prisoner (a "sticking"). I've got about 17 flat in now and 19 more to go on these cases.

I'm a product of the California system. I started soldiering in the CA Youth Authority at 15 and made my bones 30 years ago. When I was branded you had to take a life to wear the brand and it was a thing of respect in the joint and on the streets.

Let me give you a slant about prison creating criminals. I did my time in serious prisons when I was young: San Quentin, Folsom, Tracy and others. I also did time in Raiford, Florida. My time was for real. When I was paroled from San Quentin I came to Arizona where I wound up killing a guy because he snitched on me.

Anyhow, what happens when we do a lot of time is we get programmed with a set of rules and reactions that are not only correct but often are the only reactions that will allow us to survive in these places. They become normal and set in our minds and then we are released and something happens. And we react. Of course, to a normal freeworld person, we will seem savage and brutal, even though all we did was what kept us alive the week before we were released.

As I look back I can see my reactions to the situation which cost both the man I killed his life and me, mine. I can also see how I was programmed in these places. No excuses, only an observation.

*Lee McVay
Arizona State Prison*

Insider Outlook art: "Texas," by Dan Locke, TDCJ; "Hand," by Daniel Nicklaus, Stateville, IL; "Death," by Michael Davis, Corcoran State Prison, CA.

"WHAT MORE CAN A FAG ASK FOR?"

In your October issue you ask: Are you man or woman enough to tell us about sex behind bars? Haven't you listened to the prison administrators? Sex in prison only happens on TV and in the movies!

Yeah, right.

Let me tell you, sex goes on here every day. It goes on in the cells, the stairwells, the showers, a corner in the yard—everywhere. The administrators of these places remain silent or deny it happens.

Believe me, honey, it's going on. I've slept with more men than are named and numbered in the Bible—Old and New Testament combined. And most of 'em while locked up. Not just inmates, either!

I think it's important to realize that we are, by definition, animals. As such, we have basic appetites: food, water, shelter—and sex. We are driven to satisfy these hungers at all costs.

Being openly gay,

I'm frequently hit

on. Imagine that! I gotta tell ya', some of these boys are the men some of us used to dream about: big, thick, cut bodies, and too stupid to carry on a real conversation. What more can a fag ask for? I get what I want, he gets what he wants, and I don't have to talk to him or cook breakfast in the morning! Gotta like that!

Let me stop babbling here and get serious. All of us, including the administrators, know what's up. We can ignore it, but it's not going to change. Sex will not go away. Due to this fact, there are some important decisions to be made here.

Fourteen years ago, sex was sex; nothing much to worry about unless your herpes flared up. Sex can now mean death. Blow the wrong dude and end up dead or with hepatitis. Quite frankly, neither appeals to me. But the administrators' denial is costing prisoners their lives.

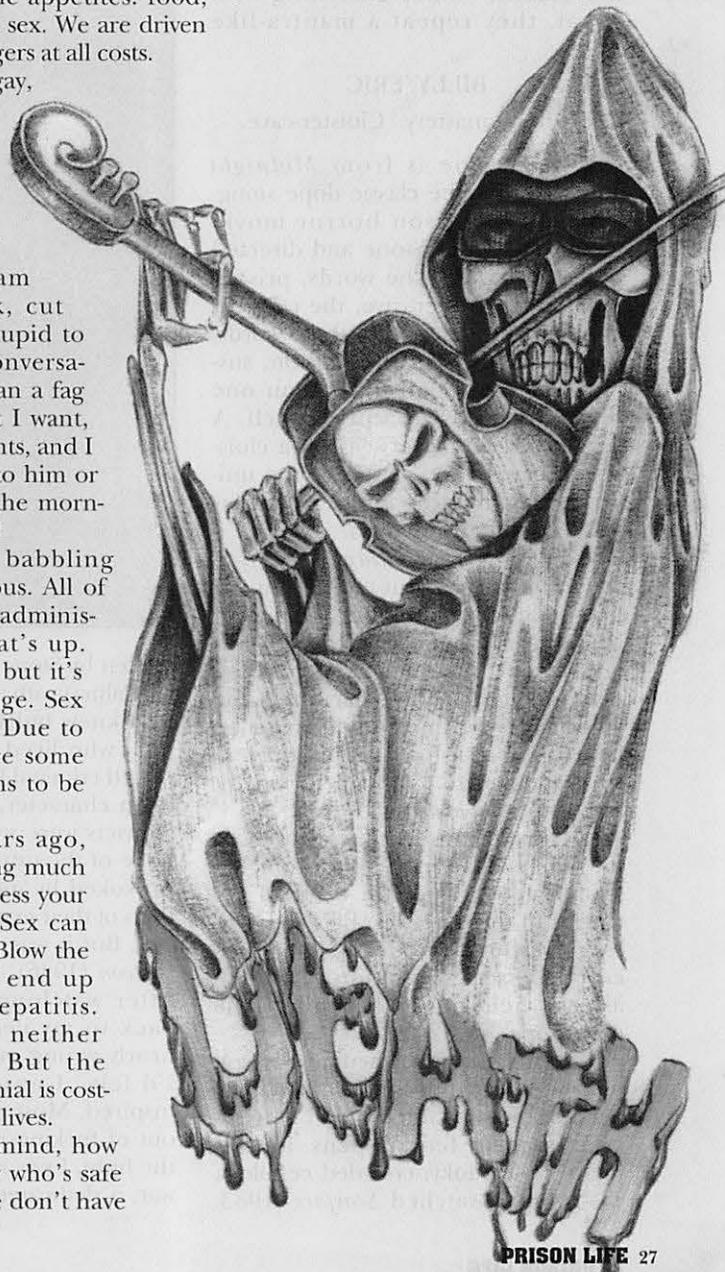
With that in mind, how do any of us know who's safe and who's not? We don't have

a clue! On the street, at least two can grab a rubber, but not in prison. Hey now, there's a thought: Sell condoms at the commissary. Silly me, that would mean the staff would have to acknowledge what's going on.

Fucking and sucking will go on behind the walls and fences of every prison in this nation for as long as they exist. Isn't it time the State acknowledges it and does something to protect those adults who are engaging in consensual sex while locked up?

Let me wrap this up with a warning to my queer brothers and sisters out there: Please be careful who you're doing.

*Jay Twidmer-Baum
Iowa City, IA*



EVERYBODY MUST GET STONED

OLIVER STONE GOES TO PRISON

by Richard Stratton

INT. PRISON CELL — DAY

MOVE IN ON: Billy and Eric do yoga exercises. As they stretch in ritual movement, bodies glistening with sweat, they repeat a mantra-like phrase.

BILLY/ERIC

Prison-monastery. Cloister-cave.

The scene is from *Midnight Express*, the classic dope smuggler's prison horror movie written by Oliver Stone and directed by Alan Parker. The words, prison-monastery, cloister-cave, the concept conveyed by juxtaposing those words, and the mantra-like repetition, sustained me through more than one long lonely day in a prison cell. A prison is a monastery, a cell a cloister—a cave at the center of the universe. It is all in the mind, all in how you look at it: your vision.

I went to see *Midnight Express* when it first came out in 1978. At the time, that was what I did: I smuggled hash out of countries like Lebanon and Turkey. Watching the film, I felt my guts tighten with fear: the same fear I felt every time I was approached by a cop or a customs officer, the fear I was addicted to. I thought, *This is too real. Get me out of here.*

Oliver Stone's films do that to me. They make me feel as though I should get up and run before I get caught in the obsession he's trying to exorcise. But it is too late, I am riveted to the seat, glued to the screen, already held in thrall by the same obsessions.

During the '80s, when movies written and directed by Stone started coming out, I was in custody, held in maximum security federal pens. Late at night, in a smoky, crowded cellblock TV room, I watched *Scarface* (1983,

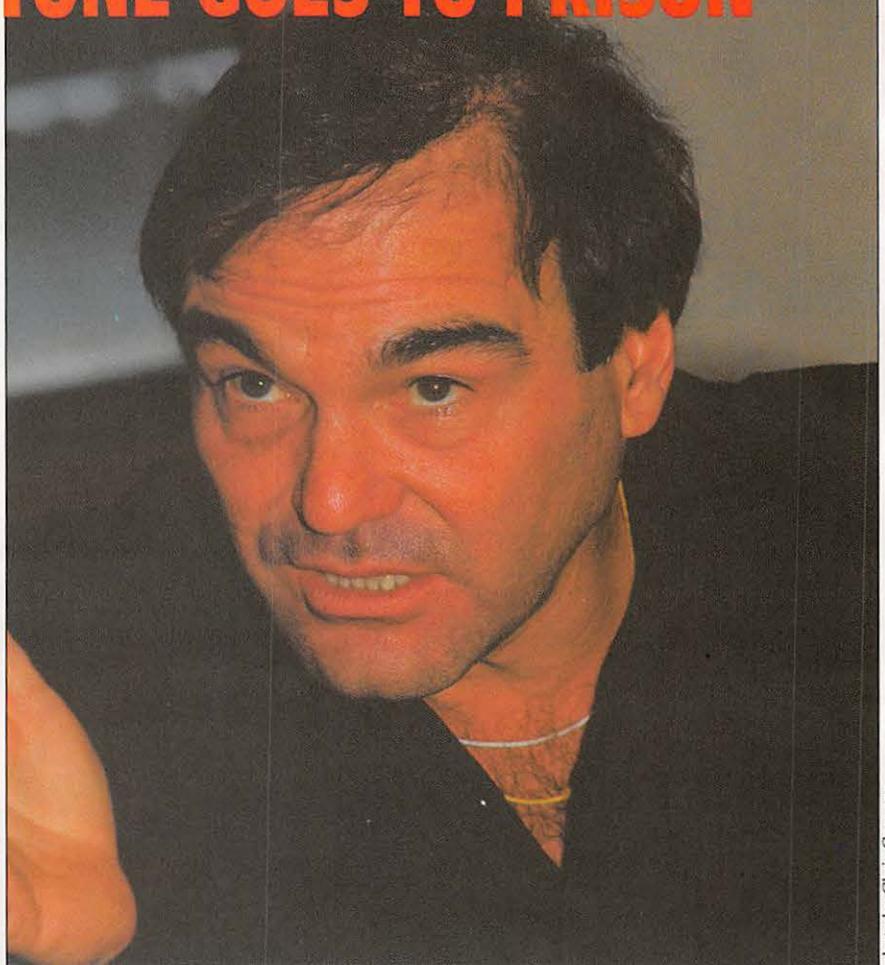


photo by Chris Cozzone

written by Stone and directed by Brian De Palma) with a tough audience, men who knew bullshit when they saw it, men who lived the coke-and-power-crazed criminal life depicted by Stone's main character, Tony Montana. The convicts were mesmerized; there was none of the usual jeering and hooting provoked by most Hollywood renditions of their experience.

But it was *Salvador* (1986), then *Platoon* (1986), that really got to me. After watching both films, I went back to my cell and hit the bunk nearly wrung out from the emotions I'd felt. I was enraged, confused, inspired. Most of all, I wanted out—out of fucking prison so I could join the fight. I saw myself as a prisoner of war, a dedicated writer searching for

truth, a revolutionary burning with hatred for the sanctimonious arrogance and hypocrisy of a government that could wage war in Vietnam to defend freedom and lock me up for 25 years for smuggling pot. It was all related: pot, Vietnam, freedom, our lying government. And Oliver Stone was on to it. I went to sleep wondering, *Who is this guy? How does he know about this shit?*

One of the first things I did after I got out was to rent *Born On the Fourth of July* (1989). A week later, *Wall Street* (1987). Same thing. I was blown away. Watching Tom Cruise as paraplegic Ron Kovic, I barely moved. It is the incredible intensity Stone manages to get actors to bring to the tormented, compelling charac-

ters he creates that make his films so enthralling. Tom Cruise has never been as tightly wound since, Michael Douglas never so despicable. In *Talk Radio* (1989), which I also saw on video, Stone began to reveal his hand as a cinematic virtuoso. Even as I watched the movie on a TV screen, I had a disorienting sense of having been granted omniscient point of view, as though I were seeing each frame from somewhere in the middle of the action.

The Doors, released in 1991, was the first Stone-*auteured* film I saw on the big screen. It is the only way to experience that movie. Big. Loud. Overpowering. Relentless and dangerous. Excessive. Like a rock concert, like a Doors concert, like a Doors concert on acid, and like the times: the sixties. That's what I like about Stone's films—the danger. He has a dangerous vision, a vision of character forged through life-and-death risk-taking, excess, despair and courage.

Stone has such courage, as an artist and as a man. An only child, son of a well-off Jewish businessman and a loving, Roman Catholic, French mother, Stone was a Park Avenue kid and a Yalie. At twenty-one, he quit it all and went off to war. After a bitter fight with his parents, he dropped out of college, joined the army and shipped out to Vietnam as an infantryman.

I understand the impulse. I'm sure it came more from needing to discover himself than from wanting to kill communists. I've often wondered how I would have handled combat. I would have gone to Vietnam had I not been turned on to pot and radicalized at early age. Yet the question remains: Would I have had the courage to fight and kill? Stone volunteered for combat, he was wounded twice and awarded the Bronze Star for bravery. He smoked Vietnamese pot every day for months, ate acid, listened to the Doors and went out hunting Vietcong. How's that for pushing the surreal envelope? No wonder the man is so far out there—far enough, indeed, to discover it was all a horrible mistake. As a filmmaker, Stone has been creating powerful testaments to an apocalyptic vision of America that was galvanized fighting guerrilla war high on psychedelics in the jungles of Vietnam.

And then came *JFK* (1991).

Never has a film excited such inflamed, polar controversy. Never has a big budget Hollywood movie had such an impact on our national psyche. Only Oliver Stone has the guts to make such a movie. Only Oliver Stone has the power and integrity as an artist to get such a film made. At a time when most of our esteemed artists have chosen the easy way out, cowering before the keepers of the bottom line, Stone remains true to his heart, true to his instincts, true to his creative vision.

Well before the movie was shot, a pirated version of the script was making the rounds and the vicious guard dogs of our national mendacity were excoriating Stone for supposedly taking liberties with historical fact. *So what?* I thought. Every great artist interprets so-called reality. What matters is the truth of the artist's vision.

JFK, all three-plus hours, passed quickly before my eyes and resonated in my mind and solar plexus like a pot-induced paranoid fantasy. So many of us who grew up during the sixties are victims of the same obsessions. *It's all a fucking conspiracy!* Hadn't I always known that? True, the cocksuckers who are conspiring to manipulate history don't know what the fuck they are doing. But that only makes it worse.

From the time 30-odd years ago (30 very odd years ago) when I took that first hit and journeyed forever one toke over the line, I knew why the stuff was illegal. You get high and

you begin to question reality. That is what happened to Oliver Stone. He got stoned and he's never been the same since. None of us will ever be the same. Not Newt Gingrich, nor Hunter Thompson. Not John Lennon, God rest his soul. Not Ken Kesey, nor Robert Stone. (Another stoned Stone.) Not Bob Dylan. Everybody must get stoned. Only Bill Clinton is exempt, still steeped in bullshit because he didn't have the guts to inhale. Sure, Bill.

The afternoon I went to see *Natural Born Killers*, I thought it might be interesting to smoke a little Ulster County weed to get in the proper frame of mind. It should come as no surprise that some of the best pot in the world comes from the hills around Woodstock, New York. I got out of the cab, lit up a joint, took a couple of hits, then strolled around the corner and into the movie theater.

Moments into the opening sequence I was gripping both armrests and holding on for dear sanity. *Holy shit*, I thought, *this is madness. I'm losing it. I'm too high.* The vertiginous cinematography, the balletic violence, the hallucinatory colors and images dazzled me, scared me. Again I thought I should flee the theater before I saw what Stone wanted to show me about violence in America.

I met Oliver Stone a couple of weeks later in a large, plush TV studio conference room on W. 57th street in Manhattan. We were both there as guests on different segments of *Politically Incorrect*, a cable TV show on Comedy Central. Stone had agreed to meet after I sent him a few copies of *Prison Life* with a note saying I wanted to talk with him about his prison experiences.

I had been warned that Stone liked to insult people when he first met them as a way of throwing them off guard. I wasn't worried about that. One thing nearly a decade of prison will do for you is teach you how to handle charged meetings with men who like to come on as heavies. Stone wasn't at all pompous or insulting. He was intense, dressed in black, wired, lean and restless as an outlaw in a holding cell. But he was essentially cool, sincere, it seemed to me. I had the feeling that he is still out

Yoga in prison from Midnight Express.



there roaming around in some hairy state of consciousness seeking self-discovery at all costs.

We began by talking about *Midnight Express*. The script won Stone an Oscar and jump-started his career.

"*Midnight Express* was a hell of a story. The movie was done on a very low budget. Not much was expected from it at that time. It was a big surprise, you know, a sleeper hit. It cost about three or four million dollars to make and must have grossed one hundred million dollars internationally. It put me on the board, as well as Alan Parker.

"I wish they had shot the ending that was scripted, the original ending which was his escape through Greece. Billy actually got out without killing anybody. There was a change, dramatic license, because they didn't have the money to shoot the overland escape through Turkey to Greece, which has a Great Escape kind of feeling, so they ended it with Billy walking out of the prison after he committed a murder in order to give it some dramatic excitement. We felt he had to kill the fat guy, the commandant who ran the prison, to get out. Actually, the fat guy was a lot funnier than how he's pictured in the movie.

He's very solemn and serious in the movie. The Turks are very funny to me because their prison system is so screwed up. When we were shooting in the prison, we would pan down one cell, see some poor guy who's really suffering—skinny and gaunt. In the next cell and you'd see another Turk having hookers and business cronies in and making deals and running contracts from jail. Some of them lived in suites, had all the good food. You could buy anything in a Turkish prison. The whole point about the relativity of the system was a little bit lost in the movie. Everything was for sale—sex. You could have concubines in. We were accused of sensationalism and racism. Amnesty International has always regarded Turkey as one of the great abusers of human rights in this regard. Their prison system is notoriously bad. Years later, when the Turkish prisoner made that extraordinary film *Yol*, about his life in a Turkish prison, he actually shot it in a prison.

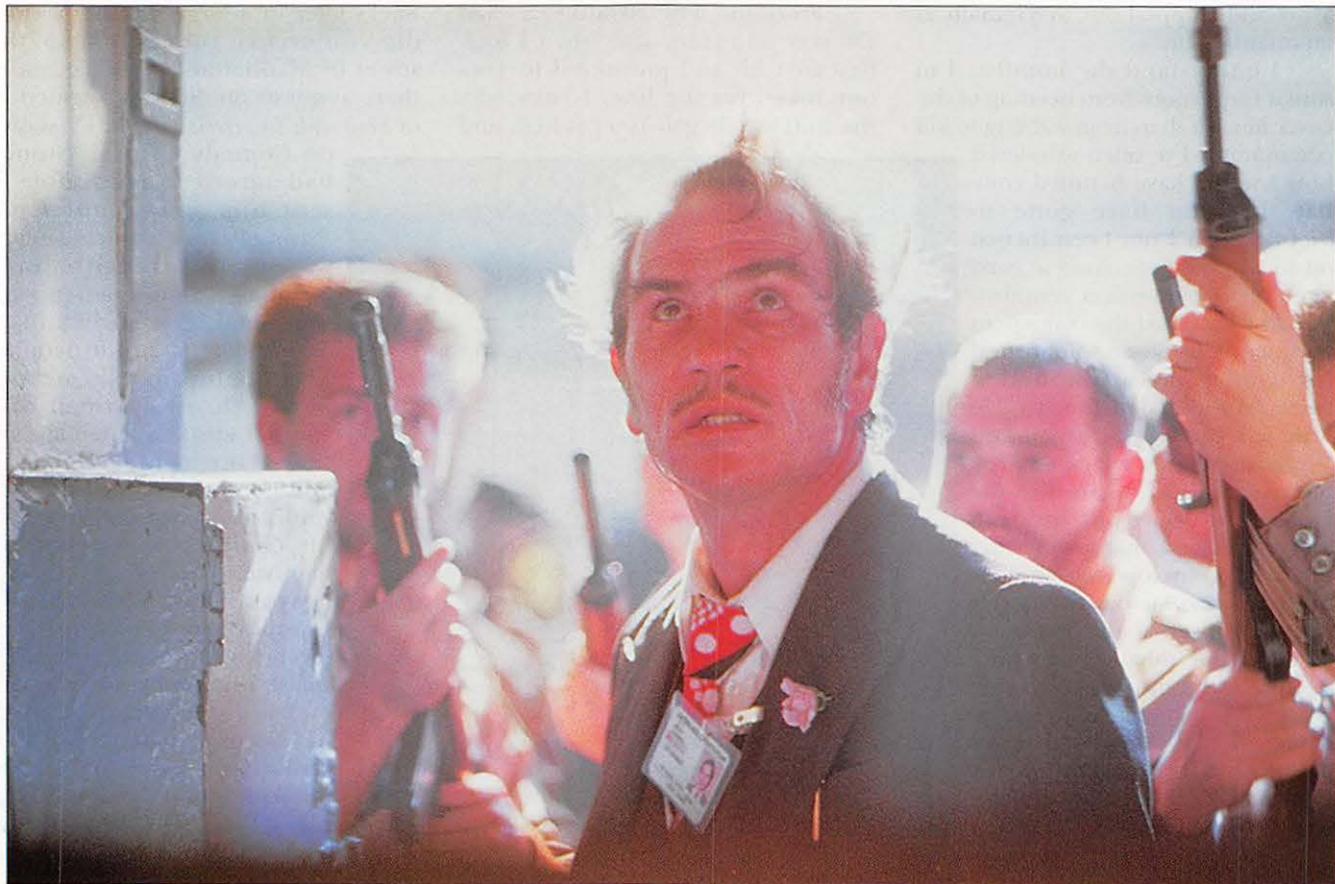
"The homosexuality, I dropped. It wasn't even in the book, but I sort of sensed that was going on. Columbia in 1978 was in no position to do a mainstream film with a guy buttfucking or being buttfucked. It wouldn't have gone down."

I asked Stone what it was that drew him to the subject matter of prison.

"I had written *Platoon* a year before *Midnight Express* as an original screenplay. Everyone had read that screenplay, and they were impressed with the writing but they didn't want to make that movie. So they, Columbia, hired me to give it a shot on this film. I was drawn to the material innately because I think it's a great story about justice and injustice, the prison system. And I was drawn to the story because of my own experience in prison, which I used to give it the sense of visceral protest. That all comes from the sense of shock and outrage I had when I came back from Vietnam. Late in November of '68 I was busted. I had Vietnamese grass on me. Couple of ounces. You know, it was great grass, why not bring some home? I was doing it on a steady basis. I got hooked over there. In a nice way, not in a destructive way.

"I ended up freaking out in America, taking acid on the West Coast. I just had to get out of this country. I wasn't prepared to come home yet—I had to detox. I was not decompressed from the war yet. So I crossed over into Mexico and partied down there because they were a little

Below: Tommy Lee Jones as a deranged warden. Opposite: Woody Harelson busts out of Stateville. From *Natural Born Killers*.





different from me. I felt more at home in Mexico. On the way back, I was busted at the border with part of those two ounces of Vietnamese grass. Kind of stupid on my part. So the FBI came and got me—handcuffs and all that. I was charged with federal smuggling. Nixon had just declared a drug war on the border. It was the first drug war, which became the precursor to everything that's happened since then. The FBI came and got me and booked me under federal smuggling charges, which was serious. The guys in jail told me that if I got one judge, I'd see three years' probation and probably get it suspended. They said the other guy'll give you twenty years and you'll have to do at least five. It was like a five-to-twenty-year sentence. That was the law, five to twenty years for drug smuggling. So that's what they booked me on. Mugged me and everything. They paraded me through downtown San Diego in the daylight into the courtroom for the indictment, chained to the bars. This was ten days out of Vietnam. I never got to make my phone call. It was a mess. The prison was a fucking mess. It was overpacked, people were sleeping on the floor. It was San Diego County Jail, a big inner-city prison and it was jammed with people, mostly Blacks and Hispanics, all up on drug charges. Everyone was young, my age or a little bit older. They all

hung in gangs. I talked to a lot of these guys and I was just amazed. It opened my eyes. Kids had been in there for six months and they hadn't even gotten a lawyer to come and see them. It was like hard time, but it was preliminary to the trial.

"I think I had spent about two weeks in there and still couldn't get my call in. You're supposed to be allowed a phone call, right? I kept writing notes. At first I didn't want to call my father, I just wanted to deal with it myself. I thought maybe the public defender would come and I could work something out with him myself. But he wouldn't show up. That's the scene from *Midnight Express*. Waiting for some lawyer to get you out.

"Eventually, because of the notes, the guards started to pay a little more attention to me. I got a note out, 'Please, I'm a Vietnam veteran, I haven't had my phone call.'" Finally, one day they let me make my phone call and I called my father in New York and said I was back from Vietnam. I hadn't even told him I was back from Vietnam and here I was in jail on drug smuggling charges. Within a few hours, the lawyer showed up because my father had called and the lawyer knew there was going to be a payment in this matter. He showed up and he was very cheery, like the fel-

low in the movie. Then he started to work on the process of getting me bailed out.

"Ultimately, to make a long story short, I got out and the charges were dismissed in the interest of justice. I had to stick around San Diego for a week on a probation kind of thing. The lawyer implied that somebody in the D.A.'s office pulled the file. I sensed that money was changing hands. There was something going on. I was sort of detoxed and cleaned out, whatever the word is, and I made it back to New York. Welcome back to New York. It was a weird return. I was twenty-two years old."

"There was that great prison scene in *JFK*," I said, "when Garrison goes to Angola to talk to the Kevin Bacon character. And now, with the horrendous riot sequence at the end of *Natural Born Killers*, you've gone back into prison. Tell us what it was like shooting that riot scene."

"We shot *Natural Born Killers* at Stateville in Illinois, which is a rough prison. It's tough. Stateville was, I think, 70% or 80% violent criminals. It's the heaviest state prison in Illinois. And I think 80% or 90% Black. So, it was a very interesting view of Chicago. I know it's a violent prison, but I loved the way the warden handled it. He was so cool, just kind of saying, 'They've got it,' mean-

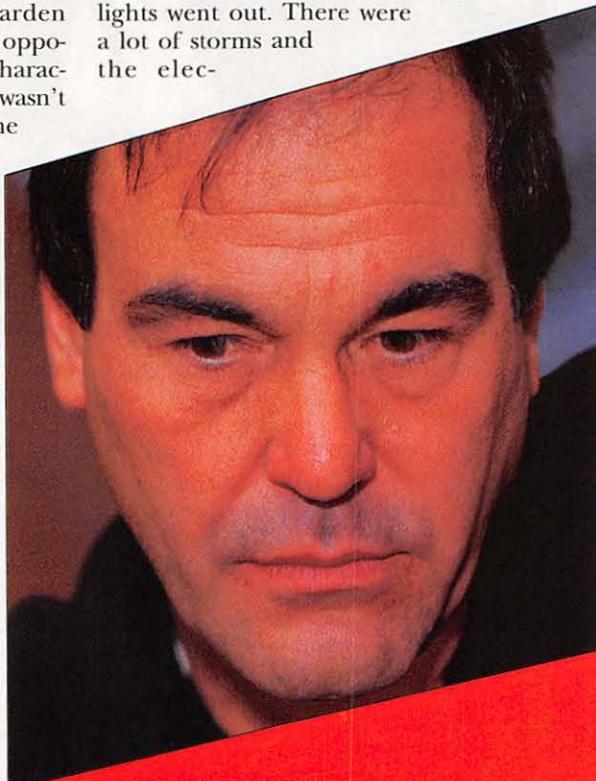
ing the prisoners. 'It's their thing.' He did the minimum, he seemed to give enough leeway to play around and fuck up. I didn't notice a heavy degree of repression, which I saw certainly in Arkansas and in some of the Texas prisons I have visited."

"The Tommy Lee Jones character in *Natural Born Killers* was wild," I said. "Amazing. Tommy was great. Sort of every con's worst nightmare version of some insane geek warden you just know is in there because he really enjoys inflicting pain."

"Yeah? You liked him?" Stone asked with a grin. "In Stateville they had three major gangs, I believe. We shot in several wings of the prison. We had good cooperation. The warden was great, actually. He was the opposite of the Tommy Lee Jones character. He was a very strong guy, he wasn't all that popular, but he knew the right way. He let the prisoners go. He let them have that edge. A lot of the prisoners made cracks about the joint. I'm not going to say it was a perfect prison, but I think that that prison was well run. Imagine allowing us to shoot a riot in there, with real prisoners. It's pretty nutty. Most prisons would never allow that. But Stateville did and I think that ultimately it was a good thing because the prisoners got paid. We also put in a new cable TV system. We hired prisoners to work on the film. They offered us, I think, about 1,000 prisoners and we used most of them. In the first part of the film, we let them use prop guns and beat up our stunt men. They loved it, they were having a ball. Then the press got involved, they heard about it, and they of course went nuts. It hit the papers. Then they closed us down. The governor's office said, 'What is this? Prisoners are walking around making a movie? What if they escape?' The usual. So they closed us down, stopped us from shooting. It was pretty hairy because we were facing a big financial deficit here. We shot some other stuff in Chicago. Meanwhile, we kept negotiating with the prison board to get back in Stateville. Finally, they made a new deal with us. We could use the prisoners, but we had to segregate them from the weapons, rubber weapons. It made it a little more complicated because we needed to use more stunt

men which cost us more. But still it worked out. The real sense of violence that you have is those guys going nuts on our stuntmen—beating the shit out of them and enjoying it, climbing the walls, yelling, screaming. Throughout the film, you'll see real prisoners. Sometimes we went to the roundhouse, the real roundhouse, that's a hell of a scene. When you see the uncut version on laser disk, that version will have the uncut riot, which is an amazing scene. People get thrown in ovens. It's all over the top, it's nuts. It's like the music sets in and the riot goes on for about fifteen minutes. The censors went crazy when they saw that.

"A few times during shooting the lights went out. There were a lot of storms and the elec-



"We hired about a thousand prisoners to work on *Natural Born Killers*. We let them use prop guns and beat up our stunt men. They loved it."

tricity went out. Our crew got spooked because in the dark, a couple of them got groped. So they saw the real thing, y'know. When the lights go out, things get weird. I like Stateville because you have no security. I mean, once you're in, you're in. They can take you out whenever they want. They could have taken the whole movie crew, if they had wanted to. They knew that we were ransomable, but they were cool. The gangs—one Spanish, one Black —

were fighting amongst one another and there was a killing while we were there. And then there were the Aryans too, fucking crazies. So there was this whole crazy mix. We had fairly good relations. It's a beautiful old prison, visually exciting. The roundhouse is incredible. Here we were running rampant in it. Claudia Schiffer came to the set one day to do a documentary on us. Schiffer, this gorgeous German model, is walking down the tier and all these black guys are like, 'What the fuck'. The guy who runs the prison system in Illinois was really cool, liked to see these guys have fun. They seemed to be pleased that there wasn't any damage. We were in a long time, shooting riots y'know, and it was tough. I've been to a lot of prisons because I've researched other films about prisons.

"In 1980, I researched *Baby Boy*, which is a beautiful prison novel. And I went to all the prisons in the South. I went to Parchman, and I went to Arkansas and Alabama and Mississippi—that's Parchman. I went to Angola at that point too. It's a good prison, if there is such a thing, it's a much better prison than some of the others I've seen. For example, I remember Arkansas was horrible because the prison was totally regimented, run military style where you walk along the edge of a wall. You're not allowed to even walk in the middle. You shut up and you keep quiet. There were all these rules. I feel like that's the kind of prison that's going to blow."

It was nearly time for us to go to the green room to prepare for the taping. The segment I was to do was about making prisons tougher. I asked Stone what he thought about this whole prison build-up, the creation of an American gulag, a massive prison-industrial complex.

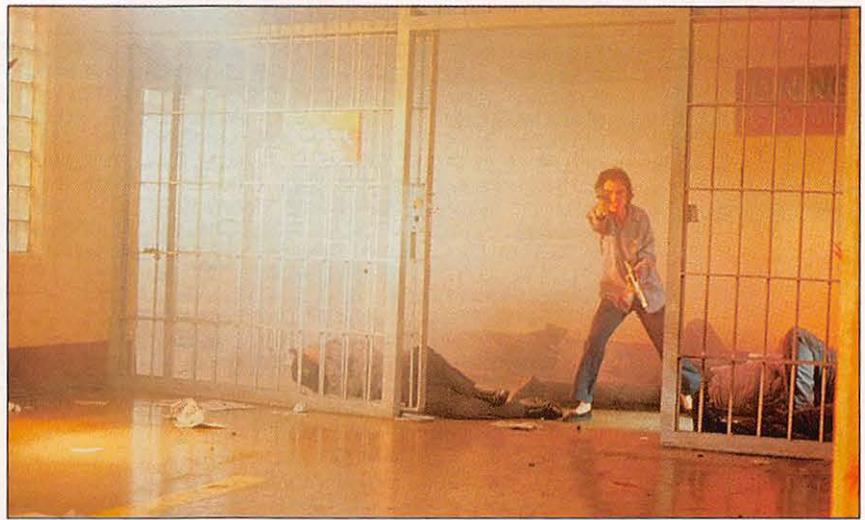
"It's absolute bullshit. It's absolutely the wrong way to go about it. I think it's fascism. The whole concept of fearing crime and creating a monster out of crime is part of the madness of the media. The media has created the fear of crime. Crime itself, violent crime, has remained the same, according to Bureau of Justice statistics, or is actually declining."

"But is it the media creating the

fear of crime, or is it the media covering what the politicians in Washington are pushing—their agenda?” I said. “Once we lost the Evil Empire as an enemy, they needed a replacement, some bogeyman to keep the public in fear and get out the vote. Crime, prisoners, prisons—it’s a natural. ‘Let’s pick on them. They can’t vote. Nobody gives a shit about them.’ To get elected, to get re-elected, they were in a frenzy to see who could pass the toughest laws. ‘Three strikes, you’re out,’ and all that crap. The media picks up on this. The media covers it.”

“No, I think the media created this monster because they made a lot of money selling crime shows during the ‘70s and ‘80s. It’s about money. They created the concept of the bad guy and they terrorized the public with it. The local news is now taking over. Everywhere I go, the local news is tracking a crime around the clock. The average guy stays at home, the passive consumer watches TV and he doesn’t want to go out to the supermarket, he wants to stay home and watch the bad guys on TV, which is terrifying. He likes it, he wants to see the violence. But he doesn’t want it done to him. Therefore, you have a more passive and consumerist society. Ultimately, they don’t want you to leave your house. You can shop on Barry Diller’s Home Shopping Network. You can call everything in. You can give them your credit card number for the undertaker. You keep society at bay—it’s a repressed society and it’s a fear-ridden society. No one thinks for themselves, they can’t think through the miasma of images of crime and fear and danger.”

“Certainly *Natural Born Killers* has



been criticized for its attack upon the media,” I said. “But I have to tell you, I didn’t see it that way. To me, the movie was really about the culture of violence, the idea that violence begets violence. Ours has always been a violent society. We’re a nation founded upon violence. The murder of the Indian in the movie was for me a metaphor of America destroying its heritage by annihilating our indigenous people. You have Mickey coming in and dropping forty pounds of red meat in the middle of the floor, Rodney Dangerfield groping his daughter. By the way, that sequence in the film, the bizarre, over-the-top, sit-com parody with Rodney as the lecherous old man was absolutely amazing. But what I think the movie’s saying is: Violence begets violence. This is my whole *spiel*. You want to create a class of super-criminals, people who have no feelings? Treat them like animals, and that’s how they will behave. I didn’t see your movie as an indictment of the media so much as an indictment of the culture of violence.”

Stone flashed me his engaging gap-toothed grin. He took out a pen and began scribbling notes. “Where the hell were you when I needed you?” he asked and laughed. “I think you’ve said it better than I have in all my interviews. I wish I’d talked to you before the movie came out. I think you’ve summed it up in a way that I’ve been struggling to say. The film works on a level which is so hard for people to get. It’s a harsh film. It’s a savage film. People say they like it or they don’t like it. I say that it’s irrelevant if you like it or don’t like it—it’s: Did you get it or didn’t you? It’s beyond whether you liked it. Who likes this? You can’t say you like this kind of culture. It’s a crazy culture. It’s a culture gone to hell.”

A few weeks after the interview, I rented *Heaven and Earth* (1993), the third—with *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*—in Stone’s Vietnam trilogy. I wanted to round out his oeuvre, get the full sense of where he’s been and ponder where he might be going. I watched the film alone late at night, then went to bed to dream on it.

Stone contrasts the beauty of pastoral Vietnam, the wisdom of its simple, indomitable people, with suburban America, sweet land of TV and obesity. The film is about karma, soul debt, as Buddhists call it. Ultimate justice. The pain and horror you inflict upon others will come back to you. His films are seditious. I wonder if they will allow *Natural Born Killers* to be shown in prison. It should be required viewing in Washington. The riot sequence is your wake-up call. In the nation’s prisons, Stone’s nightmarish, paranoid vision of America has become reality. **PL**



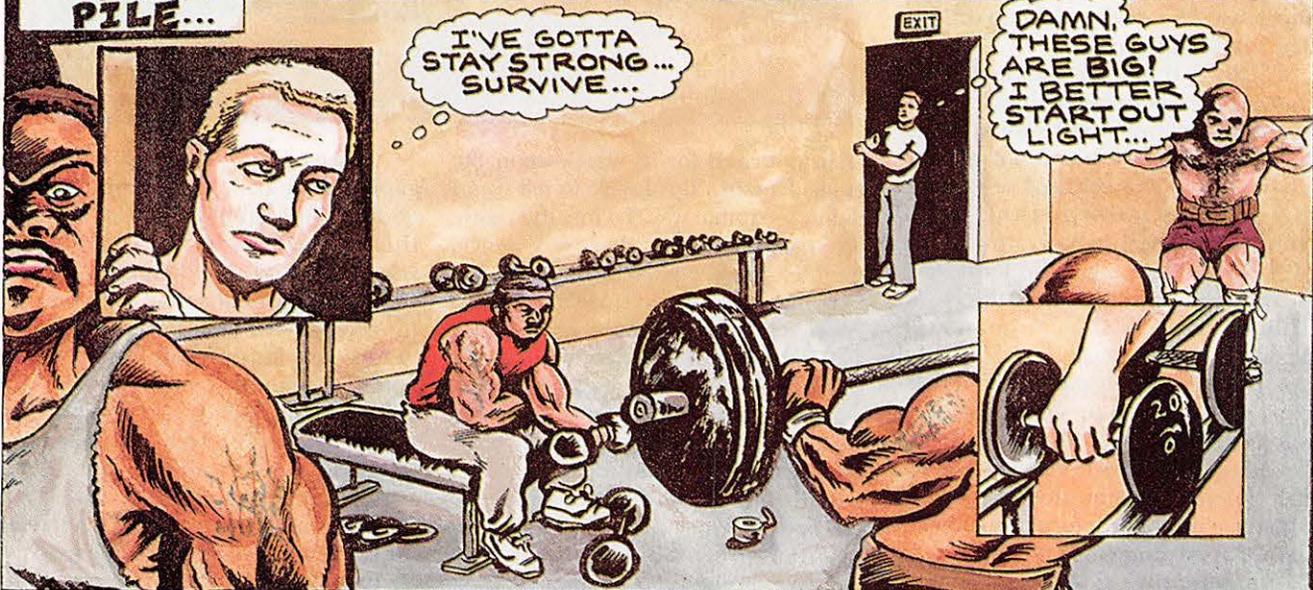
Left and Above: Two stills from the riot scene in *Natural Born Killers*.



IN HIS FIVE-YEAR STINT AS A GOVERNMENT-FUNDED SUPERHERO, CRIMEJACKER HELPED LOCK UP NEARLY 3000 CRIMINALS-- FROM JUVIE CRACK DEALERS TO INTERNATIONAL DRUG SMUGGLERS. HE LED PARADES, KIDS CARRIED HIS IMAGE ON LUNCHBOXES. HE WAS AMERICA'S HERO. THEN HE FELL...
DUSTED FOR CONSPIRACY, CRIMEJACKER WAS SENTENCED TO 20 CALENDARS IN THE STATE JOINT. SOME SAY HE WAS SET UP, AND THAT THE FEDS, WHO WERE FEEDING CRIMEJACKER SUPER-STEROID CHEMICALS, WERE BEGINNING TO DISTRUST THEIR HERO. STRIPPED OF HIS POWERS, NEIL POLITAN, A.K.A. CRIMEJACKER ENTERED STONEKILL MAX PENITENTIARY AS ONE OF THE "COMMON CRIMINAL SCUM" HE ONCE TOOK PRIDE IN PUTTING BEHIND BARS...

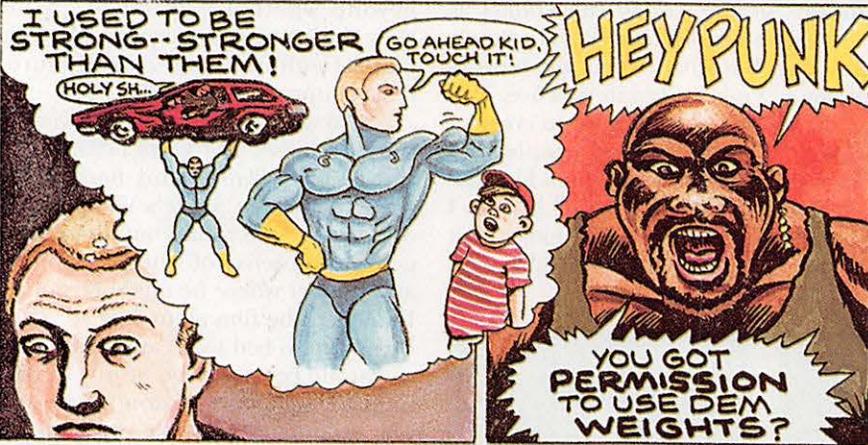


THE IRON PILE...



I'VE GOTTA STAY STRONG... SURVIVE...

DAMN, THESE GUYS ARE BIG! I BETTER START OUT LIGHT...

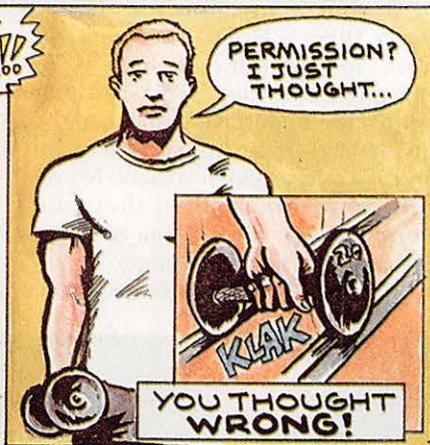


I USED TO BE STRONG-- STRONGER THAN THEM!

GO AHEAD KID, TOUCH IT!

HEY PUNK!!

YOU GOT PERMISSION TO USE DEM WEIGHTS?



PERMISSION? I JUST THOUGHT...



YOU THOUGHT WRONG!



THE FAMOUS CRIMEJACKER. HA!

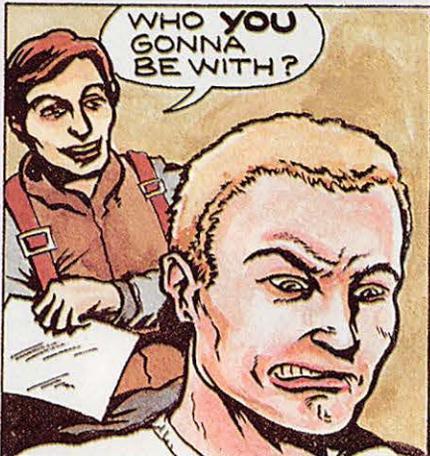
DEPUTY OF SECURITY KOONTZ!

LOOKEE HERE, CONVICT. I'VE GOT SOMETHING THAT'LL INTEREST YOU.

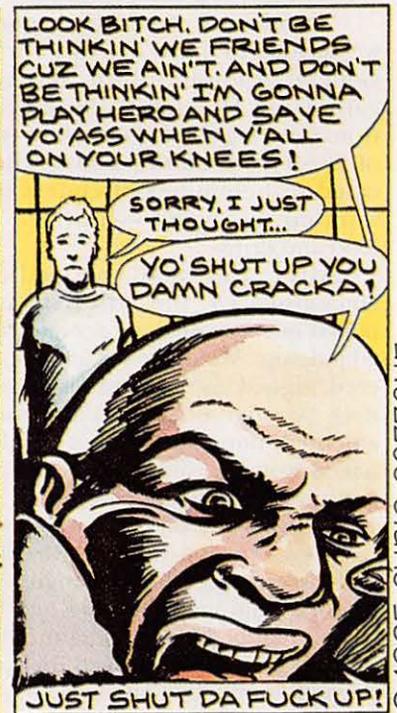


YA KNOW WHO THIS IS? THIS IS THE WARDEN'S DAUGHTER.

AND TONIGHT SHE'S GONNA BE WITH ME.



WHO YOU GONNA BE WITH?



THINK YOU'RE A WEAK-ASS PUNK?

WELL, UH... YEAH.

HELL YEAH, SHO'D HATE TO BE YOU!

WELL... IF YOU... WOULD YOU...

SORRY, I JUST THOUGHT...

YO' SHUT UP YOU DAMN CRACKA!

JUST SHUT DA FUCK UP!

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FIRST ANNUAL ART BEHIND BARS CONTEST



by Karen Cantrell

When *Prison Life* announced its first annual Art Behind Bars Contest last June, we had no idea what to expect. We knew there was a lot of talent behind bars, but the response we got was mind blowing.

By the December 15 deadline, we had accumulated over 1,000 poems, 200 essays, 200 short stories, 125 works of visual art, and 25 drama entries. Enough work to fill an office. Poetry alone grew into four stacks each the size of a small child.

To celebrate the great response, we decided to throw a party at Art In General, a not-for-profit New York gallery, on December 19. Ex-cons from Catering With Conviction—part of Fresh Start, an organization dedicated to helping ex-offenders find work on the outside—provided the food and drink.

After the mail arrived on December 15, the editorial staff pulled out the visual entries and started judging. We discussed and considered, argued and lobbied for the winners. A range of themes and forms emerged: imprisonment, censorship, naked women, wild animals, tattoos, graffiti, and make-do art.

On the day of the party, Steve Lashley, our assistant art director, and I spent three hours hanging the artwork amid more arguing and lobbying. I argued for hanging the show thematically. Steve lobbied for visual strength, something about the room's

axis and hanging the larger, darker works so that they would attract people toward the smaller, lighter drawings. We climbed ladders, measured the walls, the works and each other until we could agree on how the show should look.

Over one hundred people attended the show. We passed out ballots to everyone as they stepped off the elevator and asked them to choose their top three favorites. I feel safe in saying that the best artists won and the honorable mentions will not be left behind. We plan to use many of the entries in upcoming issues.

For weeks before the party, we evaluated the writing submissions. The writing was sorted into "good," "pretty good" and "reject" piles.

Authors of the rejected pieces had their work returned (if they included a SASE.) Authors of the "pretty good" received a letter of encouragement from the editors.

We then scaled the "good" down to our first, second and third place winners with several honorable mentions. Like the visual entries, we plan to spread out the good works through several issues.

If you already have ideas for next year's contest, a word to the wise for visual entries: Don't worry about whether or not your materials are top grade. Lunch sack art, envelope art, handkerchief art, recycling whatever you can get your hands on is a time-honored prison tradition. One of our surprises was the dearth of three

dimensional works. Except for a pair of illustrated Ray Bans, there were no carved bars of soap, box collections, popsickle stick sculptures, or tapestries woven from unraveled socks. Did you keep these things for yourselves?

For the poets, we understand where you're coming from. Love, mothers, lovers, time, prison, dreams and prayers were the most common themes. Dozens of poems had "love" in the title: "Loving A Convict," "Unseen Love," "Love Is," "Love Is Like," "Recipe for Love," "Song of Love," even "Tasty Love." "Time" was the second favorite title, alone or "Locked in Time," "Prison of Time," and others. Titles like with "Prison" and "Prisoner" competed with "My Small Dark Cell," "White Walls," "Prison Walls," "Locked In A Box," etc.

Fiction entries were pretty diverse, although we had to draw the line at the racist, paranoid and otherwise unbelievable entries. But don't think we're pansies. We like a little drugs and sex and rock'n'roll to spice up the stories as necessary and we appreciate upbeat, coping slices of prison life.

Nonfiction writers naturally focused on problems with the system and rehabilitation.

A big thanks to all of you for making *Prison Life's* first Art Behind Bars Contest such a great success!



Paul e. McCoy 92

FICTION

First Place

Chester Cornman
Missouri East Correctional
"The Shot"*

Second Place

Benton Murray
F.S. Correctional, GA
"Lenny's Catch"*

Third Place (tie)

David-Michael Harding,
Clinton Correctional, NY
"The Cats of Savone"

C.W. Pyle

CA State Prison, Represa
"Surrendering of Spirits"

HONORABLE MENTIONS

J.C. Amberchele
Canon City, CO
"Bedbugger"

Randall Cole
Tiptonville, TN
"A Learning Experience"

Alex Friedman
CCA/SCCC, Clifton, TN
"The Information Man"

Sam McBride
CMF, Vacaville, CA
"Frog's Song"

Joseph Raymond Pulliam
CA State Prison, Represa, CA
"Weekend 'Jass' Ensemble"

Jackson Stahlkuppe
Dooly Correctional, GA
"Please Don't Squeeze the
Trigger, Charmaine"

DRAMA

First Place

Precious Bedell
Bedford Hills Correctional, NY
"Pieces"

Second Place
Patrick Nolan
CA State Prison, Represa
"Inside Reasoning"

Third Place

Derrick Corley
Shawangunk Correctional, NY
"Disciplinary Hearing"

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Jesse Campos
CA State Prison, Crescent City,
"And Justice For All"

Lance E. Fleming
New Folsom Prison, CA
"The Tao of Darkness"

David Wood
Baker Correctional, FL
"Chowhall Blues"

POETRY

First Place

Ismael G. Santillanes
Northern NV Correctional
"The Visit"*

Second Place

Pam Golinveaux
ICIW, IN
"Underground Clouds"

Third Place

Jorge Antonio Renaud
Robertson Unit, TX
"This Time, This Time"

HONORABLE MENTIONS

James Griffin
Atascadero State Prison, CA
"Scream"

Jackson Stahlkuppe
Dooly Correctional, GA
"Dear Eve"

NON FICTION

First Place

Gregory J. McMaster
MCF, Stillwater, MN
"The Prison Toilet"*

Second Place (tie)

Nathaniel Hardy
Orient Correctional, OH
"The Making of a Criminal"

Jorge Antonio Renaud,
Robertson, TX
"Poets in Prison"

Third Place

Greg Waleski
Arizona State Prison
"Honor is Everything"

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Marc "Baruti" Bell
Dixon Prison, IL
"Cold, but True"

E. Todd Evanoff
Central Utah Correctional
"Down But Not Out!"

Lance E. Fleming
New Folsom Prison, CA
"Yoga and Me"

Daniel L. Gorton
New Hampshire State Prison
"A New Hysteria?"

Patrick Middleton, Ph.D.
State Correctional, PA
"The Autobiography of an
American Criminal"

Shep
WA State Pen, Walla Walla
"A Pretense of Poverty's
Defense"

John Kline Towner, III
Huntsville, TX
"Not Less than Life"

Charles Young
USP Terre Haute, IN
"Is the Crime Worth the Time?"

ART BEHIND BARS NON FICTION 1ST PLACE

The Prison Toilet

by Gregory J. McMaster
MCE, Stillwater, MN

Most people don't give a second thought to prisons unless, of course, they are in one, have a friend or family member serving time, or work in the growth business known as the incarceration of America. Even those of us who break our daily bread and wrestle our sleepless nights away within these cages give little thought to the subject of this story: the prison toilet.

Depending on how many different prisons and jails a man has seen, he may have come across a wide variety of toilets. There are the standard porcelain toilets, but these are often round instead of oval and are built far sturdier than the average household model. Stainless steel toilets are the most common because, unlike the porcelain models, they cannot be broken into pieces and can be bolted and fastened down more securely.

Stainless steel models include the toilet-sink combination unit similar to that which is commonly found in the washroom of a chartered bus. In some cases a porcelain or stainless steel toilet is blocked in by cement. A form is made around the toilet and the cement is poured, leaving nothing visible other than the very top of the toilet and the actual toilet bowl.

If a man is unfortunate enough to have been in a padded cell, strip cell or some other variation of an isolation cell, he may have come across the ever popular pipe, which is nothing more than a hole in the floor about four to six inches in diameter. Good luck using that. For those men who have been in a riot or lived in a facility during the aftermath of a riot, they have probably used the plastic three-gallon potty bucket, which is similar to what families take on camping trips except there's no place to dump it.

Typically, water reservoir tanks are not built on the back of the toilets, and other than the temporary potty bucket, none of them will have toilet seat lids or covers. At least prisoners can't be accused of not lifting up or putting down the seat.

The prison toilet serves a wide variety of uses other than for the obvious bodily functions. Some uses will shock the public's senses; others will catch even the most hardened convicts by surprise.

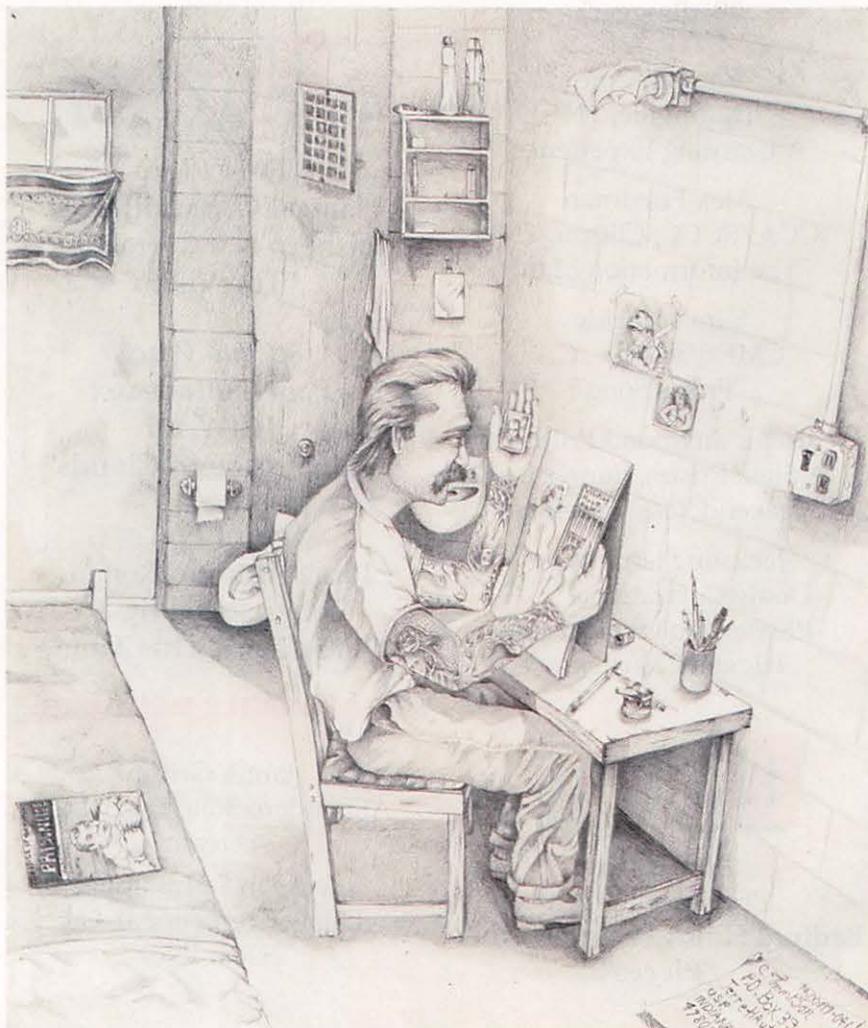
Although it's an enormous waste of water, most prisoners use their toilets as a trash can for unwanted food, torn-up letters, candy wrappers, tissue paper, cigarette butts, etc. If something fits or can be made to fit, it usually ends up getting flushed.

The prison toilet is almost always the only chair in a man's cell (other than his bed) and is often used as

such by him or a visiting guest. Many prisoners prefer sitting on their toilets while handling contraband in case there's a surprise visit from a guard. If need be, they can instantly flush the items in question. In most cases, the guard is going to look the other way simply because you are on the toilet. The visual effect of having your pants down around your ankles always helps.

Many men feel the toilet is the most comfortable reading spot in their cell, and more than a few have used it as a masturbation seat while looking at some girlie magazine. A

"Untitled," by C. Thompson from U.S.P. Terre Haute, IN.



game board, such as for chess, or any suitable flat surface can turn a toilet into an all-around work bench. It's a stepping stool to the higher recesses of a cell and a workout device for those who are athletically inclined.

Many prison cells have no mirrors or reflective surfaces in them. Intentional or not, and depending on how many hours a day are spent confined to the cell, a man could begin to experience sensory deprivation. Not seeing trees, animals or automobiles is one thing, but never seeing yourself is another. The man in solitary confinement quickly discovers that he can see himself reflected in his toilet water. Just as a child peers into a still pond, a desolate prisoner can look into the toilet bowl and identify with himself again.

For reasons unknown to me, prisoners spit with an abnormal frequency. While pacing back and forth in a small cage, the toilet makes a perfect spittoon.

Since our ancestors lived in caves, man has always found creative uses for fire. Prisoners are no different. The rim of the stainless steel bowl makes an excellent fireplace with all of the remnants being flushed at the end. Assisting in the fireplace concept is the fact that most cells come equipped with a built-in air vent on the wall behind the toilet or in the ceiling above it.

The toilet can also be used as a refrigerator or ice chest. On a hot, sweltering day, fresh toilet water can be quite a bit cooler than the outside air. A carton of milk or a bottle of soda can be easily chilled. Some prisons have ice machines in the cell blocks, usually paid for by the prisoners themselves. A homemade lid of almost any kind turns a toilet into a perfect ice chest.

Whether it's long-term segregation, isolation or a general prison lock-down, there comes the time when most prisoners find themselves confined to their cells for days and even weeks at a time. These in-cell confinement periods are usually accompanied by a lack of clothing exchanges or laundry service. Yes, sir, ladies and gentlemen, this is where the toilet bowl becomes a washing machine. Use a little shampoo for soap, and socks and underwear can be scrubbed up real nice.

If a man can get hold of some inks or dyes, he can use the toilet bowl as a soaking tub to change the color of his clothes. The same principle also applies for bleaching clothes and pre-soaking.

Sitting back on the bed with some crumpled up balls of paper, the toilet suddenly becomes a basketball hoop. "He shoots and he scores!" At times the prison toilet becomes the all-purpose recreation center.

So far, the lighter side of the prison toilet and its multiple uses has been discussed. Now it's time to discuss the darker side. Prisons always have a darker side, and so do their toilets.

During a prison riot, a toilet can literally save a man's life. Riots mean fire and prison fires mean toxic smoke. There are also the multitude of gasses that are used to quell the riot. By itself, either the smoke or the gas can make breathing difficult. Together, the two can form a deadly combination. Little known to most prisoners is the fact that every time a toilet is flushed, fresh air comes into the bowl. By covering your head with a blanket or towel and placing your

"The man in solitary confinement quickly discovers that he can see himself reflected in his toilet water."

head in the toilet bowl, you can receive a blast of fresh air every time you flush.

Most people wouldn't consider a toilet to be a telephone, but that's exactly what prisoners use them for in cases of emergency or when other forms of communication are thwarted. Plumbing pipes are basically empty except for when a toilet has been flushed. The only standing water in the system is in the toilet bowl. Most of this water can be scooped out with a bowl or cup. Naturally, both parties who wish to communicate must remove the water from their bowls. Once this has been accomplished, a direct line exists through the pipes and voices come through with amazing clarity.

If using the toilet as a telephone is a bit strange, then "going fishing" is totally bizarre. Depending on how

isolated a man is and what his needs are, his toilet bowl and the connecting plumbing can be his lifeline. Whatever can fit through the pipes can be passed through the pipes with surprising ease.

As commonly portrayed in prison movies, the curve in the pipe of the toilet bowl is frequently used as a hiding spot for contraband.

If a man uses his toilet as a communication and transportation highway, you can bet that he keeps it not only clean, but in most cases immaculate. The rest of his cell might be a shambles, but a man's toilet can literally shine. Upon moving into a new cell, he will thoroughly scrub it before using it for even basic bodily functions. Depending on the prisoner, his toilet may be cleaner than those found in the finest hotels or in the homes of the most fastidious housewives.

A man can be very protective and possessive of his toilet. He may be entertaining a visitor from the other end of the cellblock who needs to urinate. "Well, that's just too damn bad, and you had better start walking now because you're not using mine," he'll probably say. Some prisoners will actually kill and die for each other, but never once share their toilets.

While visiting another prisoner's cell, a man will give the toilet a visual once-over before using it as a chair. The occupant of the cell may even offer the visitor his bed as a seat while he sits on the toilet. Or, the visitor might just be told to stand. If out visiting and an individual is grossed-out by a dirty toilet, he will suggest that it be cleaned. He may even volunteer to do it himself. Many prisoners discourage visitors in what they consider to be their private domain, thus avoiding confrontations of this nature.

Living in a small cage is one thing. Living in a small cage with a toilet as a constant companion is another. For those prisoners who spend most, if not all, of their days confined to their cells, having a toilet for a roommate creates certain difficulties.

The average prison cell is set up with open faced bars on the front, the bed running down the length of a side wall, with the toilet on the back wall. Due to the narrowness of the cell and the extremely limited floor space, the toilet is usually within twelve inches of the bed, which is about three inches higher than the toilet. Many men choose to sleep with their heads towards the back of the cell. This is done for reasons of privacy, the

reduced noise at the rear of a cell, and feelings of safety. Unfortunately, sleeping in this position results in sleeping right next to the toilet. It's a man's last vision at night before falling off to sleep and the first thing he sees in the morning. It's as if every single morning he is waking up from the worst drunk of his life with his head next to the toilet bowl.

When eating in his cell, a prisoner is forced to either use the toilet as his seat while he eats, or he can sit on his bed with the toilet in plain view as he enjoys his cuisine. There's no way

around it. With every single meal, the toilet reminds him that he is in prison.

Prison toilets offer no privacy whatsoever. While sitting on the toilet, a man is in clear view of anyone walking by his cell. This most impersonal intrusion takes some getting used to, especially when female guards work in the area. It is amazing how a basic bodily function and the use of a toilet can promote intense feelings of rage, humiliation and indignation. The prison toilet becomes an unexpected challenge to a man's character and sense of decency.

Even if no one sees, more than a few people know when a man is using his toilet. No sound goes unheard. The small cells serve as echo chambers and carry the noises of urination and defecation to all. When the toilet is flushed, damn near half the cell block will hear it. Due to the high water pressure and subsequent level of noise, there is an unwritten rule among inmates in many prisons: no flushing after midnight. A bizarre sense of common courtesy that only prison could foster. **PL**



Honorable Mention: "Mama Tried," by John Nilsen, Pelican Bay, CA.

ART BEHIND BARS POETRY 1ST PLACE

The Visit

by Ismael G. Santillanes

*For six hours
we played cards and made
small talk about
the way things
used to be*

*how little Emma
has found a man
she thinks will care
how papa
with his heavy arm*

*wrapped around Henry's neck
had to hold him
while mom called the cops
Henry lost his mind
again in a cloud*

*sin-semilla and PCP
and even though we
tried to focus
on the cards we held
we'd catch a glimpse*

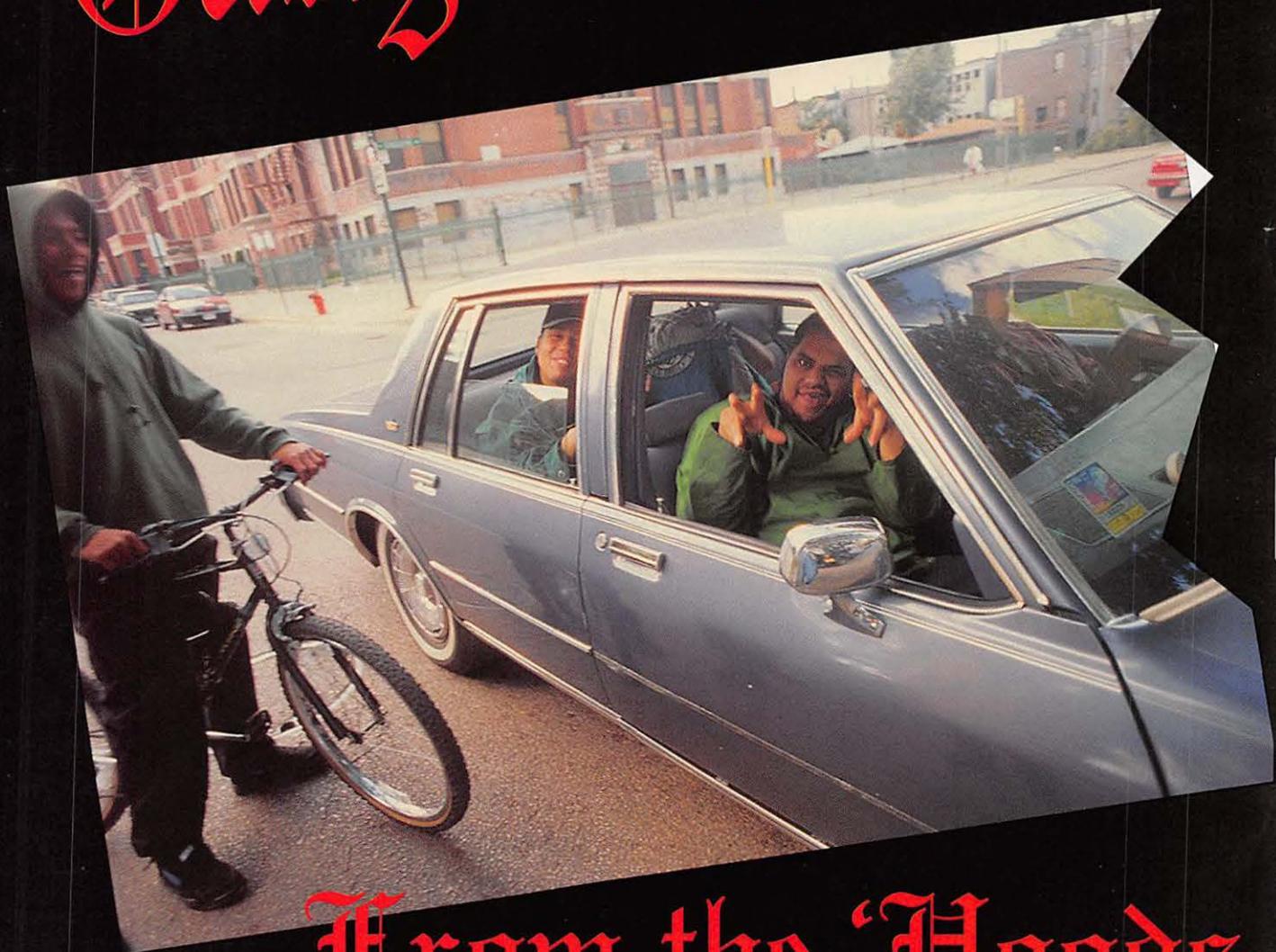
*of each other's eyes
tried to smile
like strangers
so our good-byes
wouldn't hurt too much*

*then some blur
with green pants and a badge
yelled—like slow motion hate
"Time's up!"
and we forgot what*

*we were saying
zombied our way
to the red line
where her world starts
and mine ends*

*and I realized I
was once umbilicalled
to her
my mother
my life blood*

Gangbangers



From the 'Hoods

When I was comin' up in Chicago, gangbanging meant hanging out with the homeboys, spraypainting your set here and there, maybe sellin' weed to make a little money. Yeah, gang violence happened, but most of it was done with fists or bats. Drive-by's, Uzis and 9mm's were unheard of. Even common handguns were rare.

Then crack entered the picture. Within ten years, local turf and prison gangs had organized into national syndicates. In the early '80s, who had ever heard of Crips and Bloods? Most people thought the

Latin Kings were a mariachi band, and the Disciples, a religious sect.

Nowadays, you can't turn on the tube or read the paper without hearing something about gangs. Everything seems to be gang-related: prison riots, rap music, carjackings, drive-bys, graffiti, Sox and Raiders sports gear.

With the war on drugs and the disintegration of urban conditions, we have seen America's gang population explode. With the crackdown on crime, hundreds of street gangs have had their power bases relocated to prisons. Other gangs, started behind

bars, have spilled over to the streets.

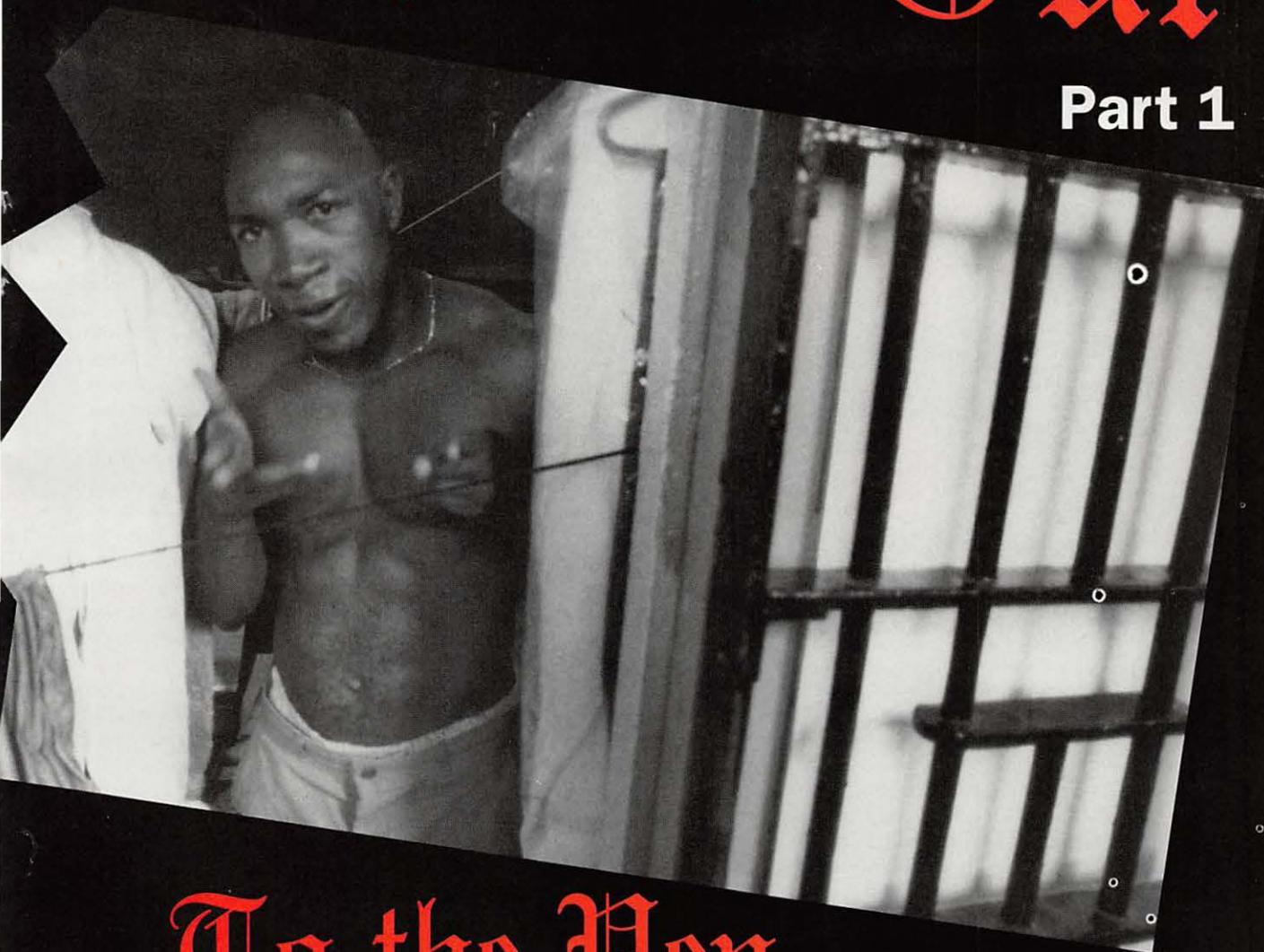
Where the recruiting takes place is inconsequential. The fact of the matter is too many kids are joining gangs, only to get busted and go to prison. And prisons are proving to be nothing but training grounds—graduate schools for gangbangers.

Behind bars, 'bangers from the streets simply carry on their fight. Those who wouldn't otherwise join a gang are forced to do so in order to survive the harsh world of prison. The violence continues.

The media and public have picked up on the violent gang scene.

Speak Out

Part 1



To the Men

The cops, now seeing everything as “gang-related,” have waged war on gangs. The result is more barriers between cops and G’s, and more ‘bangers behind bars.

It is critical that society has a better understanding of gangs.

The purpose of this article is not to analyze gangbangers. We’re not going to bore you with meaningless or hyped-up statistics. You will, however, hear from gangbangers themselves why they join gangs and what they are about.

Prison Life invited gang members to speak to us about what was on their

minds. How do they want to be known? What are they fighting for, or against? Our end of the deal was to publish their stories—uncensored, uncut, unbiased.

The voices in this issue and the next do not necessarily reflect the creeds of their respective gangs. They are more a collection of individual voices expressing their concerns, experiences and observations without the fear of how the public will react.

In this issue, we feature gangs from the Midwest (those originating in Chicago) and gangs from the East Coast. In the next issue, we’ll highlight

Texas and Cali-based organizations.

Forget what the media has already said. Forget what the cops and corrections people say. Sit back and listen to the real deal, straight from those who know from experience.

Chris Cozzone
Executive Editor

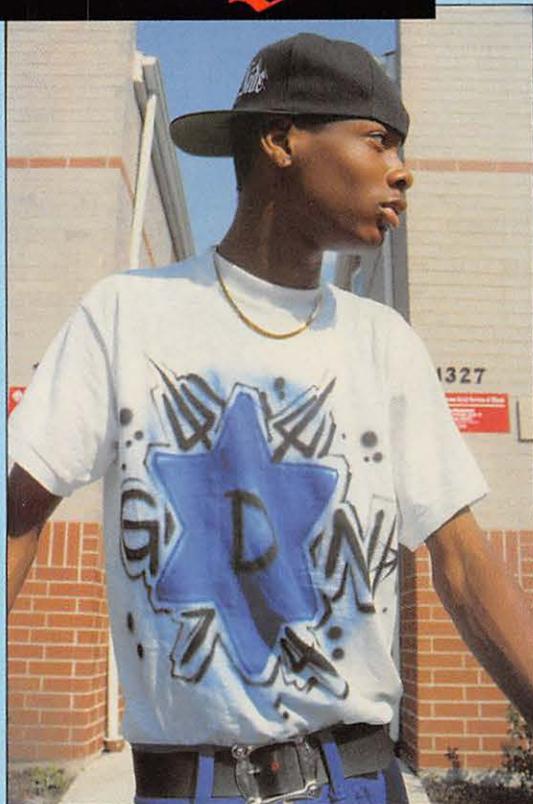
Top left: Vice Lords hanging out in Humboldt Park, Chicago.

Top right: A prisoner at Rahway signs his set.

Photos by Chris Cozzone

IN THE MIND OF A TRUE DISCIPLE

by Laron Douglas, a.k.a. Scoobie G,
Gangster Disciples,
Ohio Correctional Facility



Brotha, I struggle . . .

It's been four years since I was last on the streets in my everyday uniform: a black sweatshirt with a long blue T-shirt up under it, a black leather tweed belt turned to the right with my all-black, hard leg Levis saggin' to perfection, a black Pro-Model cap, also turned deep to the right, a turkish gold rope and a beautiful six-pointed star on my right index finger. This is what it was to be a member of the glorious Gangster Disciple Nation on the streets.

Organizations in the streets are worse than in the joint. There is easy access to artillery and explosives, but being in a nation doesn't make one a criminal. It just shows one how to be more productive. If a brother is not willing to die for any particular cause, then that brother is lost.

I was brought up in this glorious nation to help all my brothers grow and reach their fullest potential. Kickin' it on one of our strips called the Graveyard, this trip is a multi-million dollar industry—nuthin' but drug sales, 24 hours a day. We make all the money we can to uplift our glorious nation, and a lot of members are meeting their quotas.

But don't get me wrong. There

are many incidents in which the opposition tries to infiltrate our business. Even though we ain't practicing that gangbangin' trip no more, we haven't forgotten how to war.

Now we're teaching knowledge and money as the keys to success. I see brothaz all the time comin' to the joint with that 'bangin' mentality. I try to teach them to get wise. Money is what's going on. Being in the joint ain't cool for a real gangsta,

a real gangsta is out on the streets making millions, buying up businesses in the community to help uplift our nation. I try to show these guys reality and make them more aware so that in the future, they won't make the same mistake.

We are also trying to help educate others on all the negativity against gangs—and I speak only about the Gangsta Disciples, 'cause that's what I am and will always be.

The Gangsta Disciple Nation is not a gang but an organization. I've been part of this glorious nation since '84. I'm from Cleveland, Ohio, but in Cleveland, Disciples are the majority. I've lost a lot of brothaz in this nation due to gangbanging. I don't associate with nobody outside of my nation.

Being in this glorious organization has taught me a lot. I grew up without a father and I turned to my Disciple brothaz for love. They knew exactly how to treat a brotha and were always there for me, through thick and thin.

I came to the joint for a gang-related murder I did not do. The police said I was shootin' at a rival gang member (Vice Lords), that I missed him and killed someone else. The police stuck that bullshit on me, but my Disciple brothaz have hired

me a good lawyer and investigator. Things are looking good so hopefully I'll be up and out of prison before you know it.

When I was young, it was cool to 'bang. But it got our nation nowhere. Now I'm older and smarter and more aware. The dope game is a way to get quick money, and the brothaz see this, you know, living in the ghetto. They don't have too much, and selling dope gives them the chance to have the finer things in life. See, some brothaz only know how to hustle, which is good, but the brothaz with the great minds, we need them in school and college so we can own more businesses and become more productive in society. We do appreciate legit professions, but living in the ghetto is hard so we got to start somewhere and move up.

I know that here the love is thick and strong, and all my brothaz is going to keep it real with me no matter what. I got a lot of animosity toward the opposition 'cause they took plenty of my brothaz away. I've took some, too, but the 'bangin' shit got old and I got tired of visiting my brothaz in coffins, throwing a six-point star over the dead body, sheddin' tears, then going back to the Graveyard (our strip) and getting drunk, reminiscing about the brotha. Then a cold rage would come over me, and I'd throw my body up for revenge. We'd all strap up and go into enemy territory and take care of some of them. But now I'm tired of that. Shit, that's why I feel that the preservation of my nation depends on true brothaz who want a change.

Top Left: "I was born a Gangster Disciple," says Jo-Jo of the G/D Nation in Chicago.

Other Page: Gang graffiti in Jo-Jo's 'hood.

G'S GIRL: GET A GRIP

by Michele Flanagan

My fiancé is currently serving a ten- and a six-year sentence at a prison in Illinois. He is heavily involved in a white gang organization and his rank is extremely high. From visiting him and other friends throughout the Illinois prison system, this is what I've noticed.

With all these individuals being Caucasian, it has been necessary for some of these men to do what they call "hook up" with various white organizations. This is because the ratio of black inmates to white is about 50 to 1.

I am not a racist, but I can understand the need and desire for these individuals to become involved for reasons of protection and safety in numbers. I also see they have a strong need for brotherhood and friendship.

My point, however, is this: In the Illinois penal system, most prison officials and guards are not accustomed to dealing with racial tension. The result is chaos.

I am fully aware that gang activity is frowned upon by the administration, but many people do not realize the amount of reverse discrimination occurring within these prisons.

Officers allow the black organizations to run amuck and break many stringent prison rules because they're so fearful of what might happen to them if they don't look the other way. Meanwhile, they harass and try to disband the white organizations, punishing them for any slight infraction. This, to me, is a blatant example of reverse discrimination.

Too many people are unaware of this, and the ones who are don't seem to care, or they're simply too afraid to speak up.

I understand that some people have the attitude that organizations such as these should not exist, but is it fair to try to ban one race's activities and not another's, especially in such a dangerous environment?

Don't these officers and guards realize that they're not only hurting themselves but all of us in the long run? Maybe it's time they started thinking.

Let's just be thankful that the individuals within these organizations are intelligent, strong, and industrious enough to work their way around these pansy-operated administrations.



Wednesday night, 8:30 p.m. Many of us soldiers were out that night—drinking, selling dope, shooting dice on the strip we call the Graveyard, acting as if nobody would dare step to the strongest Disciple Nation in the city.

My brotha Snake pulls up in his triple-green '86 Blazer with deep dish Dayton's, pumpin' to the sounds of "6 Feet Deep." He gets out, chirps his alarm and comes walking across the street wearin' his black sweatshirt, white long T-shirt up under it, black jeans saggin'. When I see my little dude, a smile comes to my face. Many of these nights he's dodged death by the skin of his teeth. I see my little shorty and clinch with him, showing him all the love in the world.

I notice Snake's pockets is kinda big. "G, what up with ya?" I ask him. Snake tells me he's just jacked some fools for ten grand. Says he just got finished hitting the lick. "In yo' truck?" I ask.

"Yeah, fool. I ain't hidin' from nobody. My name is Snake."

I say, "Yeah, cool."

We go in the back where the rest of my brothaz are and we start drinking some more. Then a friend comes up and asks me to sell him a 50. I say, "Cool—three for \$50," so the lame gives me \$40 and tries walking off real fast. I'm already tipsy from drinking Eight-Ball so I run and catch up with this fool. No questions asked, I punch him in his jaw and cold-knock him out, take my dope out his hand and go back to where my brothaz are.

We're all standing around chillin' when all of a sudden, a red Ford station wagon pulls up with the lights off. Automatic gunfire breaks loose. Our strip is a one-way street, and on this particular night a couple of my brothaz, all drunk, had come up the wrong side of the street, so the wagon is now blocked. So me and my dudes run to the bushes, get our gats, and run down the street to where the wagon is trapped.

We light that wagon up! It pulls up on the sidewalk. BAM! It hits a fire hydrant and the fools get out running. We're still firing missiles at they ass when I see flashes: 5-O. We all retreat and hide 'til the police leave. When everything is finished, the police tow the wagon away.

But my brothaz who came up the wrong side of the street have been pulled over by the cops. Too drunk to run, they get caught with beer, some dope, pages, a .357 Magnum and a .38 Snug. They're 16 so their parents have to come and get them.

So Snake comes over to me and says, "Scoobie G, them was the fools I jacked for the \$10,000." I tell him it's all cool. Then one of my shorties comes up and says a G got shot. I say, "Stop lying, fool," but he shows me a hole in his leg and one in his arm. "Damn!" I say.

Now I got to take my shorty to the hospital so I get on Snake's car phone and call some more brothaz 'cause taking my shorty to Mt. Sinai hospital is moving into the heart of the enemy's territory, which they call "The Promised Land."

A half-hour later, Jeeps, Blazers and wagons pull up. I get all my brothaz together and explain to them what's about to go down. I ask if everybody's

Gangs



CLAIMIN' YOUR SET

Spanish Cobras, a gang allied with the Folks from Humboldt Park, Chicago, sign their affiliation and stand by their markings. Top: Princess Die.

Below: Shorty signs her set. The "West Side" on her T-shirt refers to the division of Humboldt Park—roughly the People Alliance on the East Side, the Folk Nation on the West Side. Opposite page: Little, Li'l Beans and J.B. stand by their corner. "We're allied with the Gangster Disciples," says J.B. "But that don't mean we don't shoot at 'em if there's a personal beef. The Kings [Latin Kings—People Nation] are a different story. We're King Killers."

strapped and see plenty of weaponry. I tell them, "Folks, Shorty got popped so we need to rush him to the hospital. Me and seven brothaz will take him, and I want a car parked outside the door. In case word gets to them fools, I want a car circling the hospital ready to cut 'em down before they reach us." Every body jumps in they rides and pulls out.

Our car pulls up in front of the emergency door at the hospital and eight brothaz get out and take Shorty in. We walk up to the lady at the desk and I tell her, "My dude got shot. He needs to see a doctor." While the lady is fumbling with some papers, I look behind me in the waiting area and see six members of our enemy. All my brothaz look around and stare so the fools stand up, they hats all to the left and shit. I tell Shorty to go to the car and tell the rest of the brothaz to come in.

So we all walk up to these fools. I say, "What it be about?"

One fool says, "That's the lame that robbed us!" pointing at Snake. I say, "Hold on, G." One of the fools say, "Don't call me G." Then I see one of them run out the hospital door. My mind thinks fast: We're in the middle of their little territory and he's running to get more muthafuckaz. I tell my brotha Slo-Pace, "Go get that fool. Run after him!"

Then I yell a number and hit the dude in front of me with a nice three piece on the button, knockin' him out. The reception lady starts screaming. Here we are in the middle of the hospital emergency room, rumblin'! Me and Snake are whoopin' this one dude real bad. I pick up a chair and slam it on on his head. I look and see my otha brothaz run in. "It's on, now!" I say.

I hear a "Watch out!" then see a chair flying through the air. I try to move out the way but it strikes me in the

forehead. One of my folks picks up one of them fools and slams him into the candy machine. I see my G, Polo, getting his head beat into the ground so I run over and kick the foe in the back, knockin' him over, then I kick him some more. Polo gets up, takes out a little Boy Scout knife and starts sticking the enemy. The dude is screaming now, "Oh, stop, no!"

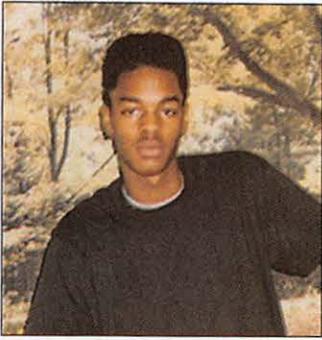
Then I glance up and see security coming. I hear boom boom boom boom, so I hit the floor. I look up and my brotha Slowpace got his .44 Auto out and he's yellin', "Gittout! Them fools is on they way and it's an army of 'em!" So I yell, "Let's pull folks!" and we all run out the hospital, jump into the cars and race back to the Graveyard.

When we get back to our strip, we're all laughing, talking about all the fun we had. We drop Shorty off at his mom's house. Everybody talks for a minute, then pulls out after showing some love. Me and Snake go up to my house and lie on the couches.

I say, "Bro, what made you go into the heart of those fools' territory and rob 'em?"

Snake tells me, "A real Disciple don't bar none. I don't give a fuck. I'm from the Graveyard."

And I say, "You're right, little bro." We fall asleep.



My Family

by Lamont Brown,
a.k.a. L-Dogg, Gangster
Disciples, Green Bay C.F.,
Wisconsin

I can't say when I became a Gangster Disciple because I was born one, and I'll always be one. Most brothers get in an organization for protection, money or just because they want to be down, but I was born one and they are my family.

Being in an organization doesn't make you a bad person. It's not like they make you do things you don't want to do. You have freedom of choice, you just have to make sure

you choose right.

Growing up in the ghetto was all about money and survival. Everyone has guns now, from grandmothers to eight-year-olds. I wasn't a bad kid, but I had to make money and carry a gun for protection. I never started trouble with anyone.

It hurts to see all my brothers locked up. I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy. It's no joke being away from your family and friends. I know the Lord is punishing me for not listening to my mother and grandpa. I didn't mean to kill, but teenagers are going to be teenagers; they're gonna do some stupid stuff. In my case, it was playing with a gun.

I was busted at the age of 16 for a 187. I took someone's life, true enough, but I'm not a cold-blooded killer because I truly regret what I did. It could've been handled in a different way. I got sentenced to life. At first I blamed myself hard. I'd think, "What a friend you are to kill a friend." Then my family made me realize that it was an accident. Now I can go on with my life, never mind what the system says or thinks.

The brother crossed me. I didn't want to do him, but if someone crosses you once, he'll do it again. At the

time, I was going to let him slide, but he tried to hurt me and I took care of my business. Although I've shot a lot of people over gang-related things, this wasn't one of them.

Being a Disciple has helped me learn to accept responsibility for my actions. I feel that I can live with my past because I wasn't that bad. I didn't bang too tough because I was too young. But I did take care of business when it needed taking care of. No one in this organization ever told me to take someone's life, and I don't feel they will.

I have a good family, so that wasn't the problem. But now I have a better family, one I'll do anything for, as if they were my blood. Although I still respect my family to the fullest because they took care of me and brought me up right, my heart was seeking something else. I'm sure you fell in love with a woman before. There's a love in this organization that can't be explained. Like most people can't explain how they fall in love and why, I love this organization and would die for it and kill for it.

I joined the Gangster Disciple nation when I was 13, in Milwaukee, WI. The Disciples are big in

(continued on page 51)





RIDIN' UNDER THE 5-POINTED STAR

by Albert McGee, Vice Lords, Mississippi State Pen, Parchman, MS

We get all the bullshit just because we're in a gang. It doesn't matter what you're in for or how you handle your time behind bars.

Just about everybody in the system knows that the only thing you have to do is tell the police that a gang member has threatened your life and they'll go for it—because of all the bad press gang members get. Here in the MS Department of Corrections, they don't give gang members a chance. If your name is brought up, you're assumed guilty until found otherwise.

It doesn't matter how much good I do. The fact that I'm a known gang member is enough. Forget that I'm going to college here. Forget that I've not had a rules violation report since I came here in '90. They look for the wrong in me, just because I'm a known gang member.

The media doesn't help; every time you turn around, you see something on the set about gang-related this or that. The media plays a big part in what the public thinks about gang members without even giving a person a chance for being human. The media is ignorant and the system is afraid.

If the DOC would let us talk to and handle our own, it would be better in here for the average guy. See, a lot of problems with gang members

in prison is that older guys don't get a chance to talk to the young guys comin' in who are causing the most trouble. But the staff is afraid because they know we just might be able to do what they can't do.

I once shot a rival's mother in both knees just to see how loud she could scream.

I'm 33 years old and I've been an Insane Vice Lord for about 18 years. Like so many, I joined a gang at an early age. Contrary to popular belief, I didn't join because I lacked a family. For me, it was simply a matter of my surroundings. Had I lived about four blocks over, I would've been a Black Gangster Disciple instead of an Insane Vice Lord—which I'm very proud of being. I shall die a Vice Lord, loyal and true.

I've done some rather wild things, some of which I was never arrested for so I won't get too deep there. But I will try to let you see inside my mind.

There are some things, though, that can't be explained, like why I would want to take another's life for something as simple as a color. I remember the first time I killed a

rival gang member. I was 15 or 16 at the time; it was more of an act to prove myself than anything he did to me or any of my brothers. I stole a car and told myself that the first person I saw who's convenient I was gonna kill. After driving around some, there was this guy I saw going to his car. I just pulled up beside him and asked the time.

Then I shot him in the face with a .357 five times—being a Vice Lord I ride under the five-pointed star. After I shot him, I got out of my car and kicked him to make sure he was dead, which he was. Then I started dancing around and laughing, having a good ol' time. That was my first time, but not my last.

Had the guy been with his brothers, I would have killed more of them 'cause killing a rival gang member was on my mind. When I saw him walking with the "flag" sticking out of his back pocket, I figured he may as well be a Gangster Disciple 'cause I shot him down like he was one. After that, I felt as though I could take on all them suckers. I even made a pact to try and kill, or at least just shoot a gangster every few months or sooner if one of them did something, or if we just caught one or two of them off by themselves.

I once shot a rival's mother in both knees just to see how loud she could scream, especially since she thought I was going to kill her for sure.

Guess what I've always wanted to be? A serial killer, so they can make a movie or something about me. I know you're thinking I have no regard for others or myself, that I'm sick, or that I need help. Yes, maybe I do, but sometimes I just want someone to talk to, and someone to listen. Outside, I'm normal; but inside, only a select few really know who I am. I'm sick if you judge me by society's standards, but on the streets I'm just another gangbanger trying to survive the war.

Being in a gang is truly a positive thing, if you look at the loyalty, love and discipline that we have toward each other. The respect I have for other gang members is also deep, but hopefully we can all get together and stop some of the killing.

Top Left: "Murder Town"—another name for this 'hood in Humboldt Park, Chicago where the Gangster Disciples claim rule. Other page: Stateville Correctional Facility in Illinois, which houses the state's most dangerous G's.

My Family

(continued from page 49)

Wisconsin because they've come down from Chicago. When I was growing up, everyone around me was Disciple, including a lot of my uncles and cousins on both of my parents' side. They used to tell their Disciple brothers that I was going to be a true Disciple, and here I am today.

When I said my heart was seeking something, let me clarify that.

There is no regret, only dedication. I'm a real young brother who's down and willing to die for this organization. When your heart is dedicated to something, it's there for life, at least it is for me. I love this nation like I love my mother.

What people and the media fail to realize is that we are not gang-bangers anymore. We are an organization trying to better ourselves through laws and policies set forth by our chairman, Larry Hoover. And those laws and policies are about growth and development. We're about getting an education so we can move on to bigger and better things, like college and getting our own businesses. Then we'll be able to look out for our brothers who are locked up, and our families.

Whenever anything happens with a gun, the media says it's gang-related. But most of the incidents aren't. The white man has organizations and nobody gets sweated. So why do we?

**I love this
organization
and would
die and kill
for it.**

When I got locked up, I truly thought our organization would be strong up here in Green Bay, but it's not. That's because there are so many fake-ass brothers saying they're a part of this nation when they're not. Many brothers get locked up and ride with organizations for protection. These brothers ain't shit. This organization is nothing to play

with and these brothers will learn, sooner or later.

So many brothers are about hate because of the wars on the street. When they get locked up, the hate is still there, so we can't get any structure going because we're too busy fighting each other. Up here, we try not to have any wars, but if we did, it would be against the Vice Lords, Latin Kings and the 2-4's from Milwaukee—or basically, anyone who's not Folks, or who disrespects our organization.

But if we can get all this hate out, we can move on to bettering ourselves, so that when we can get out of prison, we can build a foundation we can all live on without doing 187's on each other.

It's always said that the real recognize the fake. That's true because if you're a Disciple, your G is going to shine! The fake-ass brothers will be dealt with when the time comes. These guys are the ones who make this organization look bad in other people's eyes, and also in the eyes of the Disciples, who are struggling to make this organization abide by the laws and policies given by our honorable chairman.

NATIVE AMERICAN SPEAKS OUT AGAINST GANGS

by Larry Harris, Stateville Correctional, Illinois

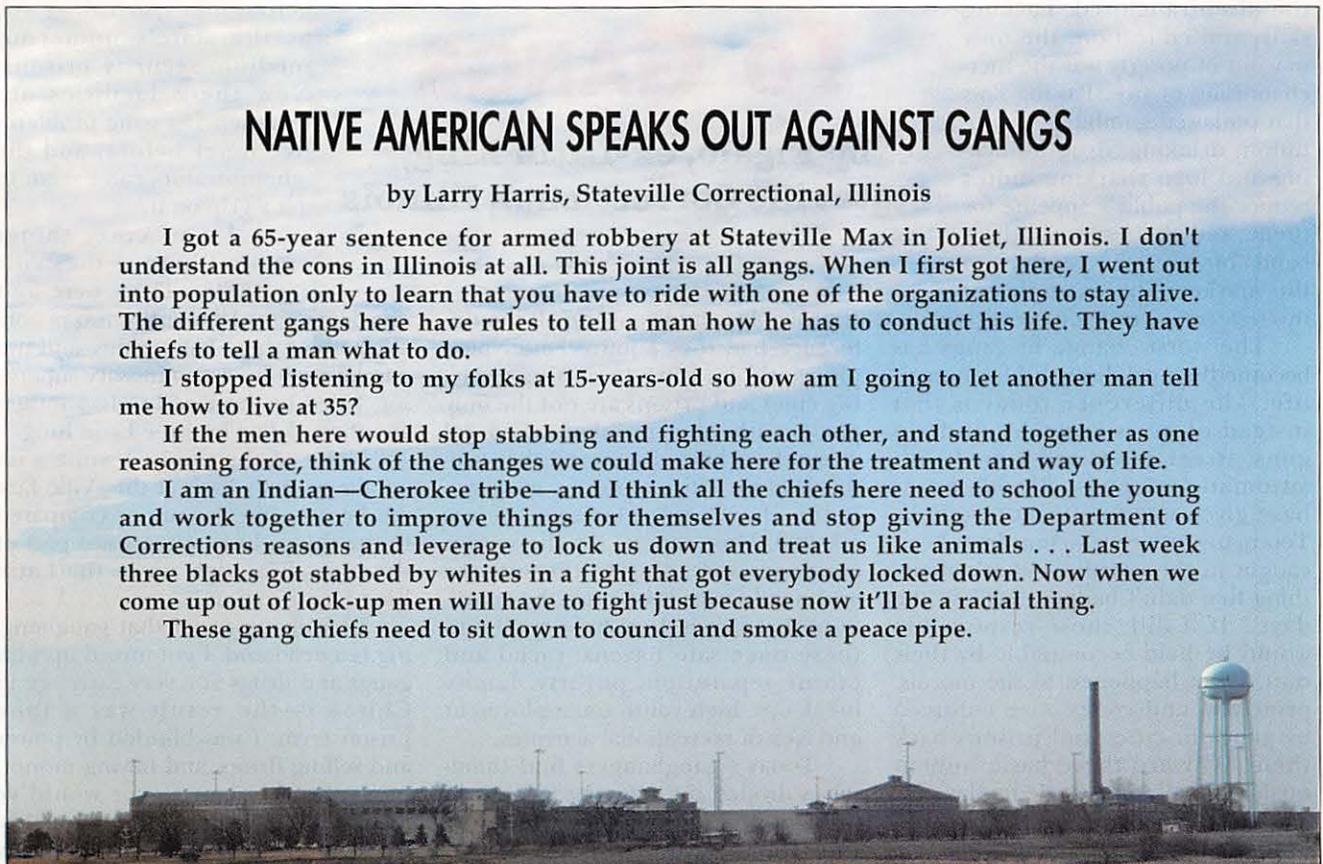
I got a 65-year sentence for armed robbery at Stateville Max in Joliet, Illinois. I don't understand the cons in Illinois at all. This joint is all gangs. When I first got here, I went out into population only to learn that you have to ride with one of the organizations to stay alive. The different gangs here have rules to tell a man how he has to conduct his life. They have chiefs to tell a man what to do.

I stopped listening to my folks at 15-years-old so how am I going to let another man tell me how to live at 35?

If the men here would stop stabbing and fighting each other, and stand together as one reasoning force, think of the changes we could make here for the treatment and way of life.

I am an Indian—Cherokee tribe—and I think all the chiefs here need to school the young and work together to improve things for themselves and stop giving the Department of Corrections reasons and leverage to lock us down and treat us like animals . . . Last week three blacks got stabbed by whites in a fight that got everybody locked down. Now when we come up out of lock-up men will have to fight just because now it'll be a racial thing.

These gang chiefs need to sit down to council and smoke a peace pipe.



Gangs

Anyone who takes a hard look at some of our most celebrated heroes can see what some of them really were: glorified gangsters. Gangsters in American culture have glamorized a social condition as old as humankind itself and made crime into a night passage for urban youth trying to cope in a concrete and glass jungle.

There was a time when gangs were regarded as a rational response to society's "inadequate opportunity structure." That social theory goes down the tubes as the realities of gang violence and economic survival come under public scrutiny.

What went wrong? What mutated the otherwise rational and orderly groups and turned them into unreformable recidivists and sociopaths unfit for anything except the jungle? Was it turf or, as sociologists like to call it, "territorial imperative?"

The transformation of this country from agrarian to urban life accelerated the rise of gangs. City streets became the battleground for the young and the disenfranchised. Lacking skills and education, the only way out of poverty was the merchandising of vice. Passing laws that outlawed gambling, prostitution, drinking, drug trafficking and loan sharking didn't reduce the public's appetite for them, and their survival drew bands of aggressive youths into the market. The examples of this ugly transformation are legion.

The worst change in gangs has become the total disregard for human life. The difference today is that instead of brass knuckles and zip guns, street gangs are armed with automatic weapons. Bloody noses have given way to gunshot wounds. Too many innocent victims have been caught in the crossfire—that's something that didn't happen "back in the days." If it did, those responsible would be held accountable by their own. What happened to the morals, principles and codes once enforced by gangs in cities and prisons back then? Why are these basic human qualities totally disregarded today?

No gangbanger in the '60s could have predicted today's state of affairs.



A SHOUT-OUT TO GANGS

by Figalo, ex-Latin King,
Stateville Correctional, Illinois

It probably would've made all the difference had they known. Fewer people would be lying in coffins today. Big cities and prisons are not the only places with gang problems. Federal researchers have discovered that two-thirds of the cities reporting gang violence have populations below 500,000. Most experts say the reason gangs are spreading to the suburbs and small towns is because the conditions that spawn them have crept into these once safe havens: racial and ethnic separation, poverty, family break-ups, high youth unemployment and lack of recreational activities.

Today's gangbangers find themselves divided into warring factions to wrest control of what many see as the only way to attain the "American

Dream" of material success. Stories of 15-year-olds driving BMW's, Cadillacs and Benzes with trunks full of weapons and pockets stuffed with thousands of dollars are as common as they are true. Teachers are afraid to bar beeper-toting teenagers from classes for fear of reprisals.

The problem with gangs will not go away overnight, if ever. The solution probably won't be realized by disarming gangs, as if that were possible anyway. Parents have to start educating their kids as soon as they are able to understand what all this really means, and kids have to start seeing that there are too many dead kids now and another needless score who will be spending a major part of their lives in prison.

Many of these gang members don't understand the seriousness of their actions until they are caught and sent to prison. By then, it's too late. A lot of these young brothers and sisters are ending up in the adult divisions. In Illinois, that means Stateville, Pontiac and Menard (the most dangerous max systems), as well as the state's numerous medium security prisons. Now these facilities are experiencing gang problems like never before, and the administrators can't seem to get a grip on it.

A lot of crazy things jump off here at the 'Ville (Stateville). There were four murders in just 18 months: two prisoners, both of them Latin Kings, and two employees: one a commissary supervisor, killed by the Vice Lords; another, killed by three Latin Kings.

None of the things I witness on an almost daily basis at the 'Ville faze me because they're minor compared to the things I saw when I was part of the crazy life, high up in the Latin King Organization.

I am living proof that gangbanging is a dead end. I got mixed up with gangs and drugs at a very early age in Chitown—the result was a long prison term. I was blinded by power and selling drugs, and having money, more money than I ever would've made flipping burgers at McDonalds. But neither the power nor the money



was worth my losing half my life inside the joint. Not only am I losing a good part of my life here, I also lost a good woman and have to endure the agony of watching my son grow up without me.

While I was behind the wall, I decided it was time for me to retire and leave all the bullshit behind. So I dropped my flag and left my gang status for good.

The first and foremost law of the Almighty Latin King Organization Nation (ALKON) is "once a King, always a King; you come in alive and the only way you leave is dead." However, that law doesn't apply to me because I never left. I simply resigned and retired. I also stopped crews from being able to continue slanging narcotics in my 'hood as well as in the other five cities me and my crew helped the organization set up shop: Milwaukee, Spanish Harlem, New York, Miami, Houston, Minneapolis.

Believe it, because there are Latin Kings everywhere. There are even

Latin Kings in Connecticut. The two brothers who call it out that way are Nelson Millet and Pedro Milan. These guys are renegades and considered outcasts by the ALKON because they started that chapter out there without proper blessing (a big no-no). There has been a nationwide hit out on them ever since. Lord Gino sent a crew of gunners at their region-crowns or chapter jefes as we call them and they shot up the place, but were caught by the 5-0 and are now doing time in their system. Man I'd hate to be in those brothers' shoes!

The reason I resigned from the Latin Kings is because Lord Gino, who wasn't doing anything but sitting on his throne getting fat off me and the rest of the organization, made some very bogus moves that made me realize our "cause," no longer had a cause.

Lord Gino got upset when I walked away from the Kings and decided to put a half-million dollar price tag on my head. And while I know that half a mil is ass-wipe money to Lord Gino, (I know because we used to generate that kind of money on an almost weekly basis slanging narcotics), I'm not in the least concerned about him because he knows that on the bricks, it's a much different ball game. And whoever he sends, he'll have to send them right or he'll be reading about them in the obits and sending their families flowers, forever! Word!

For now, I ain't gonna lose sleep over it because I have much more important things to do with my life and one of them isn't spending the rest of it inside prison, or dead.

When I hung up my colors and decided it was time to move on in a much different direction, I took a totally different outlook on life because I finally realized there was

so much more to loving than being a shot-caller and a drug trafficker.

I will always carry the love I once had for the organization in my heart, an organization that I devoted almost 20 years of my life to, but I will never return to it. There is no turning back, not now or ever. I am 31 years old, I have a beautiful wife and a wonderful, gifted and talented son who is now 12.

What do I want to do with my life? What is my purpose? We all have a reason and direction for living. That I am headed toward something makes me want to plan for the future. This is what today's gang members lack.

I'm no longer involved with gangs because I know I have a stronger destiny. Gangbanging doesn't contribute to the important and more worthwhile things I want to accomplish before I grow old.

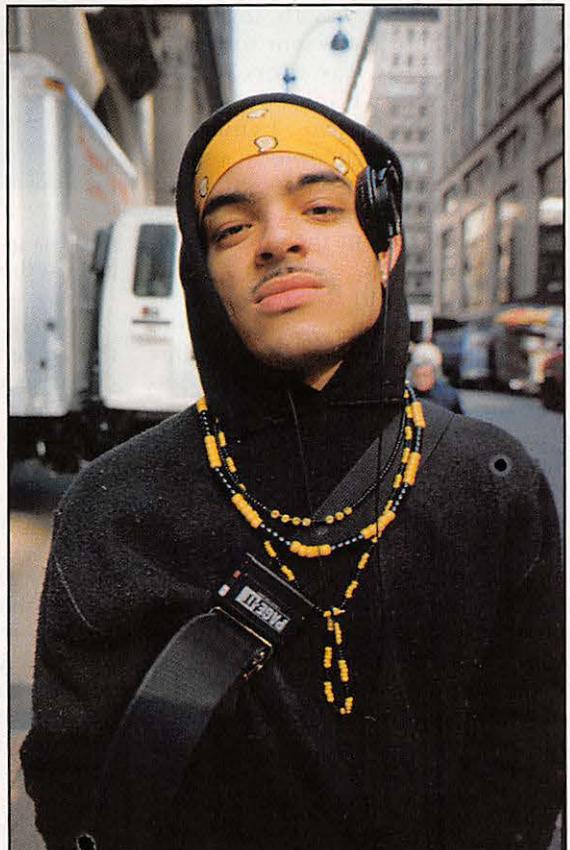
Page 52: Young recruits signing their set.
Top: Turf markings in Humboldt Park, Chicago. Below: King Pit, a Latin King in New York, recruited at Rikers Island.

Chitown

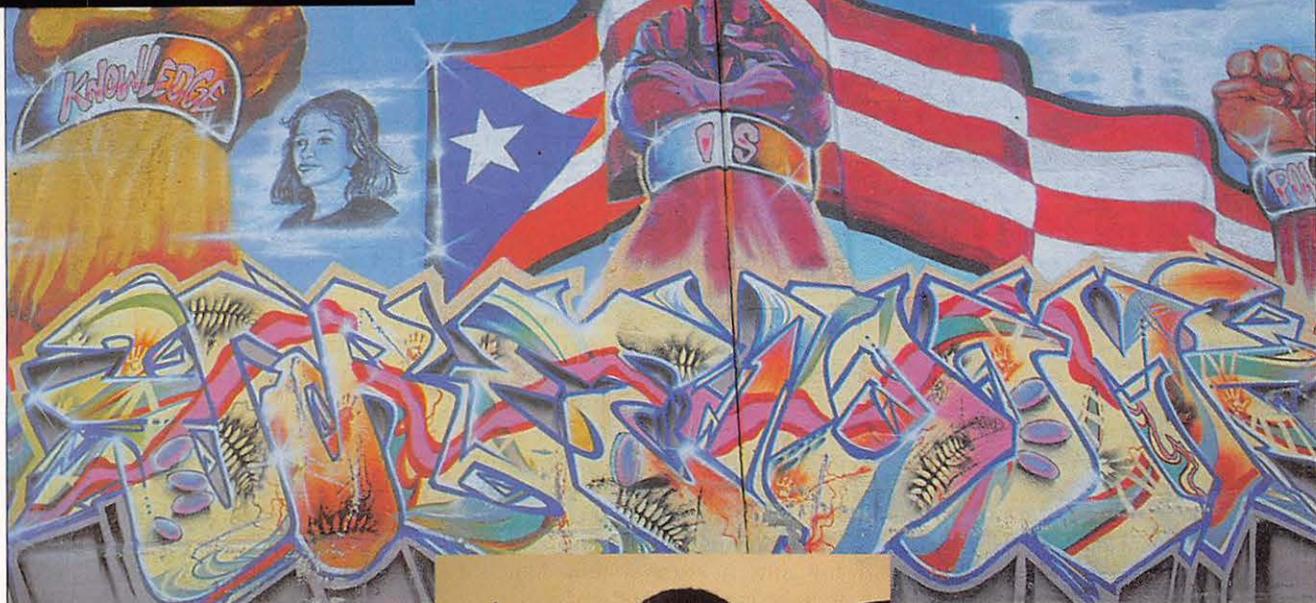
There are more than 40 major street gangs active in Chicago—and most of them have power bases inside Illinois prisons. The strongest of these are the Latin Kings, Black Gangster Disciples, Latin Disciples and Vice Lords.

In the mid-'80s, the Black Gangster Disciple Nation and the Latin Disciples formed the Folk alliance. Soon after, the Latin Kings and Vice Lords started their own alliance—People.

Nowadays, most gangs in Chicago are either People or Folks. This super alliance has allowed the stronger factions to branch out into other states. Thus, we have Disciples, Kings and Vice Lords throughout the entire Midwest, stretching coast-to-coast. The Latin Kings are known throughout the New York area, too.



Gangs



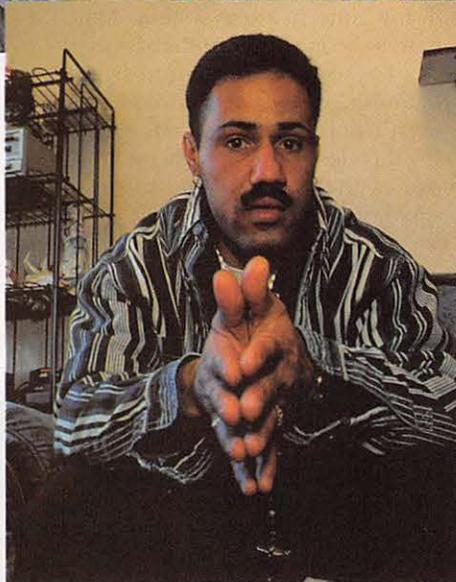
WE ARE NOT A GANG

by José Colon,
Ñeta Association, New
York City

I have been a Ñeta for 14 years. I joined when I was 16, in Puerto Rico, where I was sent to prison for murder. It was there that I became a Ñeta. This was during the war against the Insectos. I ended up killing five more people in prison during that war. At one point, I was facing 103 years in prison. I ended up with a pardon from the government despite my crimes.

Now the fight in Puerto Rican prisons is against the system. For the first four years we waged war against the Insectos—the weak, the treacherous, the snitches who ruled all Puerto Rican prisons. During the war, the system had stayed out of it only because inmates were killing each other. But once the war was over, and after the Ñetas started targeting the administration, it was a different story. By then, our organization had grown too strong to fight and the system had to comply with our demands. Since 1981, the conditions of prisons in Puerto Rico have been much better.

The fight has moved here to New York because so many Puerto Ricans have come here and because the



José Colon of the Ñeta Association.

need is great to fight for our rights against the system.

There is a terrible corruption in the corrections system, especially in the areas of food, health and education. This corruption is throughout all New York, especially Rikers Island, where I have just left.

This corruption has gotten so bad that in December, together with the Latin Kings, Five-Percenter and other organizations, we organized a hunger and work strike.

We were not trying to riot. We were trying to send a message to the system that time is short and we're not standing for their corruption. Now they know we're serious. If anything, the strike at Rikers Island gave out some credit.

The strike was a protest to the \$23

million the city of New York cut from programs and drug rehabilitation in city jails. Since 90% of our people going into prison are doing so for drug-related offenses, we felt that cutting out drug rehabilitation programs was wrong. It called for action.

One of the purposes of our organization is that when a member leaves prison, he should never come back. By cutting training and rehab programs, they make the return to prison inevitable. An offender needs some way to contribute to society. That's why we need training and education in our prisons. Who's gonna hire ex-cons?

Taxpayers should demand the correction system be stronger in the areas of education and training. As Ñetas, our mission is to demand change in the current oppressive regime.

That's why 24 hours before the strike, the commissioner, Anthony Schembri, sent a message to me that I was going to be transferred—me and all the Neta leaders from the other houses. A meeting was arranged with the director of Internal Affairs.

They knew what was happening. We had sent them letters as a warning. They knew what houses the letters were coming from (6 Building) but we didn't let them know exactly who sent them. Not knowing I was the president of Ñetas at Rikers, and figuring me for a go-between, they sent word to me that they wanted to talk to the leaders.

I said no, until they gave me the guarantee that the leaders wouldn't be

moved, brought up on bogus charges or become victims of abuse. Then I told them I was the President and a meeting was set up.

The commissioner talked to me, and told me he knew there were problems with the corrections system. He said he knew there was corruption, misuse of funds and misdealings with discipline, but the problems were two different ones—state and local—and there was very little he could do about it.

So we went ahead with the strike, and it lasted seven days.

They didn't move me because they saw what was going on. The corrections people tried to, but the commissioner had given me his word that I wouldn't be a victim of persecution or physical violence or abuse by the system. I had told them that violence would occur only if they didn't keep their word.

Even though most of the drug programs have been cut, the food at Rikers is better now, marginally anyway. And the C.O.'s have cut down on the physical abuse.

Although I am out now, I have no problems going back in if my brothers need me there. I'll just hop a turnstile and I'll be back in Rikers before you know it. In fact, before the hunger strike, I was supposed to be released, but I committed violations in order to stay through the strike.

To me, what's worth all the pain of being a leader is very often just a "thank you." I'll do whatever it takes for my brothers, for my

people, even though the system wants to pack me up, move me around. They consider me a dangerous person, but that is just part of being a leader, putting up with the treatment.

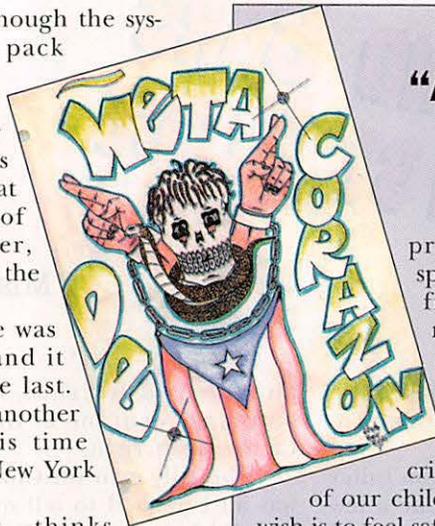
That strike was not the first and it will not be the last. There will be another one soon, this time including all New York state prisons.

Everybody thinks we're a gang, but we're not. They think we're criminals, that we kill, do drive-bys, sell drugs—we do not.

The Ñetas do not want power, we just want to be recognized and respected. You have to respect my food, my health, my family.

We do not recruit. People come to us. We're not a territory-based organization. What we fight for are human rights, not turf. We fight for respect and better treatment, not for power. We have a mission and we follow it.

There are Ñetas in the streets, though, who are corrupt and go against our creeds. Since I left Rikers, my duty is now to deal with these few Ñetas who corrupt our whole association. These people have no business calling themselves Ñetas. They will be dealt with.



FROM THE "ASSOCIATION ÑETA" HANDBOOK:

We are determined to progress, advance and spread. We have no time fighting for unworthy reasons or committing crimes of any sort. Association Neta has a desire to live better in society. Too much crime takes over the minds

of our children. Our most wanted wish is to feel safe in our neighborhoods during the day and be able to walk our sidewalks at night. We don't have the power yet to put a stop to this problem, but with help, we can and will put a stop to it.

We are a group of Hispanic adults and young adults getting organized to help others help themselves. We are not a gang or a crew. We are not crimeseekers. We are an association trying to get somewhere in life by influencing each other to get an education that will eventually turn us into assets for our association.

We are very peaceful—but don't underestimate us. We will solve any problems that others may have with us at all costs. We will help and look after our family in time of need. At first we will try to talk our differences out, but if that doesn't work, we will use all force necessary to solve our problems, without pity or regret.

History:

Around 1979, in a prison called Presidio in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, a man by the name of Carlos Torrez Irriate, a.k.a. La Sombra (the Shadow), got tired of the abuse that occurred in the prison system—which was inmate to inmate and administration to inmate. He decided it was time for a change and did something about it.

Step by step, prison to prison, the Ñeta Association was formed. An all-out war against the Insectos (inmate oppressors) was formed. Carlos and his Neta warriors spilled their own blood, fighting for the peace, harmony and respect that we have in our Puerto Rican jails today.

In 1981, Carlos was killed by a shot in the head, but his Neta warriors continued fighting. Now, that fight has carried over into the prisons of the United States because there are a lot of inmate's rights violations going on there, too . . .

LEADERS: CURB YOUR OWN

The current trend in Gangland is to call your gang an organization. "We're not about gangbanging," you'll hear from more than one member, "we're about progress, about brotherhood . . ."

Yet the violence continues.

A lot of "shot callers" might be pissed with some of the negativity expressed in more than one of these articles, especially if it involves their nation. Sorry bros, but it's time to do a reality check. You can push your organizational procedures and teach your brotherhood creed but locs are gonna be locs.

Maybe these articles will open some eyes and push gang leaders and organization presidents to get a handle on their own. It's time for the brothers with the juice to realize that unless the violence is curbed, you're never going to get the respect you're demanding.

Unless you get it together—deliver and enforce the message that the way of the 187 only lends juice to the 5-0—you're never going to amount to anything but fodder for the nation's big prison business.

Peace.

Prison Life

ART BEHIND BARS FICTION 1st PLACE

The Shot

by Chester Cornman,
Missouri Eastern Correctional

"Attention on the yard. Inmate Cornman, number 44526, report to Control Center."

Damn! I thought, Why can't they just leave me alone? I've done a few months on a forty-year sentence, and these assholes want to call me to the Control Center. No doubt for some stupid reason like to see my caseworker for a job assignment, a cell move, or some totally bizarre reason I couldn't even think of. Damn! I have years to do, and they want me right now.

Obviously, they had no idea that my hustling partner, Charlie, and I had hustled all morning to get the dollars for a shot of dope. Then it had taken another two hours of waiting and hunting for the dope-man before we realized he was on a visit. After all that, there we stood, waiting for him to come back with our

already paid for shot, and these buttheads want me at the Control Center. Yeah, right.

The silly grin on Charlie's face was all I needed to tell me that if I left, I'd lose out. Charlie and dope would be gone before I even got to the Control Center—much less there and back.

"Go on, Dog, it might be important," he said with that sideways grin of his. "I'll cop and meet ya back in A-Hall."

Yeah, sure. When pigs fly! I thought. I'd been down that road before. I could hear the story already. "Damn, Dog, the cops rushed me just when I was getting everything ready. I had to flush it all."

"Nah," I said, "I'll just hang around. They can wait on me for a change."

Thirty minutes later, still waiting, no dope-man, and again the loud speaker called. "Cornman, Chester, number 44526, report to Control Center. IMMEDIATELY."

"Wow! Dog," said Charlie. "They sounded pretty serious that time. Ya better go man. They'll write you up."

"Screw you," I said. "I'll wait."

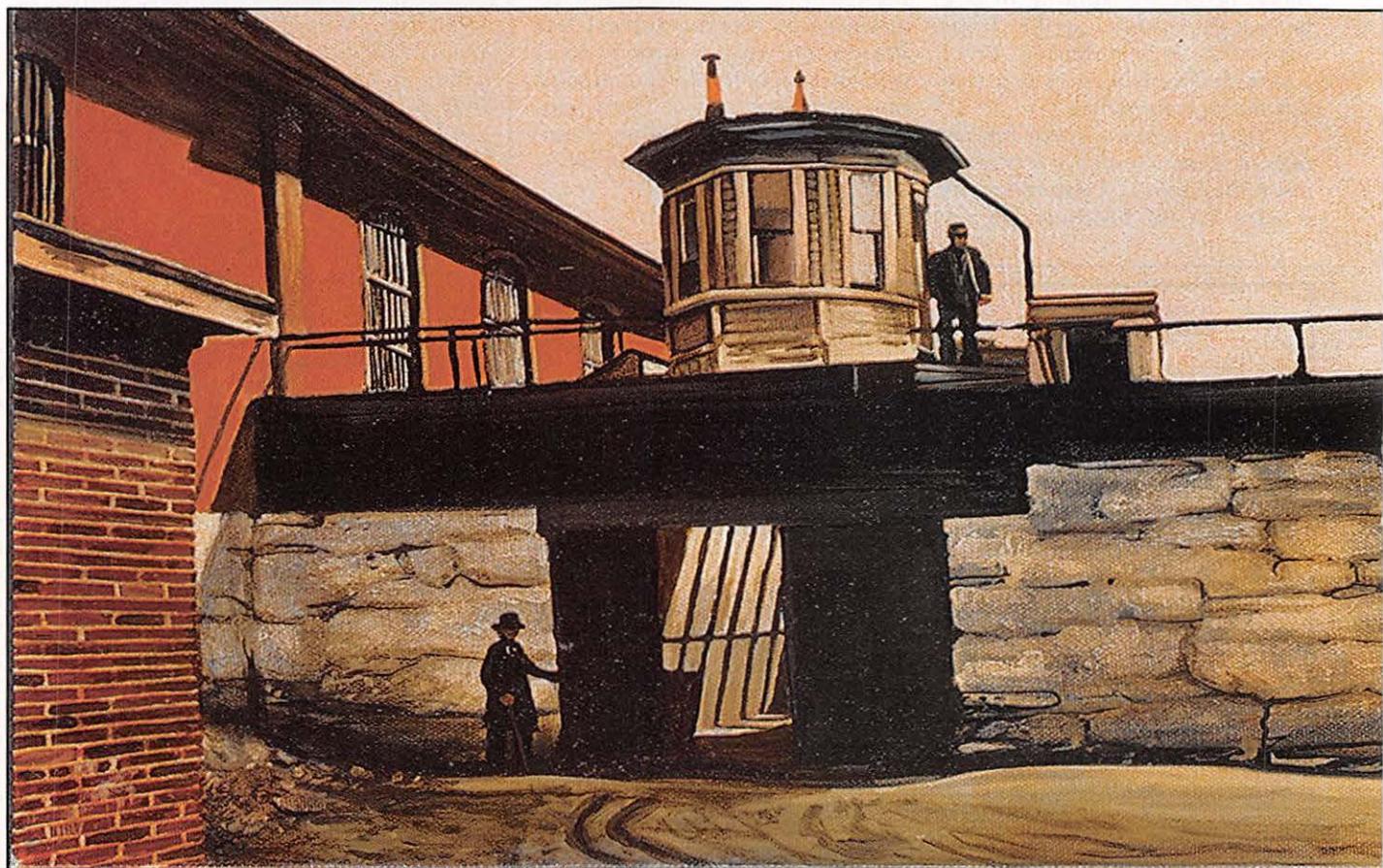
"O.K., Dog, it's on you," he said with a little giggle.

"Hey, Cornman," I heard from behind me. As I turned around, I realized it was Shift Captain Bogart. Asshole of assholes. "Didn't you hear them call you over the intercom?"

"No sir, boss, I sure didn't," I replied.

"Well, they did. They want you at the Control Center. Get your ass on up there now."

"O.K., boss, no problem," I said as



I looked over my shoulder just in time to see Charlie bite his hand to keep from laughing out loud.

Charlie's scum! I kept repeating to myself all the way to the Control Center. I'll kill him! If that worm beats me, I'll break his jaw. Shit, not *if* he does, but *when* he does. I should just go back there and pummel him to the ground right now.

"Yeah, I'm Chester Cornman, can you tell me who wants me?" I asked the Control Center guard.

"We've been calling you for an hour and a half. The caseworker needs to see you," he responded.

I knew it. A job change, a survey, something stupid. Bet on it.

"Just have a seat on the bench. He'll be with you in a minute," the guard continued.

Yeah, right. After twenty minutes of waiting, I began to nod off.

"Mr. Cornman, Mr. Chester Cornman," I heard a male voice say.

"Yeah, that's me."

"Mr. Cornman, do you have a brother named Johnny?" he asked.

"Yes sir, I sure do."

"Well, Mr. Cornman, you need to call home. There has been an accident or something, and my information is he's dead," he said, and kept looking at his watch.

Wow! What a bedside manner, I

thought, which was a strange thought for me to have at the time, I know, but for some reason I just couldn't get it out of my mind. Here's a man supposed to be a professional and he can't think of a better way to say my brother is dead than just "He's dead."

"Come on in here. I'll give you a phone call," I heard him say through the fog that seemed to somehow take over my brain.

His bedside manner continued as he handed me the phone. "You have five minutes."

"Hello. Mom? What's happening? This caseworker just said Johnny was killed. What's the deal? Don't cry Mom, just calm down and tell me what's going on," I said.

"What did you call for?" I heard her say from the other end. "Yeah, he's dead, and it's all your fault. He got shot in a robbery." I could hear her sobbing on the other end.

"Damn, Mom," I said, as I felt the tears well up in my eyes. "I didn't do nothing. Why is it my fault?"

"You are his older brother. He wanted to be just like you. And what did you teach him? I'll tell you what, you taught him how to rob and steal. Well, he's dead now. I hope you're happy."

"Your time is up," I heard coming from the receiver. "Please hang up

the phone."

"What's happening here? Mom? Mom!"

"I just got cut off!" I said to the caseworker. "No warning, nothing! I just got cut off!"

"Your time was up. I told you you had five minutes when I gave you the phone."

Wow! The brain fog was really taking over now. I could hear just fine, I could see everything, but it was as if nothing was quite getting through the fog to the brain.

"Well, redial the number. I need another five minutes," I pleaded. "Please, my mother will think I've just hung up on her."

"There's been an accident or something. My information is he's dead."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Cornman," he said. "I don't have the authority to give you another call. You will have to make a formal request through your regular caseworker." Again he looked at his watch.

It's Friday, I thought. I won't be able to get in touch with a caseworker until Monday morning. My mom hates me, my brother's dead, is it my fault? A thousand thoughts kept reeling through my mind, and then there was that damn brain fog. I just wished things would slow down. I couldn't grasp all this at once. "Just give me a minute to get myself together," I said.

"All inmates report to their Housing Units. Clear the yard for Count," said a voice over the loudspeaker as I left Control Center.

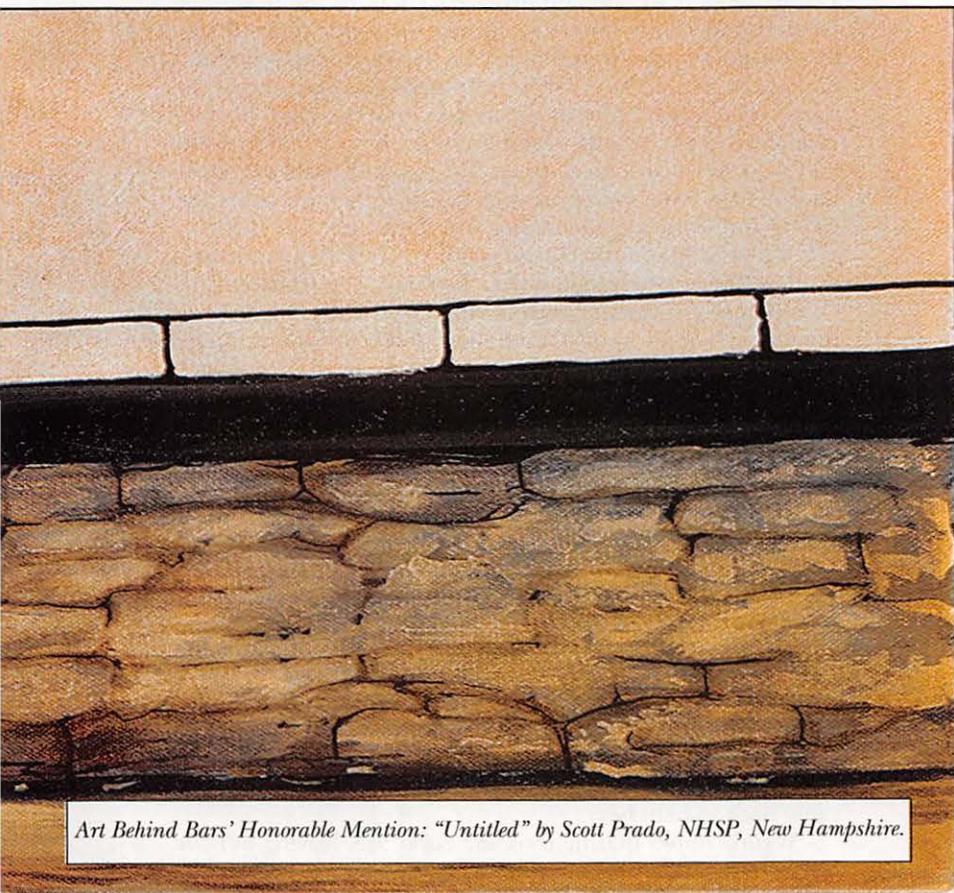
"Damn, Dog, what took ya so long? I didn't think you were ever gonna get done. Now we're gonna have to wait until after count to fix, man," I heard Charlie say through the fog. "Damn, Dog, what's the matter?" he said, as he got closer and realized I was crying. "Are you all right, man?"

I ran down the whole story as best I could in such a short time, and through that damn brain fog. When I had finished, a small crowd had gathered.

"Let me get this straight," Charlie said. "Five minutes and then they just cut you off?"

"Yeah, that's right."

"Hey, can't you assholes hear? It's



Art Behind Bars' Honorable Mention: "Untitled" by Scott Prado, NHSP, New Hampshire.

count time. Get to your cells right now," Captain Bogart was hollering.

Oh no, I thought. Here we go. Now I've gotten everyone in a wreck, and I know for a fact Charlie's dirty and can't stand a shake down.

"Let's get going guys. We don't need any problems with this creep," I said.

"Hey, Bogart," Charlie yelled. "We've got a problem over here."

"Ya damn right ya do," he responded. "You're all late for count, and out of bounds in the process." He was coming in our direction.

"We ain't going to our cells until Chester here gets a phone call." I don't know who said it first, but everyone chimed in.

Captain Bogart listened calmly to our story. When we finished, he said, "Chester, you come with me. You'll get your phone call. The rest of you go back to your cells. It'll be all right."

True to his word, the captain got me a phone call. He sat there with me for a full forty-five minutes and even handed me a tissue or two to wipe away the tears. My mother and I got everything together.

Before we hung up, I told her how much I loved her. She said she was sorry for what she had said. She needed someone to blame, and I was the most available person. Anyway, she loved me too.

When the call was over, Captain Bogart said, "Well, Chess, I guess ya know I'm gonna have to put ya in the Hole for that little incident out front."

I didn't argue. What the hell? I thought. I didn't feel like being around people anyway.

The Hole guard seemed surprised to see us. "Damn, Captain, weren't you supposed to get off at four o'clock? It's nearly six-thirty."

A thought struck me: Bogart hadn't looked at his watch once during the whole affair.

Monday morning came. Right after breakfast, there was Captain Bogart in front of my cell in Ad Seg. "Well, Chester, it looks like you're gonna skate on this one. It says here in the rule book that you must be interviewed on a violation within 24 hours of its occurrence. Damn technicalities got me this time," he said with a smile.

As I stepped out of the Ad Seg unit and let my eyes adjust to the sunlight, I heard, "Damn, Dog, you'll never believe what happened to your shot."

PL

**ART BEHIND BARS
FICTION 2ND PLACE**

Lennie's Catch

by Benton Murray,
Frank Scott Jr. Correctional, GA

The tunnel boat skimmed the waves at full throttle. Carefully stacked layers of monofilament gill-netting flew from the deck and left a bobber-strewn trail in the wake. The razor-tipped oyster bar dead ahead seemed unavoidable, and Wanda's knees were braced for the crash when Lennie suddenly kicked the steering rod hard left and, almost shaving the paint from the boat's side, gunned it between the school of mullet and the treacherous reef.

When the boat reached the outer edge of the school, Lennie looped around and drove back toward the beginning of the bobber line, hurriedly closing the webbed death trap around the shoal of frenzied fish. As he approached the front end of the net, he raced back and pulled the prop out of the water. The momentum swept the boat over the cork line and inside the circle. Wanda tossed the remaining 20 yards of the 300-yard net overboard, tying the two net ends together. Lennie then did a few figure-eights inside the mesh walls, terrifying and scattering the mullet into the nooses.

"Look at 'em jump, Wanda. What a strike!" Lennie said as he surveyed the scene. Silver flashes gleamed along the entire length of the net as thrashing fish fought helplessly in the mesh. In a few spots the bobbers had been drawn underwater from the weight of the catch.

"Must have been over a hundred," Wanda agreed. "Another couple of strikes like this and we'll make some real money today."

It was the third strike of the morning. Lennie rubbed his back, anticipating the work of unloading and restacking the net facing the two of them. "This is gonna have to be the last strike today, Wanda. My back's killing me. I don't remember fishing being so rough back when I used to do it," he grumbled.

Wanda shot him a worried glance as she snagged the tail end of the net, straightened it, then began the job of neatly restacking the net onto the deck. This was a job that had to be done painstakingly, for any sloppiness could result in the net knotting up on the next strike. She worked for a full fifteen minutes, pulling mullet and stacking net before Lennie came back to help her.

Wanda noted that he took the cork side, leaving her the much more difficult and strenuous lead line to work. The

old Lennie would never have done that, she caught herself thinking, and was instantly ashamed of herself. Lennie had been in prison for five years on drug charges and had been out for only a week now. The two had enjoyed a great marriage before his arrest, and they had a boy named Lenny Jr. who was six and a daughter, Sara, a year younger. Those long five years had seemed like an eternity, but Wanda's memories of Lennie's kindness and thoughtfulness had helped her wait.

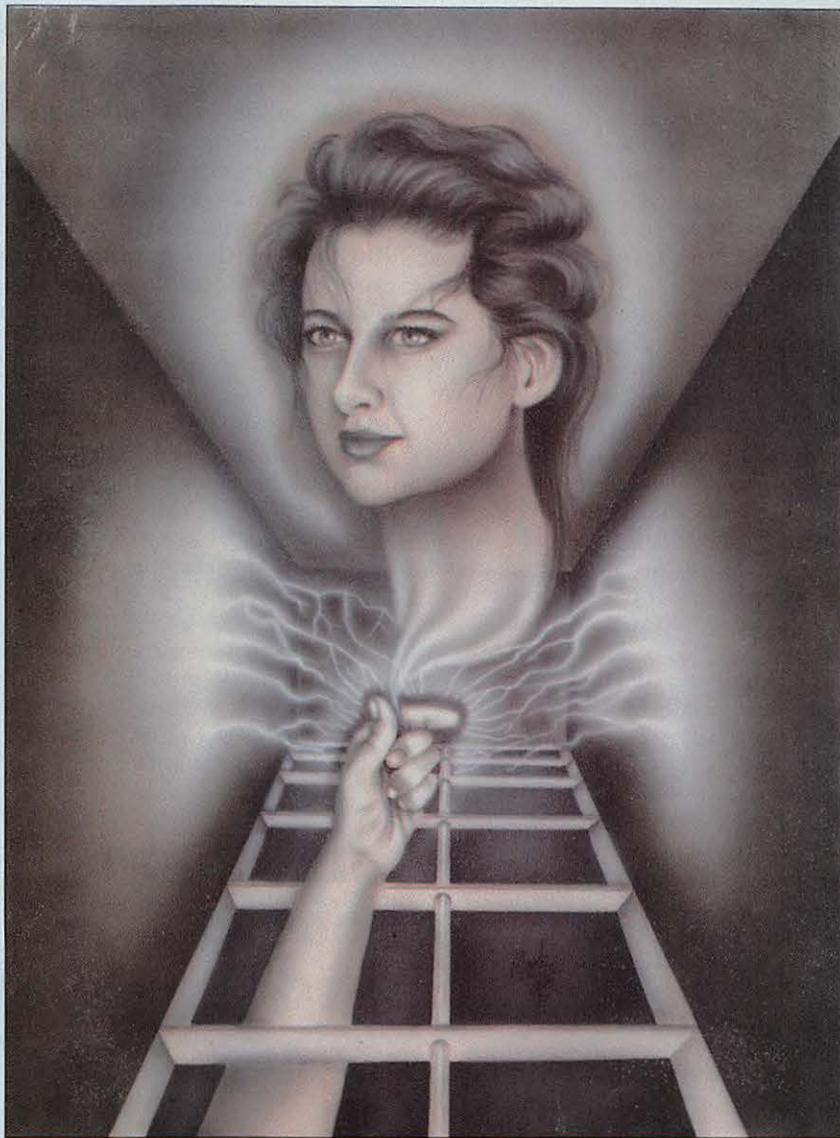
The Lennie who came back to her one week ago was a changed character. The fun-loving and care-free Lennie of old was gone. In his place was a quiet, almost solemn man. They'd once talked constantly about everything. Now he never initiated conversations and expressed little interest in anything but the kids. Most painful and hard to understand was the fact that he hadn't slept with her yet. He'd not been able to get it up when Wanda had lured him into bed soon after he got home, and since then he just said he wanted to wait a week or two and "get his head straight." She didn't know what that meant and had decided she didn't care to know. She wanted her husband back.

Throwing a mullet hard at the icebox, she exploded. "Lennie, we've got to talk! I don't know what's going on, or just what the problem is, but this isn't working. You know I love you; I just can't figure what's wrong. Is it me? I know I put on a little weight after I had Sara and haven't gotten it off yet. Is that the problem?"

"No, God, no, Wanda. It's me, honey. My head's all messed up, and I just don't know how to act or what to do. I asked you for two weeks. You waited five years for me. Can you just give me another week. I'm sure I'll have things worked out by then."

The two finished clearing and restacking the net in gloomy silence, Wanda near tears and Lennie keeping his head down and his thoughts to himself. Wanda, not at all happy with his answer, struggled with her feelings. She was sure of one thing, though. She'd waited five years for Lennie; whatever the problem was, she could wait another week.

"I'll wait," she said. "I don't know why you can't tell me now, but I'll wait even longer if I have to. I'll wait as long as it takes 'cause I love you, Lennie, and me and the kids need you." He hugged her silently, face impassive. As he started forward to



Art Behind Bars' Honorable Mention: "Beyond Reach" by Mark D. Smith, Angola State, LA

"The white powder gleamed through the rent in the plastic: about 25 pounds of cocaine."

crank the motor, she decided to change the subject. "Can we stop and catch a few sheephead or a redfish for dinner on the way home since we're going in early? Junior sure loves baked redfish."

"Of course," Lennie replied. "I know a spot that always used to hold sheephead, and I could usually find a redfish there, too. It's on Seashore Reef right off Cedar Key only a few

miles out of the way. I used to find a lot of good driftwood there that I could sell, and I've been wanting to swing by and take a look for the last few days."

Lennie cranked up the Mercury, aimed the boat north toward home but a little westward and offshore. His fishing luck was holding, it seemed, for as he approached the rocky outcropping some minutes later, he spied the striped forms of at least a dozen sheephead and the long, dark shapes of several redfish feeding in the shallow water. "Let go!", he hollered, signaling Wanda to throw out the weight attached to the net. Then he raced up to the rocks and skirted the edge for about 20 yards before turning away sharply to begin encircling the doomed fish.

Just as he began the turn, a shine from the edge of the rocks caught his eye, and he shut down the throttle so fast Wanda fell to her knees and cried out. Lennie didn't;

he ran by her and shoved the two hundred remaining yards of net into the water. He then returned to the front and idled the board to the reef, shut down the motor and got out.

He'd known what it was the second his eyes had caught the glint from the two-foot square package wrapped in plastic and wedged among the rocks. With trembling hands he scooped it up and stepped back into the boat, avoiding Wanda's eyes. Lennie was an experienced drug mover, he knew full well that bales of marijuana were always much bigger than this. Pulling out his pocketknife, Lennie cut a deep gash in the triple-wrapped plastic. After feasting his eyes for a second, he looked up at Wanda. The white powder gleamed between them through the rent in the plastic: about 25 pounds of cocaine.

Even at the rock bottom price of \$8,000 a pound, which Lennie knew he could easily get for the whole bale, there was at least \$200,000, far more than a man could make commercial fishing. It was enough to take care of his kids and send them to a good school so they wouldn't have to go through the hardships he'd faced.

Wanda thought of these things, too, but uppermost in her mind was fear: fear of the police and fear of losing Lennie again after all these years. "Throw it back" she hissed. "If you want me and the kids, throw it in the Gulf. I don't want to be rich, I just want you." She reached for the bale, but Lennie grabbed her wrist.

"Just you wait a minute, Wanda. There's no rush. Let's think this through," he said heatedly. Their glances locked for a moment until Lennie looked away. "Okay," he said, "maybe you're right. We can't risk coming in with it. But maybe I can tell one of the old gang where it is and get some money out of it anyway." Lennie picked the bale up, stepped back on the reef and carried it up higher beyond the tide mark. He then covered the bale with several pieces of driftwood and returned to the boat.

The two began the tedious task of restocking the net while the nearby cocaine weighed heavily on their thoughts. Lennie again took the bobber side of the net and stopped to rest twice before the netting was again neatly stacked on deck. In her perturbation, Wanda scarcely noted

that she was doing most of the work. Damn my bad timing in wanting a sheephead, she thought. She was so furious that if either of the species had been in the net, she'd have thrown it back. She was startled when Lennie suddenly broke the silence.

"I think you're right, Wanda. I don't know what I was thinking. Especially with you in the boat, too. We've got to think of the kids. We just can't risk it."

"Oh honey," she gushed. "I knew you'd see it was wrong. Let's throw it away and get out of here. I don't even feel safe this close to it."

"We'll just leave it where it is," he answered. "I'm not going near it again. It'll rot or a storm will wash it away soon. Maybe somebody else will find it. Who cares? Let's you and I get out of here."

As the reef receded in the wake behind them, Wanda felt as though the bulk of her worries was being left behind, too. If Lennie could turn down this temptation for the sake of

up the kids, then swung back by the fish house around three o'clock, at Junior's insistence, to see if Lennie would take the young'uns for a short boat ride. Lennie was gone with the boat, testing it, she thought, or, even more likely, tied up to one of the many waterfront bars nearby.

Lennie came home about 6:15; surprisingly, he was sober. "I ran into Darryl at the bar," he said as soon as he came in the door. "He wants me to deck hand on his shrimp boat for him the next three days or so. We'll be heading out in an hour and a half, so I've got to eat quick."

"But Lennie," said Wanda. "You won't make but thirty dollars a night on the shrimpboat. You're supposed to stay away from convicted felons as part of your parole. Darryl's been busted several times. Isn't he still on bond? Tell him no, and let's catch mullet while they're running thick."

"I don't really care about the money that much. You know I need to get my head straight on a few things.

These three days will be perfect. I'll talk with you and let you know everything that's been bothering me. I'll have everything under control by then, I promise." He grabbed up Junior, swung him up in the air and hugged him tight. "What do you want to be when you grow up, Junior?" he asked the boy.

"I want to be a spaceman, Daddy," Junior piped up. "And Sara's gonna be my nurse for when I come back to earth and need a checkup."

"Is that so, Sara?" asked Lennie. She didn't answer, just nodded shyly.

"Well, we'll have to see about this," Lennie laughed. "Don't neither of you two want to be a fisherman like your daddy? My daddy was a fisherman and so was his daddy." Sitting on the floor, with an arm around each child, Lennie told Junior and Sara about how, because of not going to school and studying hard, he, his father and his grandfather had all lived most of their lives in Yankeetown, fishing for a living. But if they studied real hard they could be spacemen, nurses or whatever they wanted when they grew up. Wanda, reheating dinner, looked in and smiled at the rapt, wide-eyed and attentive expressions on Junior and Sara's faces. He always could tell a good tale, she thought.

Lennie ate and then helped Wanda wash the dishes, much to her

"Lennie came home about 6:15 p.m. Surprisingly, he was sober."

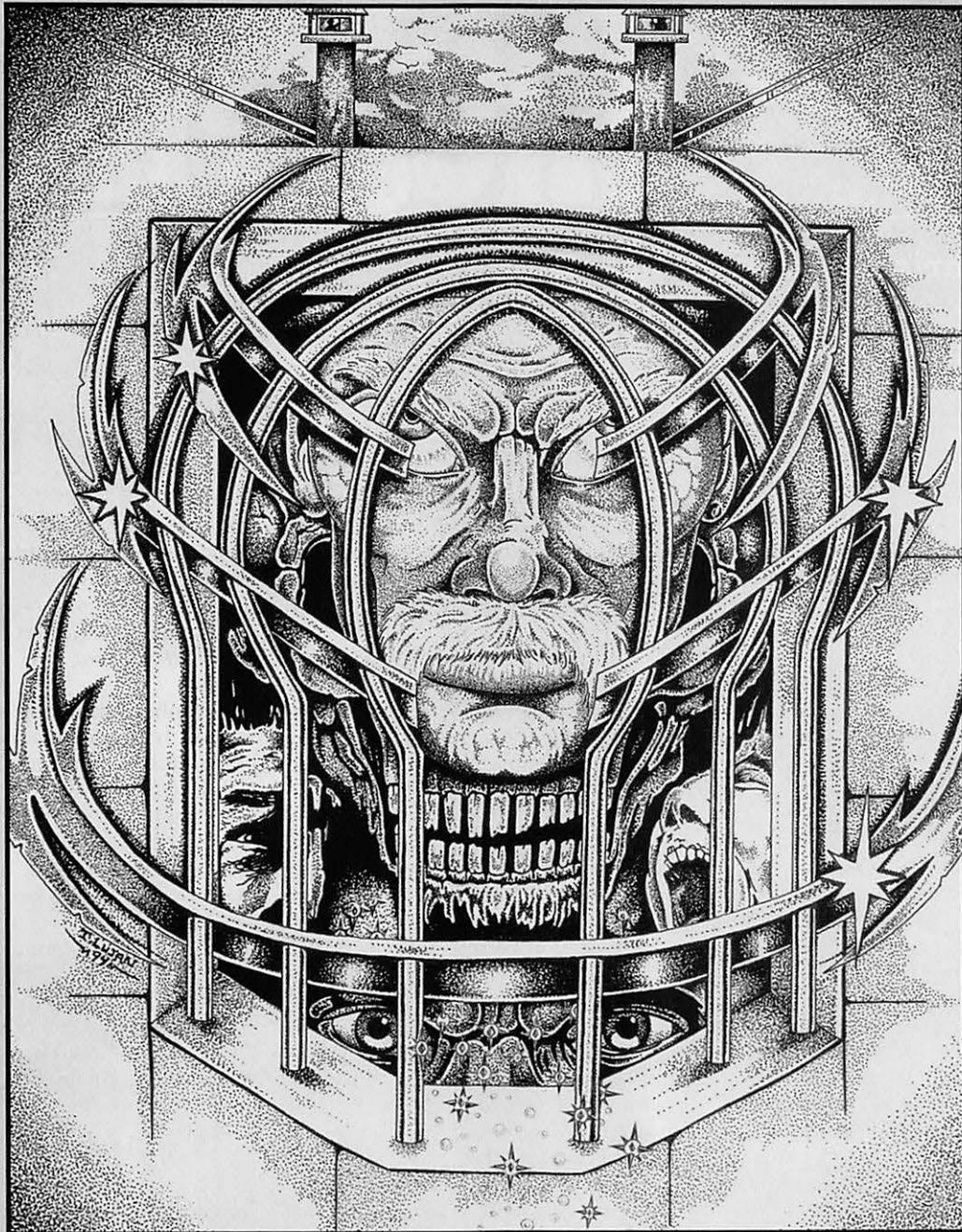
the family, then her worries were groundless. She'd just have to be patient.

An hour's cruise brought them to the fish house where they found that mullet prices had dropped two cents a pound. Their catch still brought them nearly seventy dollars, minus gas money, for a morning's work, so Wanda suggested steak for dinner.

"Sounds good," said Lennie. "You take the truck and go on shopping. I'm gonna change the plug in the Mercury and replace the fuel line. It's getting pretty rotten. I might just stop at the bar on the way home, too. Ain't every day I throw away a fortune and I think I'll have a few beers."

"You deserve 'em, honey." Wanda smiled. "I'll get you a six-pack from the store and have it waiting on you. Dinner's served around six so don't be late." She handed him \$20, hopped in the truck and took off. Lennie headed back toward the boat.

Wanda went to the grocery store, stopped at her mother's and picked



Art Behind Bars' Honorable Mention: "Untitled" by Thomas Lujan, Arizona State Prison

amazed but secret delight. When the horn honked outside summoning him, Lennie gave all three great big hugs, kissed them all, and headed out the door. Wanda stood at the door a long time after the truck drove off, pondering, and when Darryl's boat came in three days later and Darryl himself told her that Lennie certainly hadn't gone out with him, he'd only talked to him a few minutes the afternoon before he went out, Wanda was more numb than surprised. Returning home, she unlocked the door, helped the kids in, then noticed the suitcase and letter sitting on the dinner table. She opened the envelope and took out the short note. Tears had already started at the corners of her eyes when

she began reading.

Dear Wanda, it began.

I guess you probably think this is the cowardly way for me to tell you, but I couldn't face you with the truth any other way. Five years in a cage can do a lot to a man's mind. It can make him think thoughts and do things he'd never do any other place. What I'm trying to say, I guess, is that I fell weak a little over two years ago. I had sex with a queer in prison. Just once, I swear, but once was enough. He had AIDS, honey, and I caught it. Just before I got out I tested positive. I love you and the kids too much to stay. You know us anyway—we never could resist sex, and I won't chance it. God knows I want you and love you. I went back to the reef, Wanda, and in the

suitcase is \$180,000. I want you to put it away and spend it wisely on the kids. It's all I can give them now, and it's the only thing I can leave you. I'm taking enough money to get myself far away and outside the U.S.A. I'll be all right, honey. Don't wait for me this time 'cause I can't come back. I love you, baby. Be strong.

Love Lennie.

Junior suddenly tugged on her hand and said, "What's wrong, Mommy? You're crying. Where's Daddy?"

"Hush, little spaceman," she said. "Everything's okay, darling. Everything's gonna be all right." **PL**



IRON PILE

Q&A

by Chris Cozzone, Fitness Editor

BIG ED'S DREADED QUADS

Iron Pile: I'm trying to build legs bigger than Godzilla. So I squat and I squat and I squat . . . but, still, my thighs don't seem to be popping out of my pants. All I got to show for my efforts is a sore lower back. What's up with this squat action? There's no reason why I shouldn't have huge legs—I'm 6' and big-framed.

*Big Ed
U.S.P.*

Your sore lower back says it all, Big Ed. If you're squatting your ass off and the only thing hurting is your lower back, I'd say it's time to find something else for your quadriceps.

Not everyone is meant to squat. For most people, the squat is a very ineffective exercise when it comes to blasting quads. If you're not able to keep your back straight as your legs form a 90 degree angle (the point at which you should end a squat), then you are not mechanically inclined to perform a perfect squat. Let me explain.

The basic function of your quadriceps muscles (Rectus femoris, Vastus intermedius, Vastus lateralis, Vastus medialis) is a knee extension—basically, straightening your leg from a bent position. The most direct way of hitting your quads, then, would be an exercise which most closely resembles this primary movement. You got it—Leg Extensions.

Leg Extensions are a one-joint movement, meaning all you're working on are your quadriceps. Squats, Leg Presses, Hack Squats—they're all compound, or

multi-joint movements. When you're blasting away on them, you're also hitting other body-parts. For example, on squats, you won't be able to help but involve your lower back in assisting the lift.

So if you're complaining about lower back pain, it's only because that area is getting fatigued before your quads ever get a chance. And since you're squatting so damn much, you're probably injuring your lower spinal muscles.

What you're striving for is that bone-deep burn in your quads, and that's something that most people don't often feel on squats (unless they're mechanically gifted and able to perform that perfect squat).

Take a break from squats, you don't need 'em anyway. Instead, do Leg Extensions. Blast the hell outta your quads in the most direct way possible. Learn to love that burn, 'cause that's what's gonna get them quads to pop out. If you're still up to it, after Extensions, throw in a few sets of squats or Leg Presses while you're pre-exhausted. If that don't get 'em, nuthin' will.

LOSIN' STRENGTH— NOT

Iron Pile: It's good to hear us prisoners have someone to write about our problems with weightlifting. I am a big guy, 235 pounds, 6'2". I've been trying to lose weight and get a well-defined body before my release in one year. As I lose body weight—about three pounds a month—my overall bench press seems to decline. I'm taking

vitamins, eating fruits, potatoes, rice, beans and foods high in proteins and complex carbohydrates. Is there anything I can do to keep my bench press up as I start to lose body weight? Your ideas would be of great help to me.

*Stephen John Kontoes
U.S.P. Atlanta, GA*

Stephen, until you stabilize at a given body weight, the best you can do is keep pushing that weight as best you can. Bear in mind that losing pounds on a bench press doesn't necessarily mean that you're getting weaker. In fact, you may even be getting stronger.

Remember that strength is determined by how much you can lift at a given weight. So, if you were benching 300 at 235 pounds (1.276 times your body weight), and now you're benching 265 at 200 (1.325 your body weight), you would've actually increased your strength.

All that extra fat will enable you to heave more weight, but remember that the extra pounds are mere leverage. Fat cells are not able to contract and pull joints (i.e. lift weights) so don't worry about a few pounds on your bench press.

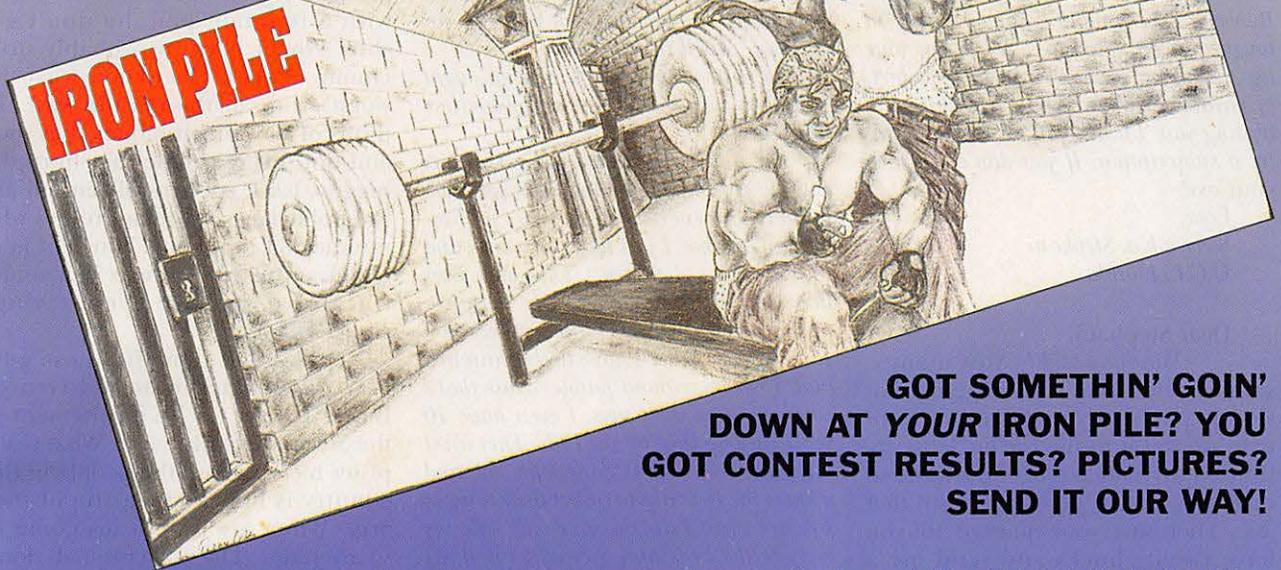
Once you've stabilized at your targeted body weight, your body will be ready to explode with new-found strength. Just keep doing what you're doing, and eating what you're eating.

Send your Q's and problems to Iron Pile, c/o Prison Life Magazine, 505 8th Avenue, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Background photo by Sarah Willkie

**YO! WE'RE
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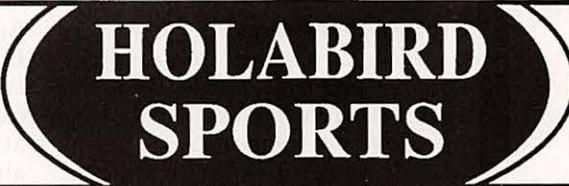
IRON PILE



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Ask Bubba

Hi Baby!

I think you're so cute. I'd love to have a man like you. The only problem is, I think you like dick as much as I do. "Ask Bubba"? I think it should be "Ask Bubbetta." Why don't you stop acting so tough and get yourself right? Shave your legs, arch your eyebrows and get some pretty panties to wear. And girl, while I'm writing you, I'll ask you to send your sister a subscription. If you don't, I'll kick your ass!

Love,

Steve a.k.a. Stephani
U.C.I., Florida

Dear Stephani,

Biaaaaaatch! You mangy, sniveling ho. Don't be dragging that sloppy pussy of yours around here tryin' to sell it to me for no subscription to my magazine. You want to read this, honey, go out and sell that ass. Then save your quarters till you have twenty bucks and send me a money order. I just know you're so ugly nobody will have you, but give it a try anyway. Even a blind, one-legged chipmunk sometimes finds an acorn.

Love and kisses, Bubba

Greetings, Bubba!

I read Prison Life for the first time a couple weeks ago. The rag is pretty fuckin' good, jack! I mean, Bubba. So I'm askin': Can I get a free script? I can't afford crackers for my pet mouse or a rubber for his head 'case it rains.

Ya help a lot of people and ya might be able to help me with this problem(violins please):

I'm doin' double life plus 35 years with no possibility of parole ever, for bank robbery. I never hurt anyone, or kidnapped anyone. I just took the money and ran. (So I used a gun.) That sure does piss 'em off in Virginia. The Virginia prison system considers a life sentence 600 years. So in reality I have twelve hundred and 35 years without parole 'cause that's what my time sheet says. I even have 10 years back-up time for the Feds. They want me when the State is done with me, and y'know the Feds like to collect their time, so I figure when I die the state will send my body to the Feds and they will stand my coffin up in the corner and of a cell until my Fed time is up. Then they'll bury me.

Bubba, my problem is, what color coffin should I get?

Lucky,

A Happy Convict

P.S. Keep givin' those wimpy, whinin' short timers the blues. They don't know how lucky they are. It gets me off when you ride their backs.

Lucky, you ain't, pal,

First of all, let me tell you what I think about the time they gave you. A man robs a bank with a gun, he gets 1,200 years. A man robs a bank with a fountain pen, he don't get shit. And I bet you probably stole chump change. You know what the worst crime of the decade was? In terms of how much money they took and how many people they hurt, the biggest bank robbers of 'em all are the politicians and their cronies who ran the S&L scam on a bunch of middle class folk who sure as hell couldn't afford to have their savings ripped off.

How much time did those guys get? How much time did George Bush's kid get for his involvement in the Silverado bank scam? What really pisses me off about the people in this country is how fucking stupid they are. When are Americans going to smarten up? The real criminals don't break the laws, they make the laws.

And if you think those fat cats who just took over down there in Washington, these so-called Republicans, are any better, forget about it. Bubba knows what they're up to. People think I'm some lily-livered liberal, but that's all wrong. I'm a radical fucking right wing nut! (There, at last I've said it. I feel better already.) I could tell old Newt a thing or two about what it means to be conservative. What the Republicans want to do is to replace the welfare state with the imprisonment state. They say do away with big government, yet they want more cops, more prisons, more laws — and less freedom for everyone.

Lucky old pal, you slap happy, stir crazy fucker you, to hell with the coffin. Tell 'em to burn your ass in one of them ovens. there is no such thing as death. Let your spirit run free. And then come back to haunt them.

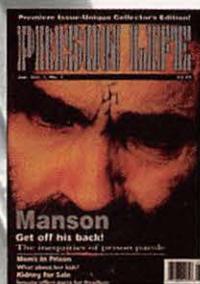
Bubba for President

Bubba wants your questions!
Send your kites to Bubba, c/o
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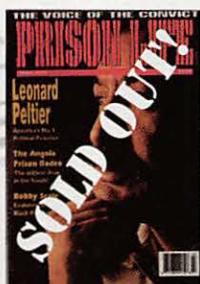


COLLECTOR'S ITEMS—PRISON LIFE BACK ISSUES ARE SELLING OUT FAST!

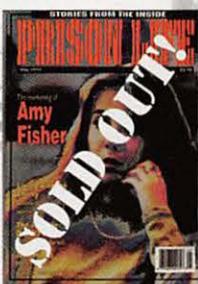
Lock 'Em Up and throw away the key!



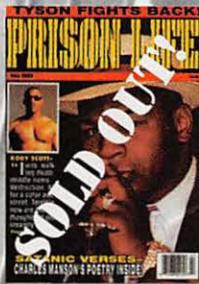
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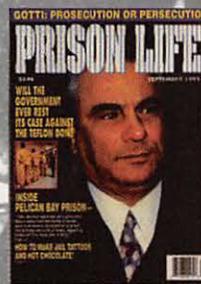
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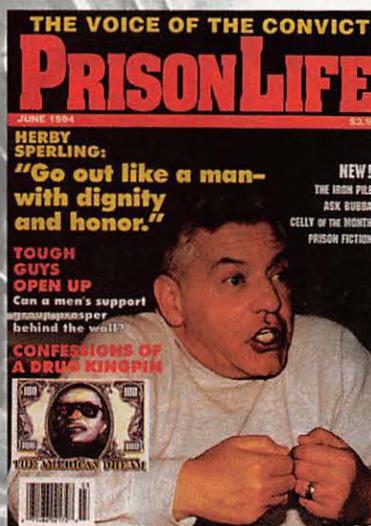


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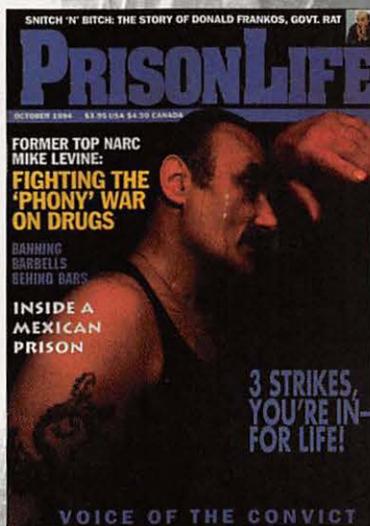


#6—DEC. '93

The first six issues of *Prison Life* are nearly sold out . . . you ain't ever gonna find 'em. But you can still score issues 1, 5, 7, 8 and 9. Packed with prison survival strategies and stories from the Inside, these issues will *never* go outta date. Only ten smacks a shot while they last, and that includes postage & handling.



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Family Matters

REUNITED

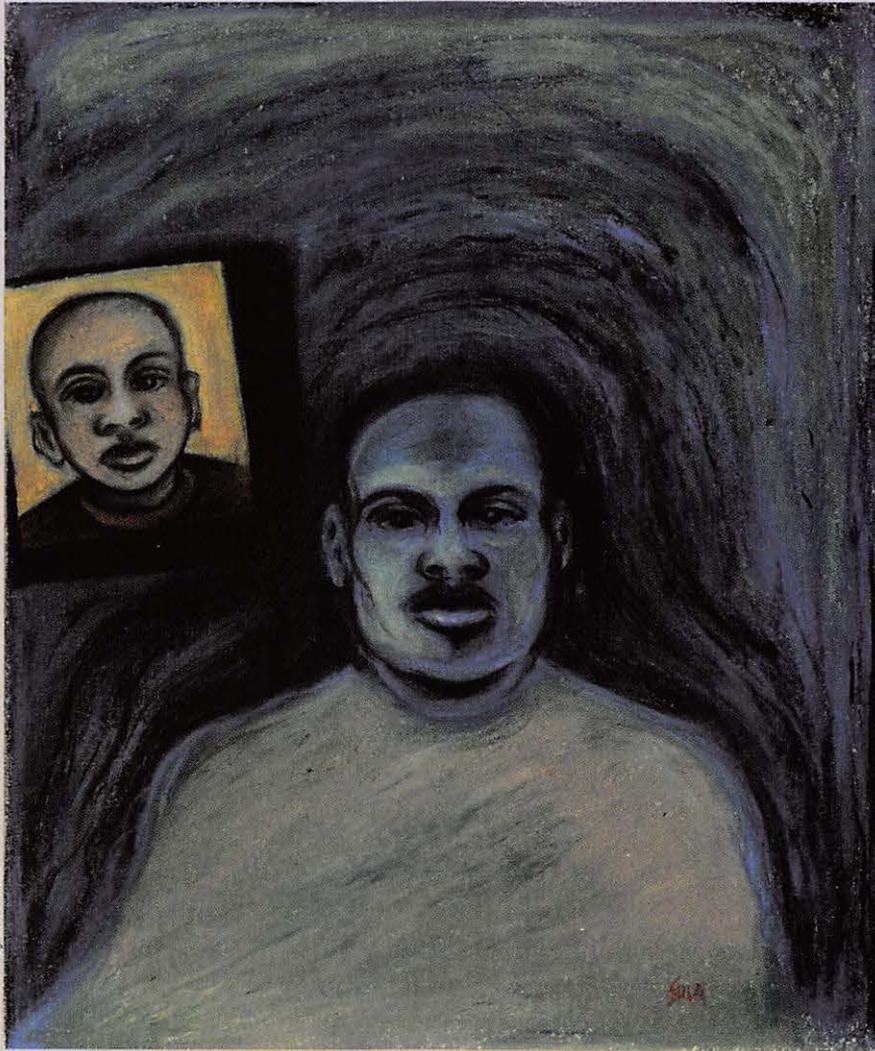


Illustration by Rob Sula

In the January '95 "Family Matters," we printed a letter by Reginald "CASH" Alexander beseeching women with children by a man behind bars to let the fathers see their children. While CASH's letter was written to all women, it was based on his relationship with Trinetta, the mother of his son, Le Cashius. CASH hadn't spoken to his son for several years, and for this he held Trinetta largely responsible. Trinetta read CASH's letter in the January issue and sent her response.

Dear Cash,

As I write this letter, your son and I are doing fine. In fact, he's sitting here next to me looking more and more like you every minute.

We're happy to hear you're staying strong and, like you, we are trying

desperately to weather the storm. I'm sorry I haven't been more of a friend to you, and especially regretful that I haven't done everything possible to allow you to remain a part of your son's life. The reasons are complex and many, and you may not understand or forgive me for them, but in light of your letter I will explain.

Cash, when they sent you to prison it was as if I had been imprisoned, too. They took away your freedom—they snatched away my hope. Everything I had envisioned and planned for the future was suddenly yanked away. For the first few years of your incarceration I was lost, my mind was doing tailspins. Every dream I had was destroyed. Then one day I suddenly stopped spinning and

opened my eyes and saw the scary truth. You were gone!

I was all alone, with a small child and facing a world that I was not prepared to face without you. I never wanted a child until I met you. And I told you when we first met that I was determined not to end up a single, struggling mother like many of my friends.

I conceived and gave birth to Le Cashius because I loved you and that was what you wanted. You promised me a million times that we would always remain a family. And although I knew you didn't willfully leave us, I still found myself blaming you for our struggles.

I tried my best to wait for you, remain faithful and by your side. But

as the years dragged along I became lonely and unhappy. I won't try to deny that I have found someone to fill those voids, I'll simply ask, "If the tables were turned, would you have waited for me?"

Anyway, once I became deeply involved with that someone, it became emotionally impossible for me to remain a part of your life. How could I write you love letters, visit you (smiling in your face and kissing you) for several hours, knowing that as soon as our visit ended my affection would be for another man?

You may not respect the way I've chosen to handle things, but I'm sure you wouldn't have respected me if I had done the above, would you?

Still, I tell your son about you all the time, and contrary to what you may believe no man will ever take your place in his life. I've wanted to bring him to visit you and at times I've started to write you, but deep down inside I've felt guilty, like I've

let you down, and I know that you don't forgive easily. Therefore, I was afraid to face you or to contact you. I believed that you hated me and that rumors had turned you completely against me.

I was also going through many changes, trying to find myself, and hopelessly depressed over your situation. But don't ever think that you were forgotten. It's impossible to look at Le Cashius and not see you. It really hurts my heart for him to grow up without having his daddy around. I do my best with him but he still needs you. I was so depressed that somehow it just seemed much easier to stay away and not communicate with you at all.

You aren't very understanding, and looking back on it now I must tell you that when you first went to prison you had some very unrealistic expectations of me. Then when I couldn't live up to all of them, you made me feel like a tramp. I avoided contact

with you because I didn't like being made to feel that way. Life wasn't easy for me either during that time, but your understanding of my predicament was zero! Cash, you expected more than I was capable of giving.

I know I've been wrong to deny you your son, and I apologize. But I have always told him about you and I promise you that he will be taught to love you. I, myself, think about you often and I miss you a lot. I hate that things have gone this way, but I hope that one day we can become friends.

So much has happened since you've been away, so much to make me cry. I just wish you could come home. We may have been out of your life for the past three years, but we have always loved and needed you. And we always will.

Love,
Trinetta and 'Lil Cash

Cash Responds to Prison Life

Since I wrote the "Letter to Our Ladies" for the January issue of *Prison Life*, I have been reunited with my son through telephone calls and pictures. The first few conversations with Trinetta were polite but somewhat strained.

After several more calls, we finally discussed our past estrangement and tried to iron out our differences for the sake of our son. I must admit that I had to bite my tongue on several instances because there still lives some bitterness in my heart.

However, the joy of hearing my son's voice and hearing him laugh and call me "Daddy" is a reward worthy of holding back a few bitter words.

Today, Trinetta and I are "friends," as if to say we are not enemies.

Trinetta's response to my letter may mirror the feelings of many women who have a child by a man behind bars. But it is my hope that those women will become true friends to their children's father and not just utter or write hollow, empty words.

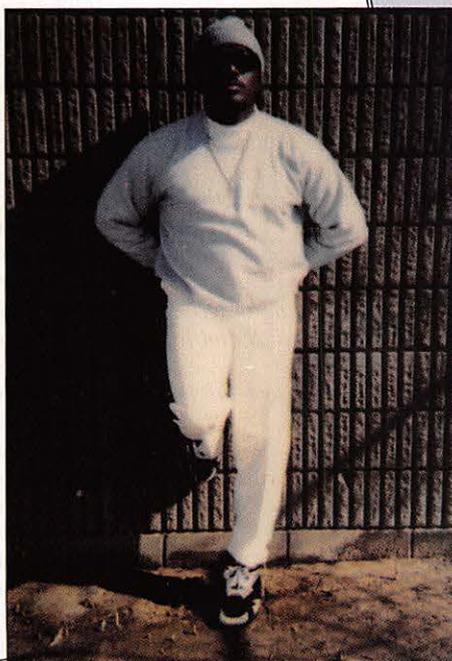
In my case, I've gotten a chance to talk to my son several times and tell him how much I love him. I also have several new pictures of him and have heard that he has inherited many of my good traits (a few not so good).

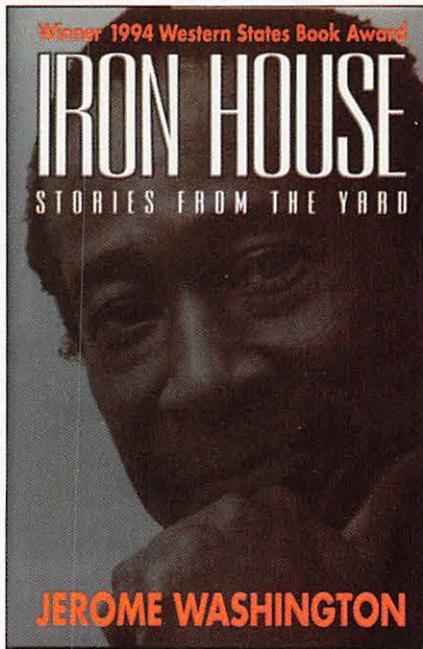
One thing that I am positive of is that

no person or amount of time can totally erase me out of his life, because inside his veins flows my blood. No matter what happens this day forward, he will always be my son. No one can change that. He is a miniature me. And it is because of him that I will never, ever, give up.

I love you, LeCashius, and one day Daddy will be there for you. No sentence is long enough to keep me from getting there.

Love,
Daddy





Iron House: Stories from the Yard
Jerome Washington
QED Press, \$18.95, 164 pgs.

Review by Jennifer Wynn

"So what if the food is unfit for canine consumption?" the Mess sergeant said. "We ain't feeding dogs, we is feeding you." He gloated, then added, "The SPCA can't squawk about that."

The last time we tried a hunger strike the warden stormed into the mess hall and ordered us to eat. When no one made a move to break our solidarity by eating, the warden dragged a large chalkboard into the middle of the messhall.

"This is your last chance," the warden shouted as he held up a piece of chalk for all to see, then prepared to write. "If you men don't start eating right now," the warden screamed, "I'm going to write the names of every informer, snitch and rat in the prison."

Before the chalk touched the board nearly every plate was clean.

Ring a bell? So should most of the accounts in *Iron House: Stories from the Yard*. Jerome Washington's book, winner of the 1994 Western States Arts Federation Book Award for Creative Nonfiction, is exactly what its title proclaims it to be—a compendium of vignettes and impressions covering the author's time in the joint.

STORIES FROM THE YARD

Some are as short as a sentence or two, others are several pages long. Yet nothing I have read by a prisoner or ex-con captures with such depth and poignancy the emotional undercurrents of life in hell.

Every portrait is sharply written—unadorned yet graceful. The author's lyrical storytelling stands in direct, and sometimes disconcerting, contrast to the horrors he writes about. In just a few paragraphs, Washington manages to make the main character of each sketch come to life, and he succeeds in leaving the reader with a sense of motive, whether cruel, crazy or heroic.

We understand, for example, why Lizard Macdonald only laughs when he is clowning with the guards with his "Right on!" Uncle Tom routine; how Willie, after ten years of masturbation, could only see "his wife as a substitute for his fist," and why it is that the author, who admits he's been "jive, insensitive and fast talking..." now watches as his "'help-me letters come back like stray homing pigeons, stamped 'Return to Sender.'"

The author's clear writing and sharp observations are more than odes to clear thinking. They show he has taken pains to understand the system and the players within it. Washington respects his fellow prisoners and seeks to tell their stories truthfully. He points out in the introduction that prison writing involves risk: "If the writing is not representative and doesn't ring true to the prisoners, criticism can come from the blade of a knife or a punch in the face."

When Jerome Washington went to prison, he was already an accomplished writer, teacher and political activist. In fact, he was the first black Yippie leader. According to the '60s activist Paul Krassner's autobiography, the two met while pissing side by side on the walls of the Pentagon during a demonstration. Later, blinded by tear gas, they helped each other up a hill.

In 1968, Washington helped his fellow Yippies Abbie Hoffman and Krassner disrupt the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. His FBI records falsely classified him as

the liaison between the Yippies and the Black Panthers. By 1972 he was in jail for charges of murder and attempted murder, which were ultimately dropped upon his release 16 years later.

"I never gave in to being a prisoner," says Washington, now living in Fort Bragg, California. "I always saw myself as a survivor." Judging from his prison record, it seems that Washington did more than "survive" life in the New York State prison system. He literally transformed it. "I became successful in an unsuccessful system," he says with characteristic modesty.

While at Auburn Correctional, Washington started the *Auburn Collective*, which won awards from the American Penal Press for its responsible and powerful journalism. Drawing from his experiences as a literacy teacher in the deep South to help Blacks exercise their power to vote, Washington started the first literacy program at Auburn. He also taught journalism in prison and gained the support of local, freeworld journalists.

Not surprisingly, the warden became threatened by Washington, whom he felt was becoming too powerful. Officials confiscated his typewriter, manuscripts and two years of research. He was sent to Attica in handcuffs and shackles. "They transferred me to Attica to silence my voice as a writer."

But Washington fought back—and won. He enlisted *pro bono* assistance from a leading New York City law firm and filed a First Amendment lawsuit in Federal District Court against the warden who had him transferred to Attica. Despite the warden's attempt to portray Washington as a security risk and a "card-carrying member of the Black Panthers," Washington won the suit for the "right to write," as well as \$5,000 in damages. "This was the first time a prisoner ever brought such a case against an institution," Washington says. "It was a major victory not only for me but for all prisoners." Reflecting on the warden's desperate last ditch efforts to defame him, the

author observes: "In prison, paranoia works both ways. It affects the watcher as much as it does the watched."

While most people might rest on their laurels, Washington went on to publish another small magazine, and to write and publish several plays, including *The Boys in Cellblock C*, for which he won a fellowship from The New York Foundation for the Arts.

same look of desperation on the face of a man rummaging through a garbage can as the man riding in a limousine."

While Washington's primary goal in writing *Iron House* was to tell with honesty and sensitivity the stories of America's imprisoned, an equally important intention was to give freeworld citizens "a glimpse of prison life in a way that they can grasp it." With billions of dollars commit-

"Those of us who are in prison have been convicted. Everyone else is still on trial."

The final pages of *Iron House* are devoted to the author's return to the freeworld, which was not at all how he anticipated it. Paranoia, despair and cynicism prevailed. The political activism and collective rallying cry of the '60s had been replaced by isolated subgroups of society at odds with each other and the world. "I saw the

ted to building more prisons every year, this isn't a bad idea. For people who have never experienced incarceration first hand, *Iron House* should be required reading. As Washington notes on the first page: "Those of us who are in prison have been convicted. Everyone else is still on trial." **PL**



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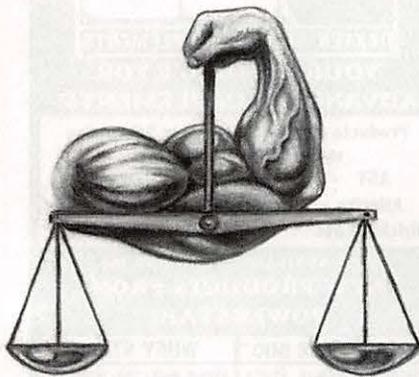
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Writ Writing: Getting Started

By Larry Fassler, Jailhouse Lawyer

This is the first in a multi-part series on how to create and write a new appeal of your conviction or sentence. Most likely, you will have already appealed your case, and the “writ of habeas corpus” will be your last shot at freedom. It may go by another name in your jurisdiction, such as a “2255” motion if you are fighting a federal conviction, or a “2254” if you’re appealing a state conviction to federal court. (I’ll use the generic term “habeas corpus.”) Regardless of the name, every state and federal court has a procedure available.

IDENTIFYING YOUR ISSUES

The first requirement for any writ is to identify the issues. Good issues can win; poorly chosen issues will lose. Most prisoners who want to file a writ simply find a jailhouse lawyer and ask him to look at their case and find the issues to raise. A good jailhouse lawyer can do that. Unfortunately, not all jailhouse lawyers are that good, and even those who are competent usually know little more than the particular issues they raised in their own appeals or in other writs they helped write. So, while a jailhouse lawyer can often help, I suggest you start by trying to help yourself.

The person who knows your case best is you. You know how your defense failed you. If your lawyer wouldn’t investigate or prepare for trial, you are the one who knows that. If the cops violated proper police conduct in investigating your case, you are the person who knows about it. So the first step in any writ is to identify the things you believe were wrong about your case.

MAKE A LIST

Write down each of the things about your case that doesn’t sit right with you. Don’t worry about the law or whether they are legal issues, like the Miranda warnings. If you feel you were wronged by a particular action or decision, add it to your list. Use common sense. Much of the law is based on common sense.

You have probably already appealed your case. Were you satisfied with the outcome, or do you feel strongly that there was an issue raised on your appeal that the court ignored? Do you feel your lawyer failed to present your issues adequately? If so, add this to your list.

Have other people raised issues that sounded good and might apply to your case? Add them to your list. Have you read anything in a book, magazine or newsletter that sounded like it might help you? Write it down. Don’t scrimp on your list. Put down every possible issue you can think of. Brainstorm.

Take your time putting the list together. There is no hurry. You may be very anxious to go to court and try to get a reversal, but remember—you will probably only have one chance, and if you don’t file the best writ you possibly can, you are jeopardizing your future possibilities for appeal. It is better to take six months doing things correctly than it is to do an extra six years because you were in a hurry and filed a losing writ. The key here is effectiveness before efficiency.

After you have compiled the list, sleep on it for a few weeks. During that time, you may think of additional issues, and when you look at the list again, you will probably think of more. This is not a project you should expect

to do in a day. It takes thought and recollection, both of which take time.

HIT THE STACKS

I strongly recommend that you read a good basic text on criminal law at the early stage of the writ-writing process. The best book I know of is *Modern Criminal Procedure*, by Hall and Kamisar (West Publishing Co., St. Paul, Minnesota). Don’t be daunted by its size. It’s easy to read and will give you a good understanding of the basic issues for appeal. You can read it in sections—taking a month or two to finish the book may do more for your chances of success than anything else. Most prison law libraries have the book, but if yours doesn’t, it’s well worth the money to buy your own copy.

By this time, you should be looking around the law library and getting to know the people who hang out there. You will find books and other publications that catch your eye and give you additional ideas. At this stage, however, it is best to concentrate on identifying issues that might be worth raising in your case, not in doing legal research on them. (Researching your issues will be the subject of a future column.)

After you have developed your list, start discussing your case with jailhouse lawyers. Undoubtedly, they will have ideas of their own, and you should add them to your list if you think they apply. If you’re considering using a jailhouse lawyer to help write your writ, this is a good opportunity to begin to evaluate those individuals who are offering to assist you. Pay careful attention to what they say. If someone insists on a particular issue that you feel is not relevant to

your case, take it as a warning about that individual. Many jailhouse lawyers know only one or two issues, and they build their entire careers on them, often to the disadvantage of their clients.

For example, 25 years ago, when I first started doing legal work, I became deeply involved in illegal search and seizure law, which played an important role in my own appeal. When I began helping others, I naturally started by looking for search and seizure issues because I knew the law on this subject. Some jailhouse lawyers never get beyond that stage, and if you fall into their hands, you

may find that your excellent Miranda issue, or your ineffective assistance of counsel claim, is overlooked simply because you are using a jailhouse lawyer who is familiar only with one or two areas of the law.

By the same token, if you are lucky enough to find a jailhouse lawyer who is very familiar with an area of law that seems particularly suited to your case, you may want to use this person's help even though he or she has limited knowledge in other areas. So keep an open mind at this stage, and listen carefully to anybody who offers you advice or suggestions.

In conclusion, I reiterate my ear-

lier advice: Take your time. Develop your list of issues slowly and comprehensively and don't worry about when you are going to file. If you blow this chance because of impatience, it's you who will have to do the time.

In my next column, I will discuss how to go about narrowing your list of issues, deciding which ones to use and which to discard. **PL**

Send your legal questions to In-House Counsel, c/o Prison Life, 505 8th Avenue, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

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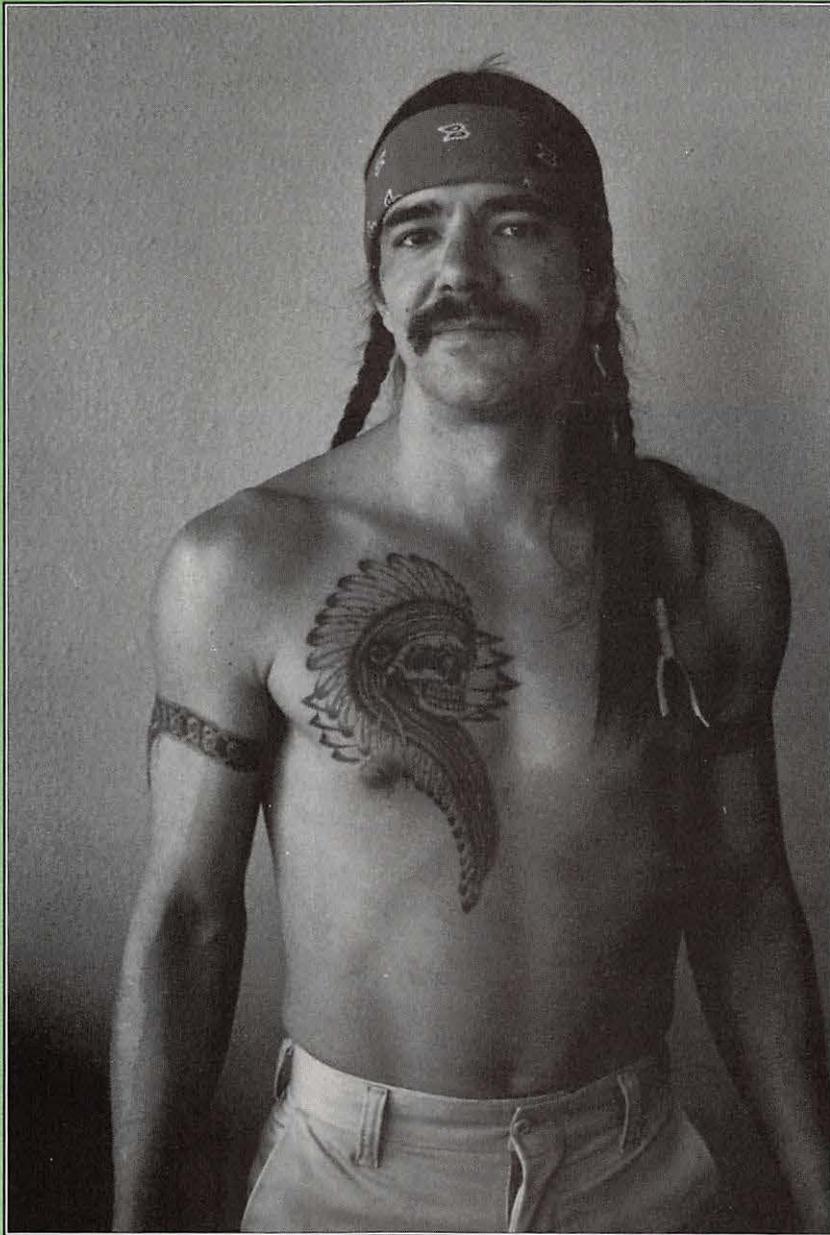
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TATTOO OF THE MONTH



“If I don’t take anything to my grave, I’ll take my tattoos.”

Fred D. Van Dyken, a member of the Oglala Sioux tribe and a native of Montana, has a total of six tattoos, all depicting Native American culture (he says “Indian.”) The skull in the warbonnet design tat on his chest stands for fallen warriors and the inner strength you can get from your ancestors. He designed it and had it applied five years ago while incarcerated in the Montana State Prison. Fred is currently locked up in Washington State. *Photo by Pat Hansen.*

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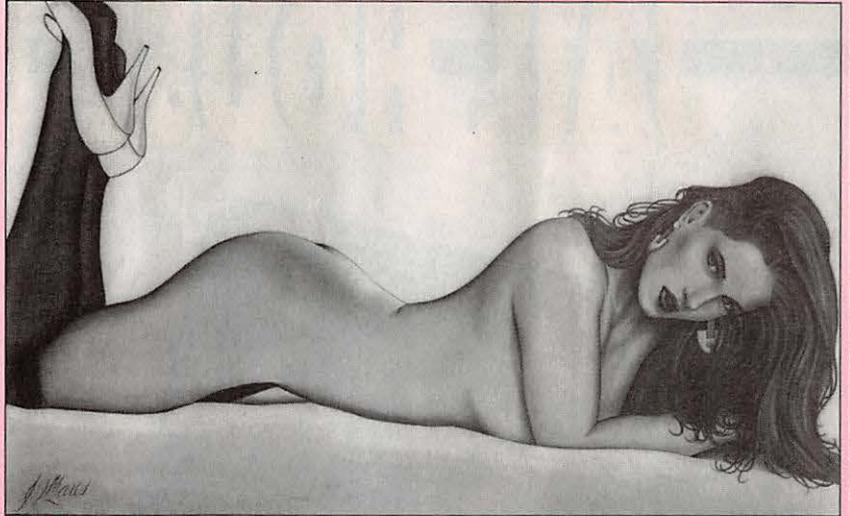
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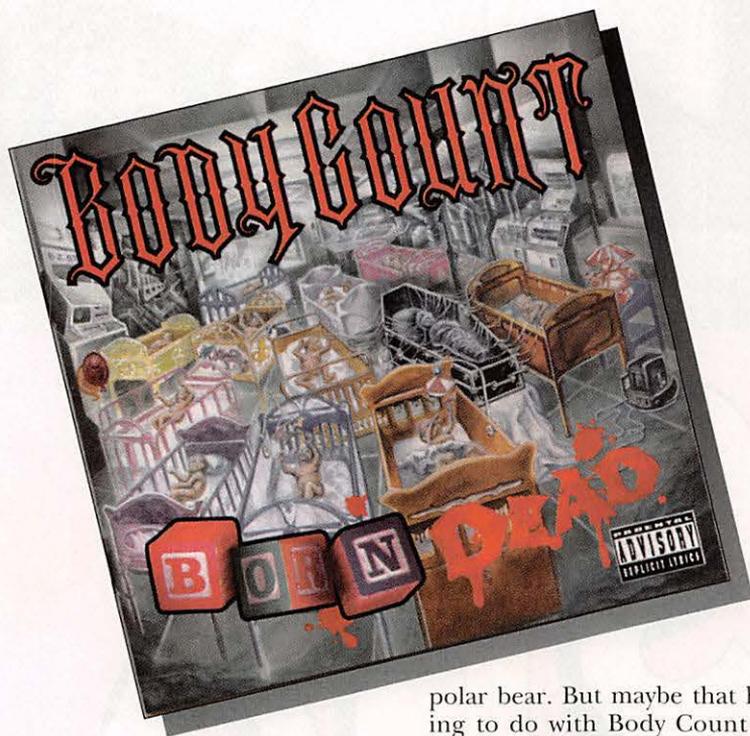
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** The illustration above was an Honorable Mention in the Art Behind Bars Contest: "Untitled Nude," by Joaquin Maus, Limon Correctional,*

JAIL HOUSE ROCK



Born Dead
Body Count
(Virgin Records)

Review by Jimmy "Snake" Tyler,
Rikers Island, New York

I have such killer memories of Body Count. My crew and I were blasting BC's first album, *Cop Killer*, the night we all got busted for beating up mall security cops. Now I'm here doin' a short stretch. No biggie.

Then the other day, my road dog came to me. "Hey dude, Body Count's got a new one out!" he said. Since I'm due for a parole hearing, I figured it was like some sign from the gods or something.

Fuckin' A! I was right, too! Body Count's *Born Dead* kicks some serious ass! Killer shit here, *Born Dead*. It's like an album full of all kinds of social-meaning stuff. It's changed my life around. Again.

It all started with this dream. There was this black guy who looked like that Jesus dude. He looked like Elvis, too; maybe a combo of the two. Anyway, he says (in my dream) to me, "White boy." Jus' like that: "White boy." Then I went on to dream of Godzilla, only he was all white and had a black button nose just like a

polar bear. But maybe that has nothing to do with Body Count or Elvis-Christ, I don't know.

I do know I wouldn't have had that dream had I not been listening to *Born Dead* over and over again, all goddamn day. Now all I wanna do is hang out with the "brothers." I want to share with them my Metallica, my feelings. I want to smoke a bowl with them, hang out and talk shit about the government and cops and about how racist everything is. I want them to see me not as a punk-ass white boy metalhead but as just another "brother." Fuck, man, for the first time I finally understand the One-World-One-Love bullshit.

Fuckin' A, my life has taken a 180. And Ice T hath showeth me the way.

At first, though, I have to admit I was sorta pissed off. Body Count talks about taking out the white folks throughout the whole album (*Cop Killer*, too). I thought, Hey dude, I'm white, too. But then I figured it out: Ice T just means all the old dudes who run this fucked-up country. Yeah, let's take 'em out, Ice! I'm withya! Nuthin' personal here!

Shit, Ice even dedicates the album to "the white youth of the world who have the courage to go against their racist parents and friends." Yeah, way cool. Now when I

go to the brothers down the block and tell 'em I'm gonna hang with them, after they stop laughing, they see I ain't talking shit.

"Yo," I say to the bro's (and I don't usually use the word "yo"), "it's, like, a necessary evil and shit."

Just like "Necessary Evil," the song. Check it out:

*Little white kid with a kool-aid smile,
Training wheels on his bike thought he
called me a nigga
Pushed that little bastard in traffic so
graphic
He was holdin' his bike tight.
He was a victim of fucked up explaining
An American example of fucked up
training.
When the fuckin' bus connected,
he flew like Knievel.
I was just necessary evil*

But I figure Ice isn't really saying to do this for real 'cause then all the Blacks would go around killing white kids with kool-aid smiles (a lot of them in the 'burbs, 'case you really want to find them) and they'd end up in prison and then more and more Blacks would be behind bars and Ice T would have to do another album about how fucked up the prison system is and how racist the motherfuckers are who run the D.O.C.'s and B.O.P.'s and that they should be pushed into traffic, too.

The tunes are about uniting and killing the "Monster" (the gov't), and how we're all pawns in their game: *Uncle Sam is his name, you're his slave, shallow graves, and Muthafuck your red, white and blue*. In fact, *Born Dead* really refers to how the white supremacists would want to see all the "people of color" born. (Y'know: dead.)

Here's what I say, and maybe the Black Elvis/Jesus combo in my dream has inspired me: O Boy/Man of Pale Color, Offspring of all That Mayeth be Racist, Even Slightly So—Buy this Album and Drink of its Wisdom . . . And then after, relax, light up and jam down to some kick ass metal. This rules.



by Hadji Hamilton

Slick Rick's "Behind Bars" (Def Jam Recordings) is a must buy. The title song, "Behind Bars," is recorded with special guest rapper Warren G., and it's as real as jail rap can get. It's no surprise that Slick Rick wrote most of these songs while locked up for attempted murder. Hype lyrics describe the horror of life in prison: "I should be out mingling with the stars, but instead I'm accumulating scars behind bars." With songs like "Sitting in My Car," you'll be bouncing no matter where you are—home, car or jail cell because this album contains some hardcore beats. Slick Rick continues to be the master of story telling, and he earns his props on this one. He's out on work release now, and word has it he may be deported back to England. No matter where he's at, I'm sure this Hip Hop legend is still keepin' it real and makin' the shit we wanna hear.

Move over Snoop Doggy Dog. Biggy Smalls is movin' up in the Hip Hop Nation. Smalls' debut CD, "The Notorious B.I.G." (Bad Boy Entertainment), is nothing but flava. His first single, "Juicy," will inspire anyone who's going through hard times. He tells of growing up poor but always knowing he was gonna be somebody. From drug dealer to mega-entertainer, he talks about it in "Big Poppa": "Living a little better now, Gucci sweater now, dropped top BM's, I'm the man, girlfriend." Every song has hard-core, from-the-gut lyrics—the kind that make you wanna get your shit together NOW. Biggy Smalls got it goin' on.

2 Pac is back with a new crew. The name of his group is "Thug Life"; they're representin' Out Da

Gutta/Interscope Records. Consisting of brother Mopreme, Syke, Macadoshis and The Rated R, Thug Life has a great future ahead of them. The first single, "Pour out a Little Liquor," appeared on the "Above The Rim" sound track, which has already gone platinum. With strong shit like, "And if I die, it don't worry me, Mama don't cry, bury me a G," it's easy to see why they call themselves "Thug Life." As 2 Pac explains: "A thug is an underdog, 1000 against 1, and still fighting. If we're not thugs, we don't survive." Although Volume 1 focuses on death, it's death that has become part of a Thug's Life. Biggy Smalls and Nate Dog also put in guest work on this CD.

Straight from Snoop's Dog Pound comes Li'l 1/2 Dead with the same type of funk that has made Snoop a household name. Li'l 1/2 Dead's debut album, "The Dead Has Arisen," (Priority Records) is as fat as Dr. Dre's "Chronic." But what do you expect? He's also from Long Beach, CA. Seems like all's in the family over here: with cousin Nate Dog and guest artist AMG & Chill, Li'l 1/2 Dead can't help but earn props.

Don Jagwarr was discovered by Ice Cube. His debut album, "Faded," has that raggamuffin flavor that'll have dance halls packed wall-to-wall. Jagwarr's style evolved from living all over: He was born in Trinidad, lived in Brooklyn for many years, then moved to Los Angeles. If you like that Hip Hop/Reggae combination, you'll like Jagwarr. Otherwise, I guess it's just O.K.

I'll be back in the next issue of *Prison Life* with some more good shit. For now, check out these flava's and be cool. I'm ghost. Peace.

Fat Tracks—the shit you should be listening to—by Hadji Hamilton. Right outta Rikers, hittin' the bricks of New York, he's here to tell you wassup with the latest hip hop tracks.

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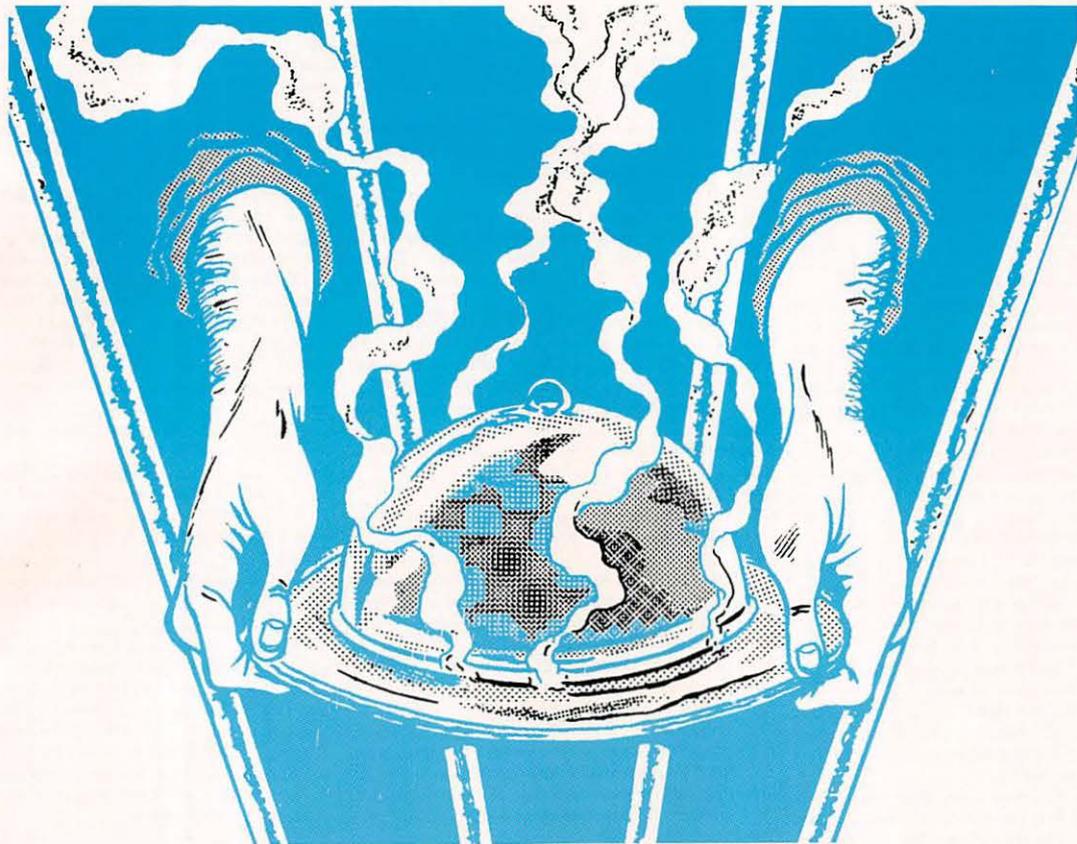


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Hearty Beans and Noodles

1 package Top Ramen Noodles (beef or chili flavor)
1 handful Instant Dehydrated pinto or red beans
1 tsp. mayonnaise
Jalapeno peppers
Minced dried onions
Pinch of garlic powder
Pinch of crushed red pepper
Pinch of salt

Crunch noodles and put in bowl. Add season packet and handful of beans. Add enough boiling water to fully cover noodles and beans. Add onions if using them. Cover bowl and let stand until noodles are cooked. Add mayonnaise and jalapenos. Stir well. Extra water can be added to achieve desired (soupy) consistency. Season to taste with garlic powder and crushed red pepper. Careful with the salt!

J. Stewart

Central California Women's Facility

Nutty Jims

1 bag Corn Nuts (barbecued or plain)
1 or 2 Slim Jims
1 or 2 packets hot sauce (smuggled from chow)

Soak corn nuts in water 'til al dente. Break up Slim Jims and add to corn nut mixture. Add hot sauce and cook over bomb or in hot pot. Eat & enjoy.

*Bobby Lee
Florence, AZ*

Stuffed Jalepenos

1 jar whole jalepenos
2 cans chicken
3 tbs. mayonnaise (10 packets)

Slice peppers lengthwise, remove seeds and rinse. Place on a paper towel to drain. Mix mayo and chicken. Fill each pepper with chicken mixture and chill well before eating.

*G.G. Galloway
Carswell FMC, Texas*

Cone-Cox-Shun

2 bags Top Ramen Noodles (beef flavor)
1 cup peanuts
2 bags pretzels
2 small boxes cereal

Find a large, empty coffee container. Pour all ingredients into container and sprinkle to flavor with beef packet from Top Ramen. Shake to mix ingredients. Other items can be added as container goes empty from eating all the cone-cox-shun.

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Chowchilla, CA*

The Bowel Reliever— A Convict's True Relief!

1 box bran flakes or All-Bran cereal
1 fresh orange
1 tsp. coffee
Sugar or sugar substitute to taste
1 cup hot water

Combine all ingredients, add sweetener to taste. Eat at individual pace and head for the toilet!

Lance Ellis, Greenville

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SBM, God-fearing, cultural, 37, 5'10", br hair, 182#, br eyes, lb br complexion, college ed. Drug-free, non-drinker, non-smoker. Enjoys boxing, martial arts, weightlifting, art, poetry, jazz. Seeks friend from amongst the God-fearing. Steven Leonard Theus, #17970, Ely State Prison, POB 1989, Ely NV 89301-1989.

SWM, been down for 10 yrs, will be out in 2. Seeks female for friendship, maybe love. David Armstrong, #185607, P.O.B. 97, McAlester, OK 74502-0097.

Odinist-oriented Aryan seeks female, 16-66, for lascivious letter lust, maybe phone, too. Also interested w/ swaps by sailed scrolls of naturally realistic wisdom/philosophy. Mule is 99.9% Nietzschean, 100% Darwin. Cum to me and you shall receive. Blue-eyed bearded, heavily-tattooed Dennis Lee "Mule" Marsh, P.O.B. 351, Wapunk, WI 53963.

SBM, 34, 5'8", 182# Christian. Never married, never had kids, college-educated, musically and artistically inclined seeking brunette, mulatto & black women for corr. & phone. Must be goal-oriented and a believer in good. Been in system since 19. Gettin' out in a few years. Need help, friendship, acceptance. Mike Brighton, 40 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY 14202.

Creole/Blk guy, college ed., attractive, poetic & respectful. Seeking female friend, 25-40, to share photos/fun. Happy letters. Eric Martin, P.O. Box 7500, B60373, A6-122, Crescent City, CA 95531.

SWM, 5'11", 26, brn hair, bl eyes, 172#. Loves to write to anyone who likes music and poetry. Looking for a good lady friend to share stories. Plus, I'm pretty good looking. William J. Blanchard, #21975, Box 14, NHSP, Concord, NH 03301.

SWM Lifer. Goin' to Board soon. Handsome, honest, educated, seeker, published. Excellent letter writer. Have R'n'R heart and live life w/ passion. Much to offer the right woman. Looks important. No smut. No games. Jeff Walker, C49778, CA State Prison-Solano, POB 4000 (9-144U), Vacaville, CA 95696.

SWM, 33, 6'1", 250#, hazel eyes, blnd hair, good physical condition—got some yrs to go yet. Looking for SWF or Latina who's got heart & soul. Will answer all. Photo for photo. Curtis R. Nolen, #474467, Robertson Unit, 12071 FM 3522, Abilene, TX 79601.

Out in '95. No games or drugs. Enjoys country music and sharing love & life w/ each other. Honest & straight. Want a loving & lasting woman to grow old with, enjoy laughter, nature, animals—a woman 40-60 who knows how to stand by her man. Write Buck Corby, #286-008, UCI A-P 44-1222, POB 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

SWM, 35, 5'11", 190#. Seeks all and any ladies wishing to correspond w/ very down-to-earth, serious person. Will respond to all. Been down 10 yrs so no head games, please. Steven E. Huston, #179652, POB 5000, Carson City, NV 48811-5000.

Ladies: Tired of cheating, lies, head games & immaturity? How 'bout tryin' this romantic Italian on for size? Early '30s, educated, honest, handsome, affectionate, faithful. Seeking serious relationship-minded woman who's independent, appealing, mature, open and not shy of commitment. Carl Puiattii, #716927, UCI, Box 221 (A-1), Raiford, FL 32083.

SWM, 33, been down 10, out in '96. Seeks female for friendship, maybe more in time. David Armstrong, #185607, POB 87, McAlester, OK 74502-0097.

Writer down again! Would appreciate correspondence from anyone interested, especially females. I'm 45, 6'1", 195#, long-haired. Interests: weightlifting, reading (political, historical, adventure, comedy). Aspiring writer-poet. John R. Sanchez, #08347-051, FCI La Tuna Cp. 1, POB 8000, Anthony, TX NM 88021.

Down Wood, Irish Blood, Looking for down Featherwood. Will answer all responses. David Aguilar, #H-24170, B7-2360, POB 409000, Ione, CA 95640.

SWM, 24, trim, athletic, would like to correspond with attractive, trim, SWF, 20-30 yrs. Tim Caisse E48167, CSP-LAC, 44750 60th ST West, Lancaster, CA 93536.

White boy in Distress. 5'9", 170#, Blk hair, Brn eyes, 32 yrs young. Needs a tender touch with a warm heart. Blind, crippled, & crazy OK. Will answer all. Charlie Hurt 41069, JCCC Box 900, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

Black, Row prisoner, 40, wants to exchange letters with folks of all persuasions, perhaps visit. Amos King #036275, Union Corr. Inst., A-1/43-2199, Raiford, FL 32083.

WM, 37, 5'10", real life Drugstore Cowboy, seeks mail from adventurous females, age & race open. No gameplayers please. Will answer all letters. Thomas Reimann #79759, PO Box 19033, Green Bay, WI 54307.

SWM into lifting weights & staying in shape would like to hear from anyone who will write me. I'll answer any & all letters. Roger M. Chambers, #42-444, Ely State Prison, PO Box 1989, Ely, NV 89301.

SWM, 32, discharging on 20 year sentence in 2 more years. Seeking caring female who appreciates the simple things in life. Age & looks unimportant. It's what's inside that counts. Timothy Crawford, D-30901 B-4, HCO1, Reidsville, GA 30499-0001.

DWM, 36, Father of 3, ages 19, 11, 9. Recovering alcoholic living the program. Been down 9.5 yrs; parole possible soon. Slim build, common sense, intelligent. Believes in God, love, honesty, family, & altruism. Enjoys reading, writing, & pleasant, interesting conversation. We're all in this together & living one day at a time. Harvey F. Garlotte, X60710, U-14, PO Box 1419, Leakesville, MS 39451.

BM, 23, aspiring rapper with talent, 5'10", 140#, with 5.5" braids. H.S. grad, some college. Parole in '97. Seeks corr. from females who enjoy writing & receiving letters. Age, race, height, weight, location, unimportant. Friendship satisfies the human need for affection, affirmation, sharing, & companionship. Will answer all. James Jenkins #78817, Unit 29-A, Parchman, MS 38738.

Knight in Tarnished Armor, SWM, 6', 200#, 30, strong, intelligent, handsome, mature. Presently death row - proving innocence!! Future secure, present difficult, Very Lonely!! Answer all. Stamp appreciated. No games please. Jeffrey A. Muehleman, 094506, Box 221-A1, Raiford, FL 32083.

Author of 4 published non-fiction books, now writing novels, plays, & movie scripts. Seeks free world collaborator & rep. Whores especially welcomed! Dennis Sobin, 266816, C-4, Hamilton CI, PO Box 1360, Jasper, FL 32052.

Good-looking, Italian looking to meet women who are serious about a relationship. I'm 29 & looking to settle down with the Right Woman. Prefer black, Spanish, or Italian. We can do it. Tommy Rosati 93A6915, Box 2000, Pine City, NY 14871, South Port Corr. Fac.

SBM, 29, 6'2", 190#. Seeks that someone special who's compassionate, open-minded. Will answer all. Eric Turner #873681, Union Corr Inst 43-2144 A-1, PO Box 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

WM, 34 enjoys the short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald & studied Solzhenitsyn. Please write to this honey member. Michael Heston 06525-067, FMC PO Box 4600, 2110 E Center St, Rochester, MN 55903-4600.

Ex-con Stephen Donaldson ("Donny the Punk") welcomes letters from all survivors of rape behind bars, jail/prison punks who were "hooked up" for protection, jockers who have or had their own punks, and booty bandits willing to write about it. Be patient on replies. PO Box 2713, Manhattanville Sta, NY, NY 10027-8817.

BLACK-ON-BLACK-GAY, beautiful, fem male, 5'9", 32, 184#, light skinned, oriental looks, arched eyebrows, pretty lips, HIV negative, seeks bisexual & straight men in the free world. Can't receive letters from other prisoners! Lawrence "LaValerie" Raibon #33325-004, FCI, PO Box 1500, El Reno, OK 73036.

Does anybody really care? Cherokee male, 37, 6', 155", Brn hair & eyes. Don't lie or play headgames. Seeking sincere, caring lady for friendship & possible long term relationship. If you're the type who believes in fresh starts & 2nd chances, write to Brent A. Ellis #47436 Moberly Corr Ctr 2-B-462, PO Box 7, Moberly, MO 65270.

SWM, 50, semi-retired professional, likes reading, TV, weight-lifting, 6', 180#. Wants special friend & correspondent in prison. Dennis Tihansky, 206 Kings Court, Washington, PA 15301.

SWM, 36, 6'1", 180#. Seeking ladies 21-45 for pen pals & serious relationship. Am kind, caring, romantic. Will respond to all. David Buckland #934897, PO Box 30 21-5A, Pendleton, IN 46064.

Laurinda Hammock, Ellen Embry Fr Mo, 1973-74, old friend—write me. To that lil Irish lass (L.E.) what I said about you & your lil boy I meant, put your heart into a real thing and leave the punks alone. Anyone else, if you want some decent conversation, I'll respond. I'm real. You be real too. WM, 38, 5'9", Lng Hair, 170#, no fat. Dakota Chad Dekoven 145274, 1576 Bluewater Hwy, Ionia, MI 48846.

SWM, 25, seeking any female 18-50 for friendship/relationship. Interests include weight lifting, traveling, nature, & music. Will answer all responses. Phillip Kimble #230-864, MA-188, PO Box 740, London, OH 43140.

Male, artistic & entertainment field genius seeks soon to be released, young, female prisoner to act as Chief Exec. Assistant in artistic business endeavors. Win Peters #86028, PO Box 97, McAlester, OK 74502.

White Lifer, 46, goatee, tattoos, muscles, head shaved, bald & beautiful! Seeks hispanic or white lady to write/visit. Guy Williams C35148, Box 1902-4A, Tehachapi, CA 93581.

SWM, 49, seeking females of any age to correspond with. Doing life without parole and have no one who cares. Able to write to other prisons. Promise to answer all. J Doc, 113665, Box 10, Stillwater, MN 55082.

SBM, Soul Seeker, 43, 6'3", 260 robust lbs. Enjoys sharing & caring. Seeks correspondence, companionship, & love with female of the same interests. Robert N. Olds, #036638, Moberly Corr Ctr, PO Box 7, Moberly, MO 65270-0007.

SWM, 35, Federal prisoner, writer. Seeks correspondence with sincere, honest lady. Age & race unimportant. No games-no lies. Charles Young #13104-075, PO Box 33, Unit 5-C, Terre Haute, IN 47808.

SWM, 48, been down a long time - still has a ways to go. Would enjoy some sharing of words & honest friendship. Robert J. Ferrell #A917016, 1150 SW Allapattah Rd, Indiantown, FL 34956.

Please write to a just-been-moved con. Embery McBride EF-207197, GSP G-1-#1, Reidsville, GA 30499.

Tall, black, handsome, 35, male. Been down 15 yrs. Out in a couple more. In search of a beautiful, sexy, intelligent, sophisticated lady (20-50) willing to take a chance with a loving, faithful, educated man. I'll do anything to please my lady in or out of bed. Wanting a long term relationship. Race not important. Serious replies only. Julius Evans #453368, Coffield Unit, Rt 1 Box 150, Tennessee Colony, TX 75884.

SWM, 30, Long blond hair, Blue eyed devil seeking that heaven sent angel, SWF. I'm wild & if you think you can tame me, I dare you! John Briggs C-94051, Cal State Prison - Sacramento, FC-2-B-115, PO Box 29, Repressa, CA 95671.

Lonely, athletic, black male, 39, 5'6", 150#, seeking anyone who is searching for a sincere friend. Any reply welcome. Will send photo. Larry E. Miles #200-178, 5900 Bid Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130

30 yrs old, 5'9", 152#, brn hair & eyes, very outgoing, & love people in life. Interested in meeting an honest, sincere, loyal lady who deserves to be with one man. I'm single, never been married, no children. If you're that special lady, I'll be waiting to hear from you. If you're ONE OF A KIND I may even marry you. Gary Cooksey #860825, Branchville Training Ctr, PO Box 500, Tell City IN 47586.

Age 34, Mexican/Navajo, caged over 17 yrs, could use some female company. Race, age, come what may. Would appreciate whatever you wish to say. Cornelio J. Tristan B-92248, PO Box 7500 SHU C-7-E#117, Crescent City, CA 95532.

If you're looking for a man that's down but not out, TOTALLY in love with life, has learned his lesson, but is unafraid to move forward, has a plan and a great future, write to Pearson, Russell H-96499, PO Box 3366 (3B04-129), Corcoran, CA 93212-8310.

Inmate awaiting new trial seeking true, lasting friendship that may someday lead to something more intimate & rewarding. Very open & straight forward about myself. Humorous, care-free, educated in the captains field for 12 yrs. Wishing to share some quality time so let's do lunch. Roderick Michael Orme #726848, A-1 45-1280, Union Corr Inst, PO Box 221, Raiford, FL 32083-0221.

STRANGERS ARE FRIENDS—SBM from DC, 35, 6', 190#. Confined for the past 11 yrs & seeking correspondence. Will answer all who write. Bruce Gaynor, 186312, 901 Corrections Way A2-322, Jarratt, VA 23870-9614.

WM, 5'7", 170#, 25, enjoys reading, physical fitness, self-improvement. Looking for correspondence with women of mutual interests. Jack Fuson #223194, PO Box 480999, New Haven, MI 48048.

SWM, 41 yrs. I'm a very lonely prisoner who needs a friend. Please write to Clay M Curtis, #03871-084, PO Box 1000, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

Convict: 6'4", 265#, Blue-gray, 39, interests include exercising, karate, Indian culture, reading, bikes, outdoors. Owns a business. In system 10 yrs & getting short. Roy "Mountain" Whitehead #944333, OCI (B-233-L) 3189 Little Silver Rd, Crestview, FL 32539-0578.

LONELY! 42 yr old WM, 5'9", 150#, Bl eyes, enjoys C&W music, trucks, outdoor life, travel, historic literature, seeks friendship with like-minded female, but will answer all. Paul Hale #862345, Indiana State Prison - A450, POB 41, Michigan City, IN 46360.

32 yr old, very good looking Italian, 5'9", 175#, in good shape, brn eyes, long light blk hair, looking to find that special lady for long lasting relationship. Will trade flicks. James Ferrari #209153, 4008 Cooper St, Jackson, MI 49201-7518.

BM, 31, 5'9", 175#, bowlegged-loving, intelligent, open, & honest. Seeks correspondence with open-minded woman for friendship - age, race, looks unimportant. Christopher Trotter #862556, PO Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46360.

Pre-op transsexual seeking real man, honest, open-minded, straight forward. Other transsexuals most welcome. Richard Hamm #133886, DCI Box 661, Waupun, WI 53963.

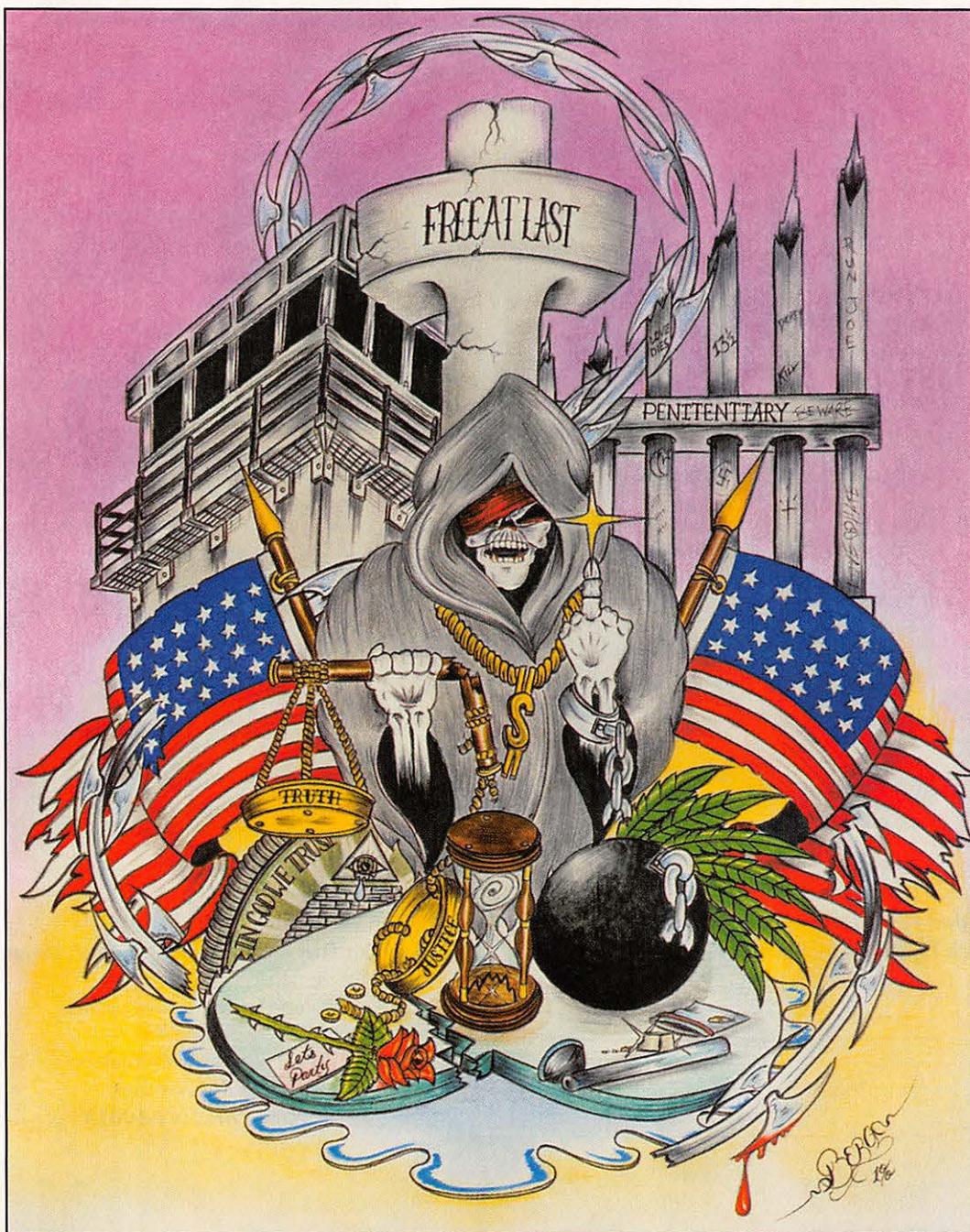
WM, 40 yrs old with 22 yrs down & fighting to come up. Seeks female to challenge the present horizons & broaden those yet to be found. No games. Open minded. No promises but one - I do not turn my back on my friends. Wayne Knutson, #402218, PO Box 316, Ft Madison, IA 52637.

African-American man, 40, 5'10", 175#, BS in Bus. Mgt., currently working toward BS in Computer Sci. Studies Biblical Hebrew & Spanish. Religion is Nature, Science, & Art. Desires to correspond with all beautiful-hearted women/men who can see what is good & dimly understand the music which the earth produces. George E. Vaugh #140-337, PO Box 56, Lebanon, OH 45036.

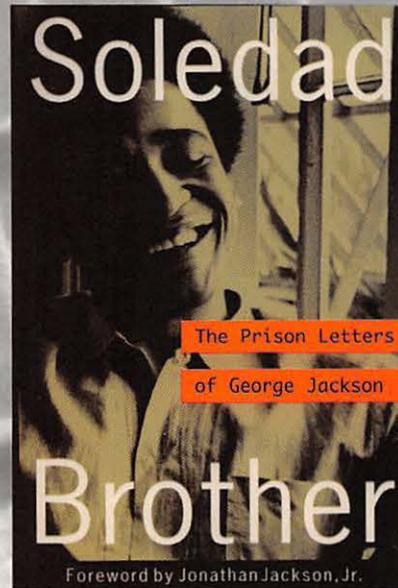
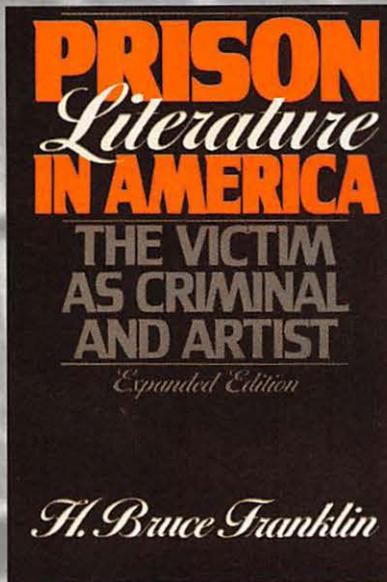
33 yr old WM, 5'8", brn hair, grn eyes, seeks female age 24-44, for secure, loving, committed mate. Sexy photos welcomed. Sincere women interested in compassion, exercising, & honesty only apply to this sincere body builder. Gregory Lee Meeker #268-469 2C237, PO Box 120, Lebanon, OH 45036.

SWM Convict, 36, doing 10 to life, in Spud Country of all places, brn eyes & hair, 165#, forced back. Looking for a compassionate SWF companion. Steve G. Brown #35353, IMSI B-Block PO Box 51, Boise, ID 83707-0051.

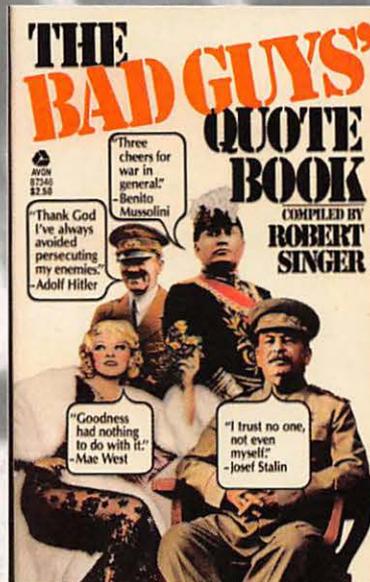
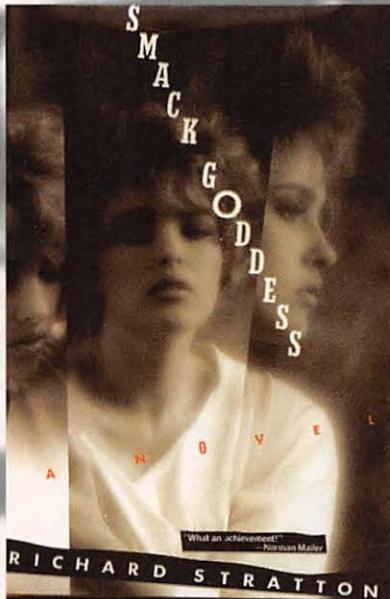
SWJM, 44, 6'2", 240#, grn eyes. Capricorn into New Age lifestyle. Tarot, crystals, health, no smoking, no drugs. May be going home in next 12 months. Ron Wegner, #94A0949-4A-36, Box F, Fishkill, New York, 12524.



Art Behind Bars' Honorable Mention: "Free at Last," by Douglas Berg, Eastern Correctional, Maryland.



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Meditating Together

By Brother Rasa

Prison is a place of dualities. Conflicts abound between guards and prisoners, and between racial groups. Outside the walls too, conflict is a worldwide, ongoing situation. We all experience conflict within ourselves, as well. Sometimes it seems that for the sake of survival, we have to throw up barriers around ourselves. Spiritual exploration can help us resolve much of the conflict we feel within.

My brothers and I have been getting together for a couple of years now and experiencing the gifts of meditation. We practice every week — sometimes as a group, sometimes in pairs, sometimes individually in our own space. When you are with a friend, meditating, sitting with eyes closed, at the threshold of the divine, even the guards may hesitate to interrupt. They perceive that you are in a sacred space, that you are doing something worthy of reverence. And you are. You are opening your heart to the presence of the Supreme Being, and you are inviting that Higher Power to enter, to elevate and expand your understanding, to transform your vision.

Meditation is like a prayer. Anyone can do it. It is one of the tools of transformation that anyone can use to enhance whichever religious practice he or she might already embrace. In other words, meditation is not just the property of Eastern mystics. Whether you are Christian, Moslem, Jewish or Native American — or even if, like me, you don't put your spirituality into one of those categories — you can use meditation to deepen your experience. For me, that's what meditation is about.

Relax.

To begin, find a place where you can sit undisturbed (as far as is possible) for an hour or more. If you have earplugs, you might want to use them. Some of the brothers use headphones and play soft music. Do whatever you can to create an environment of comfort around yourself. Some of the prisoners I know have transformed their cells into beautiful

temples, spiritual oases within the prison. I surround myself with things that radiate a peaceful and nurturing energy. I have photos of people I care about, pictures of Christ, Krishna, Buddha. I have scriptures and books that are sacred to me, and a display of cards that prisoners whom I care deeply about have sent to me. I wrap myself in my favorite security blanket (winter mornings are a bit chilly here in West Virginia), and I sit comfortably. I prefer to sit in a 'half-lotus' posture — legs crossed with one foot resting upon the other thigh. This helps me to keep my back straight without straining and lets me breathe more deeply and easily and concentrate better. The important thing is not which posture you choose, but that you sit comfortably, with your back straight, in a way that will enable you to best relax.

Close your eyes and begin by focusing on breathing. Take a long deep breath and exhale. Allow your breathing to slow down. Meditation means awareness. As I breathe deeply, slowly, I allow myself to relax with each breath. I am aware of my breathing and aware of the gift of the breath of life. *I accept each breath as a gift from the Creator, and I return each breath with gratitude back to the universe.* Think about it. Each breath is something so precious, yet you cannot possess it for long. You have to let go of it, release it, return it to the source.

Give your mind a rest.

Allow your thoughts to calm. Although you may have many powerful thoughts racing around in your mind, try to give your mind a rest. Time spent meditating is your own time for personal spirituality, for heal-

(continued on page 85)



Illustration by Steve Lashley

Classifieds

LEGAL

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If you are an incarcerated victim of involuntary sex behind bars, you can get a free practical information/advice audio tape, "Becoming a Survivor." Unsealed but transparent, tapes can be sent care of a shrink or chaplain if not allowed directly. Request from: P.O. Box 2713, New York, NY 10027-8817.

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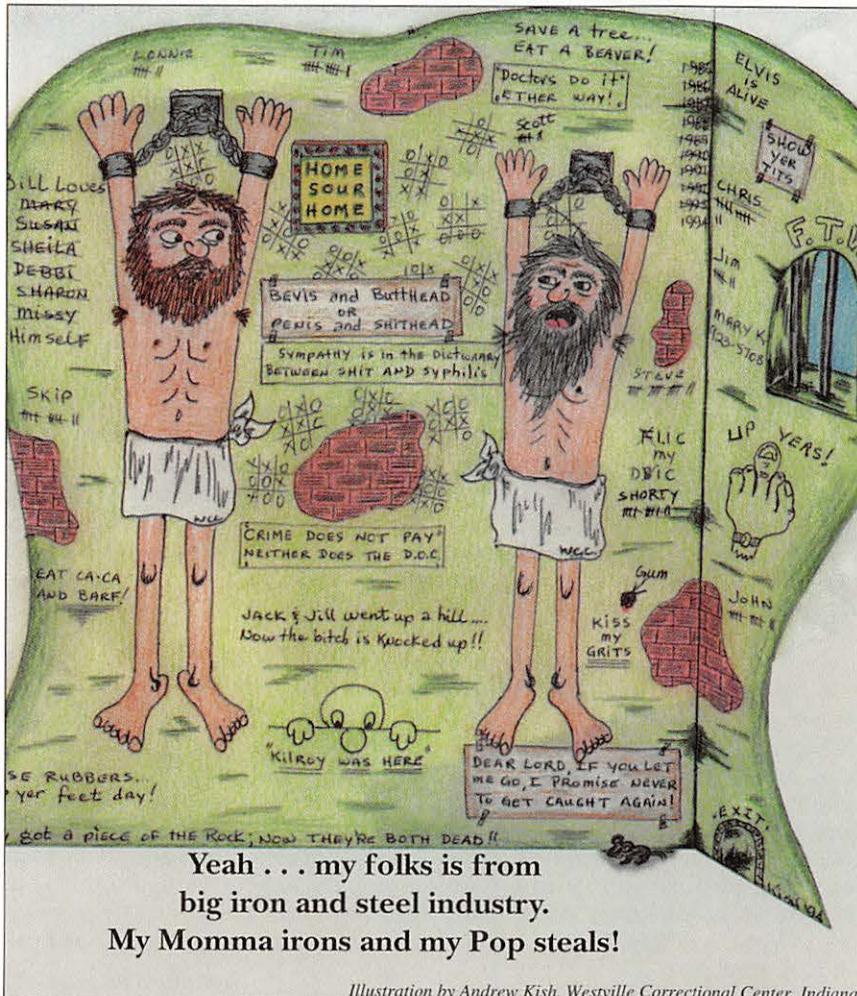
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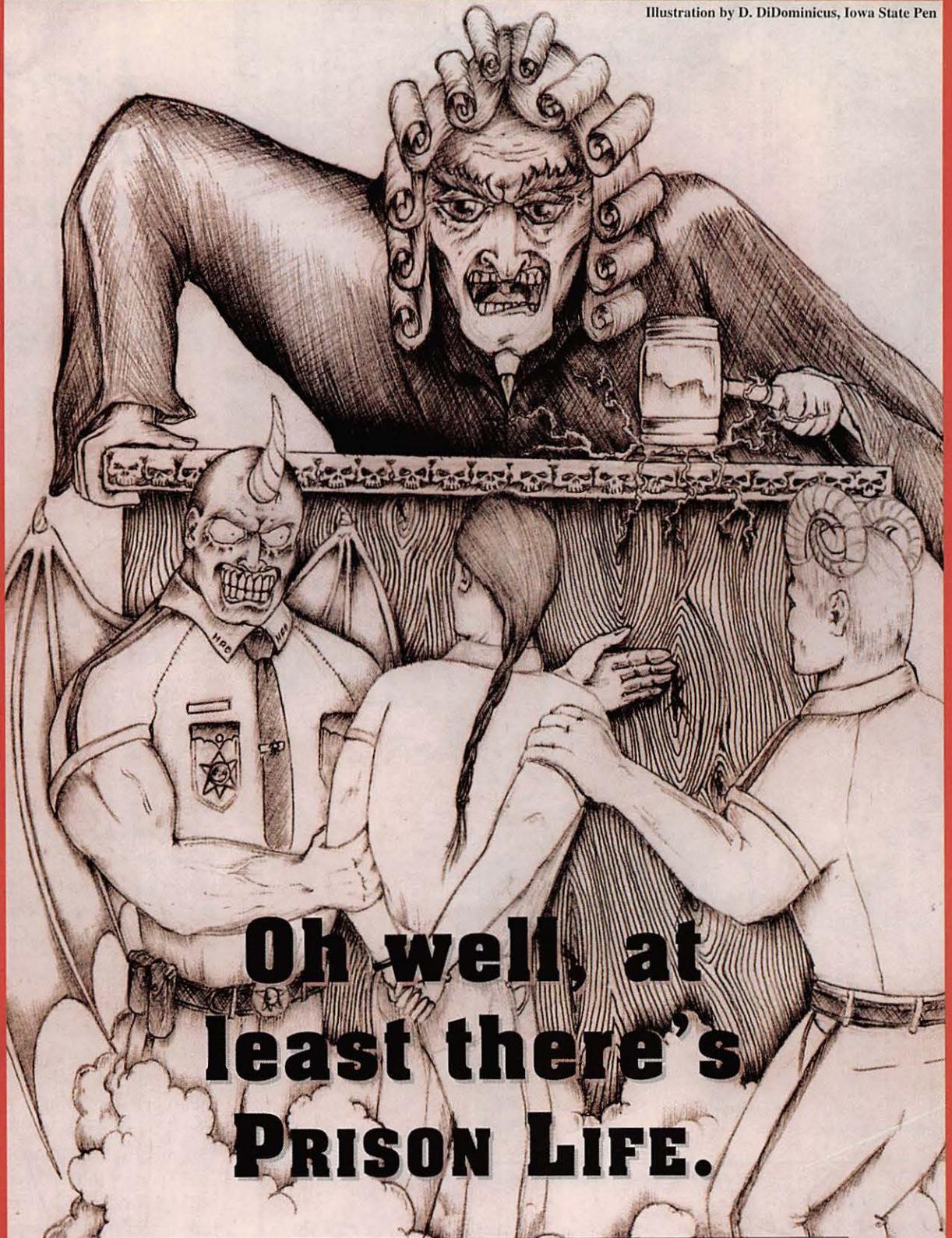
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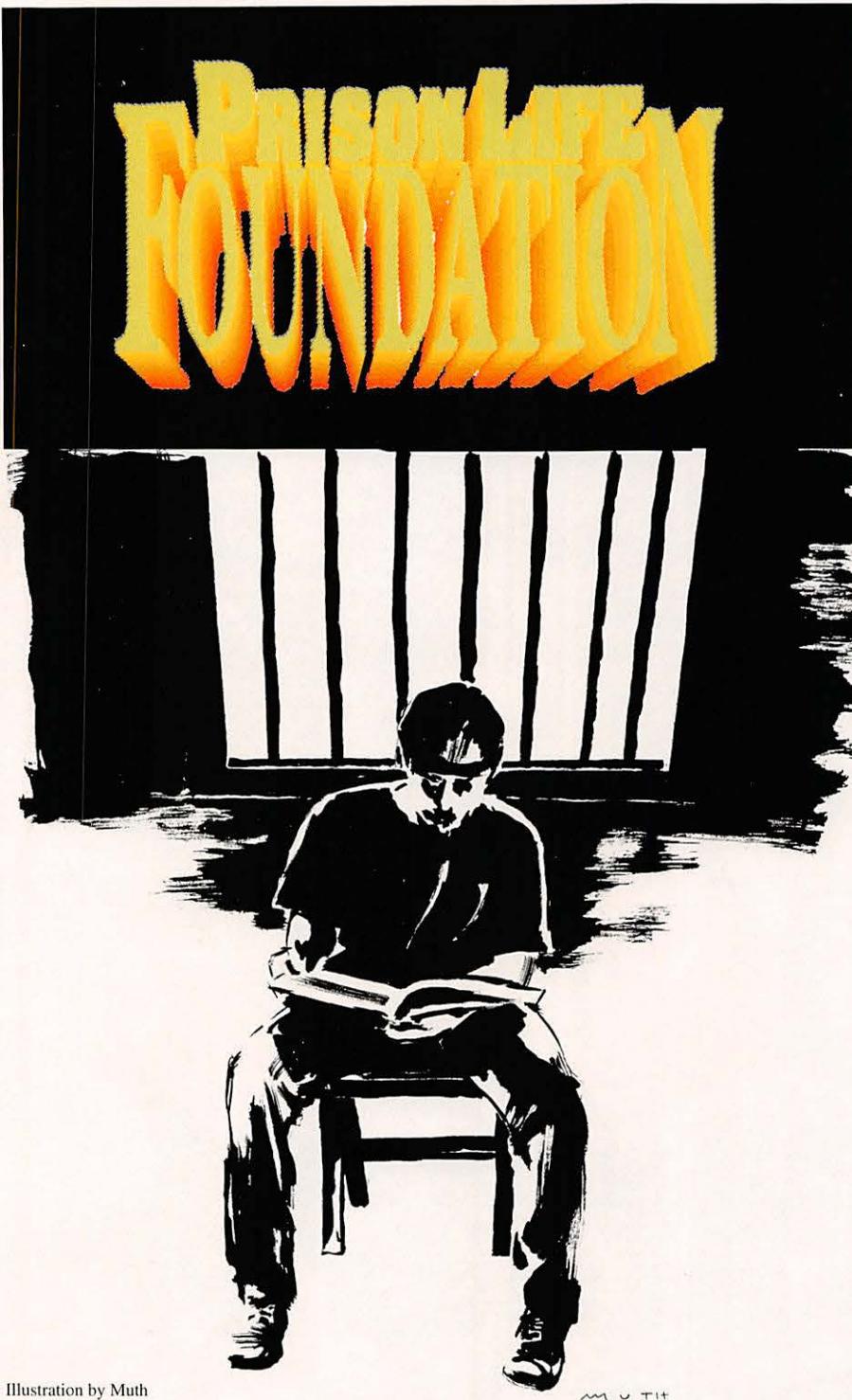


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Meditation

(continued from page 81)

ing, growth, for resting in the Spirit. You can resume your pressing business later. Right now, give it a rest.

There is a place within yourself where your Higher Power dwells. This power may be present to you as Krishna or Christ, Allah or Buddah or The Holy Spirit or any of myriad other forms. Whichever it is for you, reach out to the source, the life force, breathe deeply with awareness. Reach out to that Higher Being. We use the strength of our souls to break through the barriers of cares and concerns, move beyond the limited mind to our Higher Power. This process of reaching out through the boundaries of the mind to the Divine is the essence of meditation. It is the opening into a vast universe of spiritual experience. As our meditation deepens, the barrier of the mind that separates us from our spirit dissolves and we pass beyond the mind's anxious ramblings into the peaceful realm of spiritual understanding.

The Language of the Soul

In a meditative state, I repeat a silent prayer, or mantra. I speak to

God, invoke God's presence, approach the presence of the Divine. Speak as you are moved to speak. Let your heart sing! It's your path, your experience, your own spiritual voice. Listen to the song of your soul. Allow yourself to feel the power of God surrounding you. This is prayer.

Enter the realm of grace, the spiritual realm within ourselves where our hearts find healing. As we explore the inner reaches of the soul we discover that we all share a single spiritual nature — we are all connected in the Spirit. **PL**

Brother Rasa (a/k/a the Swami) conducts a meditation ministry in West Virginia prisons. Prisoners of the West Virginia Penitentiary are putting together a collection of convicts' spiritual experiences, realizations, visions, poetry, etc. and invite you to share your experiences on the spiritual path. Mail submissions to: Brother Rasa, P.O. Box 1153, Moundsville, WV 26401.

LIBERTAD TEMPRANA PARA PRESOS MEXICANOS

Los prisioneros Mexicanos, especialmente en el sistema federal, pueden ser transferidos hacia Mexico para recibir libertad temprana, y vivir cerca de sus seres queridos a través de los servicios del Bufete de Benninghoff & Ramirez. A través de oficinas en los Estados Unidos y Mexico, Benninghoff & Ramirez provee a sus clientes un servicio sin igual.

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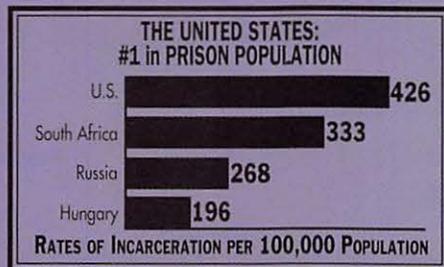


In the last three years, America's prison population has grown threefold. There are now 1.5 million prisoners in the federal, state and local prisons.

This hasn't happened by accident—and the odds are that the rates will continue to sky-rocket.

State and federal legislators continue to ignore the statistics and think nothing of America as being the country with the largest prison population in the world. What they need to do is take immediate steps to address this growth problem.

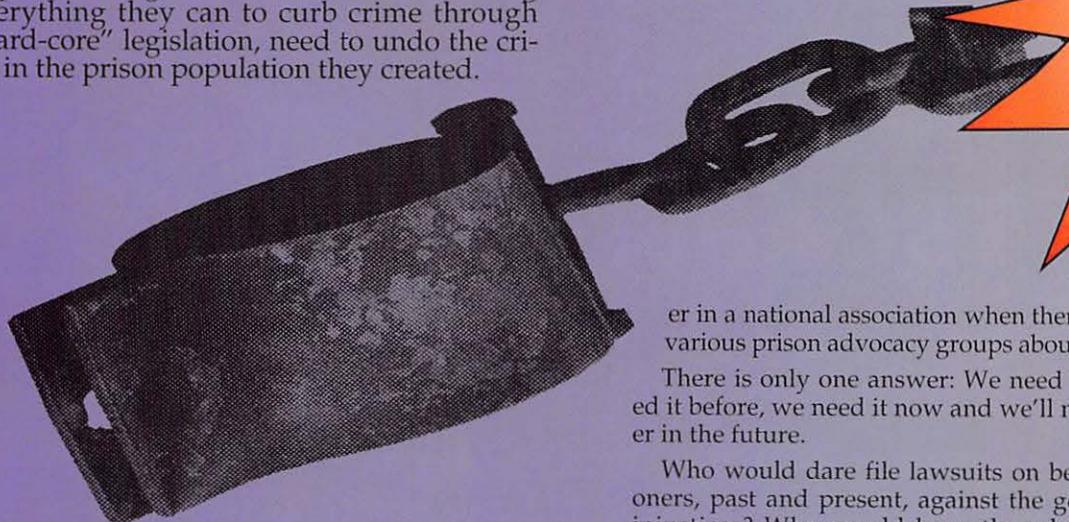
Instead of focusing on violent crime, those in power need to adopt a more realistic approach. Legislators, hell-bent on doing everything they can to curb crime through "hard-core" legislation, need to undo the crisis in the prison population they created.



Even prisoners agree that those who commit murder, armed robbery, rape, child molestation and the like are a menace to society. There will always be the need to isolate, not only to punish but perhaps to rehabilitate, these people in order to protect society.

But most other non-violent offenders can be penalized without incarceration and its costs. If the *right* resources were to be made available, the *taxpayer* would benefit.

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er in a national association when there is a host of various prison advocacy groups abounding?

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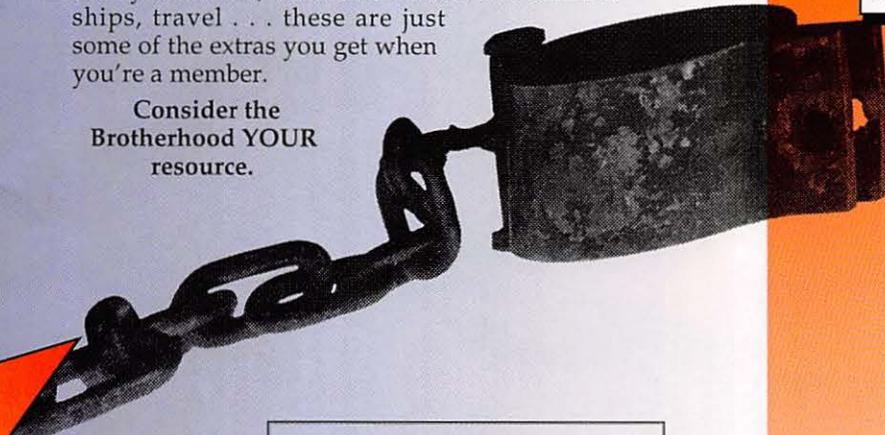
Where once you couldn't get credit, it's now yours for the asking. Where once you were denied health, life, term, auto and home insurance because of your prison record, it's now yours by applying. Where once you were being discriminated against when applying for educational enrollments and grants, now there can be an end to it.

When you thought the orange, khaki or green state- and fed-issued clothing had you dyed forever, you can relish knowing these same uniforms are getting you many perks and privileges you might not have been able to get.

The Brotherhood of Prisons of America is making this possible.

Credit . . . insurance . . . education . . . perks such as family discounts, wholesale market club memberships, travel . . . these are just some of the extras you get when you're a member.

Consider the
Brotherhood YOUR
resource.



ONE MEMBER
QUALIFIES THE
ENTIRE FAMILY
FOR BENEFITS.

★ THE BROTHERHOOD BY
WORKING TOGETHER HELPS SOCIETY.

★ THE BROTHERHOOD PROTECTS AND
MAKES COMFORTABLE THE ENTIRE FAMILY.

★ THE BROTHERHOOD HELPS OFFENDERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES HELP THEMSELVES.

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

- Health ID/Information Card
(for emergency use, w/ medical history)
- Newsletter on current concerns
- Phone Guidance and Assistance
(members receive an 800 number)
- Phone Resource and Referral
- Nationwide Pressure for Reform
- Coordination and Interaction with
Other Groups
- Shopping discounts

ADDITIONAL REFERRALS AND RESOURCES FOR YOUR FAMILY

- Employment Opportunities
- Medical, Dental & Pharmaceutical Aid
- Legal Services; federal, state and local
- Job Training
- Scholastic Loan Assistance, Grant
Program Advice
- Drug and Alcohol Education & Referral
- Child Care Agencies
- Insurance Services: Health (group),
Life (whole or term), Automobile,
Disability, Dental, Business & Home
Liability
- Financial Services Consulting:
Bonding, Credit Union, Credit Card,
Debit Cards, Mortgages, Brokerages,
Portfolio Management, Pension and
Estate Planning
- Job Placement, Executive Search,
Union Placement & Resume Writing
- Accounting & Bookkeeping Firms
- Personal and Business Tax Companies
- Immigration and Passport Businesses
- Real Estate Service Brokerages
- Commercial Property Analysis
- Residential and Vacation Home

Charter Membership Request

1995 Initial Fee: \$95.00 Renewal fee: \$35

Member _____ ID# _____

Name & Relationship of Family Member _____

Address _____ Contact tel. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Credit Card #

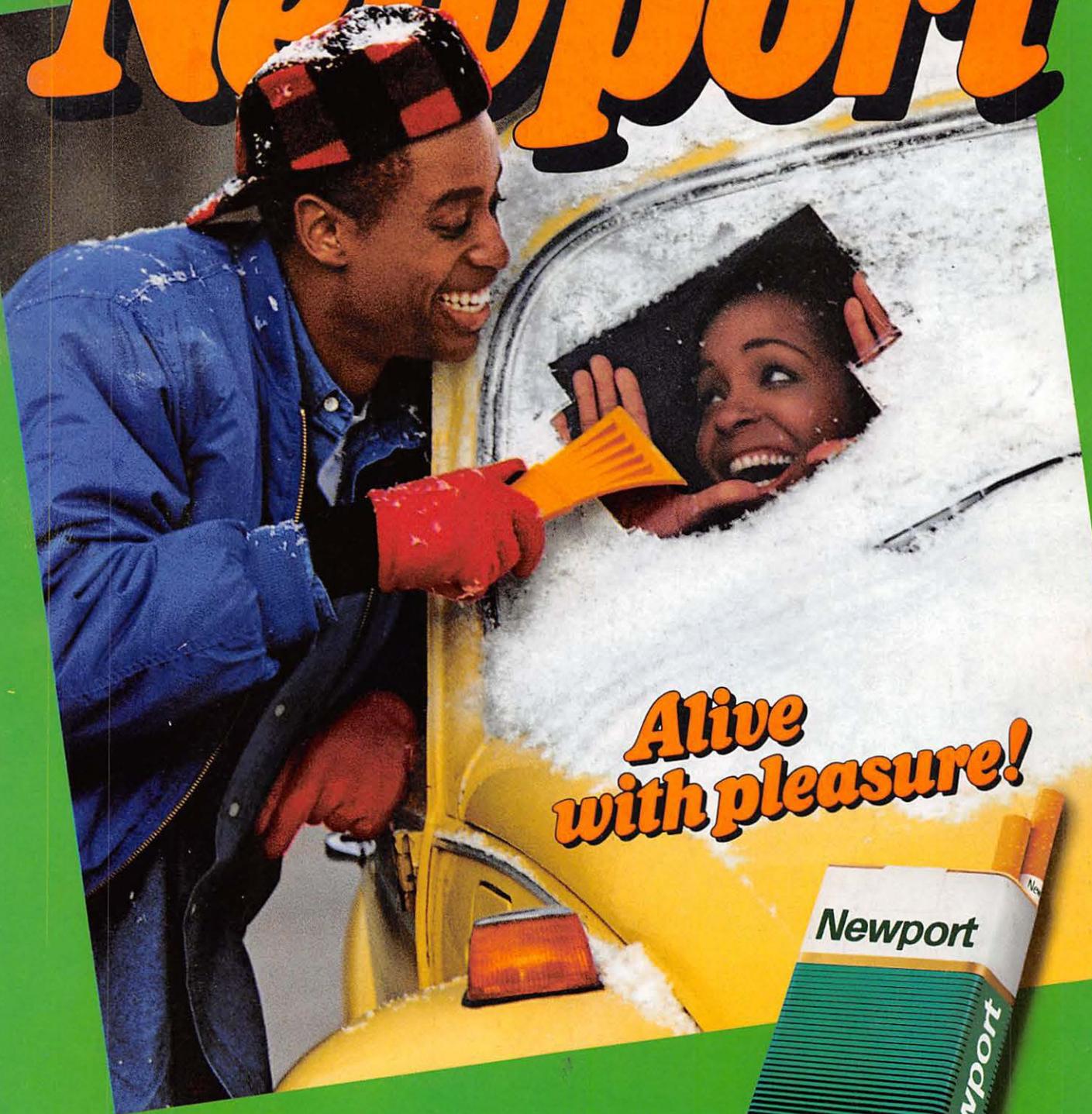
Exp. _____ AmX Visa Mastercard Discover

Signature _____

Check Money Order

For information, write to: Brotherhood of Prisoners of
America, Inc., Empire State Building, 350 5th Avenue,
Suite 3304, New York, NY 10118-0069

Newport



**Alive
with pleasure!**



SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

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Kings: 17 mg. "tar", 1.2 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC Method.