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Voice of the Convict

by
Richard Stratton
Editor-in-Chief

COMMON GROUND

While there is a lower class I am in it, while there is a criminal element I am of it; while there is a soul in prison I am not free.

Eugene V. Debs

One of the most memorable days I spent in prison was the day Muhammad Ali visited the population at the Federal Correctional Institution in Ashland, Kentucky. Ali has always been one of my heroes. I love the man's courage; I admire his strength of conviction as much as his wit and grace. Even now, suffering as he is, he has such dignity and poise, like a noble, battered old king. For me, Ali will always be "the Greatest."

Word had been around the compound for days that Ali would stop by while in the area making appearances for charity. Supposedly, a white guy doing time on a mail fraud beef knew Ali and had arranged the visit. Yeah, sure, we thought. He'll never show. Just another bullshit jailhouse rumor.

At three o'clock on the awaited afternoon, they opened the compound for the last controlled movement before count time. Still no Ali. I went out to walk around the track. I figured the Champ had been dissuaded from coming to talk to a bunch of lowly convicts. The guy who set up the visit claimed the Champ would show; he said Ali was on his way from nearby Huntington, West Virginia. But at 3:40 p.m. they called count and opened the compound for the final move back to the units.

Then, with just ten minutes to go, they announced that Ali had arrived and would be meeting the population in the yard. We hurried out to sit in the bleachers next to the basketball court and listen to the warden babble some fatuous crap by way of introducing Ali—as though Muhammad need-

ed an introduction. We wanted the warden to sit down, shut up and let Ali talk before they called count. In all my years in prison I had never seen them delay the four o'clock count and I had no reason to believe they would do it this day.

At last Ali emerged from a cluster of attendants and local bigwigs. He waltzed out onto the basketball court and began taking mock shots at the warden. "That's enough outta you," he said, pushing the warden aside with his formidable presence. Then he waved at us in the bleachers. "These are my people!"



Photo by Wayne Maser

I looked around to see black men, Hispanics, whites, maybe a dozen different nationalities, their rapt faces gazing at Ali and smiling at his style. He was still the coolest, the smartest heavyweight any of us had ever known. He did the Ali shuffle, slowly and with only a poignant memory of the former beauty in motion. It was his way of saying you never let go of your pride.

I don't remember exactly what Ali said that day. It was one of those moments when you get swept up so completely you forget to pay attention. His wit was as sharp as ever. He told some jokes directed at the administration. He said he'd tried to get there earlier but they kept delaying him, taking him to meet some other

fool he had no interest in knowing. He said he just wanted to get over to the prison and meet us, like we were his whole reason for getting up that day. There was no lecture, no "Hey, you done bad, now pull yourselves together and get out of here." He was telling us he respected us and felt solidarity with us because he knew what it was like to be oppressed. He was talking to the Blacks, and at the same time talking to all of us, looking at us the same because our common experience made us one: convicts, outcasts segregated from the rest of society. At 4:10 the warden tried to end Ali's visit and send us back to the units for count, but Ali told him to sit down and wait. "These men have been waiting for years," he said. It was a good twenty minutes before we trooped back to the cellblocks.

I remember thinking after Ali's visit that if there is anywhere in the world where racism should not exist, it is in the American prison. If there is anywhere in the world where strong, tough men and women should be able to look at each other and understand that we are not natural enemies and that only if they keep us fighting among ourselves can they keep us from taking control of our own lives, it is in the American prison. I believe prison should be the common ground, the no man's land where convicts of all colors and races and creeds come together, stripped of the outer trappings that work to separate us and instead see each other as we really are: one in the same, all human flesh and blood, weak and beautiful, different but intrinsically equal, divided only in terms of who wields the power. When you have nothing, you have nothing to lose. So you can drop the conditioned reflexes,

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**"The Drug War?
It's bullshit."**

Michael Levine gives the inside dope on the government's so-called war on drugs.

photo by Chris Cozzone

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October 1994

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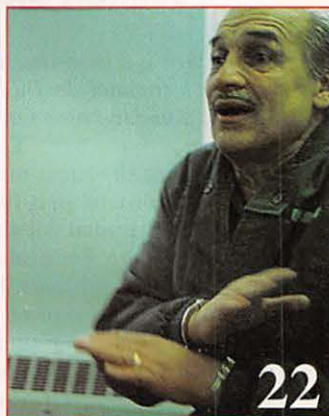
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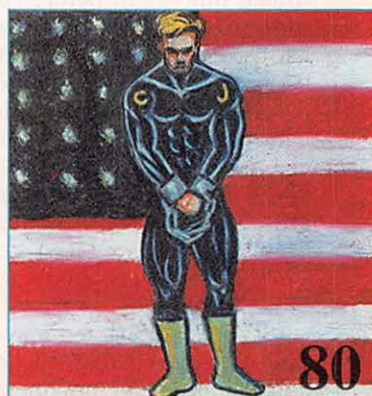
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Word

ONE MEAN 'ZINE

by

Chris Cozzone
Executive Editor

You're damn lucky to be reading this month's mag. I mean, it's a miracle we were able to crank this mother out with all the response we received from the last issue. Every two minutes, we were answering phone calls or opening mail, reading the thousands of letters received from in and outta prisons.

We thought we were being crafty, hell even responsible, when we sent every one of the 50,000 members of the American Correctional Association a free copy of June's *Prison Life*. We wanted to let the nation's C.O.'s, wardens and other corrections officials know we exist, to spread the word and help bridge the gap between keeper and kept. The responses were of two schools. Either they asked how to subscribe, saying, "This mag is wonderful. Cool. Important," or they gave an opposite reply: "I want my name off the mailing list now!", "This magazine is filth!", "You worship Satan!", or "*Prison Life* breeds discontent, gives the prisoners false role models and encourages riotous behavior—burn witch burn, blah blah blah blah."

OK, cool. We tried to reason. We argued, we laughed, we listened to those who refused to hear us. My biggest beef with the non-con response is that we're being misunderstood. Yeah, we're giving the system a fight; we're striving to change a few things; we're providing a forum for prisoners—but we're NOT seeking to overthrow the government, burn flags, open the prison gates and tell all of you to loot, kill and rape. *Prison Life* is the voice of the convict, not the gun.

Your responses were much better received. One dude at Joliet summed it up: "Your mag is one mean 'zine." If you thought the June issue was bad, wait until you check out this issue.

As you read through the line-up, you're going to see a lot of discontent, not because we're encouraging it but because it's out there. The shit exists. We're only reporting it. Our job is journalism—to provide a forum for cons and ex-cons, to uncover the problems plaguing the American justice system, and to inform, entertain and inspire those behind bars. If there's corruption, injustice and discontent, we're

gonna show it, even if it brings us heat.

And in this month's issue, there's enough heat to turn the Man's office into a sauna.

Our cover story is an exclusive interview with Michael Levine. He's an ex-DEA agent responsible for putting away thousands of people. Why does his face grace our cover? Because he's now mouthing off at the government that once employed him: "The Drug War? It's a fraud," he says. And Levine has the facts to back it up.

Next, *Prison Life* turns to the most hated prisoner of all—the snitch. Having checked out of the Federal Witness Protection Program, Donald Frankos tells us what happens when you turn stool pigeon and give yourself over to the feds at the expense of others. "They promise you the moon," he says, "but in the end, they give you nuthin'."

Speaking of false promises, the flurry of crime bills sweeping the nation is examined by *Prison Life*. "Three Strikes, You're Out" laws (also part of the federal crime bill) are being passed by individual states. Based on public hysteria, the bills are illogical, costly and short-sighted. In Southern California, for instance, stealing avocados is a strike.

Included in the crime bill is the insane idea to ban weightlifting programs and equipment in prisons. "Weightlifting just makes supercriminals and causes riots," critics say. This month's Iron Pile takes a look at the bill that could end up inciting a riot.

If it's riots you want (that is, unless your prison authorities have ripped that part out of your mailed copy), then read the gory details of the Attica, Santa Fe and Lucasville riots, considered the bloodiest in America's history. Find out what caused them and what's being done today to prevent reoccurrences.

And if you think America's prisons are shitty, check out "La Penitenciaría de La Mesa," and see

how a Mexican prison compares. John Falkenrath, a convicted drug smuggler who got caught on the wrong side of the border, gives us a no-holds-barred account of life inside *la casa grande*, accompanied by exclusive, uncensored photos by Sandy Huffaker, Jr.

"Portrait of an Artist Behind Bars" features Anthony Papa, an artist at Sing Sing who's been using paint and brush to express his political views and earning widespread recognition for the talent he discovered in prison. If Papa doesn't inspire the creative con out there to enter our America Behind Bars contest, maybe Michael Wayne Hunter will with "Cat J," a nonfiction piece about the misplaced prisoners of Category J, a housing unit in San Quentin's Death Row; or Susan Rosenberg, with "Lee's Time," this month's prison fiction, which won a prize in the 1993 PEN Prison Writing Contest.

We've also got a guest editorial by Luis Rodriguez, author of *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, and two new departments you oughtta get a kick out of: "#94A233449—Crimejacker," America's first Convict Superhero, and Tattoo of the Month. Plus we got our regulars: Ask Bubba, Pen Pals, In-Cell Cooking, etc.

Keep those letters coming, homiez. We appreciate the support and need the inside dope. Let us know what you want to see in future issues of *Prison Life*. Help us shape the magazine that's shaking up America.

PL



Photo by Dean Garcia

PRISON LIFE

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Voice of the Convict

(continued from page 3)

the hates and fears, and see that it is not the black man nor the white man who is the enemy. Rather, the oppressor is anyone who seeks to exert his will over others based on force, wealth, privilege or power.

Racism comes from fear. When I entered prison I was full of fear — not of any particular race, but fear of the power of my government. They had me by the balls, they gave me 25 years for trafficking in a plant, and I didn't think I was ever going to get out. The day the marshals came to get me at the county jail in Portland, Maine, where the only Black was a guard, to take me to the penitentiary

in Terre Haute, Indiana, one of the deputies leered at me and said some big black dude at Terre Haute was just waiting to have my ass and make me his bitch.

I lost it. I told him to go fuck himself: first, for assuming I was a punk; and then, for assuming I was stupid enough to believe that an unknown black man was worthy of my fear when it was the people the marshals worked for I feared, all those white men in the White House, and all the black and white lackeys who kiss ass and perpetuate the myths of institutional racism that keep the American people in fear, divided and conquered by the forces of wealth and status.

I've heard some men say prison made them more racist than they were when they went in. The opposite was true for me. I never thought of myself as a racist, yet we all have our fears. My sister married a black man and I have two beautiful nephews I love dearly. I grew up in a lily white suburb of Boston and had never lived near other races until I went to prison. The first few days I spent in custody, at the infamous Glass House, the L.A. city jail, I was one of two whites in a vast fish tank of a holding cell with 200 Blacks and Mexicans, all withdrawing from a variety of substances including, worst of all, nicotine.

We take our habits and our prejudices with us, and unless we have the courage to break through the carefully structured fear that works so well in prison, we merely reinforce old biases. I was told when I got to the penitentiary that I shouldn't sit in certain parts of the mess hall because that was where Blacks sat and I would be known as a "nigger lover." I was told I could get rid of a cellmate based on race. But I've never been one to go along with the program—that's how I ended up in the can in the first place. So I sat where I felt like sitting and hung out with men I liked regardless of color. When I got into one of the worst fights I'd had in prison just two weeks before I was to be released, with a black man over, of all things, the TV, the unit manager came to see me in the hole. He told me that never in all his years of working in prisons had so many different men, both black and white, come to him to urge him to drop the charges against me and the guy I fought with.

My experience in prison was that I met both sleaze and quality of every race and color. Some of the most honorable, respectful and highly motivated prisoners I met were Black Muslims. I also met some wonderful Jews, Greeks, Irishmen, Iranians, Italians and Puerto



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Ricans. It doesn't matter what color or race you are. What matters is what kind of person you are and whether you have the courage to stand up for what you believe in.

Prison Life believes in multi-culturalism, in particular the multi-culturalism of the American prison. The country's potential for greatness can and should be manifest in the great melting pot of prison, where a nation of bigots can be transformed into a nation rich with the spice of the world's varied peoples.

I believe that much of the racism in prison is institutional. I knew a lot of men, black and white, who admitted to me that they didn't really hate all Blacks or all Hispanics or all whites — it was more an individual thing. That is not racism. Racism is going along with the institutional programming coming not only from the staff but from the conformist population as well. Men who become more racist in prison are afraid, though they would never admit it. They feel vulnerable, so they cling to primitive tribal instincts instead of risking growth, liberation and perhaps kinship with their fellow man.

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Guest Editorial

WRITING OFF OUR YOUTH

by
Luis Rodriguez

Last year, I entered the guarded gates of the Fred C. Nelles School in Whittier, CA—a facility for incarcerated young men ages 10 to 16. Their crimes ranged from incorrigible criminal behavior to murder.

I came to address an assembly of young men dressed in their “blues,” many of them members of L.A. gangs. The majority at Nelles were Chicano and Latino; the rest were African American. I was introduced as a former gang member and author of the book, *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*

On the faces of these wards, some of them marked with tattoos, I saw the pain, the emptiness, the shame and the pride that I felt some 20 years ago when I was part of a barrio, east of Los Angeles.

There, among them, stood defiance and victimization. Honor and inhumanity. Young men and maturing boys.

I spoke to them as honestly as I could, as soft and hard as the occasion required. I’m almost 40 now. An elder perhaps. I haven’t been active in the crazy life for decades. But as a teenager, like many of these wards, I sat in jail cells, juvenile courts and alternative schools.

At 18, I barely escaped a long prison term. I had the help of mentors and activists in the most radical wing of the Chicano movement, people to whom I owe my life, people who steered me in the direction of struggle, study and poetic science.

At Nelles, I didn’t preach. I didn’t tell the wards what to do. I tried to summarize what I lived to help them assess their own lives: where they’ve been and where they’re going.

I was there to validate their warrior energy, to help them take it to another level of development so they would understand that there’s a way

to victory, that there’s a strategy, there are tactics, there are weapons.

In the intense years of my youth, I fought with guns, knives and fists, subdued by spray intoxicants, pills and heroin. Today I fight with words, ideas and poetry. I’m still a warrior,



Chicano pride isn't exclusively male. Crystal, a homegirl in New Mexico, proudly displays a tattoo of her set. Photos by Chris Cozzone.

but now with weapons that have proven more effective and powerful than any gun I held in my hand.

The wards took in what I said. Some were silent, which is also a way of communicating. They appeared to be thinking, perhaps feeling again. A few questions came my way. But much of the time called for contemplation.

At the end, a 16-year-old Chicano came up to me and shook my hand. “I’ve never been as proud of being a Mexican as when I heard you speak here today,” he said.

I could already see he was on a transcendent path, that he was tapping into the transformative powers within him. Then I asked the dude why he was *torcido*.

“For two murders and 11 murder attempts.”

As far as the criminal justice system is concerned, this young man was not going anywhere. But I sensed he was already on a new journey of discovery, empowerment and social

clarification.

This is the message in my work: That change is possible, that it is necessary. And most importantly, that everyone can be their own agents of change, can transcend even the worse experiences.

This society, as personified in its prison system, is saying the exact opposite. If you’re poor, if you’re of color, or an immigrant, you can never change. You are born with a brand of mediocrity, of mind enslavement, of no options.

This is reinforced by a strangling double standard of justice, where certain laws and social norms do not apply to the rich or resourceful.

On the one hand, if a member of this society’s ruling class does wrong, it is automatic they will have options to do better. But for those of us without the means, we are given “jackets” to wear for life.

The “three strikes and you’re out” concept is not new; it only institutionalizes what has been happening

to a particular segment of the population for years.

As many of you know, prison only reinforces the most inhumane aspects of the streets. It is internalized colonialism and oppression. The “criminal” justice system operates on the deepest and most pervasive level of inhumanity.

This is why “respect” is a life-and-death issue in prisons. When it has been denied, when people are torn down by the most degrading treatment, they try to hang onto respect as the one last thing of value.

For the last few years, I’ve facilitated poetry workshops in prisons, homeless shelters and migrant camps. I’ve emphasized the liberating aspects of poetic expression. It involves relating to the intrinsic value we have as human beings. Poetry is about connecting again to feelings, to other human beings with language, meaning and music.

This is why raw artistic expression, often in language, is found among those who have been most marginalized in society. When one's being has been devalued, one reaches into the depths of creativity and imagination and brings it out again: hot, searing and unconquerable.

But the capitalist society, unable to accommodate most of this next generation, is prepared to write them off. The strategy is to first criminalize them, to distance them from "civil" society (even though this society is uncivilized at its core).

Although I have avoided a prison term for 20 years, I am still within the

*"We have to prepare
our youth to be
sovereign over their
lives, their community,
their country."*

prison parameters, being from the barrio, a Chicano and a poet. My work behind the walls, the shelters and the boys' homes is to assist our collective efforts against all the barriers, to remove the imposed sentencing without due process given to us because of our station in life.

Capitalism is not an ideology. It's an economic system. But it has an underlying philosophical basis: pragmatism, to do what is expedient, of getting over, the only thing that matters is results (profits). Competition drives the system; dog-eat-dog. Only the strong (in reality, the privileged) survive.

This philosophy permeates the streets and jails, where the one who gets over is the one who cares the least. Where did we learn this, if not from our social relations?

You think those who rule this country, who are often the first ones to propose "three strikes and you're out," "zero tolerance" and similar measures are above moral degeneration? Or blackmail? Or theft or murder?

Think again.

Look at the recent revelations of J. Edgar Hoover (who blackmailed, lied and perhaps murdered to maintain his power through seven presidents) or the way that perpetual victim Oliver North is running for Virginia senator, knowing he does not have to pay for what has done. Or how Los Angeles police officer Stacey Koon and billionaire bonds crook

Michael Milken are totally devoid of remorse (and now enjoy second chances).

There are people in this society who not only feel empowered — they feel entitled. They know they will ultimately rule without consent. They know they will obtain wealth and power no matter what the immediate costs or consequences.

As a Chicano, born into this world stripped of dignity, history and culture, bereft of my language and land, how will I respond? *Mi Vida Loca* was a response. Tattoos on our faces, our arms, our backs—the inside wounds on the body were a response. For this we may be condemned, but this was our stand. This is how we negotiated our identity outside of true power.

Now we have to make our own history. We have to prepare our youth to be sovereign over their lives, their community, their country. To

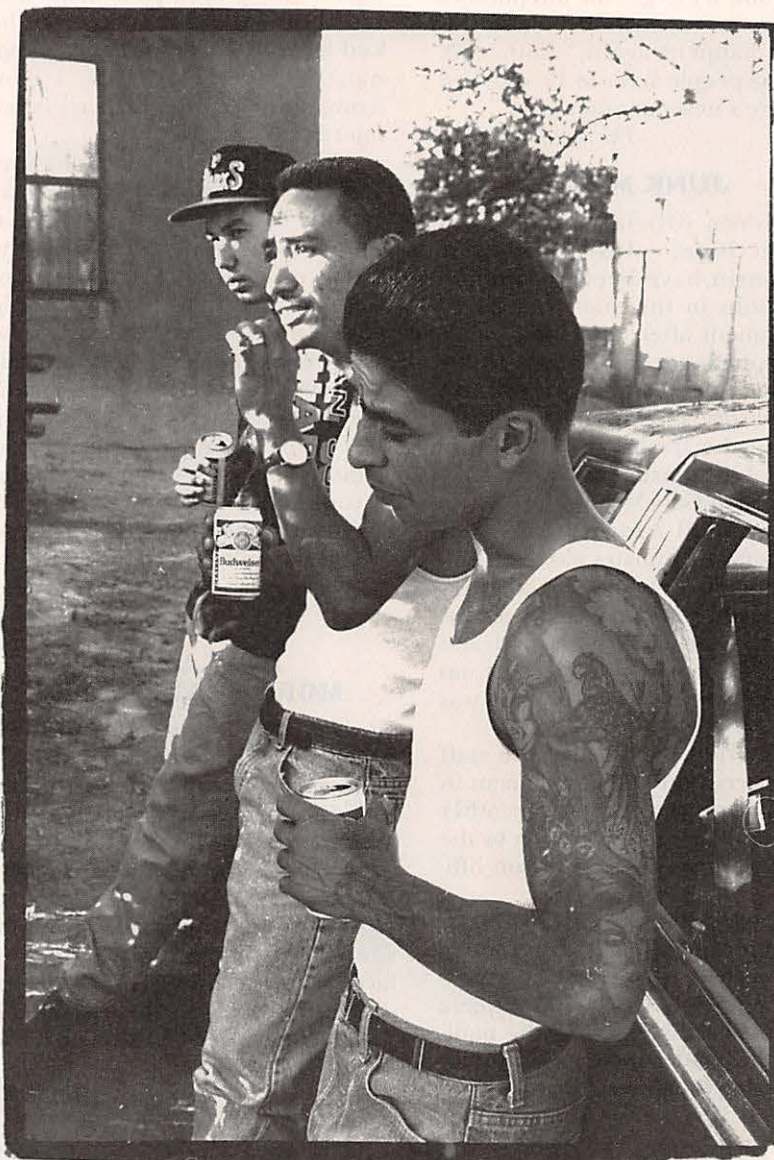
be rulers, lovers, artists and warriors (the four aspects of autonomous being).

This is why I believe in that 16-year-old Nelles warrior. There are millions like him. They are seeking the eldership and revolutionary skills to struggle, to think, to triumph.

We, who have already forged through this, must guide these young people through the journey they honor with their presence. No more prisons. No more mediocrity. No more slavery. It's time for us to rule.

Luis J. Rodriguez is an award-winning poet, journalist and critic. He is also founder/publisher of Tia Chucha Press, which publishes cross-cultural, socially-engaged poetry in Chicago. He is working on a book about Salvadoran youth gangs in Los Angeles and their impact on El Salvador, with New York photographer Donna DeCesare.

PL



San Jose homeboys kickin' back in one of Albuquerque's barrios.

Block Beat

UP IN SMOKE

A businessman spent about \$20,000 to buy up most of recently executed serial killer John Wayne Gacy's art. He plans to get a return on his investment by burning them. "We want them wiped off the map," said Joe Roth, who bought more than two dozen of the 40 Gacy works, which included portraits of Pogo the Clown and Mickey Mouse.

Roth said he wants to make a point by burning the paintings created by the man convicted in 1980 of killing 33 boys and young men during the 1970s. He said he was fed up with media coverage of the execution because it didn't send strong enough messages to parents. "We're going to burn all the pictures and try to get the attention of parents to watch their kids so this never happens again," Roth said. "Young people have to be watched so there's never another Gacy."

The Associated Press

JUNK MAIL?

Eleven officials at Waupun Correctional Institution in Wisconsin have been reassigned from jobs in the mail processing department after letters and other correspondence were found in the garbage. Members of the prison's supervisory staff found incoming mail in the trash can in the mail room of the maximum-security facility, Warden Gary McCaughtry said.

The mail addressed to staff members and inmates was in an outgoing garbage can, McCaughtry said. There were at least 50 pieces. "It was a variety of first-, second- and third-class mail," he said. "There was no indication that any mail was removed."

The department's entire staff and others who had involvement in the mail process were given other jobs pending an investigation by the U.S. Postal Service and prison officials.

"This is not a suspect list," McCaughtry said. "We just want to make sure there is a clean investigation." Other correctional officers have been reassigned in the mailroom to handle those responsibilities during the investigation.

The Associated Press

A WEIGHTY DECISION

A death-row inmate who weighs more than 400 pounds is too heavy to be hanged, his lawyer said. A hanging would likely decapitate Mitchell Rupe, who is sentenced to die for the 1981 murders of two bank tellers during a robbery.

"Beheading was a punishment used in barbaric times," the lawyer of the Seattle prisoner said. "We don't accept bodily mutilation as a form of punishment now." Washington is one of four states — along with Montana, Delaware and New Hampshire — that allows death-row inmates to be hanged.

State attorneys argue that the chance of decapitation is slight and, even if it does occur, won't necessarily inflict undue pain. Rupe also can choose lethal injection, but he said he considers it "morally repugnant." Under state law, a condemned inmate who declines lethal injection is hanged.

The prison at Walla Walla uses U.S. Army Manual 633-15 for executions by hanging. The manual gives a standard drop chart for the distance required by the weight of the prisoner in order for the big rope knot to snap his neck. The Army chart stops at "220 pounds and over." For those in this class, the chart assigns a five-foot drop. But Rupe is double that weight limit. If he were to drop five feet on a rope, while he accelerates at 32 feet per second squared, his head would be yanked from his body.

New York Newsday

HOW ABOUT MORE BRAIN CELLS?

Half of the correctional officer trainees in Florida were flunking the state certification test, so officials found a simple solution—they made the test easier. Trainees were failing in high numbers because they had a fourth- or fifth-grade literacy level. Florida D.O.C. said that if it hadn't simplified the test, it would have faced a catastrophe: The 55,000-bed system is gearing up to add another 35,000 more beds in the next five years.

The Gainesville Sun

WHAT A SLAP IN THE FACE!

When a police officer approached Lynn Kivi at a grocery store in Woodstock, GA, she saw no reason to lie: sure, she'd slapped her son. The boy had been fighting with his sister. Mrs. Kivi was handcuffed and hauled off to jail. A Winn-Dixie employee called police on May 23 after Mrs. Kivi, 35, slapped her 9-year-old son in an aisle of the supermarket. The officer saw red marks on the boy's face and asked him if he'd been slapped before.

"I get smacked when I'm bad," the boy said.

Mrs. Kivi's arrest on charges of cruelty to children brings up the debate between traditional discipline and child abuse. The Woodstock police chief complains that police can't win when it comes to suspected child abuse.

If convicted, Mrs. Kivi could get up to 20 years in prison. She's free on \$22,050 bail, borrowed from her husband's pension plan.

Associated Press

RECIDIVISM WITH A TWIST: THE SERIAL DINER

Gangaram Mahes has an interesting ritual: he slips on his best donated clothes, strolls to a nice restaurant, sips a fine aperitif, savors a \$50 meal and finishes with hot black coffee. Then he tells the waiter he has no money to pay for his meal, and asks to be arrested. He is sent to Rikers Island, where he gets three squares a day and a clean bed. He serves a 90-day sentence, gets released and then heads for a fancy restaurant. During the time he's shown to his table and the second the check arrives, he's as good as anybody. He has the same rights, the same respect, the same choices between Caesar salad and French onion soup.

The serial diner has committed the same crime at least 31 times, according to his prison record. He always pleads guilty and never urges his lawyer to bargain for a reduced sentence. "It's tough on the outside," Mahes says.

The New York Times

PRISONERS WREAK LEGAL HAVOC

Since the 1960s, the number of prisoner lawsuits protesting prison conditions has grown from just a few hundred to more than 33,000 last year, when they made up 15% of all civil suits filed in the federal courts. "These cases are just burying us and consuming a tremendous amount of time," said New York State Attorney General, G. Oliver Koppell. "There has to be a way for prisoners to complain, but this is not the way."

Of the 33,000 cases filed last year, about 97% were dismissed long before trial. Of those that continued on, only 13% resulted in any success for the prisoner—the worst rate of any type of civil suit filed in federal court.

The New York Times

FLORIDA FREES ITS FOREIGN FELONS

An unprecedented agreement with the federal government allowed Florida to deport foreign criminals to make room in its crowded prisons. The criminals received clemency (meaning they don't have to return to jail in their homelands) in exchange for agreeing to be deported and never to return to the U.S.

Gov. Lawton Chiles believes the program will keep violent prisoners behind bars longer and save Florida from having to build two more prisons. The 2,700 criminal aliens locked up in Florida cost the state about \$60 million a year. Chiles hopes half of the aliens will be eligible for the program, and that 500 will be shipped back to their homes, primarily Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Grenada, within the next year.

Other states, such as California, aren't considering the program. "The Florida solution for California would be a get-out-of-jail-free card," said a spokesman for Gov. Pete Wilson. "Unlike Florida, California shares an international border with Mexico so when felons are deported they come right back into the state."

Associated Press

COVER UP, LADIES

"Why can't we wear sandals?" "Why, if your bra is showing, or the beginnings of a breast, won't they let you in?" "What about wearing shorts and sleeveless blouses?"

"What about dresses that button down the front?" These were some of the questions the wives of Washington, D.C. prisoners asked the recently appointed D.O.C. director, Margaret Moore, who promised at a recent gathering to improve the prison visitation program. But when the women asked about conjugal visits, Moore responded: "Philosophically, I don't have a problem with conjugal visits. But in terms of my priorities, it's just not on the list."

D.C. felon's wives say they can't even hug their husbands, and are told to sit three inches apart when visiting.

Washington Post

DON'T FORGET TO FLOSS

Robert Shepard didn't need a file baked in a cake to get out of jail. Dental floss worked just fine. While cameras, guards and computer-controlled doors were keeping other prisoners locked in the South Central Regional Jail in South Charleston, VA, Shepard braided the floss into a rope as thick as a telephone cord and used it to scale an 18-foot wall. A real-life Spiderman!

The 5-foot-9, 155-pound con escaped from the recreation yard by attaching a weight to his waxed and minty-fresh cord and hurling it upward to loop it through the chain-link fence. He then used it to help him climb the cinder block wall, and hung from the cord while he cut through the fence with a 3-inch piece of hacksaw blade.

Jail administrator Larry Parsons said, "I just find it incredible that somebody could use something that thin. He's almost taken on superhuman qualities."

As *Prison Life* goes to press, Shepard remains at large, and sales of floss have been suspended at South Central.

Associated Press

EVANGELIST CON LEAVES PRISON

Former TV evangelist Jim Bakker left a Georgia prison in early July and moved into a halfway house after serving 4 1/2 years for bilking followers out of \$158 million. He will serve the rest of his time in the halfway house until Dec. 1, 1994.

"Once again, I want to humbly ask for forgiveness to those I have

offended or hurt in any way by my sin and arrogant lifestyle," said Bakker, whose original 45-year sentence was reduced by an appellate judge who felt that a federal judge made inappropriate remarks about the case.

While in prison, Bakker was divorced by his wife of 30 years, Tammy. She later remarried.

Associated Press

AND THEY WANNA KILL PELL GRANTS?

National statistics indicate that 60 to 70 percent of incarcerated individuals are functionally illiterate, and when they are released from prison, they are unskilled, untrained and unable to find employment. Subsequently, 60 to 70 percent of released convicts return to prison.

However, the recidivism rate for individuals who have gotten an education is only 30 percent. A person who is out of prison and stays out becomes a productive, tax-paying member of society; when a prisoner returns, it costs the state and society.

*The Reflector, Minnesota
Correctional Facility*

ANTI-CRIME GROUP TAKES A SLUG

Florida's Supreme Court rejected a proposed amendment to the state constitution that prisoners serve at least 85% of their sentences. The court ruled 5-2 that the proposed amendment contained too many loopholes to guarantee that prisoners would serve that portion of their time.

"The proposed amendment will not deliver to voters of Florida what it says it will," the majority opinion said. "It includes legal loopholes so large that the governor and Cabinet can, if they so choose, render the entire amendment illusory."

The majority also noted that passage of the amendment likely would require the legislature to raise revenue to build new prisons.

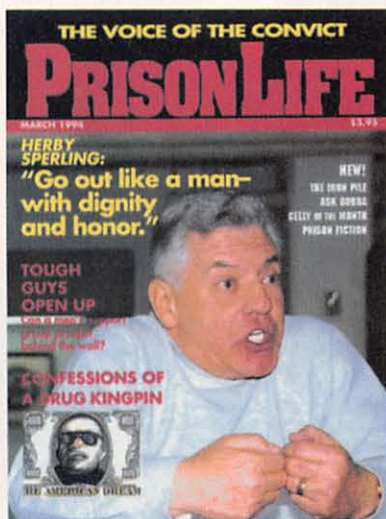
The amendment was sponsored by SOS Foundation Inc. of Seminole, an anti-crime group.

Reuters

Compiled by Staff

Photo by Manual Machuca

Mail Call



NODS OF APPROVAL

I really enjoyed the re-birth issue of *Prison Life*. The interview with Herby Sperling was well done and I also liked "The Iron Pile." But I was particularly touched by both of Richard Stratton's pieces.

In Stratton's short story, "The Great Escape," the Indian's inner flame, something that has consumed so much of my own life, made the story all the more poignant. Likewise in Voice of the Convict: "What I learned is that being a convict means you can never give in, you can never let them break you. It's better to die standing up for your beliefs than to go out on your knees as a rat, a coward, an informant."

Like Herby Sperling (whom I've never met but we have a similar spirit and mutual friends), I have also spent 35 of my 55 years in a cage. But unlike certain cretins (rats), weakness is a luxury I can ill afford, much less contemplate. Self-dignity is all I have left. It's enough for me to grin each morning when I wake up and get a nod of approval from the face in the mirror.

Joe "Sully" Sullivan
Shawangunk Correctional Facility

Dear Friends:

It is not often that I pick up a new magazine and read it cover to cover at one sitting. I thought the writing and subject matter were excellent.

It is obvious that the universe of prison life is growing in America, and that you have a tremendous potential

readership. But there is an enormous culture to write about and to reflect upon for the benefit of those who are incarcerated and for the rest of the nation. The June 1994 issue demonstrates you are up to the challenge.

Enclosed is payment for a one-year subscription.

Eric E. Sterling, President
Criminal Justice Policy Foundation
Washington D.C.

BEWARE THE CULTURAL DISTORTER

I read earlier issues of *Prison Life* while I was at Lewisburg and I did not like it. The Cultural Distorter (a.k.a. the Great Distorter—the foreign element who has hijacked our gov't) had control of the mag and it was twisted into an anti-prison life magazine.

You did a great job with the new *Prison Life*. But beware: The Cultural Distorter will be upset at this and will try to creep into your organization to once again twist/turn with his unlimited cash account. Bare your teeth and keep him out. "There's a killer on the road . . . his face is squirming like a toad . . ." (Jim Morrison).

One tip: Don't bash the guards or police. Give the guards a fair shake. Use constructive criticism, not pot shots or dead jokes. They got a job to do and my experience with them is that they do it pretty damn well. The officer who gave me my mag here at Marion told me he didn't like the prison guard jokes. I agree with him. They were Bush league.

But who am I getting off talking like I am? Just who the hell am I to be talking to you like this and telling you what to do, and to beware of the Cultural Distorter with your magazine? Huh? Just who the hell am I? Well, I'll keep that a secret for now.

Enough of this rambling!
Enough!!! Stop!

John Condon
Marion Control Unit

THANKS

Dear *Prison Life*,

Thank you for publishing my article, "Welcome to Punk City," in your June issue. The article has sparked discussion not only among convicts but staff as well. Copies were duplicated for the purpose of group interaction in various self-help organizations here in Attica. But on a personal level, I have

received responses from readers throughout the country complimenting the nature and intent of the article. I'm on the verge of making some new friends from the outside world—friends I will respect and value without manipulation for self gain.

Again, I thank you for being a voice for us who are often never heard in a healthy, sound way.

Eric Van Reid
Attica

EYE FOR AN EYE . . .

Today I received the garbage you call a magazine. I've never heard of this pile of trash before and I never want to again. I have no idea where or how you gained my address but you will take it out of your computer's mailing list. I am horribly offended by the content of your publication, and the term used on the subscription card.

I am an adult probation parole officer for the State of North Carolina and a Christian. I am proud of both factors.

I was so offended by this rag that I sent it to the state Attorney General's Office with a letter of complaint seeking help in stopping any more of your garbage reaching my door, and I'm inquiring if I could file a lawsuit against whatever source obtained my name in a mailing list and against your magazine for the vulgar language used on the subscription flyer.

All of you need to get right with Jesus Christ and destroy the entire pile of garbage you yet intend to publish.

James E. Summerlin
North Carolina

Mr. Summerlin:

We have seen the error of our ways. But only because you enlightened us. If you hadn't enclosed that handy prayer-book . . .

Come to think of it, it's only fair that we send something back to you. Since everyone likes to see his name in print, you'll be getting a copy of this month's *Prison Life*.

Oh yeah, you wanted to know where we got your name: We purchased the American Correctional Association's mailing list and sent everyone on it a copy. That's right, homey—the ACA. Thou hath been betrayed.

DON'T TAKE MY LETTER LIGHTLY

Dear Sir:

Please be advised that I see your magazine as a propaganda platform for special interest law enforcement politics and subgovernmentalism by way of using prisoners and their prisons as threats to all other citizens, especially new immigrants and exopolitical exiles who might be tempted to become "lawbreakers" occasionally.

I'm involved in some serious research and Artsience concerning the full spectrum of the "prison prism." Don't take my letter lightly because I don't take your literary slant lightly. Police are citizens. They aren't otherworldly beings of power or authoritarianism who dictate people's Constitutional rights as rites of pied-piper politics of merit and demerit for certain behaviorism traits.



I've studied the necessary sociology, political science, psychology, philosophy and technology to put up a good argument in behalf of Absolute Citizens without alot of Relative Conjecture or speculative extrapolationism.

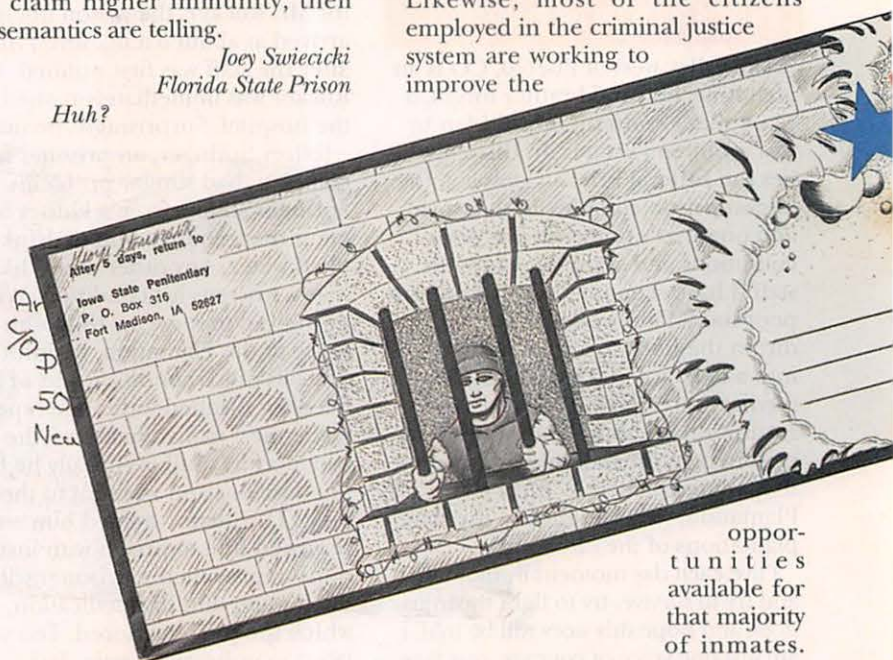
I won't claim to know everything, but I know one thing, and that's that the government wants to know more about how to check people without balances or practical moderation as Constitutional provisions ASSURE. Yet we are not pawns on the government's chessboard to be played with by ANTIMADVERSIONISTS of politique? We are biological memories of nature, and we are not obligated to compete with computeresque memories that are generated by robotic data processors of artificialism. We are not programmed by statistical memories! WE ARE A PROCESS OF OUR OWN. Besides, computer memories

are useless without a future to remember them in...and it looks like politicians and lawmakers are set upon extrapolating the present and past of the people with regard only for the political bodies future alone.

I say this: You can't make friends with Tom Sawyer painting his fence with pictures of prisonhood to flash on citizens, like horrorism instead of terrorism. People will see past that sycophantic hype. I am a mirror; I reflect back what you project forward. And I might be a cracked mirror, but in these recyclic days, that's beside the point. The point is this: You are citizens yourselves no matter how objectively subjectifying you think your media modulated syndic ideals should be. If you or anyone else claim higher immunity, then the semantics are telling.

Joey Swiecicki
Florida State Prison

Huh?



WHAT TRASH!

Gentleman:

Today we received a magazine, *Prison Life*, which we did not request nor do we want to receive in the future. We do not want that kind of TRASH in our office, therefore, we want our address removed from your mailing list immediately.

B.L. Parmer, Chief of Police
Marianna Police Department, Florida

Remove my name from your mailing list or I'll kick your ass. Send your garbage to someone who asked for it.

Lorene Forttrell
Bare Hill Correctional Facility

I have reviewed your June 1994 issue of *Prison Life*. I did not subscribe to your publication and I am asking you to remove me from your circulation.

While I respect your right to publish this mixture of poor taste, political propaganda and vulgarity, I hope you respect my right not to be associated with it in any way.

Your efforts to make heroes out of the criminal parasites whom you glorify and villains out of the responsible citizens whom you ridicule are totally repugnant to me. The majority of inmates are seriously attempting to rebuild their lives in the face of daunting odds. You do a great disservice to them when you portray them as sell-outs to "the system." Likewise, most of the citizens employed in the criminal justice system are working to improve the

opportunities available for that majority of inmates. You destroy

any credibility for your apparent political agenda when you focus on the corrupt or abusive few.

Thank you for supplying the free sample of your publication. I regret that its perverted representation of such concepts as "dignity and honor" causes me to request removal from your circulation.

S.V. Pruett, Warden
James River Correctional Center,
State Farm, VA

Warden:

What magazine did you read? Are you referring to Herby Sperling, CASH and Georgie Martorano (Cellmate of the Month) as criminal parasites? How kind of you.

We happen to believe that prisoners are more than the crimes they've commit-

(continued on page 90)

Insider Outlook

Illustrations by Steve Lashley



LIFE IS CHEAP ON THE PLANTATION

The valley west of Pueblo, CO is an area America would rather forget, a place that's conveniently hidden by vast mountain ranges. In this valley lies the Federal Prison Complex, the largest prison complex in the world, and one that's notorious for poor conditions and an inept, apathetic staff. I have seen men vomit from the poor food, faint while forced to rake dirt in the hot sun and literally fall into a deadly coma for lack of decent medical care. Conditions at Florence Institution are so well known among prisoners in the federal system they've nicknamed it "the Plantation," in reference to the slave plantations of the old South.

I live each day moment by moment and try to survive, try to fight the injustices, and hope this story will be told. I am just one voice of courage, one face in the crowd. I am number 24790-008.

At Florence, there are no educational opportunities besides a G.E.D. program. Furloughs are not permitted. But nowhere are the staff's attitudes and apathy more evident than in the substandard medical care. The staff are actually told to watch a prisoner suffer rather than pick up the phone and call an ambulance. Only the on-duty physician and his assistant are allowed to call for medical help. Many times, the physician and his assistant are at home or unavailable.

Quincy Rucker, an prisoner, complained for two weeks before falling unconscious from pain. A bullet that physicians decided to leave in him years earlier dislodged and caused his bowels to become blocked. He began screaming from the pain at about 10 p.m. and was unconscious by 3 a.m. During this time, prisoners

pleaded with the on-duty officer to call an ambulance. The officer refused and said the prison doctor was on his way.

At 3 a.m., alarmed prisoners carried what they thought was a lifeless body to the front door of the complex and laid him down before the officer, begging him to call for an ambulance. The officer called the lieutenant on duty and was ordered to take pictures of the dying prisoner. Rather than call an ambulance, the staff are actually instructed to record the death with pictures. Fortunately for Mr. Rucker, the prison doctor arrived at about 5 a.m., seven hours after the staff was first notified, and Rucker was immediately rushed to the hospital. Surprisingly, he made it.

Jeffrey Springer, an prisoner at the complex, had similar problems. Springer suffers from a kidney ailment that requires him to drink distilled water. Any other water, like tap water, worsens his condition. When he arrived to serve an 18-month sentence at the Plantation, he informed officials of his condition and of his need for distilled water. He repeated his request many times over the next two months until eventually he fell unconscious and was sent to the hospital. The doctor treated him and returned him to prison with instructions to provide the prisoner with distilled water and his medication, which the prison ignored. Ten weeks later, in unbearable pain, Jeff Springer passed out in the hallway. When he fell, he struck his forehead on the block wall and cut a three-inch gash across the top. After a seven-hour wait with only the prisoners to help him, he was sent to the hospital and finally, when he returned for the second time, officials gave him a gallon of distilled water a day.

Thomas Falater
Federal Prison Complex

THE CHAPLAIN FROM HELL

Censorship: It is the policy of this institution to publish The Mirror free of censorship except in those circumstances where the publication of The Mirror, in whole or in part, would threaten the security or order of the institution, or where the publication would have a detrimental

effect on the rehabilitative efforts of the Department of Corrections.

— Minnesota Correctional Facility's policy/procedures handbook

Among the few civil rights retained by prisoners are the First Amendment rights of freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. I guess the U.S. Constitution doesn't apply to the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Stillwater.

When Warden Robert A. Erickson retired last year, he was replaced by Warden Dennis L. Benson, who transferred from Oak Park Heights, Minnesota's supermaximum facility. Warden Benson replaced the administrative staff at Stillwater with his own. Chaplain Richard Knowles, who



had been at Stillwater for over 20 years, was transferred to Oak Park Heights so Benson could bring his own man in — Chaplain Steve Hokanson.

First impressions of Hokanson were foreboding. At a graduation ceremony, he gave a short address, during which he squeezed water out of a sponge and spoke through clenched teeth about being "wrung out." Attendees, including outside ministry, were angered and puzzled by this strange exhibition.

When prisoner Les Mercer and I met with Chaplain Hokanson as representatives of the Christian Men's Fellowship group, he warned us that if we wanted to keep our group, we should stop printing our monthly newsletter, "Reflections From Stillwater."

Our newsletter listed Christian ser-

vices and Bible studies at Stillwater, along with fellowship opportunities like playing sports or singing in the choir. Chaplain Hokanson objected to it because it didn't list non-Christian services, and he was afraid someone might think it was being published or supported by him, even though I produced the newsletter on my typewriter and had it copied by another prisoner's father. In order to keep the fellowship group, the newsletter was discontinued.

The next controversy arose over the publication of a book of Christian testimonies called "Light Shining Out of Darkness." The book was supported by Prison Pals Ministry, which contracted with the graphics department of the Stillwater prison to print it. The costs were paid by prisoner donations and outside support. But in October 1993, three days after the book was printed and distributed, one of the publication's editors and I were placed in 24-hour lockup pending an investigation by order of the associate warden. After being released, we were both suspended from our jobs on the prison newspaper for 11 days without pay. The investigation lasted a month. Meanwhile, Prison Pals Ministry was barred from conducting worship services at Stillwater.

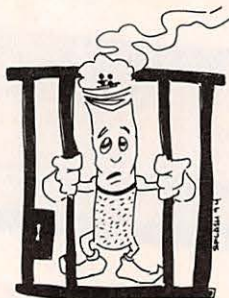
Needless to say, the investigation cleared everyone of any wrongdoing, and my colleague and I were given back our jobs at the newspaper. Prison Pals Ministry was once again allowed to conduct services, but our struggle wasn't over.

When I returned to work at *The Prison Mirror*, I was instructed by the graphics supervisor that the only religious material allowed in the newspaper would be that which Chaplain Hokanson wrote himself. Because this censorship not only violated prison policy and federal law, the editor, Darrell Ward, and I (the associate editor) decided to take a stand.

We contacted the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union, which then sent a letter to the warden telling him that his censorship violated prisoners' First Amendment rights. The administration backed off, but not without threats of retaliation. Both Darrell and I, who are interstate transfers serving life sentences, were threatened with being shipped back to our sending states. The administration also threatened to ban *The Prison Mirror*—the country's oldest prison newspaper, published since August 1887.

Needless to say, none of this has helped Chaplain Hokanson's reputation among prisoners. In fact, he's been nicknamed "the chaplain from hell." Word in the cell blocks is that his badge is heavier than his cross.

Gordon Grilz
Minnesota Correctional Facility



NO SMOKES

In March 1994, Utah State Prison banned smoking. Yes, Utah has taken away the cons' smokes due to some Clean Air Act, even though we've been restricted to smoking outside for over a year. Now we're forced to quit! We're doomed to walk around for 10 or 15 years, even life, without even a pack of cigs in our pocket. What's next? We have nothing else.

Cigarette smoking has been part of doing time since time began. It relieves stress and tension, keeps violence down, and hell—some of us just like to smoke. To my knowledge, we're the only pen in the nation where smoking is totally banned. So all I can say is this: Smoke 'em while you got 'em. Who knows how long you'll have 'em.

Gerald Evans
Central Utah Correctional Facility

MUST BE THE FOOD

I have been confined in Angola since I was 17. Now I'm 39, and I think I've seen everything there is to see in prison. The funny thing about this prison is people don't seem to leave.

My uncle, Leon "Shirt" Landry, was 33 days short to go home when he killed a guy he knew from the streets, for which he received an extra five years. Gilbert Dixon came here with 15 years and now has Life. Eddie "Wing-Ding" Burkhalter came here with three years and now has two life sentences for murder. He killed the last guy while he was on Death Row. Lee Lang came here with six years and now has five life sentences for

five murders committed here. The list goes on and on. All these men came here in the mid to late '60s and '70s and will probably never go home.

In 1973, Angola was declared the bloodiest prison in the nation.

Angola is one for the books.

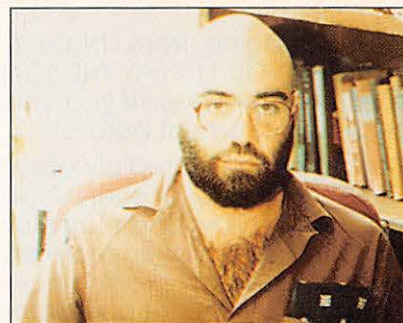
Larry Donnell Williams
Louisiana State Prison

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

The death penalty doesn't deter murderers, just like attacking child molesters, rapists or even perverts doesn't stop sexual offenders.

I was incarcerated in 1987 for infanticide. My son was six weeks old. I don't need any more punishment; I created enough personal pain already. Nine to twenty years is more than enough time to acknowledge that I failed as a father. I live for today now, consider tomorrow, but see no future in the past. Whether I am accepted or rejected, I am doing time—for myself—and I will leave prison as a different and humble man.

I belong to no religion, except nature, and I believe my goal in life is to develop inner wholeness, a harmony with nature, and to learn from



humanity's wisest sages: children, animals and females. These neglected entities are the most powerful, the most needed, and we must respect them or perish.

When there is acceptance, there is understanding. Certain people are crazy enough to forgive and love me, so I can forgive and love others. Prison is a good place to start.

Phil "Evening Star" Curcio
Rockview Prison, Pennsylvania

CAREER CRIMINAL

At age 34 I'm already classified as a "career criminal," and I'm fighting the toughest battle of my life: the fight to become a productive, responsible member of society. I've been using

(continued on page 17)

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Insider Outlook

(continued from page 15)



drugs, committing crimes and living in institutions since I was 10. I have a two-year college degree and numerous trade skills, but I cannot function in society. I always fall back into drugs until I self-destruct and end up back at square one—prison.

Growing up in foster homes paved the way to becoming a career criminal. I was first arrested at 13, for burglary, and was locked up in Juvenile Hall. I remember my initiation: standing in a bathroom stall, bracing myself, while other boys each took turns punching me in the chest.

At 16, I was arrested for armed robbery and auto theft and sent to a boys' ranch, where I served 18 months on a three-year bid.

Freedom lasted about a year. What started as a neighborhood gang fight ended in a high-speed chase and a collision with a police car. I was sent to the California Youth Authority on a five-year bid. To me, it was just another step up the ladder, and a new set of rules and friends.

I escaped after almost two years, only to pick up another five, this time in state prison. I spent two years straight in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at San Quentin. I was bird shot in riots, saw men stabbed and killed, but somehow made parole. I walked out at age 24 — lost!

It's been 10 years since then. I've had countless parole violations and am a registered narcotics offender in three counties. I'm currently fighting a bank robbery charge.

One day I was called from my dorm to see a man named Richard Rios from a place called Delancey Street — the nation's largest self-help (residential) organization for hard-core felons and addicts. Rios jammed me with questions that made me feel small, and I just didn't have the answers. I went back to my dorm knowing that my last chance at life was about to slip away. I went to the

desk and told the officer that I had to talk to Rios again.

The electronic door popped open, and I walked up to him and told him I wanted to be in his program because I knew I could make it and could do a lot of good things in life. I just needed help turning it around. A corrections officer stood watching as Rios said he'd let me know.

A week later that same officer asked me if I'd heard from Delancey Street. "Not yet," I said. He told me not to screw up because he'd stuck his neck out for me, and he usually doesn't do that. That night I heard from Delancey Street: I'd been accepted. Now I must convince a judge that my search for help is sincere and to take a chance on me.

What hope I have for a shot at a normal life I owe to an officer named Fraum and a place called Delancey Street.

—Mike Ybarra
San Quentin

PL

INSIDER OUTLOOK & In Their Own Words

You got a story to tell? You got a beef? A problem? Just something to get off your chest? Send your short pieces to Insider Outlook, your longer ones to In Their Own Words here at Prison Life, 505 8th Avenue, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

\$200,000 REWARD

Offered for the Indictment and Arrest of Persons Involved in Attempts on the Life of Bethesda Businessman

On April 1, 1993 and again on May 18, 1993, unidentified gunmen attempted to take the life of a prominent Bethesda, Maryland businessman, by firing guns at motor vehicles which he was driving. The first of these incidents occurred on Route 270, in Montgomery County. The second occurred outside the businessman's home, on Selkirk Drive, in Bethesda, Maryland. Accounts of these incidents were reported to the Montgomery County Police together with other information concerning possible suspects. Some of this information has been broadcast on Channel 9 in Washington, D.C. through the Crime Solver program.

Information has been acquired about the perpetrators of these shootings. This reward to obtain further corroborating evidence to ensure the apprehension and successful prosecution of these perpetrators.

The businessman has offered a reward of Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000.00) to any person who provides information to the Montgomery County Police or another law enforcement agency, leading to the identification, indictment and arrest of the persons who were involved in these attempts on his life which occurred on April 1 and May 18, 1993.

If you have any information which you believe may be helpful in corroborating the information which the Montgomery County Police has concerning these shootings, and which may ultimately lead to the indictment and arrest of the persons who were involved in these incidents on April 1 and May 18, 1993 please call Crime Solvers at (301) 217-2255 / (800) 673-2777.

Illustration by B.D. Hill, Huntsville, TX



CALIFORNIA

Welcome to California,
America's Premier Penal Colony

By Isaac H. Cubillos

It hardly made a ripple in the national crime statistics. After all, between 50 and 150 kidnapping-murders occur each year. But this year it's different—it's an election year, and the politicians need a cause-célèbre to show how tough they are on crime.

The kidnapping and death-by-strangulation of a 12-year-old Petaluma, CA girl by the recently-released convict, Richard Allan Davis, is all that was needed to galvanize the crusading politicians. Getting tough "is a politically irresistible response to crime," said Beth Carter, national coordinator of the Campaign for an Effective Crime Policy.

Governor Pete Wilson, joined by political hopefuls, made a pilgrimage to the stunned Northern California community. The national media trailed along to witness the breast-beating of the candidates. The speeches were generated by spin-meisters, and from the lips of the politicians came the emotionally charged sound-bite, "Three Strikes and You're Out!"

Commenting on the state Senate's 27 to 9 vote to pass "three strikes," assembly speaker Willie Brown (D- San Francisco) said that politicians had zero courage because "they like their jobs and want to be reelected." When he was asked why he didn't use his powerful office to table the bill, he said, "I got out of the way of this train because I'm a realist." He added that he had no idea how the state was going to pay for the massive costs the "three strikes" policy will bring.

In what will make California the number one prison builder in the country, Gov. Pete Wilson signed AB 971 into law, the first of the state's many versions of the "three strikes" bill. The new law imposes life sentences on repeat felons.

(continued on page 20)

THREE STRIKES, YOU'RE IN— FOR LIFE!

**A LOOK AT THE TOUGHEST
CRIME BILLS EVER AND
THE FIRST VICTIMS OF
THE ANTI-CRIME
CONTAGION.**



Illustration by Rob Sula

Bracing for After-Shocks from the Nation's First and Harshes "Three Strikes" Bill

by Mike De Felice

When Billy was 18 he walked into a convenience store, acted like he had a gun in his pocket, and held up the place for \$300. He was caught, pled guilty to robbery and sentenced to a few weeks in jail. Strike one.

Two years later he started a bar fight and hit someone in the face. He broke the victim's nose. The assault earned him nine months behind bars and probation. Strike two.

Over the next several years, Billy turned his life around. He took auto mechanics at a vo-tech school, got a full-time job, got married. Things were going great.

Then, at age 27, Billy was promoted at work. He went out to celebrate. In the process, he had a bit too much to drink. While driving home he rear-ended another car. No one was killed, but the other driver suffered a broken arm. Billy was charged with vehicular assault. He fought the case but a jury convicted him. Strike three.

Normally, a guy like Billy, with his criminal history, would have been sentenced to 12 to 14 months in prison. But because he lives in Washington and this was his third strike, or "most serious" felony, Billy was given life in prison with no chance for parole.

Initiative 593, better known as the "Three Strikes, You're Out" law, is the reason for the severe punishment. The measure, approved overwhelmingly by voters last November, calls for anyone convicted of three

"strike" crimes, on separate trips to court, to be slapped with a mandatory life sentence. I-593 is considered to be the harshes sentencing law in the nation.

The law adds more than 40 crimes to the list of offenses that can lead to a mandatory life sentence. "Strike" crimes range from but are not limited to certain drug, sex and assault cases. I-593 requires true life in prison since no good time or parole is possible. The only possible relief is to petition the governor for clemency, which is always a long shot.

Supporters of the initiative claim it targets the most serious offenders and prevents them from repeatedly victimizing society. Opponents believe that the initiative is unjustifiably costly, that it won't reduce crime, and is simply overkill. More appropriate alternatives can be used to adequately punish serious offenders while giving them the treatment and counseling they need to return to society and function responsibly.

Exceptional sentences, over and above standard punishment ranges, are already used. In the case of repeat sex predators, Washington's controversial Community Protection Act allows for indefinite commitment of offenders even after they have completed their prison sentence. Lawmakers can also revise sentence ranges, making them higher for particular crimes.

Voters, by and large, feel that punishment needs to be even more severe, and they acted out their frustration in the voting booth. However, the widely-held perception that courts are soft on crime is not accurate, reports Bill

Salem, felony supervisor at The Defender Agency, Seattle's largest public defender agency. Prior to I-593, judges steadily increased sentences for serious offenses, he reports.

A review of 1991 sentences for offenders who would have qualified for "three strike" life sentences showed that judges were imposing significantly longer sentences than the minimum allowed by law. For example, in first-degree murder

cases, the average minimum sentence was 26.3 years, yet the average sentence imposed was 41.2 years. In first-degree rape cases, the minimum sentence was 16.1 years, and the average sentence imposed was 22.5 years.

Just as the penalties of I-593 are excessive, complain critics, so are the measure's long-term costs. In Billy's case, the state will pay \$25,700 annually to house and feed him. Inflation will most certainly make this figure rise. What's more, expenses will skyrocket as Billy ages and requires expensive geriatric care.

Older inmates have medical problems such as cancer and heart disease. Routine cancer treatment runs \$40,000 to \$100,000 per inmate. A bone marrow transplant alone can cost \$200,000. A heart attack victim can require a host of procedures costing upwards of \$60,000. Such high-price procedures will drain state budgets since they are not covered by Medicare or Medicaid.

The judicial system will not escape the financial impact of the new law. "It's fair to say 593 will have a significant impact on the court system," reports Salem. Within weeks of passage, Salem realized his public defenders would be handling twice the number of "three strikes" cases than previously expected.

These cases, which can involve anything from an attempted purse snatching to rape, need to be prepared as if they were aggravated murders because the client is looking at life without parole, he says.

The cost for a public defender to handle such cases may run as high as \$50,000. The price tag of a typical felony is about \$600.

With the stakes so high, even individuals facing their first or second qualifying strike are more apt to demand expensive jury trials rather than plead guilty and get credit for time served, notes Salem.

Besides being costly, "three strikes" will probably result in keeping many prisoners behind bars far past the point they pose a threat.

"After age 40 there is a precipitous decrease in the likelihood a person will continue criminal behavior," reports Larry Fehr, executive director

WASHINGTON



of Washington Council on Crime and Delinquency. Three out of four of the most serious felonies are committed by individuals under age 30, and the largest single age of violent offenders is 18, says Fehr, citing law enforcement and government surveys. Only one percent of serious felonies are committed by those over 60.

Interestingly, the type of criminal most likely to be subjected to the unforgiving law will not be a murderer or a rapist. Not a single person on Washington's death row would have been prevented from committing their crimes had "three strikes" been in place at the time.

The state's Sentencing Guidelines Commission reviewed over 16,000 adult felony offenders sentenced to prison in 1991. Of those who would have qualified for mandatory life sentences under this law, 34.1 percent were for robbery; 26.4 percent for sex offenses; 15.5 percent for assault; 10.9 percent for homicide; 6.2 percent for drugs; 6.2 percent for burglary; and .8

percent for "other."

That the most likely offender to be trapped in the net cast by the new law is a robber (not a mass murderer) may surprise those who think the law would rid the streets of the most heinous criminals.

"You have to measure this initiative not by the cases most will agree on, such as those involving brutal serial rapists, but by the less egregious cases swept up by 593," says Assistant U.S. Attorney Tom Wales, a vocal opponent of the "three strikes" law (who emphasizes he is expressing his personal views, not necessarily those of the U.S. Dept. of Justice).

"The public will be shocked to learn about some of those who will receive life sentences under 593," says Wales.

Case in point: Larry Lee Fisher, 35. (Unlike the fictional Billy, this is an actual case.) Fisher's first strike happened in 1986 for shoving down a relative and taking \$390 from him. He served four months in jail for rob-

bery.

Two years later, he robbed a pizza parlor of \$100 while pretending his hidden finger was a gun. The second strike resulted in 17 months in prison.

This year, he held up a sandwich shop. He didn't display a weapon, and no one was injured. A jury, unaware this was Fisher's third strike, found him guilty in two hours.

Normally, Fisher would have served about two years in prison. But under the new law he must spend the rest of his life behind bars. If he lives to age 72, Fisher will serve 37 years for the robbery.

"The law is unfair," says Fisher's attorney, Chad Dold. "It does not deter crime. The only purpose is punishment. Banishment, really. It suggests that there is no hope to improve one's behavior. That's ludicrous."

Fisher was suffering from a substance abuse problem at the time of the third strike incident. He had been seeking treatment but was unable to enter a program because

the criminal most likely to be subjected to the unforgiving law will NOT

CALIFORNIA

(continued from page 18)

Just hours after Gov. Wilson signed the bill on March 7, 1994, 33-year-old Jeffrey Dixon from San Diego was charged with armed robbery. Because Dixon had three prior violent convictions, he automatically earned the dubious distinction of becoming the first "three strikes" casualty. Within two weeks, the law had been applied to over 30 cases in one county alone.

According to the California Department of Corrections, at least 81,000 more felons will end up behind bars over the next six years as a result of the new law. An additional 20,000 guards will be hired. Ironically, this is the same number of educators the University of California is laying off due to budget cuts. By the year 2027, there will be more than 275,000 people warehoused in California alone, which will cause the correctional budget to double to \$5.7 billion dollars per year.

Senator Lucy Killea (I-San Diego), who voted against the bill, said, "If we allow ourselves to be driven like lemmings over the cliff by a media frenzy and public opinion

polls that support a slogan, not a policy...we really ought to not call ourselves leaders." She added, "Let the producers of 'Hard Copy' and 'Inside Edition' sit in the legislature."

Marc Klaas, father of the murdered Petaluma girl, is lobbying to derail the new law. The reasons he gives are that it's too expensive, it doesn't target violent felons, and it might result in the elimination of the death penalty. The Polly Klaas Foundation favored a different bill that narrowed the definition of "violent crimes."

Prosecutors and judges alike opposed the passage of AB 971. Counties, they reasoned, could ill-afford the greater jail and court costs for cases that otherwise would have been plea bargained. Many California jails, already under federal population restrictions, will face acute overcrowding. As a result, local authorities will be forced to release prisoners who may pose a more serious danger to the public.

"Three-strikes" candidates will now force the hand of the criminal justice system because they will no longer go blithely back to prison. As a two-time parolee said, "The age of

Let's Make a Deal is over! No one is going to go down without a fight and without making them pay." Consider Dixon (the first "three strikes" casualty), who refused to cooperate with deputies and stood defiantly silent at his arraignment. Three-time losers are now more apt to take on the police because they have nothing to lose. "There are going to be more gang-bangers taking out cops and making the streets run with more blood. Then they're going to make the DA take them all the way to trial to blow the money," the parolee said.

Indeed, prosecutors testifying before the Finance Committee said that if they had to play the role of defense attorneys there was no way they would roll-over their clients and bargain. "They're facing 25-to-life and we're going to trial," said one prosecutor.

By passing the new law, legislators have created some unusual and potentially horrific injustices. The state Legislature, for example, allows specific counties to determine what constitutes a felony, or "strike." In San Diego, the avocado growers (a major industry in Southern California) were able to pass a law that makes stealing

he was overwhelmed by the bureaucratic red tape of getting signed up, explained Dold.

The punishment for Fisher, considering the facts of his case, brings up what many feel is another critical flaw in the mandatory sentencing scheme. The law strips a sentencing judge of discretionary powers. Individual circumstances of the offense and defendant play no part in deciding punishment.

A defendant who gets mad and waves a knife at his brother and never causes any injury receives the same sentence as a cold-blooded murderer.

"The best and most efficient assurance of appropriate sentences is the sentencing judge, who has heard the evidence and the history of prior offenses," reports the King County Bar Association, which opposed the initiative.

Judge Donald Haley, president of the Superior Court Judges Association of Washington, agrees. "Judges need to have discretion. Individual circum-

stances must be taken into consideration. The 'three strikes' law does not allow that.

"If you want perfect uniformity in sentences, then plug all the information into a computer and have it spit out the punishment. That's not justice," asserts Haley, who believes nearly every superior court judge in the state is unhappy with I-593.

It may take years to assess the full impact of Initiative 593, in terms of cost to the public and fairness to offenders. Meanwhile, California and New Mexico have passed their own versions of the "three strikes" law, and many more states are on the brink of endorsing the policy. Clinton and

Congress, eager to please their constituents, are poised to pass federal "three strikes" legislation.

Clearly, such stringent laws are the wave of the future. The long-term question is: How much will America's knee-jerk reaction to crime cost us as we lose vital human resources to the growing prison population, spend precious tax dollars on prison construction and clog the courts with even more costly and time-consuming legal rigmarole?

Mike De Felice is a public defender in Seattle, WA.

PL

be a murderer or a rapist

avocados a serious felony.

In another case, Umberto Duran, a homeless person, is being tried under the new statute. Duran has a record of burglaries and a drug habit. In an undercover operation, Duran was asked by police if he could secure \$20 of cocaine. The unsuspecting Duran told the officer he could get maybe \$10 worth. Later, after the deal, Duran was arrested with .22 grams of cocaine and what was described as "hand-to-hand-to-the-man." He now faces 25 to life.

Mark Carlos, Duran's attorney, said that the taxpayers are going to clothe and feed his client for the next 24 years at a cost of \$600,000. Carlos said, "This is a guy (Duran) who never got any drug rehab, never got the longest sentences on his previous arrests and, before the law went into effect, would have served maybe ten years. Now my client is facing life? This is not justice, this is idiocy, and people need to know this."

Isaac H. Cubillos is the managing editor of The California Prisoner, a publication of the Sacramento-based Prisoners' Rights Union.



Illustration by Rob Sula

PL

THE **FATE** OF A SNITCH

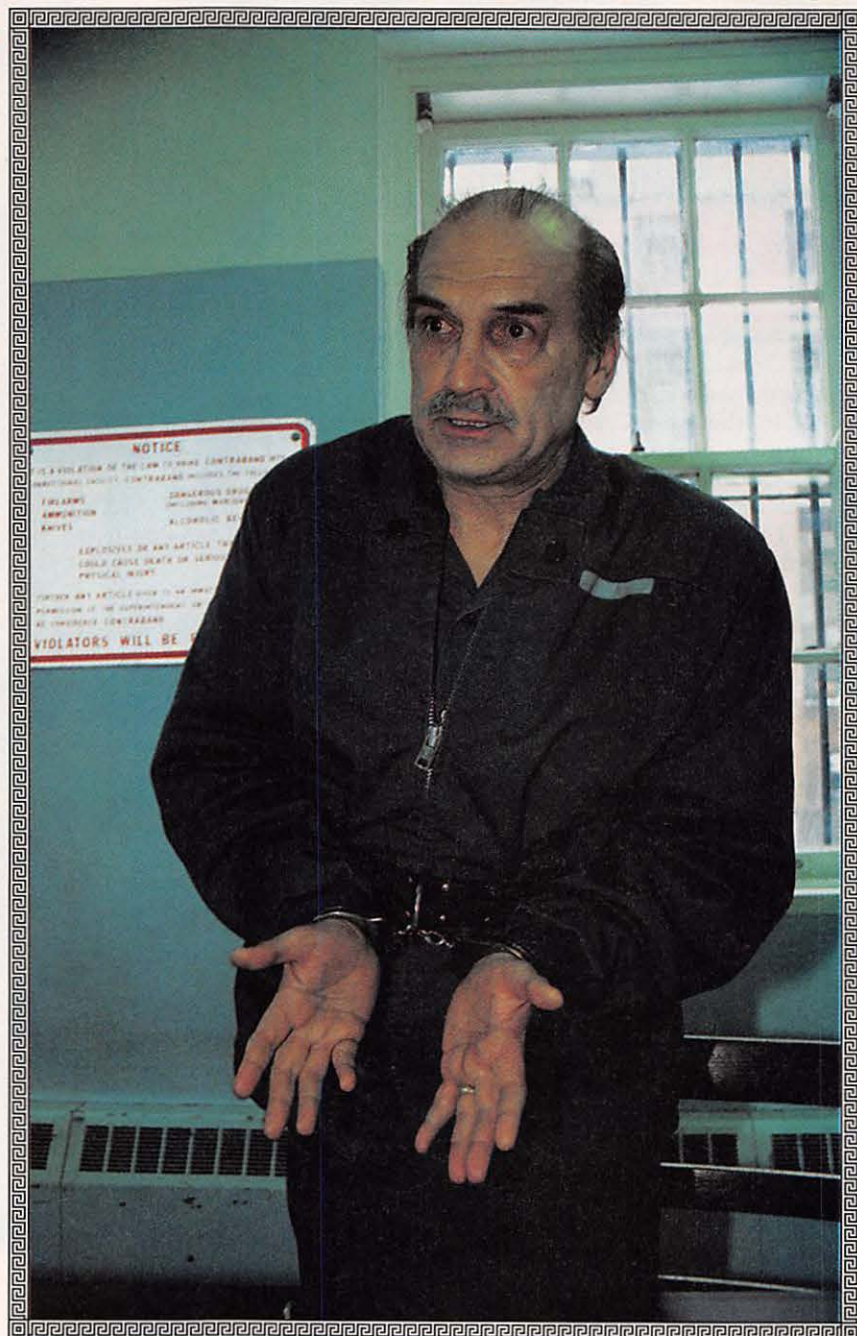
by Chris Cozzone & Andrew Heugel

First Time Ever!

DONALD FRANKOS COMES CLEAN AND TELLS OF HIS SAD FATE IN THE FEDERAL WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Turning snitch was never an option for Donald "Tony the Greek" Frankos. During his alleged career as a contract killer for the New York mafia and, later, while serving time in prison, he religiously adhered to a strict code of silence. Turning stool pigeon was unthinkable.

"Everything has changed now," says Frankos, yearning for the days when everybody knew him as "Tony the Greek." "One outta every two prisoners is a rat these days on some level. And I'm not telling you that to justify what I did, I'm just telling you." Frankos leans back in his chair, scratches his chin with handcuffed hands. He glances at the two guards in the conference room at Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora, NY. They look bored and uninterested in what's about to be revealed. Satisfied, Frankos continues. "In 1985, I made the biggest mistake of my life..."



photos by Chris Cozzone

That year was when Frankos "tipped over." He was doing 25 to life at Comstock for the murder of Yonkers drug dealer Clarence Jones when he was propositioned by Albanian drug lord Xhevedet "Joe" Lika. Lika wanted Frankos to help him put a contract out on U.S. Attorney Alan Cohen, DEA agent Jack Delmore and federal Judge Eugene Nickerson. Somehow, the feds got wind of this and Frankos was called in to see the head of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, at that time, Rudolph Giuliani, currently the mayor of New York City. There, before Giuliani and investigators from the U.S. Attorney's Office, Jim Nauwens and Ben Saurino, he got the fed makeover.

"They already knew the names of the plotters," says Frankos, meaning Lika and Jimmy Coonan, the notorious leader of the Westies, the Hell's Kitchen Irish mob in New York. "What they needed from me were the names of the targeted officials. At first, Giuliani wanted me to wear a wire. I refused. He wanted me to testify before a Federal Grand Jury. I refused. And he asked me, if the plotters were indicted, would I testify before them in a court of law? I told him no. He said that the crime was the most serious anyone could commit—a crime against the American people, against the whole U.S." Frankos says he was moved by the pro-America speech made against the backdrop of an enormous flag in Giuliani's office.

Although it was something he had never considered, Frankos decided to help the feds. He agreed to give Giuliani and his investigators only the names of the targeted officials and when the plot would happen—in exchange for a sentence reduction.

"Giuliani shook my hand," says Frankos. "He said I was doing was the most American thing possible and that the Albanians were violent criminals who did things even organized crime figures didn't do. 'I promise you,' his exact words were, 'you'll get a reduction in your sentence.'"

Of course, nobody bothered to tell Frankos that the feds have no jurisdiction over state sentences. So when Giuliani said he'd speak to Governor Cuomo and U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese for a reduction in Frankos' sentence, it was an empty promise. Frankos received nothing.

Giuliani would not reply to questions pertaining to Donald Frankos.

"He just wanted to save the targeted officials," Frankos admits. "But

THE CON IN CONTRACT KILLER

Contract Killer's bold, black and red cover boasts: "Hoffa Murder Solved!" and gives "The Explosive Story of the Mafia's Most Notorious Hit Man" as a subtitle. What co-authors William Hoffman and Lake Headley claim to have here is a verified autobiography, the truth with a capital T. But what they really have is little more than a collection of Mafia fairy tales, and the authors seem content to pass off this crap as fact.

It doesn't take a mob historian to realize there's little truth in *Contract Killer*, published by Thunder's Mouth Press: "The authors planned it to be sensational," admits Donald Frankos, "so it would sell. The authors made a lot of money. My name wasn't even on the title. I got a few bucks, but not much. Now they want to make a movie in Germany about it. Hoffman [the author] will throw a little gratuity my way, put a little money in the commissary type thing." Frankos, who is currently denied commissary privileges, would gain little.

Here are some of the wild claims in *Contract Killer*.

Claim: That everything in the book happened the way it's written.

Truth: "There's nothing in the book that didn't happen," says Frankos. "However, the truth is that I put myself in the place of the real people committing the crimes. Most of the book comes from stories I heard from people I knew or worked with."

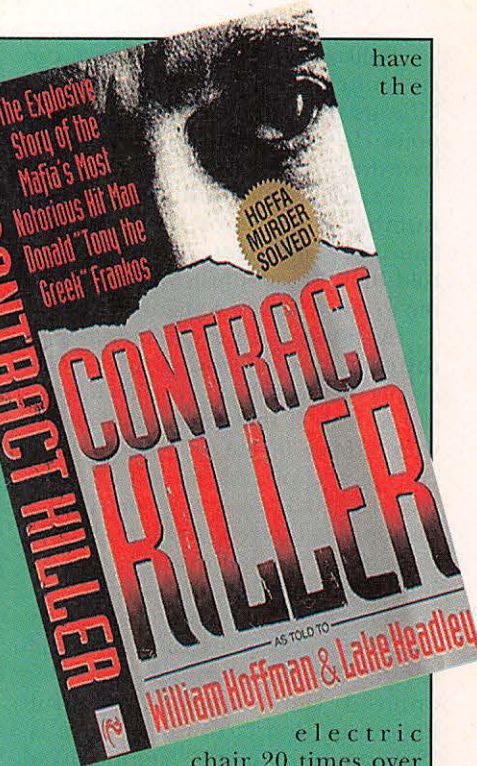
Claim: That Frankos had done at least 40 killings.

Truth: "If I had actually done all those murders," says Frankos, "I'd

Saurino and Nauwens were more interested in organized crime. They wanted me to check into the Witness Protection Program. They told me they'd get me to a federal pen, reverse my sentence, change my identity and get me away from all the crime of my past. 'We'll help you,' they said.

"I was getting older," Frankos admits, "and starting to mellow out when they started propositioning me. They kept telling me, 'We'll reverse your life bid, we'll reverse your life bid' . . . and I kept thinking about it."

With the information provided by Frankos, the plot on Alan Cohen, Jack Delmore and Judge Nickerson was foiled. Besides Lika, who ended up with a life bid and a one-way ticket to



have
the

electric chair 20 times over already. Forty killings? No. The truth is I've only killed one person. One."

Claim: In the '70s, New York State prisons released convicts on furloughs to commit contract killings.

Truth: It never happened to Frankos. But he heard about it.

Claim: That Frankos killed Hoffa.

Truth: He didn't—he wasn't even there. "It was John Sullivan and Salvatore "Sally" Bones who did the murder," Frankos says. "And Coonan cut up the body."

Claim: That Hoffa's body is buried in Giants Stadium.

New Claim: "No, no, no," Frankos shakes his head. "He's buried not inside, but *outside* the stadium."

Marion, nobody else got in trouble. Nauwens and Saurino increased the pressure to get Frankos to enter the Program and testify against Coonan, but Frankos refused. Coonan was never officially charged.

Giuliani was soon finished with Frankos, and Frankos, already feeling like a stool pigeon, was finished with the feds. But investigators Nauwens and Saurino were just beginning.

Next, they wanted him to talk to his buddy, Joe "Mad Dog" Sullivan. "They knew we were close, having grown up together in jail and on the streets. And they knew Mad Dog was doing hits for John Gotti. Their new proposition to me was this: I was to try and get Sullivan to turn."

Sullivan was rumored to have carried out over a hundred contract killings for several crime organizations. He was also the only prisoner to have ever escaped from Attica.

Frankos gave Sullivan a phone number to contact Nauwens and Saurino. "Don't get mad at me," he told him. "This is just what they told me to do. What are you gonna do?"

Although Sullivan remembers it differently (see sidebar), Frankos claims that he called and tried to work out a deal: If they provided Sullivan with \$250,000, put his kids through college and placed him on an Army base (he had too many murders on his rap sheet to reduce his sentence), then Sullivan would testify against John Gotti and Fat Tony Salerno.

The deal never went through. "Saurino and Nawens said they couldn't get the 250 g's unless Mad Dog entered the Witness Protection Program first," Frankos recalls. "Sullivan said forget it. Saurino asked me, 'How 'bout you?' I told him to let me think about it. But he said that people already knew I was the one who ratted on Lika. I know now he was lying. If they can't get you any other way, they'll scare you into the Program."

Frankos, now afraid for his life, agreed to enter the WPP. Soon after, he was transferred to Goshen County Jail and given lie detector tests during his WPP orientation. "They wanted me to tell them all about my crimes, from the beginning to the present, even stuff done in prison — everything. They said I'd have complete immunity for anything I'd tell them."

WINED AND DINED

The feds were offering Frankos more than confession as incentive to tip. "During this whole time, they were wining and dining me," Frankos recalls, with a smile. "Although I was technically in Goshen County Jail, they were taking me out every day

and bringing me back around midnight. I was given drinks and food, taken to restaurants and whorehouses. They were getting me laid—we were all getting laid."

Nauwens and Saurino's intentions were to have Frankos eventually testify against John Gotti and other alleged members of the Gambino organized crime family in return for Frankos' conviction being overturned, still a hope Frankos was clinging to even though his earlier agreement had gone sour.

Once the feds had verified Frankos' worth, he was officially checked into the WPP at the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in New York.

CLUB FED

"When you check into the Program," Frankos says, "they take you into a room for so-called 'processing.' You're given this book, this giant book of rats. If you recognize anybody, you gotta tell 'em. I saw pictures of Sammy Gravano, Joe Valachi—all kinds of informers. An officer in a suit comes to see you and asks what you want. You tell him shaving cream, this or that, whatever."

This is just the beginning of the red carpet treatment the government will roll out for a king rat. Contrary to the norm in most prisons, case managers have easy loads so they can give you all their attention. "They're always asking how you like the place," says Frankos, "or if you have any grievances."

If it's food you want, you'll have total access to the kitchen. The food, which is gourmet stuff, is prepared and tested by the feds. Hungry between meals? Just pop open the 'fridge and get anything you want. You'll never go to bed hungry."

Instead of a cell, you get a "room." According to Frankos, you're locked in at 1:00 a.m. and can come out as early as six. Other than that, there are

Mad Dog

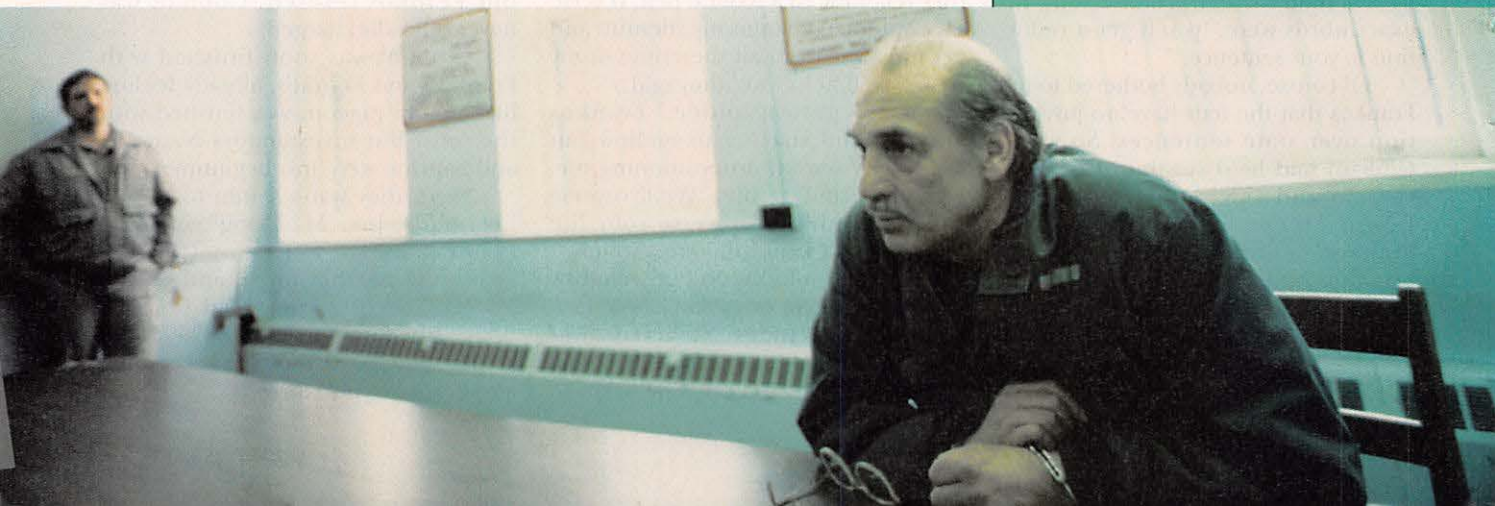
by Joe Sullivan

In *Contract Killer*, Frankos stole my identity and had the chutzpah to make me his partner. This imposter is still trying to destroy the soul of the man he wishes to lay claim to. There's nothing a rat loves more than to bring others to their level.

Frankos (we called him "Greek") was a low-life junkie of the 42nd street variety who could never rise above his station on his own merit without human plagiarism. He's a bum with a gangster complex, who killed a low-life in Clinton to up his reputation. And of course, we can't forget Clarence Jones, a drug dealer he killed for a quarter-ounce of heroin for personal use. His novel reads like a comic book. He's a brazen fabricator (ain't even a stool pigeon). But he was always a great bullshitter and story teller, and would always keep the guys on our court laughing.

Greek first approached me in Comstock lock-up in November '85. It'd been almost a decade since I'd last seen him after leaving Clinton in November '75. There were about eight of us so-called "high profile" convicts on this special security tier. I was sitting and talking with Born Allah (he's still at Comstock) when the gate cracked and Greek walked in. Also present was Armando Colon and James "Bashir" York. After Greek gave me a big hug, he went to his cell to settle in. Born Allah, who had known Greek as long as I did, just stared at me with that serious charcoal face and whispered, "He ain't the same, Sully."

This blew my mind. I mean, the guy hadn't been on the tier two minutes. I laughed at Born. "What the hell are you talking about, he ain't the same?" Looking back, I guess I had been too close to him to see the



Bites Back

subtle changes convicts instinctively sense in each other.

"Just my feeling," Born said. "What's he doing here? Who is he? Why put him here?" He had a point: This tier was for high profiles—escape risks, convict leaders, big names, etc.

"C'mon Born!" I laughed.

"Just be careful with him," he said and dropped the subject.

We all got along famously with Greek, although Born would eye me once in a while, a look that said, "I still haven't changed my mind about him."

About three weeks later, a cop went to Greek's cell and told him to pack up. Nothing about why, or where he was going. Greek said it was probably to go down to MCC for the federal suit he and his partner, Joey Kersch, had filed against some guards in Westchester County for a bad beating. I think it was that beating that broke Greek's spirit.

The first known time Frankos had ever informed on somebody was at MCC when he picked up the phone and called Giuliani's office to unveil a murder plot by some Albanian drug dealers against one of the federal prosecutors. A "star" was in the making then but nobody in the state system was aware of it, even when he returned to Comstock around Feb. '86.

My jailhouse friend Greek, the wolf in sheep's clothing, told me the story with his usual machiavellian flair. He was aided in his treachery by the Justice Department and the State Corrections Department, right down to the C.O.'s, aimed now to recruit me as a government witness. I imagine he would have reaped some reward had he succeeded.

Greek was too clever and knew me too well to approach me in a blatant manner. He spoke of how all we had to do was pretend to cooperate on anything we knew concerning organized crime. Then, they'd take us to jail in Newburgh where they had federal holding cells. There, we could escape; Greek claimed to already have hacksaw blades stashed there. "It's an easy out," he said.

At this time, the regular porter on our tier had somehow disappeared and Greek was given the job. This enabled him to be on the tier (supposedly to sweep and mop) while everybody else was locked in. I knew the deal now, so I told Born to push the jack of his

(continued on page 69)



no counts. You get a large bed, a window, and if you're not in the mood to watch the giant TV screen at the Rec Center and want a little privacy, you have your own color TV, complete with cable and videos. Hell, the walls are even soundproofed so you won't have to listen to the guy next door.

"When I was shown around my first day of processing at MCC," says Frankos, "I couldn't believe it. I saw guys hanging out, shooting pool . . . At Otisville, where I went next, there was a bowling alley and gardens where you could plant tomatoes or something. There was a basketball court, a jogging path and college if you want that. There are females coming in teaching or counseling, even playing basketball with you. All the C.O.'s wear ties and they come up to you, say, 'How you doin',' and play nice."

Of course, it's not all play for the rats. Besides snitching, they are required to earn their keep. "At Otisville," Frankos recalls, "everybody had to work. It's factory work—mak-

ing parachutes for the army—but with top prison pay. Everybody's making \$400-\$600 a month pocket money." Another 'tough' restriction is not being able to call other informants by their names. "You have to use their initials, even though you might have known them on the outside."

Frankos says he met many famous stool pigeons in the Program. "Big time hit men, white collar criminals and narcotic dealers. Nicky Barnes was there with me, and he told me he lied about Herby Sperling. 'It was either me or him,' he said. Barnes put away 80 people, thousands of years in the pen, many with life without parole. He crucified guys and got a sweet deal for it. He's supposed to be out in six years."

Frankos also met Sammy "the Bull" Gravano. "When they flew me to San Diego to testify for Frank Sako in 1991 (they were mad as hell I was testifying for the defense, but Sako's lawyer had subpoenaed me), they put

me in MCC and guess who's two cells away? Gotti and Gravano. But this was before Gravano snitched." Gravano became the fed's top informer, helping to put away 14 alleged members of the underworld.

Frankos rolls his eyes and tries to separate his hands. "When Gravano ratted, he stretched. They make you stretch it. They all know Gravano lied against Gotti, but they don't care. Gotti never killed nobody. I'm not trying to befriend the guy, I'm just telling you the truth."

I DIDN'T GIVE 'EM NUTHIN'

Although Frankos was considered an official federal informant, he had yet to agree to testify against anyone. Frankos claims never to have taken the stand against an organized crime figure. "I didn't give them nuthin'." Frankos is adamant about just how far his ratting went. "They had me go to the Grand Jury against Angelo Ruggiero (a capo in the Gambino crime family) and against Gotti on some killings. I refused. I never testified against nobody in the time I was in the Program."

In 1987—Frankos had been in just under a year—he figured out that he wasn't going to get a commutation,

much less a sentence reduction from the feds, so he told them he wanted out of the WPP. Frankos requested the federal institution in Texarkana, TX, or any state prison outside of New York where he was known. Instead, they sent him to the worst possible place: Attica.

Frankos was given a choice between Protective Custody or General Population. Refusing to sign in at PC, he went to Population. "Everyone knew I was a rat," says Frankos, shaking his head. "I was in population five minutes. Ten of them were waiting for me in A Block."

Frankos was shanked and almost died in A Block. He was taken out of Population and put in the hospital. Three months later, the feds brought him to Wisconsin. There, a whole new hook-'em line began. "They called me to say they were gonna give me what I wanted, but only if I helped them. They said they had different people working in the Justice Department now and that even though I had gotten fucked around before, I was finally going to get my commute. They started all that questioning again, but my lawyer said don't say nothing until we get a solid agreement."

"I knew the game now. I told 'em to talk to my attorney."

Frankos was shipped to

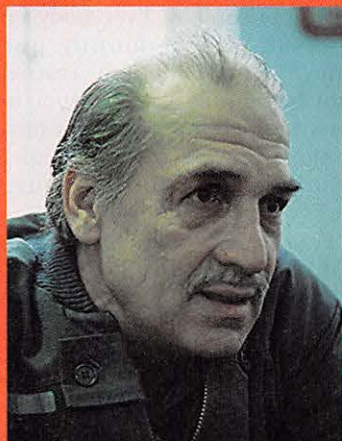
Sandstone, MN, where he'd been once before. This time, he stayed from '87 to '89, blending into the general informant population.

Although Frankos says he wasn't supplying the feds with information, he was leaking information to other sources: *Penthouse*, *Playboy* and later, author William Hoffman and private investigator Lake Headly. While soaking in the sun and playing tennis in a Phoenix facility, Frankos was talking to *Penthouse* about the murder of Jimmy Hoffa and the location of his body. While he was at Sandstone, Frankos was feeding information to *Playboy*.

In the *Playboy* article, "The Hit on Jimmy Hoffa," author William Helmer attempted to solve the Hoffa case through Frankos' information. The *Penthouse* article, "Where's Hoffa? The Anatomy of a Hoax," by Sharon Churcher, exposed Frankos as a peddler of tall tales. *Penthouse* was right on the money: Frankos had indeed lied about his involvement in the Hoffa murder (see sidebar).

Of course, the feds weren't exactly tickled that Frankos was talking to the media. Frankos was put in solitary confinement. But even there, he was able to give up everything he had to Hoffman and Headly, who co-wrote the book *Contract Killer*. When the

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO RAT



They come to you when you're at your lowest. "You ain't lookin' too good," they say.

No shit, you think. You're doing life with no parole. You'll never be with your family again, your partners have made themselves scarce, and your old way of life—livin' large with fat bank accounts, expensive restau-

rants and big respect—is a done deal. Not only that, but now you're doing time in one of the worst joints in the system and the guards are messin' with you. One week in, and you're already in the Hole. Now you got the feds playing Welcome Wagon.

"How they treatin' you in here?" they ask, like they don't know.

"Whaddya want?" you snarl. You're old-school. You got nothing to say to these guys.

They look hurt. "What do we want? Oh, you got us all wrong. It's what do you want?"

You frown. You've been warned about these guys. Even talking to these bums is enough to tarnish your reputation or get you shanked in the main yard.

"You don't want to die in jail, do you? Doncha ever want to see your kids again?"

You can't help but think about it.

"The United States of America needs your help. We want you to enter the Federal Witness Protection Program..."

If you're thinking of turning rat, Donald Frankos has only three words

of advice for you: "Don't. Don't. Don't. Once you're marked as a rat, it's over. In prison, being a rat is worse than being a rapist, or even a baby fucker, which is the worst type of inmate."

"They'll offer you paradise," he says. "They'll say they can give you anything you want, send you any place, even take you out of prison to be with your family. They'll promise you payroll and unlimited luxury. 'All you gotta do is give us this guy,' they'll say. They promise you the world. In the end, they fuck you."

"If you have 40 years," says Frankos, "do the time. At least you'll be able to look in the mirror."

"It's a hell of a temptation for anybody, I don't care who he is. Everybody has the potential to become a snitch. There are very few guys like Herby Sperling or Gotti any more. But you got to think about what it means to be a rat. Once a rat, always a rat. All those guys I used to hang with, they think I'm a rat, a no-good rat. Nowadays, I just hang my head. What am I gonna do? Look 'em in the eyes and try to play tough when I'm a fucking rat?"



From a Stand-Up Guy

Herby Sperling doesn't care too much for rats. It was a rat (Nicky Barnes) who got him life without parole. "Rats are like storytellers who want to make themselves famous," he says. "They're fuckin' bugs who just want their 15 minutes of fame. But they don't know how costly it is."

Sperling, one of the strongest stand-up guys doing time, believes there are basically two types of people: those who pay for the meal and those who don't. "Everyone has to pay for these guys," he says. "The worst thing is what happens to the families. And the government is the same as their witnesses because they're layin' "

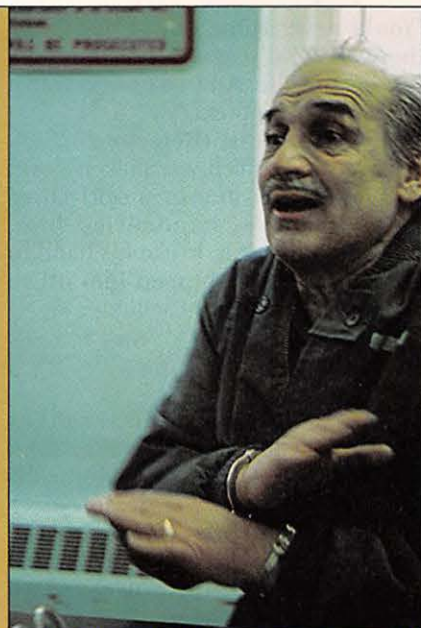
in bed with them. They all stink.

"If I give a witness \$50, I'm guilty of bribery. But if the government wants to pay a witness with money or a time cut, it's OK. They get two scumbags to corroborate with each other."

Sperling was in MCC with Frankos in 1976 and has a few choice words to say about him: "The guy's a fuckin' bum. A junkie. A screwball. Guys like Frankos lie so much they get to believe their own lies. [Sammy "the Bull"] Gravano's another one who's full of shit. He murders 19 people, then says Gotti told him to do it. The only thing Gotti is guilty of is being a good dresser. He's the perfect image for the government, the second Al Capone."

From his experience, Sperling believes the government is the only real organized crime group. "They're the biggest pushers in the world," he says. "They make up these titles like capo and godfather, feed this shit to the press and then get a guy with a big mouth who drops some big names and the public loves it. They say whatever the public wants to hear."

He does give informants some



credit, though: "I gotta give these rats credit for being perceptive—they see who the government wants to put in jail and they make up stories like Gravano. They know they have to hand the government some big names or they'll be treated like shit as soon as they're squeezed dry."

feds found out what was happening, they shipped Frankos off to Maine State Prison. He stayed there a year, until a friend of John Gotti's, Bobby England, recognized him. Then he was moved to Utah, then to California, then to Texas. Each move proved a worse location for Frankos.

In March of 1992, they asked Frankos if he wanted to go back to Sandstone, which meant being put in solitary, or go to Attica. "They wouldn't let me out of solitary because of what I said about the Bureau of Prisons and their officials; how the government was prone to lie and that the feds had wanted me to fabricate stories against people they wanted to indict. The feds were also pissed off for my lack of testifying and cooperating with investigators. I was sick of solitary, so I checked out of the Program."

BACK TO THE STATE: THE FEDS TRY AGAIN

Frankos was returned to Attica, but this time he was placed in Administrative Segregation. The conditions proved to be even worse than solitary at Sandstone. When Frankos sunk to his lowest, the feds came knocking again.

It was April of 1993 when two U.S. Marshals appeared before Frankos'

cell. "It was part of their routine," says Frankos. "We know you're catching hell here," they said. "And I was. They were throwing shit in my food, writing 'Rat' on my tray, dogging me, both the C.O.'s and prisoners. They

*"If you're
thinking
to turn rat:
Don't.
Don't.
Don't."*

asked if I wanted to go back in the program. I said 'yeah.' They said I had to help them, and that they had gotten a call from U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White about me. (White had been Frankos' lawyer for a time while he was at Sandstone.) She thought I might want to help."

The feds were trying to indict El Sahib Nosair. "They wanted information on him," says Frankos. "They told me, 'We don't care how you get it. But bring back that Nosair did the hit on Jeremiah Cohaney and that we also

have reason to believe that he's contracted to blow up several federal buildings. Find out which ones.'" They told Frankos to write an official letter to Jim Nauwens that he'd help and they'd see to it that he'd go back in the Program.

Nosair was placed in a cell next to Frankos. A month and a half later, Frankos was brought in to talk to Nauwens. "They wanted me to tell them that Nosair admitted to killing Cohaney," Frankos laughs, "and that he was gonna plant a bomb in the Federal Courthouse, the U.S. Attorney's Office. They wanted me to say I was given a blueprint of the facility by Nosair."

"I told him that he didn't give me no blueprint. 'You wanna get outta here?' Nauwens asked. 'I thought you were gonna help us. You want to go to Wallkill? Any place you want? Did he confess to you?' They told me to use my imagination."

Frankos stuck to his story: "I said he didn't confess nothing. I didn't know when I wrote that letter to Nauwens that they wanted me to outright fucking lie. This poor guy, Nosair . . . he was a nice guy. I don't care what the hell he done, but in prison he was a gentleman. They wanted me to bury this guy. If I didn't tell them what they wanted to know—

'You'll never come out of that box,' they said. 'You're gonna stay there the rest of your life. And take us to court: We don't give a fuck.'

Frankos told them to go fuck themselves. His cell was shaken down and he was put in a strip cell. Three days later, they handcuffed him, threw him in a van, broke his hand in the process, and shipped him off to Clinton Correctional Facility.

CLINTON

Bruised and abused, Frankos arrived at Clinton where they took him to Special Housing. "Right off the bat," he says, "a sergeant comes over to me and says, 'So you're the big fucking rat that ratted on Joe Sullivan? You better not cause no fucking problems here.'"

"When I asked to see a doctor, they threw me in a cell behind Plexiglass. The sheets were ripped. 'You ain't in the feds no more, Frankos,' I heard an officer laugh."

Frankos was placed in Administrative Segregation "for the

24 hours a day. Everyday, there's banging on the wall. 'Get up you rat, you snitch, you stool pigeon rat . . . I filed complaints, but they say I got to substantiate it. How? I've had to experience a lunatic in the next cell who screamed all day and night, eating and throwing feces through the bars; a man on the other side with full-blown AIDS and TB; I only get two five-minute showers a week; and I'm locked up 24 hours a day.' Frankos is the only one in Ad Seg who's not there for disciplinary reasons.

Prison Life asked Assistant Deputy Burke if we could photograph or at least see Frankos' cell, in order to either verify or offset his allegations. His answer was a firm "no." "Some of the staff aren't even allowed up there."

It seems as if cooperating with the government has earned Donald Frankos nothing but regret and a filthy cell in Ad Seg. "I was told that I never should have written a book, never should've talked bad about the State or the feds. Because I expressed myself through the media, I am being

"Everyday, there's banging on the walls: 'Get up you rat, you snitch, you stool pigeon . . .'"

safety of the institution." Although he did what he could to change his living conditions, improvement at Dannemora came slowly. He wrote to the warden and deputy warden for a new sheet, maybe a pillow, but that took two months. He also asked for something more to wear than one pair of pants and a shirt. "'You better stop complaining,' they said to me. 'You're not getting a fucking thing.'"

Nowadays, Frankos seeks readmission into the WPP or to be placed in Administrative Protective Program Unit (APPU), which is designed for high-profile cases. Thus far, he's been denied. He continues to serve time without privileges or property (he's only allowed stamps, writing paper and cigarettes, though he doesn't smoke.) According to Assistant Deputy Superintendent William Burke of Clinton, Frankos' status isn't going to change.

"Every day the inmates are throwing shit in my cell," complains Frankos. "You can't believe it. It smells

punished more than anyone can imagine."

Of course, life hasn't been all that unfair to Frankos. Early this year, he was allowed to get married. (His wife is a friend of a woman he used to date.) Although conjugal visits are out of the question, his wife can bring him food now and then. "It's not enough to make me forget about conditions here, but it's something."

Meanwhile, Donald Frankos is determined to go out fighting. "I'm not as tough as I once thought I was," he admits. "The harassment and abuse is unbearable. I am going through hell. But I ain't gonna just dry up and die here."

Never mind that Frankos was manipulated by the feds. Many people believe he deserves whatever treatment he gets. "But I'm also a victim," he says. "I don't care that I'm a rat. I've accepted that. But don't make me suffer needlessly."

AND NOW A WORD FROM THE FEDS

You've got to be, or at least appear to be, a willing stool pigeon with clout to get into the Federal Witness Protection Program. Not just any low-level, chump-change snitch can get in. There are specific criteria to meet.

"There has to be a certain level of testimony to get into the program," says Department of Justice spokesman John Russell. "Along with a willingness to testify against people and a need for security for the informant or his family."

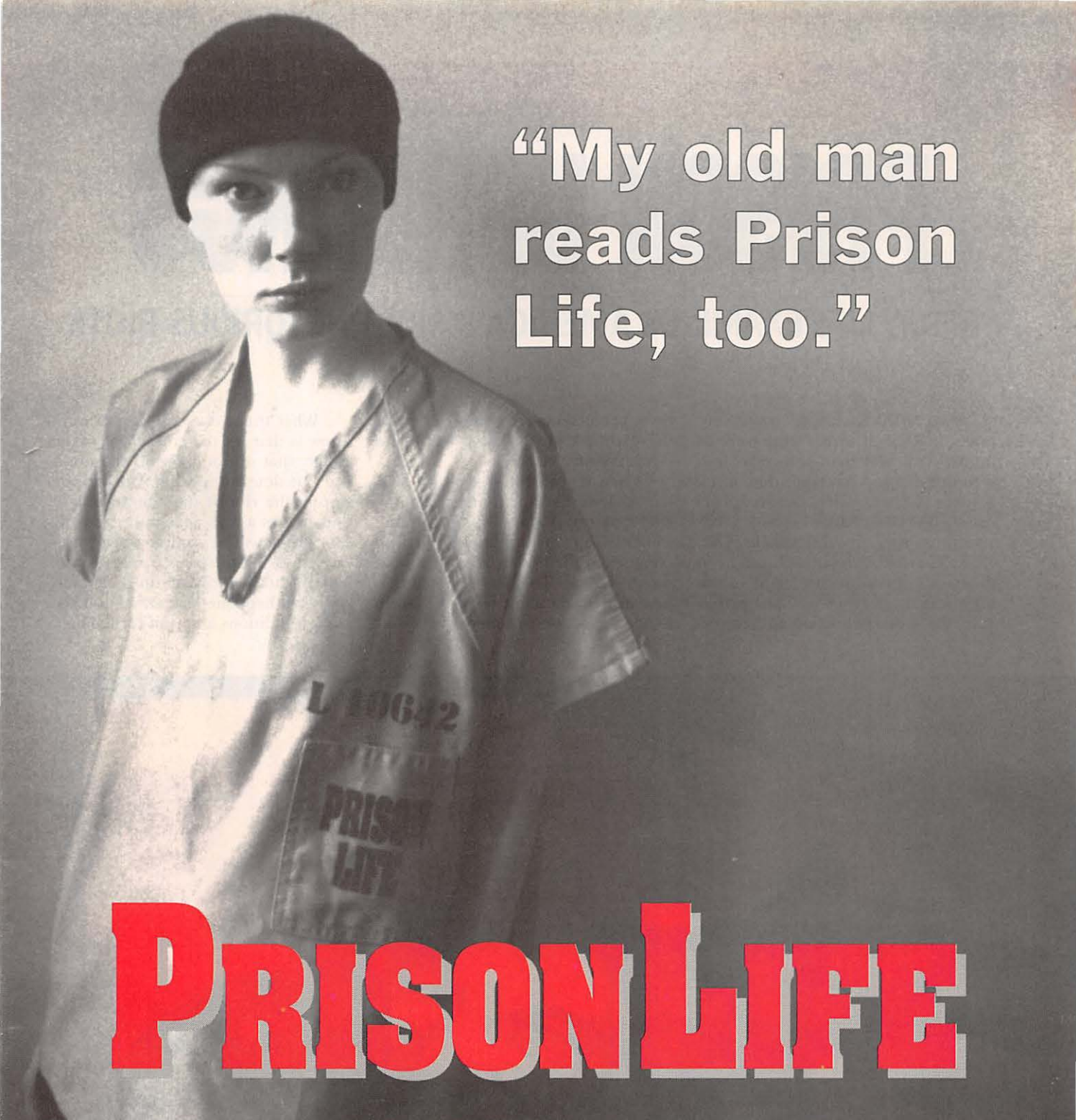
Could someone like Donald Frankos, who claims never to have testified against anyone, have squeezed his way into the program? According to Russell, yes. "But it's rare."

It sounds easy enough: Once you're in the program, you can clam up if you want. You don't even need to keep providing information to stay. "Once you're in, you're in for good," confirms Russell. "Unless you ask to get out, or are kicked out for violating the agreement, such as going to an unsafe area to meet with unsafe persons, going to the press or disclosing the location of people in the program."

Russell says that although federal informants get better amenities than state prisoners, it's only because in general, federal prisons are much cushier than state facilities. "But informants are treated no differently than any other federal prisoner. They get the same pay, the same food, the same lodging, the same privileges."

Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. Attorney General, had a different perspective on the Federal Witness Protection Program. He said he dislikes the WPP because "most rats just get squeezed dry, then are dropped." He also said that if a rat is important enough, the feds will let him run wild, and even cover up felonies in order to get testimony.

PL



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PRISON UPRISINGS

PRISON LIFE EXAMINES AMERICA'S MOST NOTORIOUS RIOTS

Since 1970, nearly 400 riots have raged in U.S. prisons. Some were as minor as a melee in the mess hall with nothing more serious than a few bruises. Others were catastrophic: Attica, NY, 1971; Santa Fe, NM, 1980; and most recently, Lucasville, OH, 1993. These insurrections brought to America's attention the plight of the imprisoned. They also caused prison administrators, politicians and correc-

tions professionals to question everything they know about prisons and punishment.

Then there's the free world civilian, kicking back at home, watching the riot on the news, seeing the smoke rise from the burning prison complex as the bodies are carried out on stretchers. To the civilian this is just another example of a system that's too soft on prisoners.

What the average citizen doesn't know is that it's the conditions at the facility that not only set off the uprising but determine what will happen during the riot. If the administration encourages a malicious informant system, there will be some enraged prisoners looking to settle scores with the snitch who added years to their bids, like what happened at Santa Fe. If the living conditions aren't fit for animals,



like at Attica, the prisoners will use the riot as a way to voice demands to state officials.

Following a prison riot, there's a deluge of legal action against the state. There are the expected wrongful death suits and the consent decrees (a court order mandating prison improvements) that have either been filed before or shortly after the riot. At Santa Fe, the riot forced the court to put teeth into a consent decree filed before the riot. That decree sought to end the barbaric treatment of prisoners and the deplorable (and illegal) conditions at the facility. As a result, Santa Fe is now recognized as one of the country's better-run institutions.

In the case of Lucasville, it's too soon to tell. The bodies are still warm.

—George Charles Gray

Illustration by Marty Voelker

Prison	Attica	Santa Fe	Lucasville
Dates	Sept. 9-13, 1971	Feb. 2-3, 1980	April 11-22, 1993
Casualties	43 dead: 3 prisoners killed by other prisoners 29 prisoners killed by State Police retaking prison 1 prison guard killed by prisoners 11 prison employee hostages killed by State Police retaking prison	33 dead: all prisoners were killed by other prisoners	10 dead: 9 prisoners killed by other prisoners 1 prison guard killed by prisoners
Prisoner Demands	—amnesty for criminal acts during riot —transportation to a "non-imperialistic" country —federal government intervention in managing the prison —reconstruction of the prison by prisoners —negotiations with specified outsiders	—bring in federal officers and avoid reprisals against prisoners —end overcrowding —better food —improve visiting conditions —allow media inside —improved recreation & education —name new disciplinary committee and end overall harassment	—single celling —an end to forced integration of religious & ethnic groups —end overcrowding —no retaliation vs. rioters —create programs —access to the media —negotiations with specified outsiders
Damage	\$2 million: mostly fire and smoke damage to shoe, carpentry and metal shops, auditorium-chapel, laundry and commissary	\$20 million: including destruction of kitchen, classrooms, gym, severe damage to several cell-blocks and destruction of prison records	\$10 million: primarily for the destruction of L-Block.



ELEVEN DAYS UNDER SIEGE

An Insider's Account of the Lucasville Riot

by Paul Mulryan, SOCF

"Hey Paul!" I heard my road dog calling me from the other side of the fence dividing the blocks from the yard. "I just heard that some rollers got downed outside L-Corridor! Keep your eyes open, rap. Some strange shit's goin' down."

I didn't give much thought to what he said. Fights between convicts and guards weren't exactly uncommon here. Moreover, this type of thing was becoming more and more prevalent. But I told him I'd keep my eyes open.

Then I heard the two rollers in charge of my block yelling for the porter and the few guys in the day-room to lock up. Their voices were so full of panic and urgency that I knew something very big was jumping off. "Lock up! Lock up now, damn it!" they yelled.

Someone in the cells called out, "The guards are locking themselves in the bathroom! What the hell's happening?"

"They've got control of the L-Corridor! There are guys running around with masks on! They've got the keys! They've got the fucking keys!"

The rumble from the corridor began to grow like a rolling thunderstorm: muffled screams, the thud of feet running through the halls, glass shattering and showering the floor, and echoes of loud ramming sounds as though heavy steel bars were battering down the walls. There was an even louder crash, and then orders were yelled.

"Open these cells! Let's get these doors open, and get these people out!"

By now, I knew the block I was in had been taken over, but I didn't know by whom. An icy doom swept through me. My first thought was that there must be a racial war.

Keys that the block officers had left behind were thrown to the prisoner now manning the control panel. All at once, the 80 cells in the L-Corridor opened. I grabbed a metal tray for a weapon and headed out of my cell. Down the range I could see

several teams of masked convicts converging on the block. Each man was armed to the teeth: baseball bats, chains and shanks of stainless steel, two-foot-long and honed to a point as fine as an ice pick. Clearly these men meant business.

"Everyone out! Get the fuck out of your cell!" they yelled as they

Lucasville during the riot.



Associated Press

moved from cell to cell. "If anyone is caught trying to hide in their cell, kill the motherfucker! Let's go! Let's go!"

I watched each movement closely, trying to read each man's intentions from his eyes and body signals. If they tried to move in on me I'd go over the range to the first floor. The jump was nothing and there were too many of them to even think about dealing with them head-on. My adrenaline shot to flight mode. Breathing fast and trying not to show it, I put my foot on the edge of the range, ready to go over if any of them started to move in on me. They came closer, checking me out, and clearly not rattled by my metal tray. Then I saw both black and white skin showing through their masks. I was relieved. Blacks and whites wouldn't be working together if this were a race riot.

"Everything's cool, brother," one said. "But we still want everyone out

in the hall, so if you need to get some of your things together get them now and leave the block."

I didn't recognize any of them, nor did I want to. Still, I inched closer to the edge of the range.

"Be cool, bro. You've got no problem here," another said.

With that, I moved out, heading quickly down the range and out of the block. My immediate concern was safety. Something this big and unbridled could quickly get out of hand. My best bet was to get out to the rec yard where my road dog was. I knew what he was about and that we could look out for each other. All

I had to do now was get my ass out A.S.A.P.

I stepped onto L-Corridor and into a world of chaos. Every one of the 632 cells had been opened, and hundreds of convicts, some masked and armed, swarmed through the hallways like angry hornets. Faces were intense with fear. Eyes darted from face to face, face to hand, looking for weapons or any signs of danger. When eye contact was made, it was brief and concealed. No one wanted his concern to be misread as a threat or challenge.

"You men get something in your hands!" one guy kept shouting. "Let's get busy tearing this fucking place down!" He ran from window to window, swinging a steel bar and smashing glass. I moved closer to the gym, hoping to find the exit door open, when I spotted my friend Val from one of the other blocks.

"Val!" I hollered as I worked my way toward him. "What the hell is this shit?"

"I don't know what up, Paul. I just got out of the shower and the place was crazy!"

I told him my plans to head to the rec yard and he fell in beside me, agreeing to put distance between us and whatever we were in the middle of. Down the hall we came upon a body lying face down in a puddle of blood. The guy's face and upper torso were completely covered in blood and punctures. Someone had pinned a guard's badge through his skin, letting everyone know that this was a snitch and that snitches would find no peace in L-Corridor this day.

"Who is it? Can you tell who it is?" I asked my homey as I stepped around the blood.

"No rap, I can't. Too much blood."

By the time Val and I made it down the hallway to the gym, it was too late. The exit door was already barricaded, wired shut and guarded by several masked and armed convicts. Since this was the only available exit, it meant that Val and I were trapped, locked in for the long run.

We knew that the riot could ignite into a full-scale bloodbath at any time and that it was imperative to arm ourselves as quickly as possible. We grabbed the first suitable thing we saw: a piece of heavy pipe. As we made our way back up the corridor, the heat and closeness of danger clung like a wet wool blanket.

"We're stuck in this shit for however long it lasts," I said to Val. "We've got to get our shit together and watch each other's back."

Val looked around, nodding his head. "Cool, rap. Let's get our asses out of the mainstream. This is too big to be safe."

"Listen up! Everyone listen up! Everyone shut the fuck up for a minute," yelled one of the Masks as he marched through the hallway. "Everybody move against the wall! We gotta keep the middle of the corridor clear. Let's get together on this!"

The crowd flanked the wall as two other Masks walked down the

center and announced: "Lucasville is ours! This is not racial. I repeat, not racial. It's us against the administration! We're tired of these people fucking us over. Is everybody with us? Let's hear ya!"

Hundreds of fists shot into the air as the prisoners roared their approval. I could feel the relief sweep through the corridor. At least we were a little clearer about what was happening. We didn't know that we were locked inside what was soon to be one of the nation's longest and bloodiest riots.

Teams of men were assigned to barricade and guard each block. Two men were stationed in the day rooms to watch the rec yard; two were sta-

the prisoner was hit with bats, weight bars and shanks. A coroner's report later revealed that besides his skull and numerous other bones being broken, he had also been cut from neck to belly and gutted. His body was dragged to the end of the corridor and dumped on a pile of wet blankets near another body, both of which would later be hauled out to the rec yard.

Meanwhile, guards were being grabbed and dragged from wherever they could be found. Several managed to break away and make it to safety, but others weren't so fortunate. Some were thrown onto the floor and hit so hard that they couldn't get back up on their own. I didn't know if they

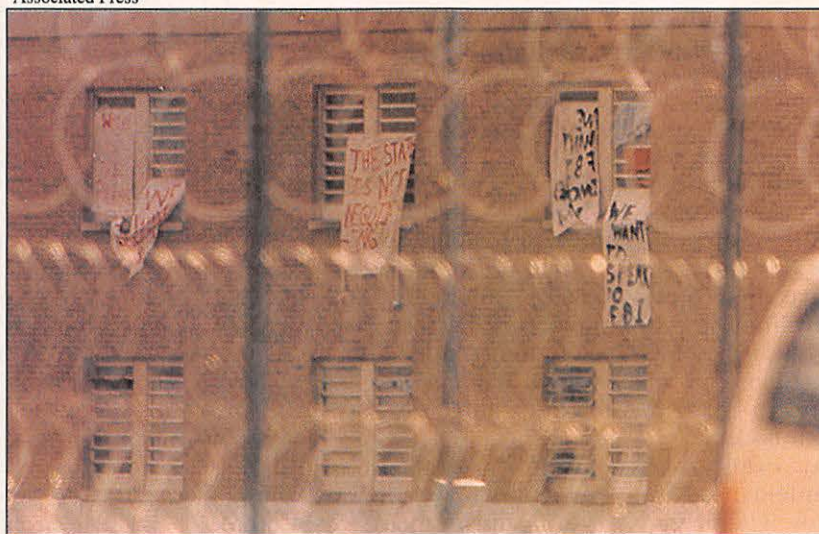
were alive or dead as they were carried or dragged into one of the cell blocks. During the first hour 11 were seized, blindfolded and dressed in prison blues. The convicts beat some of the guards so badly they released them for fear they might die. Of those seized, seven would be taken hostage for the duration of the riot; one would be killed.

The rioters covered all the windows with blan-

kets, and then searched every cell for food. With over 400 prisoners and 7 guards to feed, food would be essential. Everything we found was stored in an empty cell that became the kitchen. That first night, cookies, chips and cakes were given to anyone who was hungry. I was surprised that although I hadn't eaten all day, I wasn't hungry. I remember thinking I'd get something to eat when it was all over. Little did I know it would last another 10 days.

On the second day the prison authorities shut off the electricity and the water. Soon, all the food was gone. The deprivation of food and water, coupled with the stress, began to take its toll. People lost weight at an alarming rate. Several men got so thirsty they drank from the fire extin-

Associated Press



Until prisoners hung banners out the windows, the public was unaware that officials were not cooperating.

tioned in each of the range's top cells to watch the roof. L-2 was the only block that hadn't been opened. I overheard someone say that one of the prisoners had broken a key in the lock to keep the rioters from taking it over. Several of the Masks found a pick ax and busted the glass and the steel frame from the window casing. Twenty minutes later, L-2 was taken.

"Okay, get the bitch who broke the key in the lock! He wants to play police? We'll show him what's up!"

The prisoner had locked himself in the stairwell with the block officer, hoping that the brick and steel enclosure would keep them safe until help arrived. The Masks attacked the block wall with 45-pound weight bars and a heavy pick ax, and within minutes the concrete wall gave way. The guard and the prisoner were dragged out. The guard was blindfolded, but

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STILL NO POPULATION AT LUCASVILLE

by Michael Lee Wood, SOCF

The Southern Ohio Correctional Facility is still a deathtrap, an institution teeming with hatred. It's been that way for a long time, and the riot last year did little to alleviate the pressure that boils in the belly of the beast. If anything, it made things worse.

The aftershocks of the 1993 riot will be felt for years. Not only did it claim the lives of nine prisoners and one guard, innumerable prisoners were harmed. Guards were beaten and thrown into the yard like unwanted trash. The result is that post-riot animosity runs high at SOCF. Guards are furious about the death of their comrade, and more at the injuries the living guards sustained. SOCF's "Goon Squad" patrols the blocks daily, and at the smallest disturbance they jump on the chance to beat someone. Meanwhile, the White Shirts and the Administration stand by and watch as their officers have their "get-back." Prisoners are humiliated, slammed around and beaten. Some stay strong; most succumb. This all goes on while you're leg-chained and cuffed behind your back.

In the past year, even more rules have been implemented by our esteemed director. The prison is still on lockdown except for a handful of inmates who work in the kitchen and laundry facility. There's no such thing as population at Lucasville—at least until they complete the renovation of the whole prison, which may take another year. Men are randomly picked up and placed in Administrative Isolation for "propensity for violence" or for "gang-related material." Prisoners can no longer buy canned goods in the commissary, keep razors in their cells (we have to shave in the shower), or get a toothbrush without the handle cut off.

So you ask: "Is Lucasville ripe for another riot?" Fuck, yeah! When men are physically and psychologically abused and locked in their cells like wild animals, how much compassion or understanding can they have?

I need not exaggerate; my record speaks for itself. I've been in

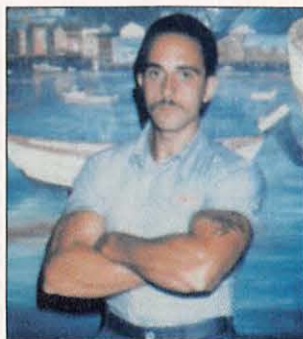
Lucasville since 1978. I know the territory and what needs to be done to survive. I've mauled more guards than I can count, and sent several inmates home on early parole—in body bags. I use the word 'inmate' because there's a difference between "convict" and "inmate": A convict takes care of his own.

Lucasville is a prison of despair and psychological torture. Rehabilitation at SOCF? Only a figment of the Administration's imagination. That's even more true since our infamous riot. We find ourselves subjected to mass indoctrinations by an omnipotent Administration whose sole purpose is to keep its wards removed from society, who use astute mindgames to create dissension among the prisoners, and who employ modern psychological techniques to break down a man's personality until he's too submissive and weak to fight back.

Will the situation ever change at SOCF? Not as long as we have an Administration that treats men no better than cattle. Animals of the lowest order strike out when abused. Can you expect less from human beings?

The riot trials are beginning. One man has already been convicted of beating a guard. Soon more trials will produce inmate witnesses for the state; renewed anger will simmer among the convicts over these traitors. The indicted prisoners will be found guilty by biased juries and additional time will be forthcoming. The judges will heap the max sentence upon their backs and the convict, no longer able to see daylight at the end of the tunnel, won't give a damn about anything.

So you ask yourself: Is Lucasville ripe for another riot?



According to attorney Niki Schwartz, who represents the Lucasville rioters, the state is currently in violation of several major points of the contract. Point no. 13 mandates programs, yet there's no drug, vocational or education programs available save for a lackluster G.E.D. course. Point no. 5 requires a system be put in place to handle prisoner grievances, yet the administration hasn't gotten around to it. Point no. 14 prohibits retaliation against the prisoners, but when 129 Lucasville prisoners were transferred to the Mansfield facility, they said they were taunted by guards and held in administrative segregation without evidence of individual complicity in the riot. Three reported that force was used against them.

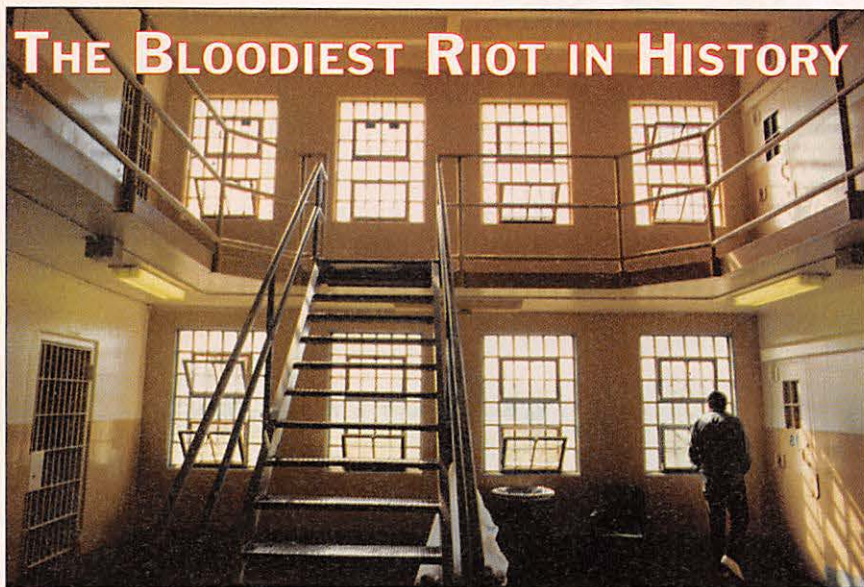
As far as representation goes, the judges have refused to appoint the lawyers Schwartz recruited and trained for the case. What's more, the highway patrol is interrogating prisoners without their lawyers present despite prisoners' written requests that legal counsel be on hand during questioning.

So far, nearly 20 prisoners have been indicted for crimes committed during the riot. No corrections personnel have been charged. While no prisoner witnesses have come forward, some say they've been pressured to testify.

Although Schwartz (and everyone else) hoped the riot would motivate D.O.C. to address the problems that led to the 11-day riot, the state's most noticeable response has been to crack down even harder. It's beefed up security by fortifying walls and reinforcing control stations, but the facility remains dangerously overcrowded, operating at 187% over capacity.

Funny, after such a bloody riot you'd think the state would be doing everything it could to prevent a reoccurrence.

THE BLOODIEST RIOT IN HISTORY



by George Charles Gray
Photos by Wendy Walsh

It's been called the most savage prison riot in American history. For two days in 1980, prisoners ruled and devastated the New Mexico State Penitentiary at Santa Fe. When it was over, 62 prisoners were hospitalized; 33 were dead.

The brutality the prisoners inflicted on each other is what singles out Santa Fe as the bloodiest riot in history. Even the Attica riot in 1971 claimed only four prisoner-inflicted deaths. The other killings, 29 prisoners and 10 hostages, were committed by New York State police when they stormed the facility. At Santa Fe, the police and the National Guard just waited until the prisoners were exhausted from murdering and mutilating each other.

Surprisingly, no guards were killed, but a dozen were held hostage. After the riot, they were so traumatized that none would testify.

Why did it happen? There was the aged facility, so poorly-planned it was outdated before its doors even opened in 1956. Designed to hold a maximum of 800 prisoners, it housed over 1,100 convicts at the time of the riot. The guards, too, figured into the equation. You had the usual sadistic hacks who seem to proliferate at badly-run joints, but also the underpaid (\$700 a month beginning salary) kids who were given uniforms, keys and rounds on their first day of work.

Santa Fe also had an innovative "psychiatric" treatment program for problem prisoners. Dr. Marc Orner, former head of the Psychiatric Services Unit, would put men in full-body casts

with portholes for urination and defecation and feed them drugs for a couple weeks. The doctor claimed he could cure any discipline problem with this technique.

The guards, too, had special methods for dishing out punishment. Michael Colby, who's been at Santa Fe since 1974, describes a favorite "old-school" disciplinary technique: "In Cellblock 3, there used to be stairs that led to the basement. The C.O.'s favorite ploy was to give you a "free ride" when you got to the top of the stairs. While your hands were cuffed behind your back, you'd get a boot in the ass down to the basement. That was typical." Guards were also known to knee prisoners in the groin while handcuffed, or force them to crawl through a gauntlet of hacks armed with baseball bats, according to attorney Mark Donatelli, who defended the prisoners during the riot trial and who currently represents prisoners on the Duran Consent Decree. On top of all this, the prison administration regularly and arbitrarily dished out heavy doses of punishment and encouraged a vengeful informant system that pitted prisoners against each another. In fact, it was the animosity the prisoners felt toward each other that fueled the riot. "Most of the killings were snitch-killings. You know, killing the dude who gave you the 50 years you were doing," says a con who survived the riot.

But there were two incidents in particular that actually incited the riot: A couple of prisoners wasted on Raisin Jack decided to jump two guards. Shortly after, Danny Macias picked up a fire extinguisher and bashed through the window of the prison control room. The controller,

a young, untrained guard, was so panic-stricken he didn't follow the emergency procedures that could've prevented the impending anarchy.

Most of those murdered were sex-offenders or snitches in the protective custody unit, Cellblock 4, which became death row during the riot.

Thomas "Teardrop" Tenorio was one of the first to go. He was a snitch who had ratted on the wrong guy—Moises "Troka" (Spanish for "truck") Sandoval—for sodomy prior to the riot. When Troka, who was part of an execution squad hunting for prey in protective custody, found Teardrop, he crushed his head with a typewriter roller. Apparently, Teardrop was on his knees praying when Troka struck the first blow.

A group of Aryan brothers used a torch to break into the cell of Pauline Paul, a mentally retarded black man, who would often shout things like, "White man is the devil" when he mingled with the general population. The convicts killed Paul with a shank, then cut off his head and paraded it, like a trophy, on a broomstick.

Some prisoners raided the dispensary and popped pills until they passed out.

In the sally-port of Cellblock 4 there are still scorch marks on the cement floor, the final resting place of James Perrin, who was convicted of raping and killing a mother and her



Scorch marks on the floor mark the death of James Perrin.

two daughters. He was pinned on the floor and dismembered with an acetyle torch.

When it was over, the damages totaled \$20 million. Although the main buildings that were destroyed—the gym, kitchen and several cellblocks—have been rebuilt, evidence of the riot remains. There's the burned-out wing of the main facility, its bars twisted from the intense heat of the fire set by the prisoners. The structure stands condemned but not demolished—an unsettling monument to the worst riot in history.

LEGACY OF THE SANTA FE RIOT

The most enduring legacy of the Santa Fe riot is the Duran Consent Decree: a court order mandating sweeping changes and setting new standards in the New Mexico Department of Corrections. The decree, which was the result of a federal lawsuit brought forth by three prisoners, was actually won prior to the 1980 riot. But because the order was basically ignored, and because the prisoners' expectations were high, the emotional groundwork for the riot was laid.

Not once since the decree was signed in 1980 has the state been in full compliance with it. In fact, the latest Duran report, based on one of the mandated, twice-a-year investigations, blasted the administration for lack of prisoner activity, one of the 14 areas monitored. The report states: "The institution does not provide 'a comprehensive program' designed for each inmate. The figures demonstrate with crushing clarity that far too many inmates are idle or underactive, and the institution lacks the resources to correct that problem."

The federal judge who oversees the Duran is sick of the state dragging its heels, and he said he's prepared to use the power of his court to make the penitentiary comply with the decree. In other words, he'll fine the state, which will only add to the financial burden New Mexico taxpayers have paid—a whopping \$7.4 million—in legal fees for court battles over the decree.

Bobby Ortiz, a prisoner who serves as a legal representative on Duran, along with other prisoner legal representatives and their attorneys, put pressure on prison officials by threatening to file contempt-of-court charges against the state on the basis of the latest Duran report. Prison officials are now negotiating with Ortiz and his group, and Ortiz seems pleased. "There are still areas we have to come into compliance with, but I think there's good faith on both sides to meet the requirements of the decree. The institution is in compliance in some areas, but not in other areas," he says. Ortiz predicts that the penitentiary will

comply with the standards in the near future because the federal judge "is giving the state no other alternatives."

According to attorney Mark Donatelli, who defended prisoners involved in the riot and who currently



(Above) "We need programs," says prisoner Irving Jones, "because we are going to be your neighbors one day."
(Below) Bobby Ortiz (l) works with Compliance Monitor Ben Berkheimer on the Duran Consent Decree.



represents prisoners involved with Duran: "Santa Fe is now dramatically different than the prison that had the riot in 1980. You don't have the overcrowding and the daily abuse of inmates that was common back then. But that isn't to say there are no problems. We are in ongoing negotiations and the penitentiary needs to come into compliance with the decree."

Joanne King is an ex-con who now works as a paralegal at the Santa Fe Public Defenders office. In studying the riot, King believes that the Santa Fe pen will never fully comply with the decree because "the main facility can never meet ACA (American Correctional Association) accreditation criteria. The structure is still the old one of the riot. They just refurbished it. They would have to build a

new one."

Like most people, King says the real tragedy is that it took so much carnage and destruction before the state would institute necessary changes. Those changes include improved visitation rights (i.e. conjugal visits), better medical care and more highly trained, professional guards. "If the 1980 riot hadn't put the national spotlight on that pen, the Duran litigation would never have gone through," said King.

The current warden, John Thomas, claims it is highly unlikely that another riot could break out, citing fewer prisoners and tighter security. One of the security measures he's taken—but has come under fire for—is cutting a host of prisoner program/support groups, such as Concerned Offenders for Youth Awareness, Prisoners for Abused Children, Fathers in Prison and The Captured Pawns Chess Club. Irving Jones, a transfer prisoner from Iowa, laments the loss of these programs, which he feels are necessary for the transition to the free world. "Time don't stand still while we're here. There's a very real fact that 80% of us are going to be your neighbors in a minute. We need those programs."

However, Jones does point out that the Santa Fe pen is better than other facilities he's seen. Prisoner Mike Colby agrees, and adds that the place has improved greatly over the years. But he says there are problems that must be addressed: "A lot of the jobs are porter jobs, where guys are not really doing anything. So you have somebody leaning on a broom for four hours and forty-five minutes, just because he has to be there. They need to make inmate activity more beneficial."

Prisoner Bobby Ortiz calls the Santa Fe pen "sweet." "I've been through Soledad, San Quentin, the federal joint and all those prison gangs. In here, you got no problems. If you keep your nose clean, you're not pressured into that bullshit like at other penitentiaries. Do your own time, mind your own business, and you'll be alright."

—George Charles Gray

THEN

For four days in September 1971, Attica Correctional Facility became the scene of the deadliest prison massacre ever. When the tear gas and gun smoke cleared, a total of 43 persons had died as a result of the four-day uprising.

It began like many other prison riots. At 8:30 a.m., after breakfast, prisoners were lined up to go on work details. One group refused to form ranks. Before the guards could get the rebellious prisoners back into line, other prisoners started shouting. Then violence broke out with such swiftness it seemed to some observers that the uprising was planned and coordinated. Within minutes, about half the prison's population of 2,254 men was on a rampage, running through the corridors, breaking windows and setting fire to bedding. Others smashed office furniture and made bonfires.

The uprising quickly spread into the prison yard and outbuildings. In downtown Attica, smoke could be seen drifting above the prison's 30-foot walls as flames roared through the school and chapel.

News of the riot spread almost as fast as the violence had flared. More and more people arrived: state troopers, the National Guard and media.

Outside, preparations for an all-out assault on the prisoners had already been made. By that time, enough information had been gathered to assess the seriousness of the situation. A total of 38 guards had been seized as hostages. The rioters, numbering more than 1,000, had full control of the yard of Cellblock D. Five hundred law enforcement officers had entered the main gate, sharpshooters equipped with .270 caliber rifles and sniperscopes were stationed atop the highest building in the prison compound, and helicopters circled overhead.

Leaders of the revolt sent out word that if the helicopters weren't

grounded, hostages would be killed. Lest anyone get the idea they were kidding, prisoners who were acting as guards over the hostages paraded several of the captives around the prison yard with pillowcases over their heads. Shortly after 4 p.m., the helicopters were grounded.

Negotiations with the prisoners began. New York State Corrections Commissioner Russel Oswald and Herman Schwartz, a law professor at the State University at Buffalo, went in to talk. Oswald had said he was going to take a hard line in dealing with the convicts, that he would first insist hostages be released and the men return to their cells before any grievances would be discussed.

After a half-hour of negotiating, Oswald and Schwartz returned. The prisoners still held the hostages, and no one had returned to his cell.

tation." "Understanding." More time for recreation, less time in the cells. No reprisals. "Competent" doctors. "More fresh fruit." "Not so much pork."

Another prisoner addressed the group. "The entire incident that has erupted here at Attica is a result of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administration network of this prison. We are men. We are not beasts, and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such."

On Friday morning, the insurrection entered its second day. A decision had been made to accede to the prisoners' demands to see the mediators of their choice. Members of the prisoners' "security guard" searched the mediators, and guaranteed them safe passage. "Just stay with us and you won't get hurt," said a spokesman. "We guarantee your safety." Another convict instructed the visiting group, "Just show these men that you care. Show them that you came to save lives and reform prisons."

Interviews with the hostages took place in the "security area" — a small compound formed by self-assigned "guards" who locked arms to form a circle around the captives and protect them with shanks, baseball bats, clubs, claw hammers and tear-gas canisters. Under these conditions, the highest ranking hostage,

Capt. Wald carefully explained to negotiators that he and his fellow captives had been at all times treated decently. In fact, he said, the captives' plight had made it easier for them to understand the day-to-day lives of the prisoners.

Negotiations ran smoothly until Sunday, when things took a disturbing turn. As some demands were granted or agreed to, the list of demands was growing. The ringleaders were now asking for "complete amnesty," which in effect meant that they not be brought to trial for any criminal act that they had committed during the uprising. Along with this, they asked for transportation to a "nonimperialistic country."

(continued on page 82)



The fortress of Attica today. Photo by Patrick Finan

A second attempt was made. Commissioner Oswald agreed to one demand: future negotiating would be covered by the media. Four newsmen and a cameraman following Oswald were met by a line of convicts armed with clubs and pipes. At this point, the rioters appeared to be full of confidence. A convict, using a makeshift megaphone, read a list of demands: Work done by convicts should be paid for at rates provided by the state's minimum wage laws. Convicts would be allowed to be politically active. Censorship of convicts' reading material should cease. Convicts should have the right to communicate with anyone at their own expense. They should also be given "true" religious freedom. The demands continued: "Realistic rehabili-

NOW

Story & Photos
by Patrick A. Finan

The term "maximum security" doesn't begin to describe Attica prison. It rises from the hills of western New York much like a medieval fortress, built to confine rather than to defend. Even on a bright winter day the walls cast shadows, deep and black. To enter Attica is to step into a world of regimentation, routine and discipline that would put many armies to shame. Companies of nameless, faceless men march down harshly lit corridors of steel and concrete, passing through time as endless as a life sentence.

Volumes have been written about the causes of the riot that ultimately killed 43 civilians, guards and prisoners. Overcrowding, undermanning of the guard force and unfit living conditions were brought to light in the riot's aftermath. Accounts of brutality and unwarranted punishment at Attica were told during the ensuing investigation. The lack of guards restricted prisoners to one shower a week. Mail, incoming and outgoing, was routinely censored. Committees were formed, investigations were made, conclusions were finalized. In some instances that might have been the end of it: Well-intentioned reforms buried in the bureaucratic nightmare of a system with too many demands and too few resources. Attica, however, could not be ignored, and fortunately, much has changed since that Monday morning in September 1971 when Attica raged with violence and death.

UPSIDE

Attica today houses 2,116 prisoners in single occupancy cells, down by nearly 400 prisoners from the time of

the riot. The facility receives and releases approximately 60 prisoners weekly. Facilities have been expanded since 1971 to include a gymnasium and a vocational school, where programs in welding, masonry, printing and several other hands-on skills are taught. Basic and advanced academic study is offered by 15 teachers. Prisoners can also receive two- and four-year degrees from local colleges. Prisoners confined in the Secure Housing Unit can earn high school equivalence certificates. The primary prison industry, known as Corcraft, employs approximately 300 prisoners in sheet metal fabrication. Prisoners

state-issued green pants is mandatory. Inmates are also granted greater access to outside vendors through mail order services for items such as vitamins, clothing and music. Mail is still opened and searched for contraband, but the issue of mail censorship appears to have been resolved. Meals are described by prisoners as "edible," and provisions are made for those with religious dietary requirements. Unless restricted for disciplinary reasons, inmates are allowed televisions, AM radios and tape players. Inmates can even subscribe to *Playboy* if they wish. Several other improvements in Attica are of note. Expanded visiting

privileges and the Family Reunion Program, allowing prisoners one annual 43-hour visit in a duplex housing within the prison, helps keep prisoners in touch with their families. Other family-oriented activities, like summer picnics, take place throughout the year.

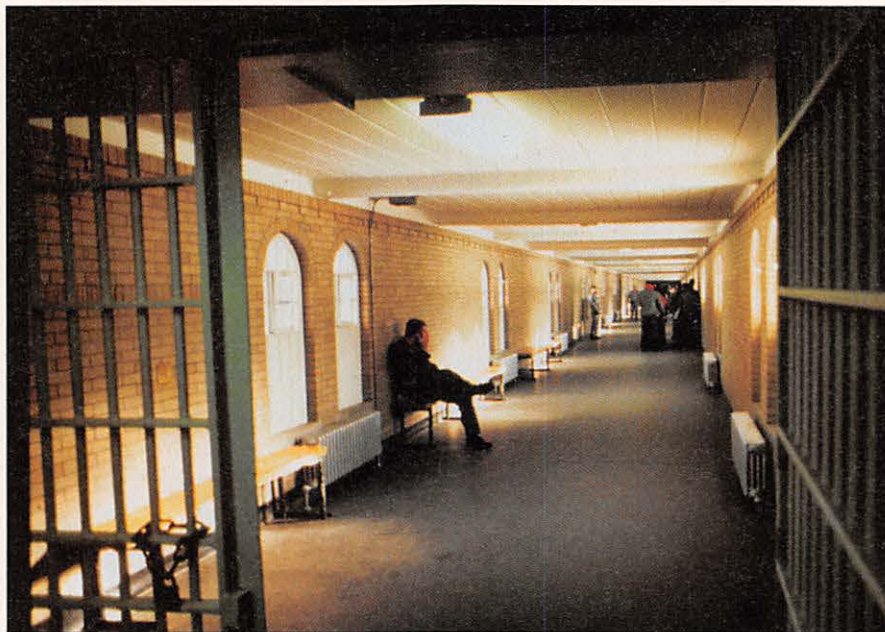
To enhance communication between inmates and the staff (yet another driving force behind the anarchy of 1971), the Inmate Liaison

Committee was established. The committee, elected by the general prison population, represents prison interests in meetings with correction officials. The Inmate Grievance Program is a way for prisoners to air frustration with prison policies in an open and direct forum with prison staff.

Prisoner groups and even a creative arts program serve about 500 prisoners. Programs such as ALFA (A Look for Alternatives) and CAP (Community Awareness Program) allow prisoners to interact with young people at risk of finding themselves in Attica.

DOWNSIDE

Attica has been and probably always will be a cold, heartless and often violent place. The average sen-



The halls of Attica.

can earn anywhere from \$1.55 to \$3.90 per day, generally the highest wage paid for prison work at Attica. Other jobs pay from 60 cents to \$1.55 per day. If all the prison programs are operating at capacity, about 1,750 of the 2,116 prisoners can be actively engaged.

The availability of showers, toilet paper and other needs for day-to-day living, which were among the catalysts of the riot, have been addressed. Each company of 40 men has two shower stalls on the cell block; prisoners may take at least three showers a week. Personal hygienic items such as soap, razors and toothbrushes are now regularly provided, and clothing restrictions have been relaxed. Prisoners are allowed options, within certain guidelines, in shirts and shoes, but wearing

tence is anywhere from 12 years to life. Violence, both physical and psychological, is a fact of life. Today, violence is primarily inmate on inmate. Gangs such as the Latin Kings and Matchateros swell as young offenders with violent criminal histories find themselves doing long bids. With little chance of survival on their own, many find themselves seeking out gangs for protection. The racial balance in Attica is typical of prisons nationwide: approximately 50% black, 35% Hispanic, 15% white and other nationalities. One guard said of the situation, "White gangs are a very small minority here. A white racist would probably be in the psychiatric unit because openly displaying those sentiments would be evidence that you're insane. They would simply be found dead in here."

Indeed, some prisoners retreat into Protective Custody status, known among Attica inmates as 'Punk City.' So intimidated by real or perceived violence, inmates have been driven to slash their wrists in order to secure a transfer. In the words of Attica prisoner Eric Reid, the resi-



Denroy Vigo, a prisoner at Attica

dents of 'Punk City' are "being confined by the confined," forced to live in isolation cells just to survive. In a recently published article in *Prison Life*, Reid details the existence of those who cannot adapt to the reality of Attica and seek refuge from the system within the system. Many are driven to gangs or driven to act out their fear and frustration in the hope of being doubly confined and protected. Of the prison system in general, Reid observed: "Prison represents someone's bread and butter. Many companies base their entire existence on keeping these cells full."

While health care has been drastically improved since the riot (several notable additions include more staff, a full-time doctor and psychiatrist and much improved facilities), AIDS and

other deadly communicable diseases are putting new strains on the prison's health care program. Governor Mario Cuomo said that his 1994-'95 \$8.4 million budget for prisoner health care at Attica is in response to "a significant demand for health care because of the prevalence of opportunistic diseases related to AIDS, T.B., hepatitis B and other infectious diseases." A budget division spokesman said of the situation: "The prison system was never designed to accommodate a population of sick inmates such as we have today." He also said that the N.Y. Correctional Services Department has one of the largest AIDS medical practices in the world, with approximately 8,000 HIV-

Attica means a big portion of my life. I'm doing 20 years-to-life right here. You adjust. Some of my peers would call that knuckling under, but I just see it as doing my time. You hear about incidents and occasionally see things that might be questionable, but I try to distance myself from it. I focus on the positive rather than the negative."

One of the programs Fraley found most beneficial is Cephass, which was born from the ashes of the Attica riots. Founded by a former Eastman Kodak employee, Harold Steele, Cephass is more than just simply a "lifer's group." Currently serving about 100 cons, Cephass groups are conducted weekly by professional counselors who main-

tain constant contact with those confined. Continuity of therapy is ensured by peer counselors, like Fraley, who completed the program and now volunteer to assist prisoners in need. And Cephass doesn't stop when inmates are freed. Post-release programs include weekly group counseling, parole-to-work transition programs, a construction company that provides job training and real-world experience as well as temporary housing and personal

positive individuals.

INSIDE

Attica can and often does bring out the worst in people, but not always. Some find a way to rise above their circumstances and even grow in what most would consider a living hell, like Steven Fraley, who's been at Attica since 1983 for murder and is doing 20 years to life. While many would have been so hardened by this experience as to be unreachable, Fraley has found the self-determination to go beyond simply being number 82A-3166. Earning a bachelor's degree in 1989 and actively participating in the prison outreach program, Cephass, Fraley has made significant progress toward an uncertain but hopeful future. He says of life and problems in Attica: "To me,

assistance.

Programs like Cephass are critical, given that Attica houses many of the most violent criminals in the U.S., a growing number of whom are young offenders. Commenting on the youth who find their way to Attica, Reid says: "It just makes you say, 'Damn, I can't believe that shit' when you see how young these kids are and you consider the crimes they've committed. You've got these kids who think murder is the right thing."

As long as we have people who think murder is the right thing, Attica will always have room for one more.

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST BEHIND BARS

by Jennifer Wynn

If life throws you lemons, make lemonade. Anthony Papa would probably cringe at such a sickeningly cheerful cliché, but it's hard not to recall it when you meet him.

Think you've been thrown a few lemons? Try a 15-year-to-life sentence (though you've had no prior convictions) for passing an envelope containing four-and-a-half ounces of coke, losing 10 grand to a scumbag lawyer who gave you the shittiest advice money could buy, being divorced by your wife and watching the dealer who set you up get off Scot-free while you were sent up the river.

As for making lemonade, consider this: Since Papa started doing time at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, he's earned a paralegal degree, a B.A. in Behavioral Science, and he was recently accepted into the master's degree program at New York Theological Seminary. Even more important to Papa, he's won numerous awards for his artwork and had a painting exhibited at Manhattan's prestigious Whitney Museum of American Art.

Tony Papa wasn't an accomplished artist before prison. He wasn't even an amateur. He was a regular Joe from the Bronx with a family and a business installing car alarms and radios. He even belonged to a bowling league.

"One day I was late for bowling," recalls Papa, "because my car was broken and I had no money to fix it. A teammate asked if I wanted to make some fast cash. All I had to do was deliver an envelope, and he'd pay me \$500."

It seemed easy enough to do. But when Papa delivered the goods, 20 cops came out of nowhere. "It was just like in the movies," he recalls. "I turned to my left and a cop slipped a .38 into my virgin ear. When I turned to my right, there was another gun. I was thrown to the ground and handcuffed."

The nightmare was only beginning. When the prosecutor offered Papa three-to-life, his lawyer, George David Rosenbaum, read the desperation in Papa's eyes as money in the bank. He advised Papa to go to trial.

"He got the cash and I got the time," says Papa, who has by now served 10 years of his bid. He became his own

jailhouse lawyer and, having exhausted all his state remedies, is now working on his federal habeas corpus. He's even thinking about trying his luck in the clemency lottery. Why not? All it takes is a dollar and a dream. In this case you don't even need a dollar, and Tony Papa isn't short on dreams.

In fact, it's his dreams, literally, that inspire him to paint. "I've been reading Jung, getting into psychoanalysis and learning how to paint from the unconscious mind. I

then try to make it conscious in order to create an intuitive connection with the viewer."

When Papa first tried his hand with the brush in an art class in 1986, he painted what he calls "diabetic art," all sugar and spice but short on emotional depth. "I began painting scenes," he says, "mostly impressionistic pieces. But then I started reading about art and studying painters like Picasso. I saw how he used his famous painting, 'Guernica,' to express the atrocities of war. I saw that art could be used to make a political statement."

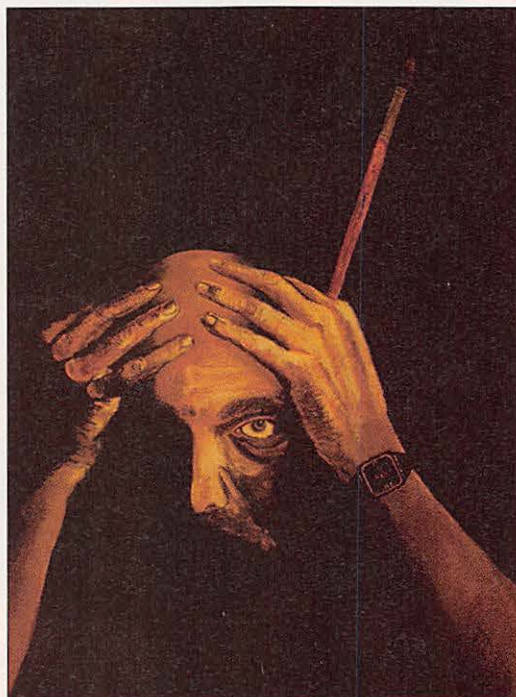
Soon after, Papa was painting pieces like "Godly Arbitration," which packs a hell of a political punch. Illustrating his opposition to the death penalty, the painting shows former president George Bush speaking at a platform while his ghost hovers behind him. One hand rests on an image of God; the other on the Whitehouse, home of presidential power. "I'm trying to show that

Bush had the power to take life as God does and that he sees himself as God's equal," explains Papa.

Behind Bush stands Dukakis, waving the American flag and holding a sign that reads: "Fry chicken, not people."

Papa's like a parolee in a brothel when he's pointing out details in his paintings. There are many: "In the bottom corner you see president Reagan, all juiced up, hailing the coffin of justice. In it's a victim, who died in jail. And there's Uncle Sammy, who's carrying the coffin on his back. The coffin represents the weight of the legislature. Then there's a prisoner and his tombstone, which represents my tombstone. See the 'thumb's down' sign on it? And the quote I used from Plato?" The quote, in tiny letters, says: "Justice is the advantage of the stronger."

Papa submitted this piece and several others, some



Papa's "15 Years to Life: Self Portrait," exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. "It illustrates the deeply rooted pain of knowing you're living out the most productive years of your life in a cage," says Papa.

CURTAIN ON A SHOE LACE

by Anthony Papa

My studio is my cell: a 6-by-9-foot metal cube filled with memorabilia from my nine-year stay at camp Sing Sing. Spread along its cluttered, dusty floor are various art books and magazines. As cramped as it is, my cell is the only escape I have.

My time alone helps me create and cope, but I have to struggle to maintain my privacy. That's the way it is in prison; I guess it's part of the punishment. In order to secure any form of privacy, I have to go through a series of elaborate maneuvers. One way is my old "curtain on the shoe lace routine."

Imagine three well-worn, paint-stained sheets hanging over a pair of old shoe strings stretched across the front of my cell. It's a simple, but effective tool for keeping away annoying individuals. It's the equivalent of a 'do not disturb' sign.

However, some people can't read. It's especially true when I'm in a compromising position, such as when I'm sitting on the toilet contemplating important social problems in the world, like the war in Bosnia or if Clinton really smoked pot. It never fails: Once my cheeks hit the cold smooth surface of my New York State-issued throne, someone almost always appears.

One guy in particular has no respect for curtains or closed cell doors—Juice. His name is really Arthur, but he hates that name. He's a six-foot-two giant, a Magilla Gorilla-lookalike with a brain the size of a prune. He's a good friend but a pain in the ass at times. To be honest, it's most of the time. He has a bad habit of coming by beefing for rap when I want to be alone.

Every day at 3:30 in the afternoon Juice routinely makes his presence known. I think it's abuse in the first degree but he says he just wants to check on me to see if I'm okay. Today was a typical example. My curtain was in its usual position and I was busy painting this piece entitled "After the Whitney." It took me

almost three months to develop, and like a flower in bloom my canvas was finally coming alive, growing like a living organism.

"Yo, you in there," Juice shouted. I dropped my brush to my side and didn't answer, thinking he'd go away. "Yo man, I know you're in there," he said in a high wailing voice—the kind that could crack concrete. "I know you're in there. Answer me. Do you miss me?"

I hate those words. Every day he comes by, asks me that same dumb



Photo by Connelly Dominick Miller

question and doesn't leave until I respond.

"My God," I muttered to myself. "What can I do? There's nowhere to run to and my locker is too small to squeeze into. I have to respond or he'll never leave." The last time, he stood there for two hours waiting for a reply.

"No, I don't miss you. Now get the fuck away from my cell! I'm busy!"

"Awwwww come on. You know you miss me."

"Look," I screamed. "I have no time for this bullshit. I'm painting!"

No response, not even a peep. He knew I meant business. Was it possible that even a savage like him could understand the beauty of art? "Thank you God," I said out loud, looking at the cross hanging over the doorway. I started to paint again, totally absorbed by the sensations I felt in my fingertips while stroking my brush against the creamy surface of the canvas.

"I know you miss me!" he shouted.

Now I was really pissed. "Hit the road you fuckin' jerk! Beat it!

Scram! Get out of my face!"

He replied through the curtain, which fluttered. His breath, just like a dragon's, was so hot it almost ignited.

"I told you about dissin' me man! When I talk, you respond!"

"You freaking mongoloid," I said. "You'd give an aspirin a headache, you big stupid jerk! I told you! I'm bust! Hit the road! Vamoose!"

I tried to paint again, but listened for a response. The corner of my eye noticed an unsightly invasion. An oversized brown hand reached through the curtain and tugged on the shoe strings. They snapped. The sheets fell.

I lunged to catch them and tripped on the leg of my chair. I lost my balance, and my hand slid across the wet canvas. I now felt naked, exposed to an alien environment—its leader standing in front of me, snarling and bearing his teeth.

"You see," he gestured, "you're not busy at all."

I turned and looked at my painting. In the middle of the canvas a muddy streak appeared in place of the details that had taken me six weeks to complete.

I was steaming. Sweat rolled off my brow and down my nose. I bit my lower lip as my heart pounded away and the adrenaline started to circulate.

I turned my head and our eyes met. We stared each other down. "Do you miss me?" he said.

I looked at him in disbelief. I was crushed. I looked at the curtain on the floor and said softly, "Yeah, I miss you. Would you get out of here now?" I felt the agony of defeat magnified a thousand times over.

"OK," he replied, with a big grin on his face. "I'll see you later."

As I looked at the mud in the middle of my painting, I couldn't help but think of why Juice would want to hear such a ridiculous statement over and over again. Maybe he has to hear those magic words to assure himself that someone cares about him after all the years he's spent in prison. As I stared at the painting, I mumbled out loud: "Yeah, I miss you."

What a price to pay for privacy!

political, others not, to the Albany Correction on Canvas Art Show in 1993. He captured first prize in the watercolor category for his painting "Pink Bathroom Sink" (literally, a pink bathroom sink, which Papa describes as "aesthetically meaningless"). None of his political work, by far the most original and insightful of his collection, has earned him recognition in the state and D.O.C.-sponsored shows. Fortunately, his piece "15 Years to Life: Self Portrait" was seen by several thousand viewers at the Whitney Museum in Manhattan.

"By some stroke of luck I was chosen by the controversial grunge artist Mike Kelley to show my self-portrait in his exhibit, 'Pay for Your Pleasure.'" Papa explains that the Whitney is going in a new direction under its present director, David Ross. "He's actually opening the door to those artists who aren't mainstream, such as me—an incarcerated individual."

New York Times art critic Roberta Smith praised Papa's painting as "an ode to art as a mystical, transgressive act that is both frightening and liberating, releasing uncontrollable emotions of all kinds."

Describing "Self Portrait," Papa waxes poetic. "It illustrates the deeply rooted pain and hopelessness that one feels thinking about the reality of living out the most productive years of his life in a cage."

"Fifteen years is a long stretch in a man's life. Time lost is unfilled, time unenriched by experience and enjoyment. Through art I have captured some of this lost time. Art has been my guiding light in an environment of darkness."

Art was also the spark that turned Papa on to education. As his art developed he got more involved in school. "Art was a catalyst," he says. "By learning art, I was able to maintain my humanity. From that point on I wanted more out of life. Instead of stagnating in a defeating system with the bare essentials, I'm progressing."

Papa also uses art as a release. "When I lose it, I paint. It's how I express my anger at the system." He points to an elaborate painting, "Corporate Asset," which portrays the prison system as a big business. Cutting through the heart of the painting is a serpent, whose head is a guard tower. A prisoner sits over the revolving door of justice, leading to the road of recidivism. "What I'm saying here is that when you're thrown into the system, and you do your time to get out, that door means you're still a prisoner, you gotta carry that

label with you for the rest of your life."

A painting like "Corporate Asset" takes Papa six months to a year to complete. "I paint day and night," he says. "I put my heart and soul in this." Given the difficulties of painting in prison (see sidebar), he needs all the gut-driven motivation he can summon up. Not to

mention resourcefulness—Papa washes his paint brushes in his toilet bowl and uses toilet paper to create the layered effect that's normally achieved through generous portions of expensive paint. He has to settle for painting on canvasses no larger than 24 by 36 inches in a cell not a whole lot bigger.

He suffers other system indignities, too, like the time he won his first blue ribbon in 1988 but wasn't allowed to keep it because it violated the no-blue-in-the-joint rule. (Guards' uniforms are blue.) "I tried to engage the guard in a philosophical discussion to get my ribbon, but the best I could get was a picture of me holding the ribbon."

Unfortunately, Papa's persuasive methods haven't worked half as well in his quest to get the state of New York to reinstate its funding of prison art programs. (In 1991, the state slashed its \$2 million art budget to \$150,000.) Despite eloquent letters to Governor Mario Cuomo and nine Senators, the most meaningful response Papa got was from Senator Joseph Galiber saying that art programs cost too much.

Papa decided to take matters into his own hands. He convinced Sing Sing administrators to let him teach an art class.

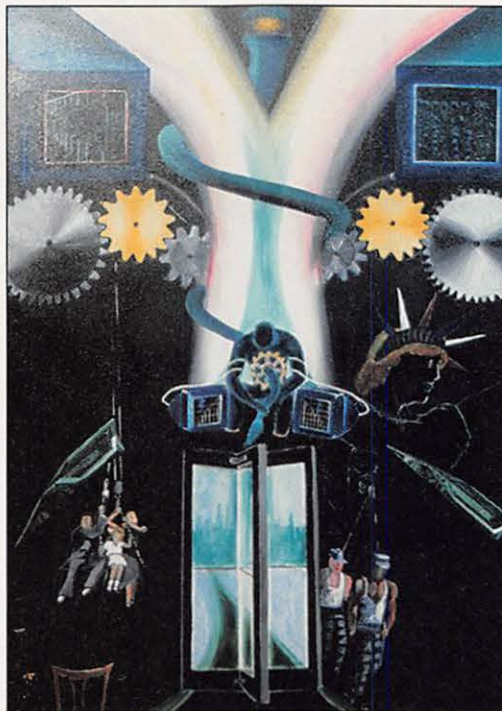
"Art is a therapeutic tool," he says. "If you're going to put someone in prison, let him do his time but also let him maintain his self-esteem."

"I believe in restorative, not punitive, justice. Now society's in the punitive mode. Instead of funding rehabilitative programs, taxpayers just want to lock you in a cage. I want to show society that it pays to let prisoners utilize these programs. A prisoner will eventually go home and interact with society. If you're gonna give someone 15 years and nothing else, he's gonna come out an animal."

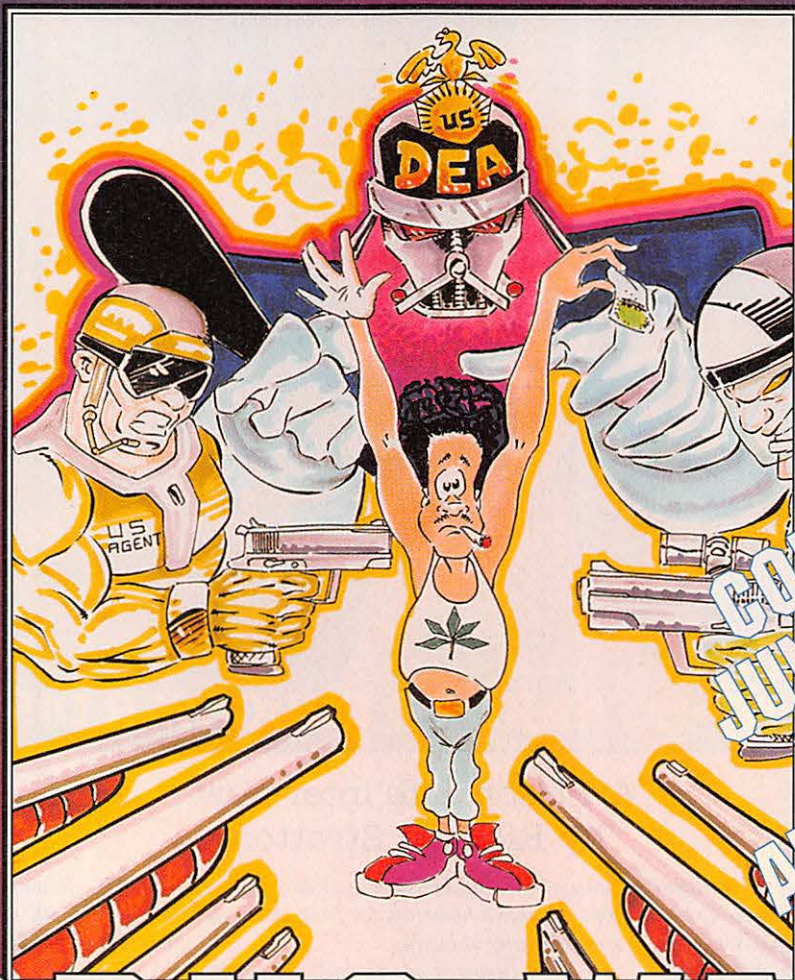
From his tiny cell, Papa gazes onto the expanse of the Hudson River. An early summer breeze cuts through the dank air. Tony holds on to his dreams of freedom. "When I get out, I want to paint in epic proportions. I see myself in Soho, in a studio, with huge canvasses . . ."



Above: "Political Reality." "Painting is a release," says Papa. "I use it to express my anger at the system and to make political statements." Below: "Corporate Asset."



PRISON LIFE



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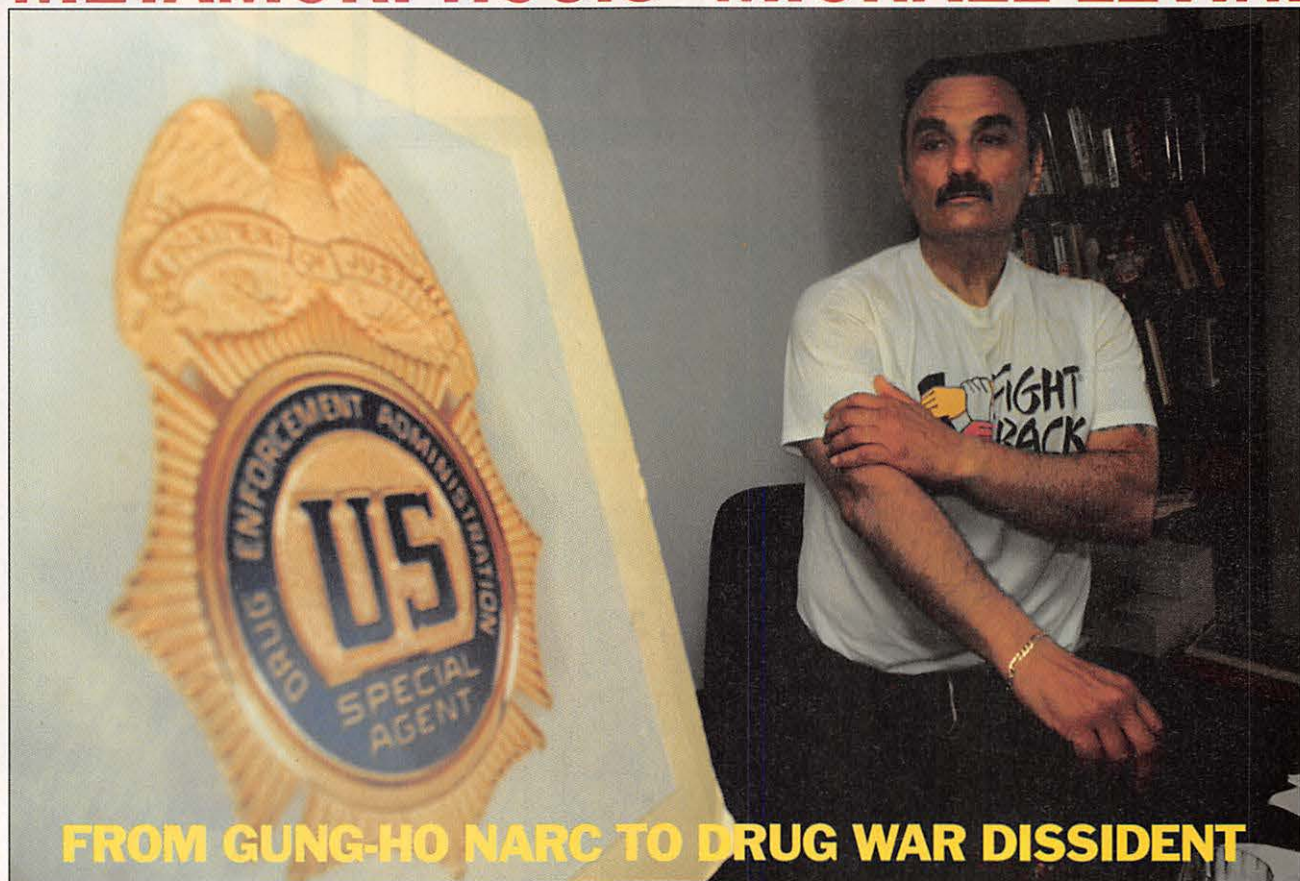
DRUG WAR

POWS

Prisoners of the Drug Wars: *Prison Life* wants your story. The June 1995 issue will examine the escalating drug wars, harsh new mandatory sentences and the cost to society exacted by our hypocritical attitudes toward drugs. If you are serving time on drug charges and feel that your story would be of interest to our editors for this special issue, write to:

DRUG WARS
C/O Prison Life Magazine
505 8th Avenue, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10018

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF MICHAEL LEVINE



Photos by Chris Cozzone

FROM GUNG-HO NARC TO DRUG WAR DISSIDENT

A *Prison Life* interview
by Richard Stratton

I read former undercover DEA agent Michael Levine's first book, *Deep Cover* (Delacorte, New York, 1990) while in prison serving a 25-year sentence for smuggling marijuana and hash. In those days I felt about DEA agents about the same way I imagine they felt about me: a mixture of loathing and fascination that is the nexus of the outlaw/lawman symbiosis and has more to do, I suspect, with how alike cops and criminals are than with how different they might be.

A few years later, I was standing in a book store in Los Angeles when my wife, Kim, who is also a former undercover narcotics agent and writer, handed me Levine's latest book, *The Big White Lie* (Thunder's Mouth, New York, 1993). I bought the book and added it to the stack on my desk — required reading on America's holy war on drugs. Like most ex-POW's, I am obsessed with trying to understand the events that resulted in my being locked in prison.

Some months passed and I still hadn't got around to reading the book. We were in the process of buying a home in upstate New York, and the real estate agent, after learning we were writers, asked if we had ever heard of Michael

Levine. He said his sister had sold Levine and his wife a home not far from where we were thinking of buying.

This inspired me to pull *The Big White Lie* out of my "must read" stack and dig into it. Two days later I closed the book and knew I had to meet this guy. The next day Kim and I drove to town to drop off some packages at Federal Express. As we were pulling away from the drive-through, I happened to look over at the driver in the opposite lane.

"That's Mike Levine," I said to Kim. I thought I recognized him from his picture on the book jacket; something just told me to look up and there was Levine.

Kim, who had been on "Larry King Live" with Levine when her book, *Rush*, was first published, thought I was hallucinating. "You just want to meet the guy so badly you're seeing him everywhere."

"No, that's him." I was sure of it. Kim got out of the car and, showing both hands so Levine could see she wasn't armed, walked toward his car.

"Mike?" she asked warily. Levine looked back at her. "Kim Wozencraft. We were on—"

"Oh, yeah. Hey, Kim. How ya'

doin'?" It was Levine, all right. The force was with me that day, and the force wanted me to meet Mike Levine.

Why did I want to meet this agent, this man who a decade or so ago was my sworn enemy and would have done everything within his large powers to lock my ass in a "cage," as Levine is fond of calling prison? This former comrade-in-arms of the men who in fact did put my ass in stir for the better part of the '80s? Because Mike Levine, with considerable help from his wife Laura Kavanau-Levine, wrote a book called *The Big White Lie*, a book that is essential reading for every Joe citizen dumb enough to believe the politicians and swallow whole government propaganda on this insane, bullshit war on drugs that is destroying our nation.

When former drug smugglers, who may know what they are talking about, come out and say that the biggest international dope dealers are either CIA assets or enjoy CIA protection, the statement is seen as self-serving. It helps the cause of truth considerably when scholars like Alfred McCoy write and publish well-researched, documented studies on the relationship between CIA and some of the world's major dope producers. (The

Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade, Lawrence Hill Books, New York, 1991.) But when a man with Levine's hard-earned credentials, a man who believed in the drug war and fought bravely and honestly for his government to the highest and most perilous levels, only to discover the shocking truth that he had been sold out by the very people he was working for, when such an insider comes forward and writes a book telling the truth, it is of monumental importance. Levine's writing *The Big White Lie* is the equivalent of General Norman Schwarzkopf writing a book proving the Army is full of shit and debunking the Gulf War as a bad joke all about big money.

So I met Mike Levine. It was eerie sitting across the table from him, breaking bread with him, talking about the drug war. Levine was a special brand of DEA agent. Levine worked undercover; he spent most of his 25-year career pretending to be a drug dealer. I spent a good part of my career pretending I was not a drug dealer. I wondered if I would have known the guy was an agent had someone introduced us back in the old days. I'm sure Levine would have made me.

Levine is big: over six feet, over two hun-

dred pounds. He's dark; they used to call him "El Judío Triqueño," the Dark Jew. He is strong and moves like an athlete poised on the balls of his feet. He's a martial arts expert, a tough, likable man with a rough-house boyish quality who, I have no doubt, could snap and instantly become deadly at the drop of a dime bag.

But why put the guy on the cover of *Prison Life* magazine? This guy put people in prison, over three thousand by his own count. He was a fuckin' cop! We decided to put Michael Levine on the cover because we believe what he has to say is vital to the American prison population. Most of the people reading this magazine are in prison on drug charges or for drug-related crimes. Many of the 1.5 million Americans behind bars wouldn't be there if more people would listen to what Mike Levine has to say about the drug war and withdraw their support for politicians who promote this sham. The war on drugs is a major part of what we know as the bloated and corrupt criminal justice system that costs taxpayers billions and is in fact a scam perpetrated on middle-class taxpayers and a form of genocide inflicted on the poor.

I got to know Mike Levine over the course of a long winter and had a number of in-depth discussions with him about the drug war. I may not agree with his ideas on how to solve the drug problem, but I trust Levine's information just as I have come to trust him as a man. Knowing Mike Levine has brought me to the hard realization that all cops are not necessarily bad people; some are just misguided.

From my own experience in the international drug trade I know what Levine has to say is true. When I was smuggling hash out of the Middle East during the long and bloody civil war in Lebanon, (a war that had more to do with fighting for control of the multi-billion dollar drug trade than it did with religion) I met and worked with intelligence operatives and major criminals who openly traded in arms and drugs with CIA connivance and protection. In fact, you couldn't

Undercover shots: (right) Levine with Billy Yellow Hair, a member of a Chinese street gang who sold him heroin; (bottom left) Levine working undercover in Spanish Harlem, trying to "make arrest statistics."



operate for long in the Middle East, or anywhere else for that matter, without CIA connections. Ostensibly, our government aids drug trafficking for political reasons, like supposedly fighting communism. But people in the business know that this rationale, if true at all, is clearly secondary to the profit motive.

Levine and I got together to record a distillation of our ongoing dialogue, a kind of précis of Levine's career, and the subject of his books. But it is to those books, and particularly to *The Big White Lie*, that I invite the reader. Read them if you care at all about why you are in prison.

I grew up on Tremont Avenue and Southern Boulevard in the Bronx, 48th precinct. I was a bad kid, really bad, arrested twice before I was 16. I was lucky enough to join the military before I got into serious trouble. I was a violent kid and looking back on it I was really afraid, scared to death. The neighborhood was changing from Italian, Jewish and Irish to Puerto Rican and Black. On the streets I used to lie and say that I was half Puerto Rican. You might say I was already undercover. I have a talent for picking up languages. My first girlfriend was Puerto Rican and I picked up street Spanish very quickly with a good accent. Later on, as an undercover narcotic agent in Bangkok, Thailand, within two months I had picked up enough Thai from bar girls to get around pretty good.

But what really started me toward my career in undercover was fate. I believe in fate, in destiny. In 1959 I was a military policeman assigned to Plattsburgh Air Force Base. I had joined the boxing team, I was 19 years old, over 6 feet and 227 pounds, and like all 19-year-olds, I couldn't con-



ceive of my own death. That's why 19-year-olds make such wonderful soldiers. I got into a fight with a guy named Heywood over a three-dollar hat. We were both military policemen. He pulled his gun, stuck it in my stomach and pulled the trigger. It misfired. There were a bunch of witnesses and he was arrested. Later, when they test-fired the gun, it fired every time.

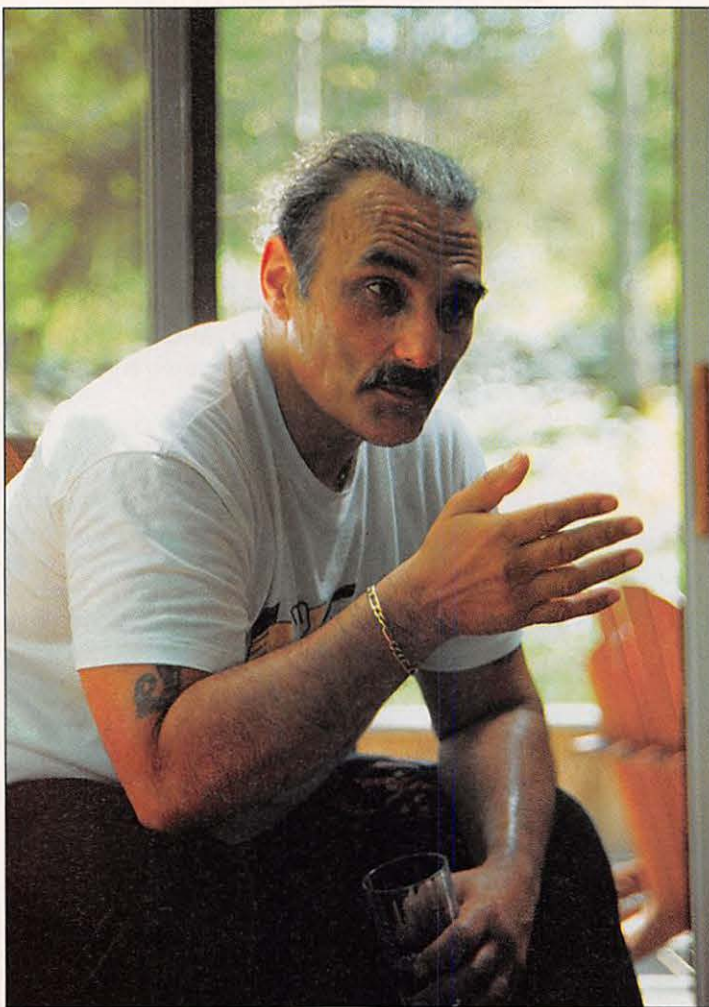
What that incident taught me was the truth of an old Arab saying: "Any day is a good day to die." The saying became my mantra. From that moment on I had only one fear in life, that I would reach my final moment on earth and say the words: "I wish I had..." I was in a rush to live out every fantasy I could imagine; visit every country I was ever curious about; taste it, feel it, eat it, try everything my imagination could conjure before that final moment came. And what better way to live out a fantasy than to become an international undercover agent for the government? And that's exactly what I did, and I got quite good at it. The better I got the easier it was for me to create any fantasy I wanted and the government would fund it, as long as the bottom line was that someone went to jail.

I played every role you could imagine to bust dope dealers. I played a priest, an Arab sheik, a Cuban terrorist. I was an undercover member of both the American Nazi party and the Marxist Leninist branch of the Communist party at the same time. I even passed myself off as a Mafia don to two corrupt DEA agents who sold me the names of informers out of the DEA computer.

Around the time the kicks started wearing off, I found out that my brother was a heroin addict. I started listening to all the rhetoric of the politicians about this holy war on drugs, and about this evil, dark enemy that was destroying my baby brother. I developed a foaming-at-the-mouth hatred for drug dealers. I blamed them for destroying kids like my brother, destroying our country and all that shit, and I was on a fucking mission from God to destroy them, and I didn't care if I died doing it. We're all gonna die. If you could choose the

way you go, what would it be? Well, I chose undercover. That's how spaced out I was, until reality set in.

My first glimpse of reality was in 1971 when I went deep cover in Bangkok, Thailand. I spent about a month hanging with Chinese heroin dealers. We're talking about a time in history when the biggest heroin seizure was still the French Connection, less than 70 pounds. These guys were producing hundreds of pounds of heroin a week. They thought I was a represen-



tative of the Mafia and wanted to impress me; they were trying to talk me into buying heavy weight. So they invited me to visit what they called "the factory" up in Chiang Mai, the center of their heroin production. But in the middle of the night I was brought into the embassy and told that I would not be allowed to go to the heroin factory. The factory was part of the anti-communist support system and was protected by the CIA. As long as they did CIA's bidding, the guys who owned the factory had a license to support themselves by selling American kids drugs, and not only kids on the streets of the U.S., but GI's on the battlefield as well.

It was the first time in my life that I was stopped by my own government.

I didn't know what was going on back then. I was a good soldier, I wouldn't have believed it if anyone told me the truth. I was simply told that our government has other priorities and that the case had to end with the guys I was dealing with. They wound up delivering one kilo of heroin to me and were busted in front of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel along with some guy making false bottom suitcases. These guys were expendable, but the factory owners had CIA sanction to produce tons of dope, and all of it was going into the veins of Americans, including my brother.

The case ended up getting a lot of publicity. It was the first time one undercover agent arrested the smuggler and financier of a heroin-dealing organization in America, and then went overseas to bust their source. I was given a special Treasury Act award, and I let myself get carried away with my own press clippings. They made me feel like I had already won the drug war single-handedly. I shoved the reality of what I had just lived through along with my brother's slow death into a corner of my mind where it couldn't hurt me. Later I would learn that this heroin exporting organization used the dead bodies of our GIs killed in Vietnam to smuggle their junk. The stuff was hidden in body cavities and body bags.

I returned to the U.S. and to my job as a Special Agent in the Hard Narcotics Smuggling Group of Customs. There was a brutal turf war going on between Customs and the then Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. One of Nixon's last acts as President was to create the Drug Enforcement Administration to end the jurisdictional war. On the morning of July 1, 1973, I woke up as a DEA agent.

For a long while I did nothing but undercover work: hundreds of cases, back to back, cocaine and heroin, seven days a week, never going

home. I had blocked out the whole Bangkok experience and was back fighting my holy war with drug dealers. Black, white, yellow, Jew, Italian, it made no difference to me. If you sold dope you were my enemy, and I would do anything to destroy you.

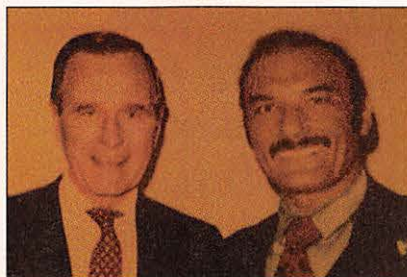
My wake-up call seemed to begin with my brother's death in February, 1977. I was teaching a class on Narcotics Undercover Tactics to the Brooklyn district attorney's investigators when I was told that my brother had committed suicide. He left a note that read: "To my family and friends, I can't stand the drugs anymore." And, again, if you believe in fate as I do, almost immediately I received word that I was to be transferred to Buenos Aires, Argentina as the DEA attaché.

During those years the demand for cocaine, and later crack, had begun to explode. The South American producers couldn't even come close to meeting it. The biggest drug dealer alive was a man unknown to anyone in America, a Bolivian named Roberto Suarez. I was recently shown a transcript of secret testimony before a closed Senate committee chaired by Senator John Kerry. A man named Ramon Milian Rodriguez, who was the main money launderer for the Medellin cartel, told the Senators that Roberto Suarez is the biggest drug dealer who ever lived. Suarez was the Medellin Cartel's main supplier of cocaine base, and, according to Rodriguez, most of the coke that entered the U.S. that wasn't supplied directly by the Colombians came from the Suarez organization.

People think that cocaine is synonymous with Columbia but that's not true. In the '70s and '80s especially, Bolivia was producing 90 to 95 percent of the cocaine base in the world. You shut down Bolivia in the late 1970s and you shut down the world's cocaine supply. You win the drug war. The whole thing was under the control of one man, Roberto Suarez. When I got down to South America in 1978, Suarez's organization, then called La Mafia Cruzeña, The Santa Cruz Mafia, which later became *La Corporacion*, or the Corporation, couldn't fill 10% of the American demand. They needed to take control of the Bolivian government, which was then anti-drugs, so that cocaine production wouldn't be bothered by law enforcement. They needed to eliminate all the smaller dealers and improve production methods. To catch up with the \$100 billion

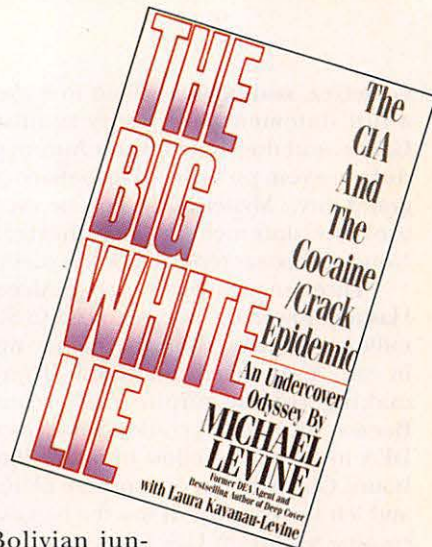
American demand, they had to create what became the General Motors of cocaine. That's what they started to do. They brought in neo-Nazis from Europe, all working for an escaped Nazi war criminal, a man named Klaus Barbie, known as "The Butcher of Leon," to handle their security. They began killing off the competition, improving production and buying off key government officials. My job was to penetrate this organization.

To do this, I created a fictitious Mafia family. We had a team of some 30 undercover agents posing as pilots, chauffeurs, chemists, bodyguards and collectors. A beautiful Puerto Rican agent was flown in from Los Angeles to pose as my wife. We had to rely on the Bolivian government to work with us secretly; they were the last vestiges of anti-drug feeling in South America, and they never betrayed us. They recognized the burgeoning power of drug trafficking and realized they could lose their country to drug dealers unless something was done.



When it began to look as if our sting operation was going to be wildly successful, our whole government turned on us. Our fake Mafia family was given a low-rent, three room bungalow to use as a Mafia mansion; we were given one beat-up old green Lincoln that had been seized and didn't have proper registration as our whole Mafia fleet; our undercover pilots were given a plane so inadequate that Suarez's people were taking bets it would never get off the ground with a load of drugs. I could go on for an hour with all the shit that was pulled to screw us up. It's all in my book, and the government has not denied a thing. They can't. They just pretend I never wrote it.

So, along with this group of undercover agents, I decided to make this case in spite of the DEA suits. In fact, that became our rallying cry: "Let's make this case in spite of DEA." And we did. While my undercover pilots picked up the then biggest load of drugs in history, about 900 pounds of cocaine, directly from Suarez in the



Bolivian jungle, I paid nine million dollars cash to two of the biggest drug dealers who ever lived, José Gasser and Alfredo "Cutuchi" Gutierrez. They were arrested leaving a Miami bank with the money. This was a first not only for DEA but for all law enforcement. Had we been allowed to let the buy go through, we could've been part of the Corporation. We could've just gobbled them up, the whole war on cocaine would've been over before it began. Instead, what happened was the government cut the whole operation short, made us do a buy-bust instead of a buy. I still felt we had done well. There was enough evidence to indict half the Suarez organization and half the Bolivian government that he'd bought off. The whole drug world was watching this case. DEA had given the U.S. war on drugs a respectability it would never again achieve. The arrest made worldwide news. It was called the greatest sting operation in law enforcement history. They based a lot of the Al Pacino movie *Scarface* on this case. Once again, I got swept away with my own press clippings. While the undercover team was basking in the limelight, the case was quietly being destroyed by our own government.

José Gasser, one of the wealthiest men in Bolivia, whose family ran the government from behind the scenes for decades, was allowed to go free by Assistant United States Attorney Michael Sullivan, the man who, ironically, would later prosecute that other CIA asset, Manuel Noriega. Sullivan is still the chief of the criminal division of the Miami U.S. Attorney's office. All charges against Gasser were dropped. I couldn't believe it. The guy is busted walking out of a bank with nine million dollars in drug money and the chief assistant U.S. Attorney drops all charges! His co-defendant when he was arrested,

Gutierrez, said he was willing to make a full statement and testify against Gasser, and the United States Attorney didn't even put the case before a grand jury. Mysteriously, no one ever took the statement from Gutierrez. None of this was reported by the press.

Three months later, Judge Alcee Hastings lowered Gutierrez's bail to \$1 million. Gutierrez put the money up in cash and walked out of jail. I was making frantic phone calls from Buenos Aires and I couldn't even get DEA in Miami to follow him. Within hours, Gutierrez got on a private plane and left the country. It was the biggest cocaine seizure in U.S. history and no one was left in jail and no one in the media covered the story. Actually, the only member of the media who wrote that something strange was going on was *High Times* magazine. In any case, the first thing Gasser did when he got back to Bolivia was publish a full-page replica of his unconditional release from U.S. custody. DEA and the U.S. war on drugs became the laughing stock of the South American drug world. It has never recovered.

I started to complain with cables and phone calls to DEA, to the Department of Justice, to State. I was outraged. At the same time, I learned that the very people I had arrested were planning to overthrow the Bolivian government, which had been helpful to DEA. I was informed by Argentinean secret police, who were nothing but mass murderers on the payroll of both DEA and CIA, that they had people in Bolivia aiding the drug dealers and their neo-Nazi security force in fomenting the revolution, and that they were all working for the CIA. The CIA was helping the biggest drug dealers in the world take over Bolivia. How could this be? I investigated the Gasser family and learned that they were tied to the World Anti-Communist League since the early '60s and were well established CIA assets. I thought I was losing my mind. To keep myself from going crazy I began keeping notes and recording conversations that would eventually become the book, *The Big White Lie*. The evidence was indisputable. Yet back then, living through it, I couldn't believe what was happening. It was like I was living out "Seven Days of the Condor" or something.

Then the revolution actually happened. I warned DEA about it, but no one gave a shit. Once the revolution took place, the very people in the Bolivian government who helped us were tortured, killed and exiled from

their own country. It was the bloodiest revolution in Bolivia's history. To this day they call it "The Cocaine Coup." It was the first time in history that a government was taken over by drug traffickers, only what the press wasn't telling the world was that the traffickers had been released from a U.S. jail by the CIA. It was the beginning of what became the Corporation. Within months Bolivia would be exceeding the world's demand for cocaine. It was the beginning of the cocaine and later the crack epidemic. It was the end of the U.S. war on drugs.

I continued complaining to anyone who would listen, only no one wanted to hear what I had to say. I toyed with the idea of becoming a whistle blower, but I'd already had some experience with what phonies a lot of our political leaders are. When they use the word loyalty, they are not talking about loyalty to the American people. They mean loyalty to a political party. The American people, in the can or out, are the last thing in the world these guys care about.

*"The CIA
is America's
primary
supplier
of cocaine."*

Around this time, *Newsweek* published an article about the Cocaine Coup and the cocaine-dealing government of Bolivia, which had by now broken down into separate branches of government. The whole Bolivian government was now in the cocaine business, thanks to the CIA. In the article they named as the heads of the Bolivian drug-dealing factions José Gasser and Alfredo Gutierrez, the same guys I paid nine million bucks to, and a woman, who became an important part of my book, Sonia Atala, known as the Queen of Cocaine. I didn't know it then, but I would end up living with Sonia in a deep cover assignment called Operation Hun. Sonia, by the way, was Pablo Escobar's first source of cocaine base. If you read *The Big White Lie* you realize that Sonia and other key members of the drug-dealing Bolivian government were CIA assets, which makes the prime source of Escobar's cocaine the

CIA. The CIA is therefore America's primary supplier of cocaine. You can imagine that for me, as an undercover DEA agent putting my life on the line to fight the drug war, this realization came as a terrible blow.

Why do they do it? Why does CIA aid and abet certain international drug kingpins while men like you are sent out at considerable personal risk and huge expense to U.S. taxpayers to fight a war that in fact our government does not want to win?

If they were forced to answer that question they would probably say something like, "To defeat Communism." But the truth is they've never even been forced, publicly, to admit what they are doing. In my opinion, and the opinion of a lot of other people in law enforcement, a good many of these guys are just cashing in, like the one guy they recently caught, Aldrich Aimes, the guy who was spying for the Russians. They documented only a half million bucks paid to Aimes from the Russians, yet they found that he had spent around two-and-a-half million. Where do you think the rest of the money came from? The man was also the head of a CIA narcotics unit. Believe me, the government does not want to talk about that because it would be like lifting up a rock and exposing a whole slew of worms like Aldrich. The point is, our intelligence agencies don't answer to anyone, and when they're caught they hide behind National Security, or they just flat out lie. They lie to Congress, they lie in court, they even lie on "Larry King Live."

When *The Big White Lie* was published in October of '93, I was on "Good Morning America," and I leveled all my charges. "Good Morning America" was the only national television show that would put me on the air with *The Big White Lie*. A day later, Admiral Stansfield Turner, who was head of CIA during the Bolivian cocaine revolution, appeared on "Good Morning America," which was very unlike the CIA. He said he was there to "put the lie to the book." Almost every conversation in that book was tape-recorded, so there is no way he could contradict a word of what I wrote. He in fact admitted that he had never read my book. He said that when he was the head of Central Intelligence, he couldn't even get them interested in working drug investigations, which is a perfect example of how incredibly inept and naive both he and President Carter were in their han-

dling and understanding of CIA. Of course he couldn't get them interested in working drug cases—they'd have to investigate themselves. They were supporting the biggest drug dealers on the face of the earth, from the Mujihdeen in Afghanistan and the Contras and the drug-dealing Bolivian government to the drug-dealing tribes of Southeast Asia. None of these CIA people will sit face to face with me on these open talk shows, no one will attack my books on a factual basis. They'll never say Levine said this and it's not true. They'll just give this blanket statement that it never happened and the media accepts it without question. Every show I've ever appeared on has offered the government an opportunity to appear with me—I encouraged it—but they refuse because they have too much to hide, and I'm one of those who knows where all the bodies are buried.

Three weeks after Stansfield Turner made his statement, the CIA was caught smuggling a ton of cocaine into the U.S. from Caracas, Venezuela. The story was on "60 Minutes" and on the front page of *The New York Times*, and if you blinked you missed it because the media dropped it like a hot potato. I was doing a radio show in California at the time, the "Michael Jackson Show," and I said, "What do you say now, Admiral Turner? Let's talk about this." Michael Jackson, to his credit, tried to get Turner on the air but he of course refused.

The next thing that happened, James Woolsey, the new head of Central Intelligence, who is nothing more than a defense attorney for the CIA, went on damage control media appearances around the country. Of course, every national show gave him an open mike with no hard questions, the kind of questions a disillusioned DEA agent could ask, and there are many of us. He appeared on "Larry King Live," looked into the camera and lied to several million Americans. He said that the cocaine—and there was over a ton—never hit the street. He said that it was an intelligence-gathering operation gone awry. Total, absolute lies. I checked with my own sources, and found that not only did CIA help run a ton of coke into the

U.S., but there may have been much more than that one ton smuggled into our country by the CIA.

The transcripts you mentioned, which record the secret testimony of Ramon Milian Rodriguez before a closed session of Senator John Kerry's Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism and Narcotics, make it clear that a good many public officials know the truth of the drug war yet they continue to lie to the American public, both for political reasons and because of the huge amounts of money involved in the international narcotics trade.

Of course they know. How else do you explain how a United States

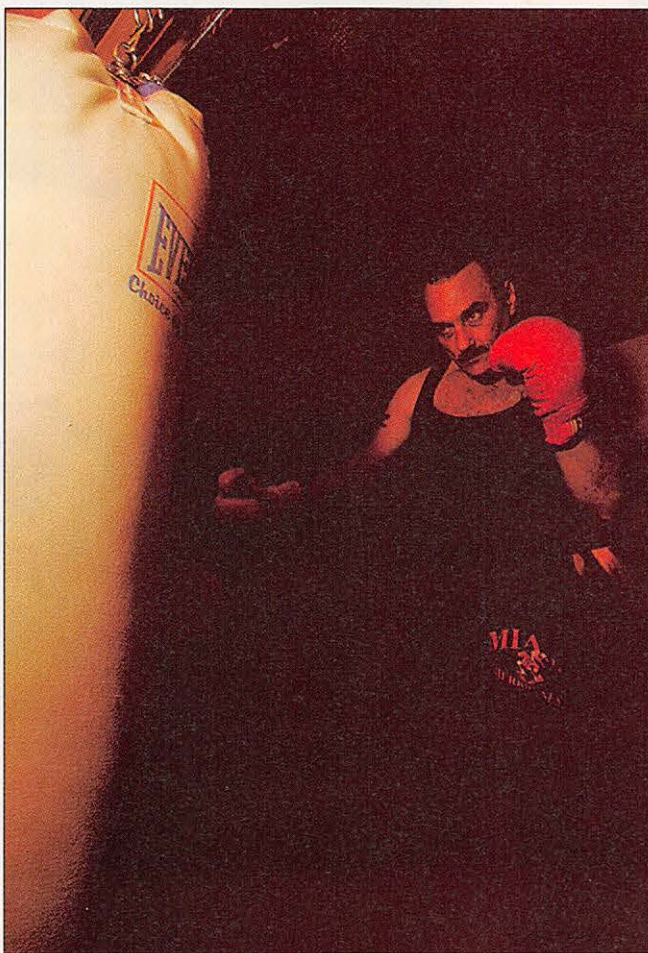
Look, in the Iran-contra report of an investigation, paid for by tens of millions of dollars of taxpayer money, our congress wrote: "All those who sought leniency for General Bueso-Rosa, a drug-smuggling murderer, and all those who looked the other way at Manual Noriega's drug dealing are responsible for what is happening on the streets of America today." If you read the report you know that they are referring to none other than Ollie North, Presidents Bush and Reagan and the CIA, yet they wouldn't name them, nor would they move to indict a single government official for conspiracy to put drugs on our streets.

Conspiracy is an easy charge to prove. I've done it hundreds of times. And I'll bet there are a lot of people reading this magazine who know from first-hand experience just how easy it is to get convicted of drug conspiracy. All you've got to prove is knowledge, an agreement and an overt act. Unfortunately, our elected officials don't have the courage to protect us. This current crop of leaders will go down in history as the epitome of criminality and cowardice in government.

It's been proven: North had an interest in a Swiss bank account that was worth several million dollars. He bought a car with \$15,000 cash that he told Congress was part of a slush fund he had hidden in his closet, accumulated from throwing change in there, along with an old accident settlement. Since when are accident settlements paid in cash? Ask any of your readers what would have happened if they tried to tell DEA that bullshit. But North got away with it. He

had 543 pages in his personal diaries with notations in his own handwriting about drugs, including statements like, "Aircraft needed to pick up 1500 kilos." On one page he had the notation: "\$14 million to finance came from drugs." And that was after he had blacked out most of the statements he thought were incriminating. He refused to tell Congress what was on the pages he had blacked out; he took the Fifth. North was banned from Costa Rica by Oscar Arias, the

(continued on page 87)



Senator, John Kerry, could say things like, "Our covert agencies have converted themselves to channels for drugs," and "They have perverted our system of justice," which is what Kerry said after hearing witnesses like Milian Rodriguez lay out the evidence of CIA complicity in the illegal drug business. Yet none of these CIA-sanctioned drug dealers go to jail. Isn't what Kerry describing treason? How can he make a statement like that and not indict anyone?"

"You mean, like Oliver North?"

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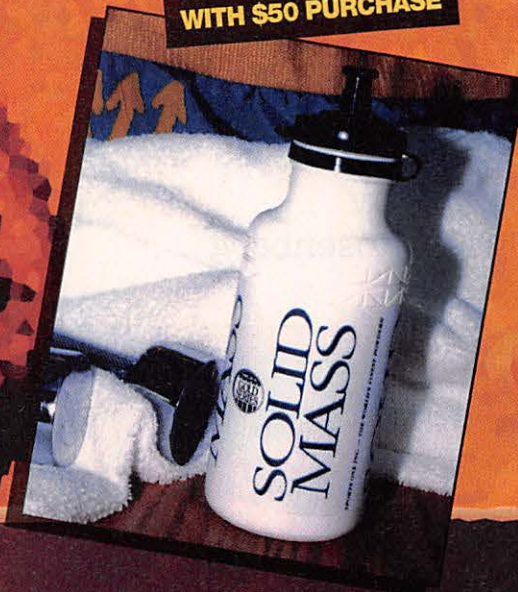
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Prison Fiction

LEE'S TIME

by
Susan Rosenberg

I was almost asleep when I heard the keys turn the bolt next door. Highly unusual: Unless someone is dying and they can get the guard's attention, the cells are locked and stay locked for the night, period.

Wilson was on duty. I heard his voice, smooth and enticing. "Okay baby, there's no way out, nowhere to go. I'm gonna fuck you right now."

"What if I don't want you to?" Jane, my next door neighbor, said.

"You know you want it, I know you want it. You've been wavin' that ass in my face for too long. I heard you like it black. I'm ready."

"You have to come and get it then." Even through the wall I could hear her voice getting husky.

"No problem." His tone thickened with desire.

Jane was a strange one. She threw herself at any man who walked in the door, but night after night woke up screaming from some internal terror. Ain't this a bitch, I thought. I did not want to hear her fucking Wilson. I did not want to be there. Somebody would peep it and the fall-out would be heavy.

I closed my mind and drifted. After you do time for a while, you learn how to build your own wall. You learn to show nothing and hear nothing. After eight years locked up I can shut almost anything out.

When Wilson came back at 6:00 a.m. to unlock the doors, it was business as usual. As everyone went to work, Jane passed me on the tier and nodded her normal hello. We weren't friends, but once in a while we'd run the track together. She looked cool, more dressed than usual, with more make-up, and she'd rolled her hair. I had a bad feeling about this.

The night came again and we locked down. Not one hour later I heard it happening again: Wilson opening Jane's door. I heard them laughing, then moaning. If I could hear, so could Maria on the other side. I thought about banging on the wall to let them know they were being heard. I wanted to yell at them: "Don't put me in your shit!" But I didn't.

Wilson and Jane went at it for a few more nights and then stopped. I don't know why, maybe they got spooked, tired or their thing just fizzled. There weren't any rumors on the unit. I hoped it was all over. But a week later on my way to work in Mechanical Services, I saw Jane at the officers' station leaning across the desk laughing with Wilson. He put his hand on top of hers in one sexy move. Keisha (my best friend here) walked by and saw it. As soon as Wilson saw Keisha, he pulled his hand away, and Jane straightened up and walked out the door.

On the line at lunch, Keisha and Maria were talking. I picked up a tray and inched up behind them. "For sure, I hate that shit," Keisha was saying. "Wilson is fine and he don't need to be with no white broad."

"Fuck her, she's crazy. That's why she screams every night," Maria said.

We got our beige-colored slop and moved to the tables. Maria looked at me. "Lee, I know you can hear them every night, too. I get hot just listening."

"What are you talking

about?" I hoped I sounded casual.

"Yeah right," Keisha shot me a look. "I remember how you can't hear. When Sally Barnes lived next to you and had that seizure, you banged and yelled 'cause you heard, even though Maria slept through it. Remember, what's her name, Miss, uh, Havers? She came a half hour later and Sally was blue 'cause she'd swallowed her tongue, and you were screaming at her: 'Where's the med team?'"

Yeah, I remembered. Havers had freaked out and let me out of my cell—very irregular—because she knew I could get Sally breathing. Then she'd turned around and locked me in the hole for being out of my cell after lock-down just to cover her simple-assed self. The woman had no guts whatsoever.

Thankfully, we couldn't find an empty table, so we couldn't finish the conversation. We had the "we hate prison food talk" instead.

Every time I put on my khakis I think about my old life, my free life when I'd put on my whites, my nurse's

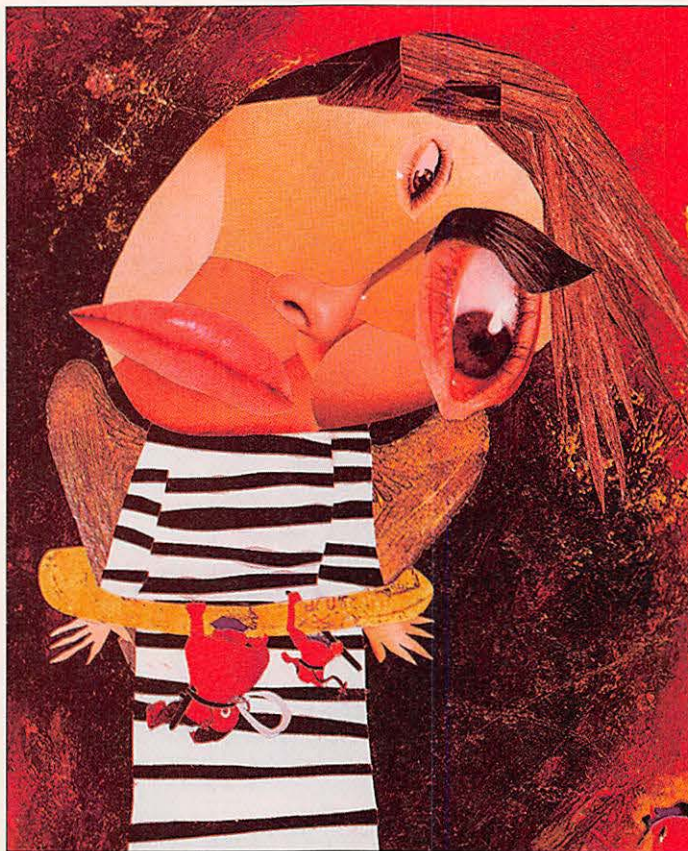


Illustration by Tom Cocotos

uniform. It's always a passing thought, a second of longing. Then I do my crunches to get my blood flowing before I leave the cell.

I walked out and ran into the unit manager, Mr. Jason. He's one sick guy. No decision is made without his personal approval. He's king here and we're his "girls." Behind our backs, he calls us his "bitches." Whenever a guard cops a feel on me doing a pat search I think, "Mr. Jason, one day there will be divine justice." Calling us bitches gives the guards a green light to treat us like dogs. Jeffrey Jason, Bureau of Prisons, hack supreme: Mr. white suit, brown shirt, Brut-smelling, "family values man." I hate him and usually I stay out of his way.

But this morning he stopped right in front of my cell. "Lee McMann, this your room?"

"I live in this cell, yes."

"Get to work."

I did, but I looked back and saw that Jason was in my cell. At lunch I went back to see what was missing or if he'd found my petty contraband (cinnamon and oregano from the kitchen, a little Comet for my sink) but everything was exactly as I'd left it. The man had looked but not touched. Something had been violated, but I didn't know what.

I started back to work but bumped into Maria on the tier. "Los puercos were in my cell this morning," she said. "The vent between mine and Jane's was moved. That's the only thing they touched. Big Daddy Jason was in yours too."

"Yeah, I hate that man." I wasn't going to talk to Maria about this. She talked a good line against the cops, but she was a government witness in her own case. As far as I was concerned, that meant she was a snitch.

Maria pushed it. "Do you think it's about Wilson? How could they know so fast?"

I shrugged. Maybe 'cause you'd told them, I thought. It was closing in on me, and I started to get mad. Fuck all this. Fuck Jane and her lying ass. Fuck the lieutenants. Fuck Wilson.

Well, maybe not Wilson. He'd always been alright with me, and everyone else too. Once, when my co-worker Cakes' mom had a bad heart attack, he'd called the hospital and let her talk with her brother. Another time he'd found two women in bed so he just counted them right there and never said a word. He was a human being first—and that can be dangerous for a cop.

When I got to Mechanical Services, my boss was at lunch, as usual. All the work orders were filled, the tools locked up and there was nothing to do. Keisha, Louise and Cakes were sitting around having a loud argument.

"I don't care," Louise was yelling—very unusual for her. "All these men walking around, patting us down, walking in the cells when we're on the toilet, pawing through our clothes. I hate it. I hate all of them. Talking to us any way they want, calling us bitches and whores. I believe her."

"You're one stupid, blind white girl. You just saying that 'cause he's black and she's white." Cakes heaved herself up from the chair and glowered. The sweat on her dark skin glistened and her temper was about to blow.

"Lee can tell us. Right Lee?" Keisha looked me straight in the eyes and smiled. "We all know you're a space case—but only when you wanna be, right? Cakes heard that Jane

said Wilson raped her. How about it? Yes? No? Is the white girls' club gonna put on their robes, or what?"

I shot back: "I don't know what the KKK's gonna do. The white girl club can tar and feather themselves to death."

Cakes was frowning, concentrating hard on a spot over Louise's head, trying not to let her fury run wild. Keisha wasn't smiling, but the smirk was still in her eyes. Louise was almost crying. She had pulled her knees up to her chin and slid down in her chair, looking even thinner than usual. I looked at her and said, "Stop crying. He didn't rape you, did he? He didn't fuck you, right?"

"No. But these men around here make me think of Jerry. He beat me up every time it rained. He said I was his and there was nothing I could do about it. When I got arrested, the first thing I thought was 'Jerry can't do me no more,' and I was happy."

"Ain't that some shit," Cakes said. "You gotta go to prison to get away from your old man. I wouldn't take that from any man. All you white girls are the same. Either you take it from your men, or you take ours."

Jackson walked in and everyone shut up.

"What's going on girls?"

"Nothing," everyone said almost at once.

"There's a special count. Everyone go back to your quarters. Come back at 2 p.m."

I was relieved. I wanted to talk to Keisha. If there's anyone I can talk to, it's Keisha. She reminds me of Tina, a woman I went to nursing school with who was always telling me to touch my patients. Tina said I'd never be a real nurse if I was afraid to touch, roll up my sleeves and dive into their illnesses. One day in the emergency room a black woman who had overdosed was brought in. She had open wounds all over her arms and was lying in her own vomit. We had to clear the vomit from her throat, then pack her in ice and clean her sores. I hesitated and Tina caught it. The shame burned as I turned

red. It wasn't the vomit or the sores that made me hesitate. It was because she was black. I'd never touched anyone black. Tina never said anything about it, but she knew. After that I thought a lot about how fucked up I was, how I was a racist and didn't even know it.

When I met Keisha, she asked me why I wasn't in the white girls' club. At first I would only say I didn't want to be in any club, that I was a loner. But later I told her this story. She said at least I'd realized it. Most people would have let someone else treat the woman. I liked Keisha for saying that. But after that she told me about her life, and how white people didn't know how racist they were, or they knew it and enjoyed it. She told me about her father trying to organize the United Auto Workers union in Detroit, and how the whites firebombed her house. Keisha is really proud she's black. She is BLACK, almost blue-black.

She called us "the odd team," and we hung out because we worked together. We didn't need to talk all the time. We were comfortable with each other on some level I can't explain. It's just one of those friendships that happen in prison and wouldn't happen anywhere else.

We walked across the compound, past the rec field. Even though it was windy and the leaves were blowing, we walked slowly, because once we got inside it would be harder to talk.

"You know you're going to be called by the lieutenant," Keisha said. "Security is going to deal with this one. Jane said he raped her and she's gonna go for it. The

*"If you say it
wasn't rape,
you'll be called
a cop lover
and a snitch."*

white girls' club has already started talking. They're talking to all the white girls who will listen. They're saying it's cop violence."

"Why me, damn it? I never talk to the police."

"Lee, don't be a jerk. You live next door to her. You and Maria are part of their investigation for sure."

"I hate this shit. All I want to do is my time and get on."

"What will you tell them?"

"It's none of your business what I tell them."

"Yes it is. If you tell them you don't know anything, they'll put you in the hole until it's over, and I'll have to send you stuff. If you tell them he raped her, then you'll be the white girl of the month. If you say it wasn't rape, then you'll be called a cop lover and a snitch. Any way you do it I'll have to decide where I stand with you. It is my business."

"But it's not my business. I don't care about Jane or Wilson. They don't care about me. They didn't give a shit about me when they did it in her cell."

"It may not be your fault, but now you're in it. So now you have a problem."

The door to the unit was open and people were filing in. Half the unit was standing on the tiers or in the lobby. The count hadn't been called yet. On the top tier there were two lieutenants and two other men in sports clothes standing at the rail, taking pictures of cells — Jane's, Maria's, mine. Everyone was watching. I cursed Jane over and over.

At 5:00 the next morning I heard officers outside of the door opening Jane's cell, telling her to get dressed. They took her out of the unit. The investigation had begun.

I wanted time to think, but I had to go to work. On my way, I saw Louise talking to Bonnie, this stone-cold racist. She and her husband had been part of some racist gang in Idaho that went on a terror rampage against Vietnamese immigrants. Now she's "born again" and leads an all-white self-esteem group. Seeing her with Louise gave me the chills; I realized that Bonnie was trying to find out what I was going to do about Jane and Wilson. I was going to have to start watching my back if this was gonna be a gang thing. It could get physical and someone could get cut up.

I got to Mechanical Services — out of the air, into the dungeon. Work was in an over-heated, dark basement office where I spent my days jockeying for a seat on the best of the torn-up, trashed chairs we collected from the garbage to furnish our office. One of our jobs is to pick up broken furniture and equipment, but since there's no place to store it, and it takes months to get anything fixed, most of it sits in the basement hall rotting.

Keisha was going through work orders and pulling out the parts we'd need for each one. Louise came in right after me and walked to the desk in the middle of the room, looking more strung out than usual. I always thought all that whacking around and beating had made her dull. She was so skinny and she looked like she was scared to put food in her mouth.

Louise's jaw popped. "Everyone's saying that Wilson did it. Jane is really afraid the guards are gonna set her up. Unless we support her, she may have to go into protective custody. This woman in a state prison had the same thing happen to her. She got pushed off a tier and broke her back. Now she's paralyzed. I mean, a guard raped her and tried to kill her."

"Since when do you talk to Bonnie so much, Louise?" Keisha asked.

Louise stuttered, surprised by Keisha's challenge. "I, uh, that's not it. It's just that I believe Jane, and besides, he's a cop and it's her word against his. And we never win unless we stick together."

"Well, I don't think he raped her," Keisha said. "I think they were lovers. She was into him. I want to know why she's doing this. First she fucks him, then yells rape. Just 'cause she says it, don't make it so."

I wanted to know why she was doing it too. I also wanted to jump out of my skin and run.

Cakes walked in. "They just took Maria in handcuffs to the Captain's office," she announced. "Four of them. 'Come with us,' they said. They didn't even wait 'til she was outside to put the cuffs on her."

When I got back to the unit, Jane was gone and Maria was sitting on her bunk, staring at the wall. I knocked and went in. She didn't look good. She'd been crying and her wrists were swollen from the cuffs. I asked her if she was okay.

A long line of Spanish curses came out: *pendejo* this, *pendejo* that. "That was worse than all my talks with the U.S. Attorney, that *cabron*. They were screaming at me and threatening me. They said I could get a new case for perjury, and no matter what, I'd go to a grand jury. I don't even know where the grand jury is. *Chingada*. They made



Illustration by Tom Cocotos

me take a lie detector test. I kept asking to call my lawyer and they said, 'Fuck your lawyer!' They said I'd go to segregation and do the rest of my time there. Six of 'em kept saying, 'He raped her.' They said it over and over."

"Who was there?" I asked.

"I don't know — some lieutenants, that *pendejo* Jason, the Captain, and two other guys who said they were from Washington, some agency I never heard of. They were the ones with the lie detector. Shit man, I didn't do anything." She was breathing hard.

"How long were you in there?"

"Three hours."

My heart dropped. Before I could stop myself I said, "You were in there all that time? What did you say to them? I mean, that's a long time."

Maria cut her eyes at me and froze. Just that fast, I had stopped being someone to comfort her, someone she could confide in. Now I was an immediate threat. I'd blown it before I could find out anything she'd said.

Spending three hours with the police meant she'd told them lots of things. I tried to save the conversation by asking if my name had come up, but other than tell me that they'd called her because she lived next door, Maria had

had nothing else to say. She stood up, wanting me to leave.

I went to my cell. Since my cell will never be my home or "house," as the police like to call it, I don't keep a lot of things. But I do have a big, knitted blanket which I crawled under, trying to get warm and calm down so I could think. I was waiting for the police to call me in for interrogation. I wasn't going to say one word, but I knew they'd physically keep me there and threaten me with new charges and more time.

From what Maria had said, I knew there was an outside investigation. It wasn't just the prison. Unlike all the other investigations I'd seen or heard about, this time they were going after the officer, not the prisoner. A few years ago, this other officer had been fucking every woman he could. Everyone knew it. He and a woman prisoner got busted in the shower by the night orderly. When the administration found out about it, the officer got transferred. A few months later we heard he'd gotten a promotion. All the women involved went to the hole for months. The difference: He was white.

An hour later, they called dinner. "Chow line. Last call." There was a rap on my door and Keisha barged in.

She stood over me, her arms crossed and her braid all messy. She wasn't her usual collected self. "No rest for the weary. GET UP!" she said. "I waited at dinner but I should've known you wouldn't show. We have work to do.

rope?"

"But he's a cop, Keisha." My voice was catching.

"Yeah, he's a cop with a dick for brains. But he didn't rape her, did he?"

No he didn't, I thought. It got real silent.

Then I said: "Look, I never told you about my case, and I don't really want to now, 'cause I don't like to think about it. But I murdered this old guy. I pulled the plug on his life support because he begged me to. I did it because he was suffering and he couldn't stand it and I couldn't stand it either. He probably would've died in a couple of weeks, I don't know. But I'm the one who ended his life. As soon as the monitors went flat and I plugged them back in, I knew I was in deep shit. The heart machine alarm started buzzing, and I thought I'd go to prison for this. But I didn't. I lost my job and my license instead. The hospital didn't want a scandal. And then I started selling drugs, which got me busted. But I'm still glad the old guy didn't have to keep suffering. So, I just get by in here. I just want to live through it and see the free light of day again. That's it. I'm afraid of more time, of a new case, of having to get into some shit that isn't mine. I'm in my own shit and I've fucked up my life and can barely manage that. You know I leave everyone alone, don't bother anyone, don't talk to the cops. I just do my time."

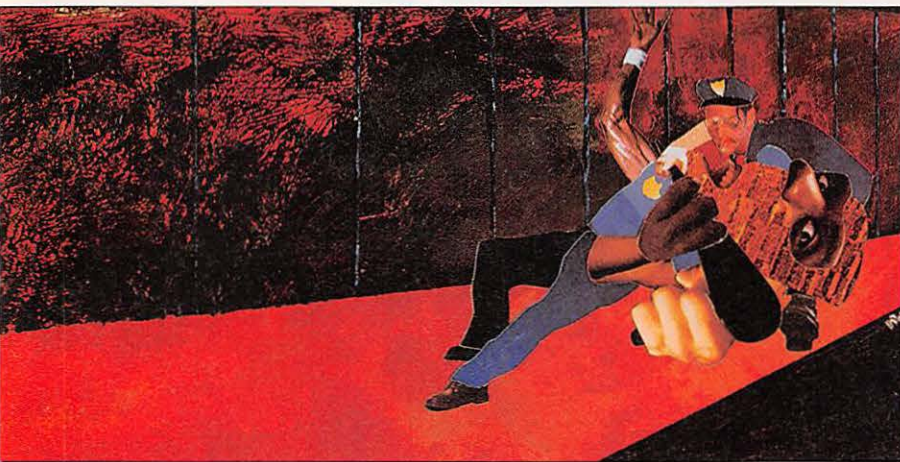
Keisha sat down on the bed and put her arms around me because sometime during that stream of words I'd started to cry.

"It's cool Lee, it's okay. You're okay. What I'm trying to say is that I can't let it go down again. Every second of every day the shit I have to eat because I'm black . . . sometimes I just feel like choking someone. To me this whole thing is a black/white thing. And 'cause I know you see it, even if you don't feel it, I thought you'd understand." Her braid had come undone and she had tears in the corners of her eyes. We sat there a while. Then she got up and said, "I'll see you later, okay?" She walked out before I could say anything.

I cried until I couldn't breathe and my chest hurt. Then something cracked. I felt light. I could catch my breath. A really deep breath. I hadn't breathed that deep in years. I laid there feeling calm, looking at the early evening light coming into my cell. Keisha was right; I couldn't ride this one out. I wasn't going to be part of a lynch mob. I was gonna tell the truth in this whole thing, and it wasn't gonna win me any brownie points with anyone. When they called me for the investigation I was gonna tell them it wasn't rape. I was gonna go for Wilson. Most of the time, it's all so twisted and sick but sometimes there's right and wrong, even in here.

Lucky for me they came before I lost my nerve. Four guards hustled me out of the cell, cuffed my hands behind my back and almost carried me out of the unit. But I was ready. I was even sort of looking forward to it.

Segregation. The hole. There was very little light and the air was dank. The walls oozed. It had become cold outside, and the water pipes upstairs froze, then exploded, and when I put my hand to the wall it came away wet. I was trying to read the time away, holding my book open towards the light that came through the food slot in the door. After they'd brought in the fifth Harlequin Romance, I'd thrown



You can't lie here like a vegetable. The whole compound is freaking out. Maria's wrists are black and blue and she's in the cafeteria crying. There are four extra cops on duty and the lieutenants are running around like there's gonna be a riot, and you're takin' a goddamned nap." Keisha was barely controlling her voice.

"Tough shit," I said. "I'm thinking."

"You're not thinking," Keisha said, her voice getting loud. "You're catatonic. You can't zone out now."

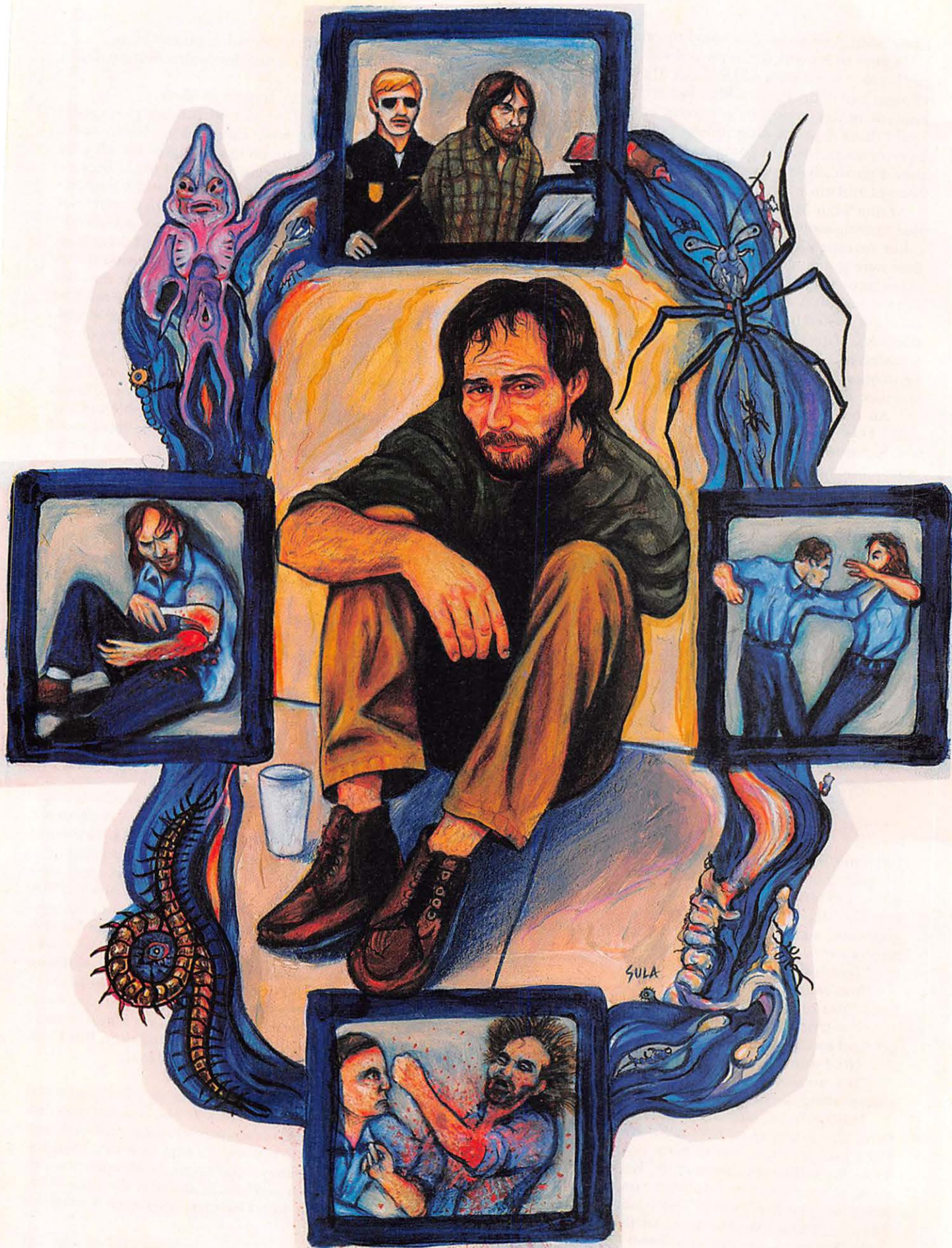
"I'm trying to figure it out, okay? So leave it." I could get loud too, if I wanted.

"No, I won't," she said.

"It's none of your damn business. You're the one always telling me to stay away from the crap."

"Listen here, and listen good. This isn't the same. One, this is about to become a lynching of one more black man and two, you've been my friend and you're in it. So, it's a different case. Get it?" Keisha went on. "I know we always say you gotta do what you gotta do, but sometimes that just don't work. This is about race. A lynching. They're gonna take the word of that cracker Jane and screw Wilson to the wall. Don't you know that any time a white girl says 'rape by a black man,' the mob runs for the

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Cat J

by
Michael Wayne Hunter

"Chrysler!"

The strange word rocked me awake at 2 a.m., my reeling, sleep-drunk mind mistaking "Chrysler" for "Christ." I cursed at what I imagined was another Jesus freak hiding behind the Bible to excuse every wicked whim that led him again and again to San Quentin Prison.

"Chrysler Newport '61" the Cat J bellowed again at 108 plus decibels, his voice booming about the condemned housing unit, hammering into my head, rocking through my ear canals before crashing to a fishtailing stop deep inside my skull.

"That's a damn car," I chuckled. I was amused by this strange change from the usual Cat J nuttiness that abounds in the dungeon I call home.

My housing unit at San Quentin holds about 500 men, the majority of them on Death Row. An exception is the Cat (Category) J prisoner who is housed on the first couple of tiers. Cat J's are the unbathed, unshaven aggressive panhandlers who ramble about the world, talking and babbling, mostly to themselves. They sleep under bridges or on park benches and use the streets for toilets. Cat J's pretty much wander aimlessly until they get into the face of the wrong taxpayer, the one who runs screaming to the boys in blue. The police snatch the Cat Jaying madmen off the streets and pass them on to San Quentin's boys in green to warehouse them for a while.

Just as Cat J's fail in the society outside the walls, they fail in the general population inside the walls of San Quentin. As you may have guessed, Cat J's have severe psychiatric problems, so the prison stuffs them full of psychotropic drugs. The drugs aren't to help them with their mental illness (San Quentin isn't about helping anyone with anything), they're simply to dope them up, to cut down on the erratic Cat J static. But the chemical solution

doesn't seem to be working too well this early morn on Mr. Chrysler Newport '61.

Pulling my bod out of bed, I listen to the Cat J beating his cell bars with something dense and heavy, perhaps his head, accompanied by this perfect rhythm with his Chrysler chant.

Bouncing out from the cells around me are evil threats directed at the madman deep in the throes of a mental meltdown.

I call out softly: "Since you're all awake, get your butts outta bed and work out with me." I laugh as my neighbors assault my ears, but not my soul. I know they're really angry with the Cat J, not me.

Lacing on running shoes, I stretch out slowly and then fold up towels, placing them on the floor to muffle the sound of my feet. Putting on my headphones, I leave the Cat J cawing behind, masked by the sound of Pearl Jam rocking in my Walkman. The volume cranked to full, I'm running in place to "Once," the first song on the first side of "Ten."

Running in place in the morning takes me far away from the craziness of just trying to survive another day on Death Row. Racing to "Kamikaze," epinephrine fills my adrenals, making me feel higher than any drug I ever took on the outside. Pumping my body to the slamming tune of "Even Flow," I find myself frequently going high to touch my hands on the ceiling. The music keeps on pounding away, beating into my ears, my brain, filling my soul. Endorphins flow into my bloodstream, shutting out the pain, no matter if it's physical, emotional, mental or spiritual. For just a little while on this glorious day, I feel FINE!

All too soon, "Release," the last song on the last side, is gone and I reluctantly stop running and pull off my headphones. Glancing at my watch, I see it's a bit after 4 a.m. and time for a coffee break. Taking in the caffeine, I listen to another Cat J starting his lunatic solo on the first tier.

"Help me, help me! I need my medication," the Cat J calls to any damn fool like me who'll listen.

"What in the hell do ya want now?" growls a sleepy guard, frustrated that the wild man's wailing is keeping him from dozing at his post.

"I need my medication. I need help," the Cat J whimpers pathetically.

"The med tech will be by right after breakfast. Jus' hang 'til then," the guard responds not unkindly to the Cat J's pleas.

"Not the tech!" the Cat J cries out indignantly, his voice laced with surprise at the guard's naivete. "I need a cigarette."

The suckered guard turns the air about him blue with curses, sounding for a moment on the edge of a Cat J mental meltdown himself. But, in the end, he shoves a cancer stick through the bars to pacify the madman, and then there is SILENCE! Temporary for sure, but blessed quiet all the same.

My coffee break over, it's time for push-ups. As I shove my body up and down, I spy two guards with flashlights walking down the tier counting bodies in the cells. I shout, "Good morning!" Not that I give a damn about their morning—frankly, I couldn't care less about their very existence. I only say the words because one day, one or both of the guards might be on a catwalk with an assault rifle pointed at my bod. A "good morning" now might be the difference between a warning shot as opposed to a bullet fired unerringly into my skull. "DEAD DUE TO LACK OF

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LA PENITENCIARIA DE LA MESA

AN AMERICAN'S ACCOUNT OF DOIN' TIME ACROSS THE BORDER

by **John Falkenrath**
photos by **Sandy
Huffaker, Jr.**

I don't recommend buying marijuana in Mexico. It may be cheap, but there's a strong possibility it'll cost you more than money. It did me. You see, if you get busted, the Federales got you by the balls, and these boys play for keeps.

Unless you got the funds, of course. I've heard stories of bribes in the five- and six-figure range. If you can pay off the cop who first busts you, do it. Believe me, it'll save you grief and substantial money in the long run.

I was walking down Revolución, Tijuana's main street, when a rookie cop stopped and searched me. Four ounces of marijuana were found. "Cooperate or I'll beat the shit out of you," his partner said. So I cooperated, aware of the reputation Tijuana cops have. I was taken to the local police department and booked. Meanwhile, my hotel room was searched and the

rest of my stash seized: 999.8 grams of Acapulco Gold. Then I was taken to the Federale building and placed in a holding cell.

The next few hours I spent rapping with a couple of Mexican prisoners, one who was a "coyote," busted for running illegal aliens across the border. They asked me if I'd been tortured; I hadn't. They said I was lucky and proceeded to tell me about the *chichara*, an electric cattle prod cops put on your testicles while your feet are placed in a bucket of water. Another favorite technique is tilting your head back, pouring carbonated water up your nose, placing a plastic bag over your head then throwing a swift punch to your stomach. When you inhale all you get is a mouthful of plastic.

I was becoming very uneasy.

One of these guys had been in La Casa, and he told me that I'd most like-





ly end up there. He was right.

I'm a third-generation Southern Californian with a college degree, and I've always considered myself a survivor. Twelve years of living as a wharf rat and commercial fisherman in ports from Mexico to Canada made me streetwise, but it never prepared me for the 19 months I spent at *La Casa*. Streetwise or not, surviving a Mexican pen is hell.

When you arrive at *La Penitenciaría de La Mesa*, also known as *La Casa*, your first stop is the office where paperwork is done. Then it's off to the doctor for an "examination." Most likely the doctor will sit around while a trusty tries to rip you off in a cigarette sale — four bucks for a pack of Marlboros. You'll also be watched to see how much money you're carrying. Then you're thrown temporarily into *Las Tumbas* — the Tombs. This is a prison within the prison and to be avoided at all costs. If you've committed an offense that warrants a visit here, bribe the guard. Two days before I arrived, a guy hung himself there. He called his parents, told them he loved them but couldn't take two more months in *Las Tumbas*.

The cells in *Las Tumbas*, like the rest of the building, are designed for seven men. There are two, three-tiered bunks and an auxiliary bunk, all made of steel. I spent my first five nights in

the nuevo cell in the middle. As many as 14 guys were in that cell. To avoid fights and get some sleep, I'd crawl under the bunks. There's about 18 inches of clearance and it's tight, but nobody can stomp on your head or spit on you from above.

The filth in *Las Tumbas* is unbelievable. The water seldom works and the toilets are always backed up. The smell curls your toes. You're given only a gallon of drinking water per cell each day. You can't even wash the stench from your mouth.

The majority of *Las Tumbas*' residents are *malendres*—former gang members who are strung out on drugs, usually *chiva*, or heroin. They'll do anything, even kill, for a fix. When you walk down the cell block corridor, walk next to the wall because if you're too close to a cell of *malendres*, you'll be grabbed and stripped of everything you have.

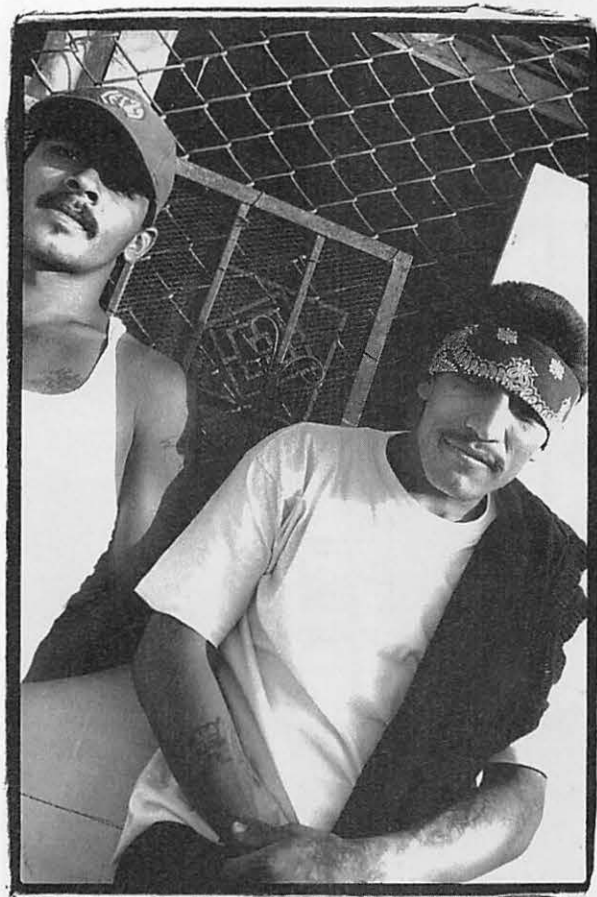
They call the first three days *grito*. During *grito* you're fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed by social workers. You're given a "psychological" test to see if you're violent. During this time you'll see other Americans. Try to learn as much from them as you can. Sometimes a cup of coffee or a cigarette can gain a lot of information. Ask what to expect in the yard, who to watch out for, how they handled what

you're going through now.

This is a critical time to make contact with your family, friends and the American consulate. Ask the representative lots of questions because very little information is volunteered. When you contact your people on the outside, tell them you need money fast. Have them set up a trust fund with the consulate. It costs \$15 but it's worth it. It's a pain in the butt when you need your money, but they'll have it on account. A couple hundred dollars can make a huge difference.

How you handle your money is your business, but I have a few suggestions that could save your ass. You're gonna need \$40 to buy your way out of *telacha* — work. Make sure you pay the head guy in operations, not the foreman or anyone else. If you refuse, or don't have the money, you'll spend your first 45 days doing the worst labor you can imagine. Mexican sewage and garbage have a rather pungent odor and you'll literally be up to your elbows in it.

It's wise to put another \$20 on a tab at the little store in the holding area. Tell the store owner that NO ONE else is to use your tab. There are no prison accounts here, and until you learn the ropes, don't keep any more money on your person than what you need to survive or can afford to lose. If



you're wearing sneakers, figure on losing them or fighting three *malendres* with knives.

The first day, you'll be awakened at 5:30 a.m. and taken to the big door for *pasa lista*, roll call. You'll go through this ritual twice a day for as long as you're there. Remember you're being watched and sized up for your worth. By the time *lista* is over, it'll be around 6:30 a.m. You and the other *nuevos* will be led through a small gate to a holding pen. This area is called "notification," and you'll get to know it well. It is here you'll meet with your lawyer, the American consulate, and be notified of matters concerning your case.

Mordida (bribery) is an accepted practice here, and most guards are bribeable. A word about the guards: Treat them with respect and they'll treat you with respect. And get used to the phrase *con permiso*, with your permission. Twenty thousand pesos will get you out of most minor offenses. If you want to get into a certain cell in the building, find out who the head guard is and give him 50,000 pesos. If you or your friends on the outside are having trouble getting something through the gate, 10,000 to 20,000 pesos usually suffices. Also, find out who the head guard of the building is and bring him a cup of coffee or a soda once in a while to make your life easier. But don't

make a practice of it, or it'll be expected.

If you smoke, figure on buying three times the number of packs you usually buy. They're going to be bummed off you continually. If you wanted a reason to quit, this is a good one. If not, load up on Faros, which are only 30 cents a pack. Stash your good cigarettes.

Since nothing is furnished by the prison, you'll need to buy clothes, but keep them to a minimum and make sure they're used. You'll also need a large bowl, a spoon, a two-inch foam mattress and a blanket. The consulate will give you a blanket, vitamins and toothpaste, but that'll take some time.

You'll then be allowed to venture

into the main yard, but for the first couple of days, avoid it. By 10:00 a.m., a large group will form at the big door. If it's a Thursday or a Sunday, the crowd is larger than usual because these are visiting days. Tuesdays and Saturdays are conjugal visiting days. Most of the guys by the door are waiting for visitors, but some may be waiting for you. You're a *nuevo*, and that's the way it is. Every *nuevo* goes through it and being a gringo, an American, makes it that much worse.

If your money is securely stashed, then you're ready to take a walk into the jungle, the main yard. Try to find another American to walk around with for the first couple of days. There's safety in numbers, and it never hurts to show the rest of them you have friends.

The first thing you'll see is a plaque on the prison wall dated 1949. That was the year the Mexican government put chicken wire fence around a field roughly the size of a city block, threw in a bunch of prisoners and had the army guard them. Inside the pen was a Catholic church and a bull ring. The prisoners built a "leettle town" complete with stores, houses, a gambling casino and other *cosas de vida*, or things of life. As the years went by, concrete gun towers were built on the corners, and after that a 40-foot-high concrete wall replaced the chicken wire fence.

La Casa today is unlike any American prison you've been to or seen in the movies. It's a community, still a "leettle town," with stores, restaurants, a bakery and other places to spend your money. Families can live with their prison relatives in apartments called *carracas*. Drugs are available and cost about a third less than they do in U.S. cities. Many junkies mix the coke and smack and do "speed balls." The needles around here are never clean.

If alcohol is your drug of choice of drug, you're going to pay more. A cold can of beer goes for \$7 and change, a liter of brandy is about \$50, and a bottle of the local home brew (known as *tepache*), made from fruit, rice, potatoes or anything else that will ferment, costs about \$3.50.

At the end of Main Street is a popular intersection. If you want to buy a nickel or a dime bag of weed, this is the spot. The dealers pay the guards for the right to sell weed here. So unless you're willing to pay off the guards, don't try dealing here or even buying until you learn the ropes. If one of the C.O.'s catches you, you're back to *Las Tumbas*. Remember, a gringo stands out like a sore thumb and the place is full of snitches. If you do get threatened with a return trip to *Las Tumbas*, 30,000 pesos should be enough *mordida* to keep you out.

There is absolutely no pattern to the flow of pedestrian traffic in the main yard, and you'll notice there is no such thing as common courtesy. People will run by and shove you out of the way. Be extra alert in the area known as "Blood Alley." Keep your eyes open and give the other people lots of room. Any time three or four Mexicans start to gather around you, figure on trouble and get moving fast to an area you know there are guards. Don't run or panic, just walk fast.

As you walk around the main yard, you'll see little apartments—*carracas*. If you have the money, the going rate is anywhere from a couple hundred dollars up to \$30,000, but they're worth it.

Living in a *carraca* gives you all the comforts of home while you're in prison. You'll have privacy, your valuables can be kept under lock and key, and you'll have a place to cook and eat without everyone trying to bum your food. And if you're married, you'll have a place for conjugal visits. If you prefer, your whole family can live inside the prison with you. A month or two before your release, you can put your *carraca* on the market and sell it for a profit. Nothing like a profitable real estate deal while in prison.

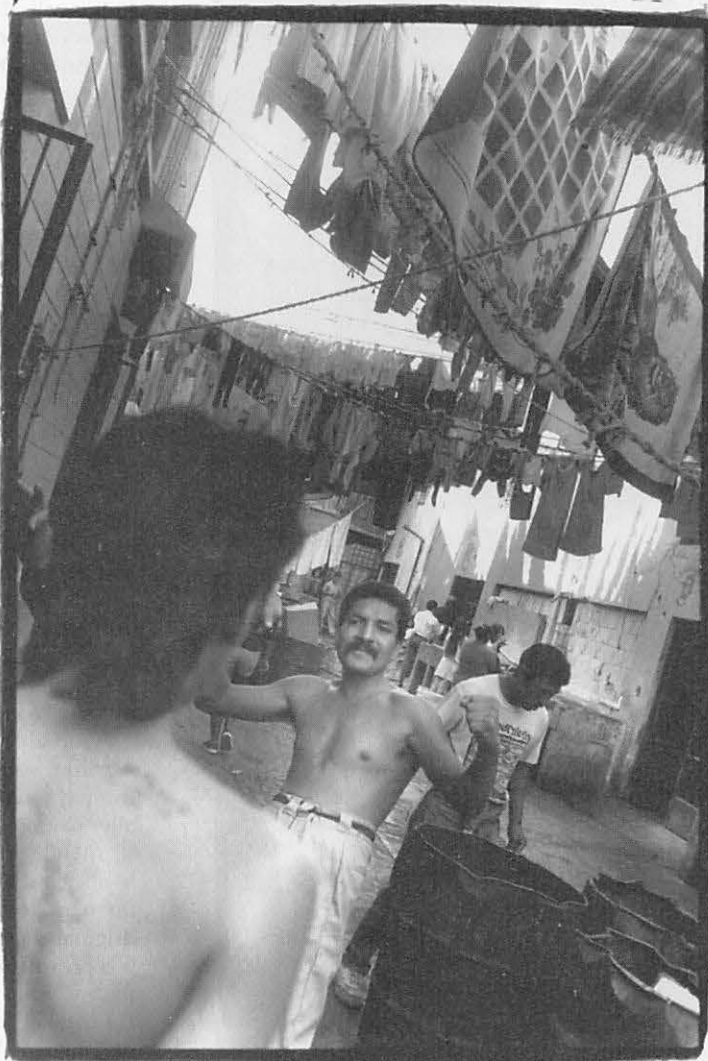
Down Blood Alley are the *tanques*, or cells, which are lettered alphabetically in

the courtyard. As they were once cell blocks, they have barred doors. Like U.S. prisons, this place is way overcrowded. Don't be surprised if you have to sleep on the floor. More senior guys usually get the bottom bunks, which, along with the middle and bottom bunks, are the best because you can rig curtains and have a degree of privacy. As a *nuevo* you start in the top bunk, where you can't rig curtains, and the light shines in your eyes. Each tanque is about 15 by 20 feet and is constructed of concrete. Most cells have makeshift clotheslines running from the top bunks to the ventilator grate. You do your laundry in the sink or a five-gallon bucket. There's an electrical outlet in the wall if you have a TV or radio. You can also cook in the cell if you have a hot plate or electric frying pan. A hot plate provides the hot water for coffee and showers. But if you live in a cell with a junkie, you'll have none of these items. He'll steal and sell them to buy smack.

Life in a cell is an endless routine. You're awakened around 6:30 for the morning *lista*. The guard will know you're there, but you still must respond. At 3:00 in the afternoon, you have to *pasa lista* again. Everybody hangs in front of their tanque and mills around waiting for the *lista* guards. The courtyard gets real crowded during this time, and as a *nuevo* you can be sure your name and number will be on the bottom of the list. While you wait for your name, stand on the outskirts of the crowd. Don't let yourself be surrounded. When the guard calls your number, give him your name and he'll check it off. If you miss afternoon *lista*, you'll have to track the guard down and pay him to get checked off the list. Miss *lista* too many times and you go to *Las Tumbas*.

There's a lot of bloodshed at La Casa. On my second day here, I saw a hell of a knife fight. They cut each other up pretty good. One guy lost an ear, but they both lived. The favorite weapon at La Casa is a *punta*, a shank made out of spoons, pieces of metal rod, toothbrushes and pieces of wood. Anything will

work as long as it's stiff and sharp, and four inches of plastic toothbrush will certainly do. On my third night, there was some kind of family dispute. A guy was visiting his brother, and another guy whose family had bad blood with the brothers, went loco. When he saw the two brothers walking along, he went up to his carraca, got his Uzi, came back down and blew the two brothers away. The Uzi was on full automatic, and when he started spraying bullets, an innocent bystander was hit and killed.



The shooter was taken to *Las Tumbas* and interviewed personally by the comandante (warden). The shooter told the comandante there was no way he was going to give up his Uzi, even if he had to spend the rest of his life in *Las Tumbas*. How many prisons do you know of where the prisoners have better guns than the guards?

Life here is cheap. Just inside the main wall, which is lined with guards and gun towers, is an area known as *la tierra de no hombre*, or No Man's Land. It's a strip of dirt around 30 feet wide with a 20-foot chain link fence

encircling it. The guards on the wall, armed with sawed-off M-1s or shotguns, shoot first and ask questions later.

As I understand it, under the Mexican Constitution, a Mexican citizen may attempt to escape from jail or prison three times. As long as no one is injured or killed in the attempt, he won't be charged with another crime, but he can be punished by prison authorities for the attempt. I don't know if this escape clause applies to foreigners.

Naturally, there have been a number of escape attempts since I've been here, some successful. They usually involve going over the wall, but a few involved digging out. Digging out is difficult because it's hard to get rid of the dirt. During a recent excavation, prison officials found several skeletons in caved-in tunnels.

Some escape attempts have been ingenious. One prisoner had his brother visit him at a prearranged time. The brother on the outside backed his station wagon into the rotting concrete wall and the other brother just walked through. They haven't been seen since.

My all-time favorite escape was pulled off by a guy named Niño. He'd been here for years and everyone knew him. He was also a junkie. Every *luca* he could beg, borrow or steal went into his arm. One night he got in an argument with this guy. Niño pulled a knife and the other guy pulled a small caliber automatic. He fired four rounds into Niño's upper thigh. Niño

was taken to the infirmary. The bullets did a lot of damage to his leg so he was sent by ambulance to a hospital, where doctors amputated his leg.

Apparently they didn't think he was going anywhere with a freshly amputated leg, so they didn't handcuff him to the bed. Sure enough, he escaped. I can just picture him in a hospital gown and crutches hobbling off. He probably ran for the border, but I wonder if he outran the Mexican bounty hunters.

Even if you're able to evade the physical abuse at *La Casa*, the food can do you in. If you have no way of supple-

menting your diet, you'll survive, but just barely. Breakfast is served anywhere from 7:00 to 8:30 a.m., when they open the cell doors. You take your bowl and walk to the cocina where the kitchen crew serves caldo, a watery soup with vegetables and sometimes rice or beans. When there's meat in it, be wary. It is probably old and tastes it. Give it to one

breakfast, except you get three tortillas. In the late afternoon you get atole, powdered corn meal with sugar and milk. I've never developed a taste for it. You also get a *bolillo* (a roll of bread), and they're pretty good. I'd save some beans and make a bean sandwich for dinner. But they only give you one bolillo.

Sundays are the worst. The water

appearance I discovered that court is presided over by a clerk in a small office they call the "courtroom." A translator explains to you what the clerk says, and then the translator reads you the police statement. It'll probably be so different than what actually happened that you won't realize that they're talking about you. All you can do is explain the discrepancies. But that's okay because under Mexican law you can change your statement whenever you want and thus can't perjure yourself. And the judge will always "take everything into consideration."

Bribing the cops from the start usually takes care of things right away. But if you miss the chance, *mordida* (the "bite," or bribe) can happen any time. My lawyer told me that for \$5,000 he could get my case dropped. I couldn't get hold of that kind of money so I had to take the alternate route — trying to battle Mexican law. After my lawyer would meet with me, he'd always leave telling me to try to come up with the bribe money.

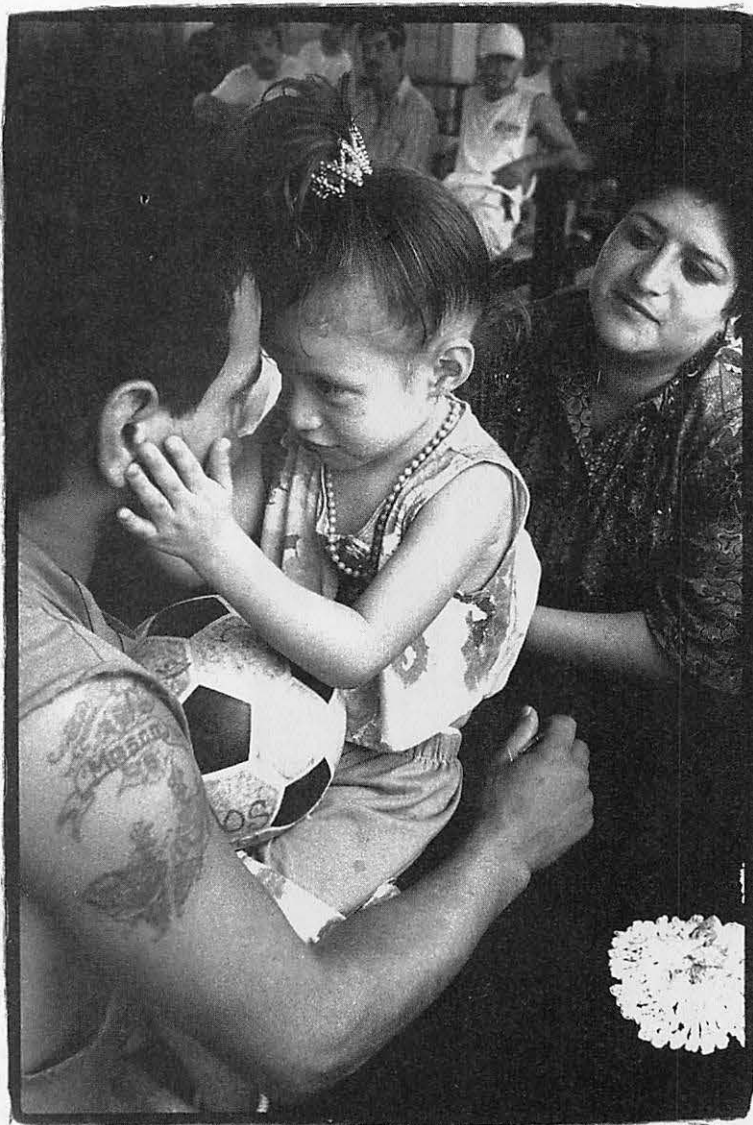
You'll go through a series of court appearances, where you'll be read your statements, asked if you have any disagreements, and present your evidence and witnesses. Your fifth court appearance, or *vista sentencia*, is the final time you'll appear. Any evidence you have on your behalf must be turned in now. You never see the judge.

Drug charges usually carry a sentence between seven and ten years, although with the right "grease" you may be able to get it reduced to five. Anytime you get five years or less, you can pay to get out. Gun charges are usually "payable" offenses.

While your Mexican sentence is still in effect, what you're waiting for is a transfer back to the U.S. Once there, your original sentence is refigured. My crime was possession of 998.8 grams of marijuana, and I received an eight-year sentence. If I had been busted in California instead of Tijuana, I'd have been looking at six months. Since I had spent 19 months in La Casa, I was released as soon as I transferred back to the States.

But I still missed my high school reunion.

John Falkenrath currently lives in California, on federal supervised release until the year 2000. He is currently working on an autobiography detailing 20 years of fishing and wandering on the Pacific Coast.



of the other guys. You also get two tortillas with breakfast. You return to your cell to eat. You get a gallon of water per day for a seven-man cell. Anything over than that you have to buy. If you can't afford to buy it, or you miss out on your share, tough shit.

If you decide to go out in the main yard for recreation, you'll be out most of the day. When you get back in depends on the guards. A soda usually gets you back in. If you decide to spend the day in your cell, you can read, play cards, sleep or write.

Lunch is served anywhere from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. It's the same as

truck doesn't deliver so there's no free water, and you only get one meal. The Mexicans usually get visitors who bring them extra bread and things. If you have no outside help or visitors, this can be a very depressing day.

But not as depressing as the day you receive your sentence. First of all, it may take up to a year for the Consulate General's office to start the paperwork. If you qualify to be "kicked out of the country," the process then takes another six months.

In the Mexican judicial system, you don't appear before the judge who decides your case. At my first court

MARTLYN MANSION

Portrait of an AMERICAN FAMILY

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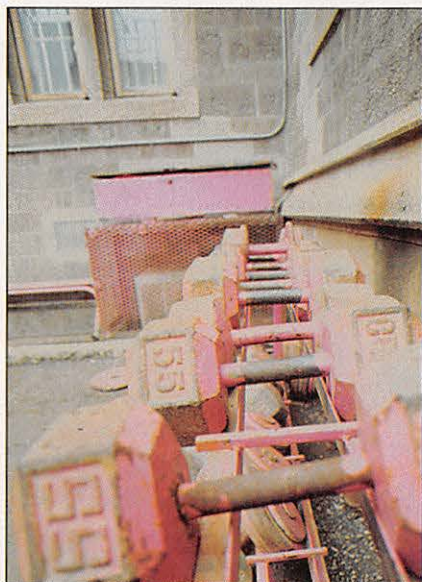
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IRON PILE

by
Photos & Text by Chris Cozzone, Fitness Editor



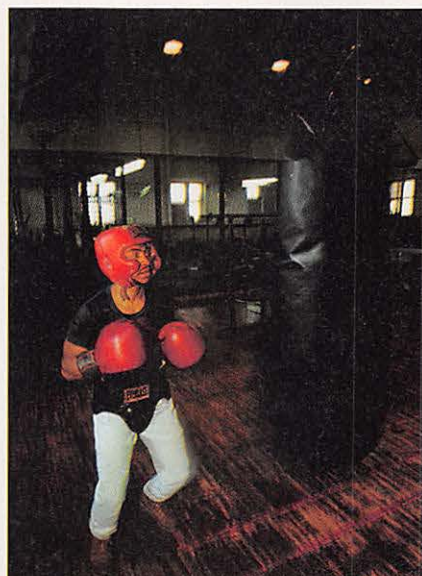
(Above) Rossi Taylor (left) and Vernon Butts are Wallkill's prime lifters. But will their barbells be taken away?



Wallkill Correctional Facility in NY may have an alternative to banning barbells: painting their weights in pretty pink colors. After all, wouldn't that reduce the general public's fears that prison iron pumpers are too macho and massive?

Check dis out: A con gets released from prison after five or so years. When he was first locked up, homeboy was a 7-Eleven robbing, 98-pound weasel; now he's coming out a 400-pound bench pressing, 225-pound behemoth. Since he's a supercriminal now, he figures he's gonna find new meaning for the term 'strongarm robbery.' He goes right to the nearest bank: "Yo, gimme all the dough you got!" he says, flexing his 19-inch biceps for all it's worth. But he finds himself lookin' down the barrel of the security guard's gun and he's back in the slammer at the end of the day.

Pretty wack story. Only a fool dumber than a dumbbell thinks lifting weights is gonna make him a so-called "supercriminal." But believe it or not, the scenario described above is of real concern. There is a serious crusade happening out there to ban



Champion bantamweight Kenneth McNeil of Rahway's Boxing Association won't be hitting the bag for long if the New Jersey DOC jumps on the banning bandwagon.

weightlifting in prisons. And from the reckless popularity the "3 Strikes, You're Out" type bills have received, things don't look so good on the iron pile.

It started with Milwaukee County supervisors voting to ban weightlifting at the Milwaukee County House of Correction in Wisconsin. Soon after, police and prison officials across the country started whining for Congress to ban not only weight training but boxing in all state penitentiaries. And now other states are knocking around the idea.

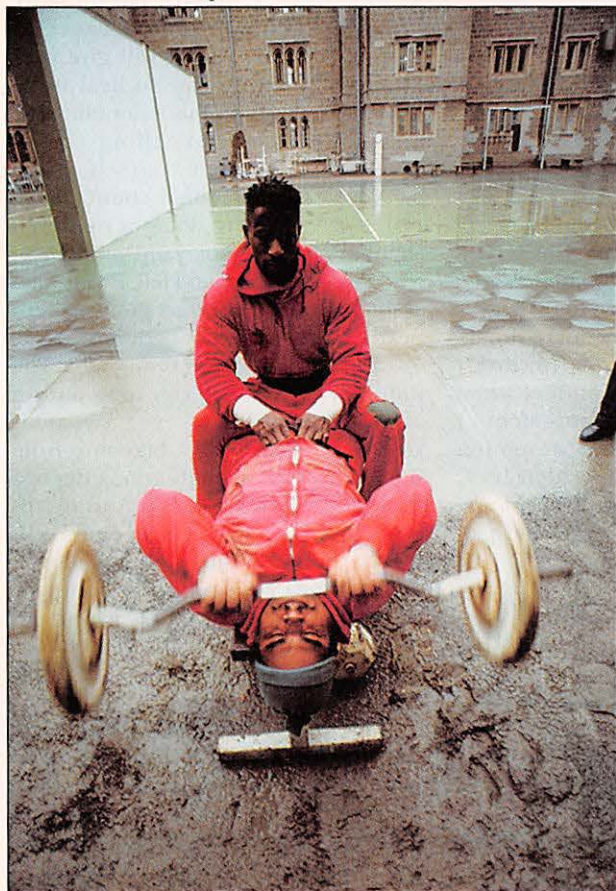
James Fotis of the Law Enforcement Alliance of America is stirring things up with questions like "Why should we use tax money to create pumped-up supercriminals?" And the misinformed General Public, manipulated with images of psychotic, muscle-bound supercons, are falling for it.

Of course, nobody has bothered to do much research. Hell, even the prison officials and guards at the Milwaukee County House of Correction were opposed to the ban, but nobody bothered to ask them what they thought. What these pencil-neck geeks (and geekettes) need to do is find out why prisoners are lifting weights in the first place.

I'm sure even a politician would find himself crankin' out reps in the gym to pack on some beefcake if he found himself behind bars. The prison environment isn't pretty. When you live in the jungle, you adapt or die. And if you're a 98-pound wimp, you're more likely to get shoved around than if you've got a 60-inch chest. Perhaps, if the suits would focus more on prison conditions, there might not be such concern to lift weights to begin with.

Of course, it's much more than necessity that drives a lifter to pick up a weight, or a boxer to put on his gloves. Ricky Williams, one of the big boys behind bars at Rahway

"V" Butts provides leverage and encouragement for Rossi while he cranks out barbell pullovers.



Come rain or shine, partners Taylor & Butts are out in the yard pumpin' iron. 41-year-old Taylor has been doing it for 12 years and he says it has been a form of discipline for him.

told me: "If I didn't have lifting, I'd be in lockdown every day." Would it be too off the wall to suppose that weightlifting was having the opposite effect (according to the cops & suits) on him? Turning him away from trouble and violence? Williams is just one of thousands behind bars who use weights or boxing to release pent-up energy.

Hell, I'm not in prison, but if I didn't lift weights, I could be. If I couldn't take out my problems on a barbell, I'd probably end up pummeling the first punk who stepped on my toe. But release is only one of several positive reasons to lift weights. There's also self-discipline and self-esteem, both of which weightlifting builds up even more than it does muscle.

Besides the many psychological benefits, there are the obvious physical ones. Weightlifting will contribute to a healthier and more fit body. The healthier the prisoner, the less it will cost taxpayers for medical needs.

They're not against aerobic exercise, or even expensive Stairmasters. Yeah, cool. Maybe they can get us state-issued pink workout gear, too. And color-coordinated Let's-Get-Physical headbands. After a while, we'll be so mellow, we'll just want to hug each other and talk about our inner feelings.

Of course, if we get too aerobically fit, they'll prohibit us from working our heart. They would be worrying about us outrunning cop cars and bullets. That would make us into supercriminals, too.

As far as building a supercriminal is concerned, nobody seems to realize that maybe it's life in a bleak and brutal environment—not barbells—that creates the monsters they fear so much. Take away the weights, and the suits are going to find more problems than they have now.

PL



IRON PILE

Q&A

ABLESS & TRYIN'

To the Iron Pile:

I'm 23 and I've just started working out 5 months ago when I was locked up. I weigh 235 pounds and I'm trying to build my chest, arms and shoulders. I do sit-ups to try to get rid of some of my stomach fat. Can you give me some tips to improve my stomach? I'm also having problems getting my bench up in weight, and my traps built up. I would appreciate if you can help me.

*James Hills
Broward Main Jail,
Florida*

Hey James:

Before I start rappin' to you about building shit up, I want to steer you straight on the fat issue. It's a common misconception that you're gonna get a washboard stomach from doing sit-ups and that the fat is gonna just melt away. Wrong!

Doing sit-ups and weightlifting are anaerobic exercises. That means, you ain't gonna burn fat by doing them. That means you're gonna work muscle—muscle that is underneath the fat. If you want to see your abs, go on a diet or start doing more aerobic exercise, y'know, like running—something you can do 3-6 times a week for 20-50 minutes.

Your abs serve two main functions: keeping your body stable and doing what's called spinal (or trunk) flexion. The range of motion on spinal flexion is very small. Therefore, if you want to work your abs, get rid of sit-ups and do crunches instead. Sit-ups put too much strain on your spine and don't work the abdominals directly.

Crunches are done best on the floor or on the slant board. What you're doing is essentially a body curl, curling your spine forward. With your hands behind your head (yo, don't be a slob and pull with your arms, ay?) you're bringing your head closer to your thighs. Again, the motion is small,

but a few sets of these will bring out those abs. Keep the reps high, 20-40, and increase the resistance when this gets too easy.

Now, if you're trying to build overall strength and upper body, I'd hit the iron pile no more than four times a week and for chrissake, work those legs, too. (There's nothing worse than a "tank-top" bodybuilder, or a guy with bird legs.) What most people don't



C'mon V, crank those motherfuckers out!

realize is that by hitting the entire body, your overall reaction to increased strength and mass is going to be better.

Traps can be had by doing dumbbell or barbell shrugs. A tip: don't rotate, or roll, your shoulders when doing them. The prime movement of your traps is an up-and-down motion and when you roll your shoulders back, you're taking the stress off of your traps. Start with your shoulders level and pull those babies as far up as your ears.

OVERKILL

Iron Pile:

I've been lifting every day, three hours a day to build up, but I just can't seem to put on any weight. Do you think I should lift more? Like my chest and arms, they're so puny no matter how many extra exercises I do for them. It's pissing me off. I feel like quitting. What should I do?

Shit, I guess it don't matter none anyway because who knows how long we'll have weights here anyway.

Don't publish my name 'cause the guys will laugh at me.

Folsom

Yo Folsom:

What fool at your pile has you doin' so much work? Damn, don't you know what the word *rest* means? Don't you know that a muscle does not actually grow when you work it, but breaks down? That's right. All those tiny muscle fiber tears that accrue due to pumping iron need to be repaired, and if you're going to the pile every day, that ain't happening.

Give it a rest, Folsom. Train hard but no more than four times a week for now. That will give your body time to heal itself. Don't misunderstand me: I'm not telling you to pamper yourself. Every rep should count. But if you're doing it right, you shouldn't be at the pile any longer than a couple hours, if that. Hell, if you train right you won't *want* to go anywhere near a weight until your body is ready.

Don't worry about the weight. The natural bodybuilder can only put on about 10 pounds of beef a year, if you're genetically lucky. Stay away from the scale 'cause it's only gonna depress you. Go by how you look. And if anyone laughs at you, fuck 'em. Hell, they're probably laughing at you now because they got you training so hard and worrying so much. Take it easy and read a book on your day off from the gym. Trust me, you'll grow.

PL

Let me hear from you. If you got a beef with this barbell ban, a question about fitness, or if you think you got a one-of-a-kind exercise routine, slap it down on paper and send it to Chris Cozzone/Iron Pile, 505 8th Ave, 14th Floor, NY, NY 10018.

Results

Powerlifting Event, April 17, 1994 FCI McKean, PA Move-A-Mountain Contest

Weight Class	Name	Squat	Bench	Deadlift	Total	Schwartz
123	Green	185	185	45	415	374.70
132	Vinelli	225	200	350	775	631.31
148	Ferrel	350	280	400	1030	785.89
165	Pace	420	265	460	1145	777.11
181	Myer	525	300	530	1355	855.41
Masters Under 181						
Whitlow		440	330	530	1270	801.75
Masters Over 181						
181	Smith	500	240	500	1240	767.56
198	Vinelli	450	310	430	1190	718.28
220	Ricci	580	380	530	1490	863.00
242	Seeker	720	490	680	1890	1015.49
Hvy	Russ	575	320	590	1485	796.25

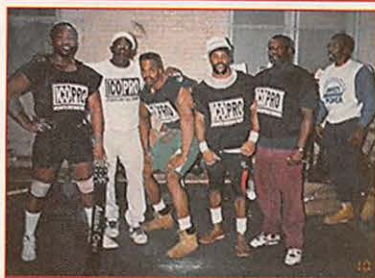
1994 New Jersey D.O.C. Powerlifting Championships June, 1994

Team Standings

1. East Jersey State Prison (EJSP)—16 winnings
2. New Jersey State Prison (NJSP)—12
3. Northern State Prison (NSP)—10
4. Riverfront State Prison (RFSP)—7
5. BaySide State Prison (BSSP)—5

Weight Class Winners

148	1. Gayden	NSP
	2. Mitchell	EJSP
165	1. Pettaway	NJSP
	2. Lone	RFSP
181	1. Hassel	BSSP
	2. Woods	NJSP
198	1. Bryant	EJSP
	2. Hunt	RFSP
220	1. Fitzpatrick	EJSP
	2. Fullard	NJSP
242	1. Cody	NJP
	2. Wilson	EJSP
Masters	1. Moore	NJSP
	2. Smith	EJSP



The boys at East Jersey State Prison. Top & bottom pics are Rahway's weightlifting champs. Middle pic is Rahway's bodybuilding team.

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Family Matters

Florence Crane's Kids Need Moms Program

by David N. Benson



Linda Wallace not only lost her freedom but her 11-year-old son KeJuante when the doors of the Florence Crane Women's Facility locked behind her in 1991. With 120 miles separating Linda in Coldwater, Michigan from her son in Pontiac, the only time she could see KeJuante was when she was sent to Oakland County to testify at his custody hearings, and she was able to steal a few minutes with him at the county jail.

After the hearings ended she lost track of KeJuante entirely.

KeJuante didn't take the separation well. "When I first came to prison, his grades went down. He didn't feel loved," his mother says.

"I was very mad," KeJuante adds. "I wanted to..." He leaves the thought unfinished. "But now I'm happy. Prison is just a different home."

The reason for KeJuante's change of heart is the prison's "Kids Need Moms" program. Now in its third year, the program reunites children and their mothers once a month. Of the prison's 650 inmates, 35 to 40 mothers are in the program.

While the goals of the program are ambitious—"to heal the hurt of separation; restore family values; rebuild broken relationships; and prevent children from following in their parents' footsteps"—they are critical considering the status of women in American prisons.

Since 1970, the female percentage of America's prison population has almost doubled, and approximately 80% of female prisoners are mothers, according to The Women's Prison Association. When women are locked up, their children must go to relatives or into foster care. The relatives often don't have cars, and little money is available for long bus trips and cab fare. Many of the mothers at Florence Crane have never seen their children, and the emotional and social costs are enormous: These children are five to six times more likely to end up in prison themselves, according to the Women Judges' Fund for Justice.

"Kids Need Moms" visits differ from standard prison visits in the amount of time the children get to spend with their mothers (four hours), the activities they get to do together—eat lunch, play

games and draw pictures—and the spacious, colorful room they meet in.

"There wasn't enough to occupy him there," says Karen Kilpatrick of the times she and her son Christopher spent in the regular visitation room. "We enjoy ourselves so much more in here." The special "Kids Need Moms" room is designed for children like Christopher. Although steel bars still cover the windows, cartoon characters decorate the walls. Donald Duck holds a balloon proclaiming "Kids Need Moms." Smurfs dance along another wall. The latest addition is a purple dinosaur.

Today, when Linda and KeJuante get together, they talk about other things besides when they'll see each other next. Now that Linda's working toward her bachelor's degree in business, when she asks KeJuante how

school is going, he looks up and says, "Fine. How about you?"

To be accepted into the program, moms are required to take a parenting class. "The parenting class is one of the best things in this prison," says Linda. "A lot of mothers have come a long way in that class, and I'm one of them."

What the mothers need, however, is more volunteers to drive their children to the prison. (Currently, 35 women are on the waiting list to see their kids). Because the Florence Crane facility in Coldwater is several hours away from the state's population hubs, many of the drivers burn out after a year, reports Marcie Nye, who recently stepped down as the program's coordinator.

To get the original set of drivers, the prisoners and staff sent flyers to churches around the state and placed ads in out-of-town newspapers. The search landed more than drivers: a local church donated a stack of board games and students at a nearby college volunteered their time. The real bonanza was a one-year \$10,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation to keep the program running.

Although prospective drivers have to endure criminal background checks and long car trips, a few say they'll never quit—no matter what. A driver who visits prisons in four different cities, logging 325 miles a trip, talks fondly of his passengers. One is 14-year-old Tynesha, who hasn't told her private school classmates where her mom is. Instead, she told KeJuante, and they now call each other regularly. "I'm really glad to see it," says Tynesha's mother, Sharon Morgan. "It's kind of a support group for the children."

Before she leaves, Tynesha presents her mother with an elegant painting of a phrase she learned in French class—*J'adore vous toujours* (I'll love you always)—a lasting memento that wouldn't have been possible without "Kids Need Moms."

David N. Benson is an Auburn, Indiana-based freelance writer.

KeJuante Wallace and his mother Linda work on a glitter shamrock together. Photo by David Benson.



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Mad Dog Bites Back

(continued from page 25)

headphones in without making contact when Greek was around, so he could hear. Greek would always check Born wasn't listening when he'd turn a bucket upside down, sit on it, and talk to me, his face almost pressed between the bars.

While it's hard to kill a friend, it was hard to ignore Armando when he flashed nine inches of steel, hissing, "Kill the rat bastard now! I'll kill him for you, just say the word!"

But I told him to wait and let Frankos commit himself completely. It was just before St. Patrick's day when he did. I said, "C'mon Greek, what's the real deal? Forget all the escape crap you gave me." He took a deep breath, then reached in his pocket and passed a card through my bars: Investigators Office, Justice Department.

The hair on the back of my neck stood up, but I managed to compose myself. "What's this, buddy?"

"That's the guy I've been wanting you to call. He's my . . . I mean, our ticket outta here. All you gotta do is lie . . . tell them anything!"

"What have you told 'em, Greek?"

"They don't want me," he said

sadly. "They w-want you Sully. You can name your price . . . where you want to stay for protection . . . with Gail and the boys, y-your ticket out." He pleaded desperately. I knew I had to kill him very shortly.

"What did you tell 'em, Greek?" I repeated. For the feds to want to take such good care of me, they would have to know something.

"Nothing! I think it was Mickey Featherstone w-who talked about you. Listen, I know you don't want to talk to the guy on the phone, but can I tell him you'll see him?"

"Sure, why not?" I grinned conspiringly.

"W. . . when?" I thought Greek would do a back flip.

"When? Let's see . . . How about St. Patrick's Day?"

"S-sure. Sure, no problem. You call it." I had every intention of making Greek history within the next few days. But for some strange reason, with the exception of Greek, we were all locked down 'til the day I was to see this guy with my demands.

It was all a matter of which happened first. If we were released from keep-lock, Greek would be stabbed to death. Or I would turn the tables on the world's most treacherous people—the feds—and beat them at their own game. Born and Armando told me to fuck the feds and go for it. So I wouldn't see the Board 'til 2092 . . . I wouldn't anyway, unless I lived to the age of Methuselah!

Before giving the federal investigator my demands, we played a game. He read off a list of names and I would nod if I simply knew them. Then I gave him some demands, which I knew they wouldn't go for.

"These are some pretty tough demands," he said politely.

"It's the only way it can be," I responded.

"I'll get back to you." A week later, I was told I wasn't "manageable."

Greek was still unaware how deadly his predicament really was. If he hadn't been jockeying to the "vibes" from the administration, he'd have been history.

The following morning I heard a tapping on the small square of glass in the solid steel door and saw Greek's face filling the window. I wanted to cry at the agony and sorrow I saw in the broken face of a man I once loved like a brother. He was nodding goodbye.

I was relieved that he was leaving, and that I had been spared killing a man whose soul had already died.

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Your New Virginity

By Hardy Coleman



Illustration by Marty Voelker

I hear it a lot: "When I get out of here, first thing I'm gonna do is get me some. I hear there's lots of it around the bus stop and I got a two-hour layover."

I think we all know what's being talked about. But does it really make sense?

Don't get me wrong. I'm just as interested as the next guy in "getting me some." But I won't be doing it while waiting for the bus.

In one obvious respect, being incarcerated is a trip back to virginity. There isn't "any" available, and just like in high school, all the guys are spending inordinate amounts of energy talking and thinking about it. I guess it's natural.

The body can be imprisoned, but the imagination can't. If you don't believe me, consider those long, lonely nights you spend on your bunk alone. Just you and the memory of her, whoever she may be, whatever she may look like. Now that's prison.

But we're here for X number of months to review our X-rated fantasies, to weigh how they work, or don't work, with respect to our lives. In light of respect for ourselves.

I don't know about you, but having re-entered virginity here, I find that sex, once again, has become a mystery. I very much want to explore it; I feel its power in my gut and in my groin. I may be a criminal, and I was

dumb enough to get caught, but I'm not so suicidally stupid as to take a woman's power lightly.

When I'm released, I'll have gone a long while not only without the big bang, but also without living in a two-gender society. Not only am I unable to sleep with women here, but I rarely talk to any. I don't even get to hear them say "Thank you" or "Please come back again" in a grocery store checkout line.

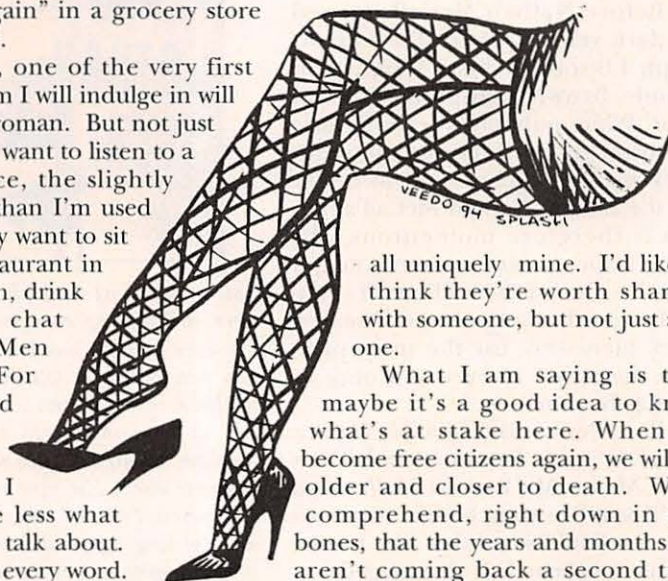
Certainly, one of the very first acts of freedom I will indulge in will be finding a woman. But not just for sex. I may want to listen to a woman's voice, the slightly higher pitch than I'm used to here. I may want to sit in a busy restaurant in my home town, drink coffee and chat with her. Men don't chat. For that, you need a different set of chemicals. And I couldn't care less what she'd want to talk about. I'll gobble up every word. For me, it'll be live music from the angels above, and living proof that I'm home.

After coffee, who knows? She and I may not have any plans. More than anything, I'd just like to jostle through

crowded streets, handle merchandise in stores, get change for a dollar bill. I want to make my own choices.

As wards of the state, we have been sentenced to prolonged celibacy—not our choice. Nevertheless, it is our reality until we get out. So when we contemplate sex, be it in holy matrimony or bought at the Greyhound station, it represents a change in the way we live. But because this "new virginity" has been a hard fight every night of my incarceration, and it hasn't come cheap, I don't want to give it away just because she looks good and just because it's been a long time.

A lot of my self-respect is tied up not in my own perceptions of myself, which change depending on whether it's a good day or bad day, but simply in who I am, whatever 41 years have produced. Me. The respect I have for myself is what's been salvaged from the wrecks, the losses, the worn-out parts of my life. My self-respect is vulnerable and also the only significant thing I'll walk out the gate with 10 months from now. So I've got something to risk, and something to bargain with: my body, my passions—



all uniquely mine. I'd like to think they're worth sharing with someone, but not just anyone.

What I am saying is that maybe it's a good idea to know what's at stake here. When we become free citizens again, we will be older and closer to death. We'll comprehend, right down in our bones, that the years and months left aren't coming back a second time around. I think we'd rather spend that time wisely than waste it. Especially when given the choice.

Hardy Coleman is serving time at the Federal Prison Camp in Duluth, MN.

Prison Papers

Makes Me Wanna Holler

by Nathan McCall
Random House
347 pp., \$21.95

Review by Amir Fatir
Delaware Correctional Center

If I were asked to send future anthropologists a description of how it feels to be a black man in 20th century America, I wouldn't be able to summon up anything better than: "The horror, the horror . . ."

White people, no matter how liberal, sensitive or progressive, can't dig it, or even approach it. Nor can black women come near the sheer existential desolation, for the experience of being the prize differs vastly from being the prey.

Language is too puny to capture a horror so thick. It's something that resists and mocks each effort to explain it. It's a horror intuitively and viscerally felt. Few black writers have even tried to shed their soul's blood on paper. The task is too daunting. Instead, musicians have carried the burden through discordant and clashing sounds, à la Coltrane, or the deep, searing wails of Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. It's the blues but something more burning and capable of carrying more payload.

Before Nathan McCall opened his dark veins to share the horror, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and Claude Brown grappled with the razor. White publishers seem to have a quota that permits one eloquent black man per generation to holler out the horror. Nathan McCall's burden is therefore momentous. His holler is for an entire generation and his voice, that of the millions of strangled, scared, enraged and diseased black men who, for the most part, have despaired of even yearning to one day breathe free.

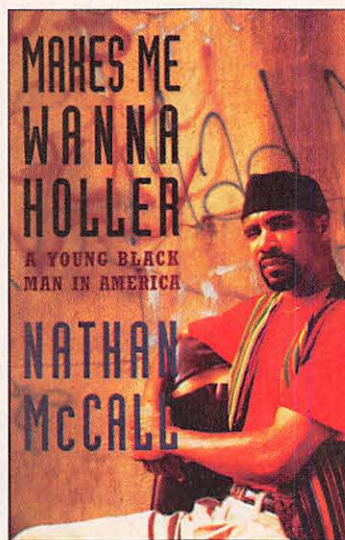
Read *Native Son*, *Invisible Man* or *Manchild in the Promised Land*. Then read *Makes Me Wanna Holler* and you'll smell a stench that traverses decades. You'll sense that the horror has not weakened or disengaged but has swelled and is at its starkest.

The race war faced by Wright is not essentially different from the one beating up on McCall. It's the same war, though now it's a more sophisticated race war, one that's even more

horrifying for young black men because of its elusiveness. How can you avoid a punch you cannot even see being thrown?

But as the attacks on black men have mutated, so have young black men's reactions to those attacks. In *Holler* you sense a heightened intensity of anger and a greater willingness to fight back than any of McCall's literary ancestors expressed. They seemed to cling to the possibility of at least détente with white people. They were willing to invest in a future in which whites might eventually make an effort to be fair to blacks. Even such minor optimism is utterly absent in *Holler*. McCall is having none of a rosy future, a cessation of the war, a place of psychological or bodily refuge for black men in this society:

For those who'd like answers I have no pithy social formulas to end black-on-black violence. But I do know that I see a younger, meaner generation out there



now—more lost and alienated than we were and placing even less value on life. We were at least touched by role models; this new bunch is totally estranged from the black mainstream . . . I've come to fear that of the many things a black man can die from, the first may be rage—his own or someone else's. For that reason, I seldom stick around when I stop on the block. One day not long ago, I spotted a few familiar faces hanging out at the old haunt, the 7-Eleven. I wheeled into the parking lot, strode over and high-fived the guys I knew. Within moments, I sensed that I was in danger. I felt hostile stares from those I didn't know.

I was frightened by these younger

guys, who now controlled my former turf. I eased back to my car and left because I knew this: that if they saw the world as I once did, they believed they had nothing to lose, including life itself.

It made me wanna holler and throw up both my hands.

For some reason—be it amusement, guilt or economics—the white publishing world puts out a few black books now and then. Black women writers have been first to speak their peace, to give voice to their perspective, experiences and aspirations in America. With McCall's book, the brothers get their turn:

The fellas and I were hanging out on our corner one afternoon when the strangest thing happened. A white boy . . . came pedaling a bicycle casually through the neighborhood . . . "Look! What's that motherfucker doin' ridin' through here?! Is he craaaaaazy?!"

McCall and his "stickmen" ran after him. They caught him and knocked him off his bike. While beating him, kicking him and watching the blood "gush from his mouth," McCall remembered:

Every time I drove my foot into his balls, I felt better; with each blow delivered, I gritted my teeth as I remembered some recent racial slight: "THIS is for all the times you followed me around in stores . . . and THIS is for the times you treated me like a nigger. . . And THIS is for the G.P.—General Principle—just 'cause you white."

McCall stepped onto the all-too-familiar path trod by millions of black men around him. He transferred to a mostly white school where he experienced racism without the protective insulation provided by all-black schools; he persuaded his mother to transfer him back to the all-black school; he started chasing girls, participated in gang rapes ("trains"), tried his hand at an assortment of criminal hustles and was eventually busted and sent to the penitentiary for armed robbery.

Since the reputed termination of slavery, prison has been a black man's rite of passage. Like all initiatory rites, it can either make or break you. It can drive you past the borders of madness or broil you into an enlightenment that makes you an inner city sage.

It's never the asinine, crippling, neo-racist "rehabilitation" programs that give birth to a Nathan McCall in prison. It's the imminent and ever-

present fight for ontological being that forces a few black men in prison to yank out stuff that's best and most invulnerable inside them. For every Malcolm X or Nathan McCall there are a hundred thousand snitching weasels who get ground into the most pathetic people they can be.

There were moments in that jail when the confinement and heat nearly drove me mad. At those times, I desperately needed to take my thoughts beyond the concrete and steel. When I felt restless tension rising, I'd try anything to calm it. I'd slapbox with other inmates until I got exhausted or play chess until my mind shut down. When all else failed, I'd pace the cellblock perimeter like a caged lion. Sometimes, other inmates fighting the temptation to give into madness joined me, and we'd pace together, round and round, and talk for hours about anything that got our minds off our misery.

McCall developed an appetite for books and discovered Richard Wright's *Native Son*. He also took notice of the prison world from all angles, the guards, the inmates, the prison money hustles—and most of all, he analyzed himself. While the books were catalysts, his own vision of himself and his environment was the stuff that formed his social enlightenment.

Makes Me Wanna Holler shows how the black man is never unconscious of his blackness. His very skin, his utter position in the cosmos, is always launched from the fundamental reality of his blackness. Try as he will, he can never fully enjoy the notion of just being human, alive or American. His very existence is modified by an adjective. If you're lucky enough to rejoice in being black, you have half a chance to greet a new day with a measure of hope. If you are like the majority, your basic blackness is forever an emblem of suffering and shame.

When McCall sought a job, his blackness and white people's reactions to it were equally as prominent in his consciousness as the job itself. If he dated a woman, the scarcity of eligible black men became a pressing issue in his mind. When he broke up with his children's mothers, the legacy of black men abandoning their children haunted and often dictated his actions. When his job as a reporter required that he report on crimes, the defendants' race called to awareness his own and how whites would view the rest of blacks because of the actions of the few. McCall never felt free to just be, to just act; in his every moment, he could feel the tug of the chain of history.

White people generally expect to be loved, admired and nearly wor-

shipped in their every encounter with people of darker hue. When their expectations aren't met, they are either amazed or outraged. Often, when traveling abroad, they are astonished and aghast over the pervasive hatred they feel from Third World people. McCall sketched that same animosity felt by related people, not in some foreign land, but right in the middle class black streets of Portsmouth, Virginia.

McCall recounts a job interview over dinner with a white editor at an exclusive Norfolk restaurant:

I was the only black there besides the waiters and the kitchen help. The room was filled with white people: flour-faced, blue-haired women and bald-headed, bloated men in expensive pinstripe suits. The whole place had a hostile feel. It was the kind of private club where they would've called the cops if I had shown up alone.

Dressed in my one and only blue shirt, I sat upright, fumbling every now and then, trying to find a resting place for my sweating hands. Sitting there across from my host, I reminded myself, Remember the Rules. Blend, as much as your pride will allow. Speak in crisp, clear Queen's English, hardening the d's, the t's, and the "ing's." And don't forget: Sit straight, but not tall. That might be threatening to him.

... We talked for more than two hours, serving bullshit back and forth like hard volleys on a tennis court. As time wore on, I felt worse. From the pained smiles to the strained conversation, the exchanges were a sickening series of pathetic lies on both our parts. I hated him and he feared me. Then why were we both smiling so much?

When dinner ended, I was drained. I felt like I'd spent all evening pimping myself. I needed to go somewhere really black...

These black men who "make it" suffer nearly as deeply as those who don't. Even after signing on with the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and later with *The Washington Post*, McCall felt besieged by racism. His rage ever simmered and often threatened to boil over.

If such despair is engulfing so many, how long can we endure as a society without some fundamental change? Forget the absurdities mouthed by comfortable blacks and whites alike that things have sure gotten better for blacks since Civil Rights. The blacks on the streets and in the prisons and even in the suburbs know that they are victims of civil rights, not its beneficiaries. They believe in their bones that America is intentionally engaged in subjugating, incapacitating and perhaps even exterminating them. Their voices go unheard and their fears trivialized.

Like abused children of alcoholic,

psychotic mothers, few blacks can bring themselves to completely hate America, the only mother they've known. Its hypocritical ideals of brotherhood and equality have been inscribed in our very DNA. Yet no sane person can expect that blacks will quietly accept the inexorable trek to high-tech gas chambers.

Nathan McCall's *Makes Me Wanna Holler* is one black man's primal scream about the factors that have produced the conditions for racial conflagration. White people need to read it and decide what they would change if they lived in a country that constantly made them want to holler and throw up their hands.

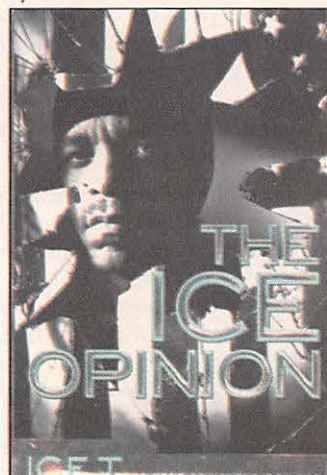
Amir Fatir is an incarcerated writer whose most recent book interprets the Muslim Lesson, entitled Why Does Muhammad & Any Muslim Murder the Devil?

The Ice Opinion

by Ice T
as told to Heidi Siegmund
St. Martin's Press
199 pp., \$17.95

Review by Jennifer Wynn

"I didn't write this book to make you like me," Ice T states in the preface of his new book, *The Ice Opinion...Who Gives a Fuck?* In the same no bullshit, take-it-for-what-it's-worth manner that has helped establish him as one of the most outspoken and articulate rappers around, Ice T sounds off on such issues as racism, the ghetto, drugs and sex. He refers to his book as "one-stop shopping for anyone who wants to document what's on my mind."



If you've listened to his music, you won't find much more in this quick, easy read. But if you're curious about the mindset of the man who won a Grammy award for Best Rap Artist,

was named Best Male Rapper by *Rolling Stone* and was catapulted into national controversy with the release of his song "Cop Killer," then it's probably worth the money.

Moving briskly from subject to subject, Ice T offers a few original insights and many truisms, especially when it comes to the subject of prisons and prisoners. Why do so many cons return to a life of crime when they get out? Because "crime is the only job that will employ you without discriminating," the rapper observes.

As a result, Ice T points out, America is creating a convict and ex-convict culture. If the government continues to put people away at the same rate it is today, over the next 15 years 20 percent of the people on the street will be ex-cons, which can be good news for the incarcerated: "It means that the next time you meet somebody behind a desk, they may have a relative locked up, and they might be sympathetic toward hiring you. . . This convict subculture will be very powerful once it gets started."

Expounding on a line from his album *Original Gangster* ("Slavery's been abolished except for the convicted felon"), he attacks the "just-us" system, the insanity of building more prisons and society's misplaced emphasis on punishment over rehabilitation and education. Pointing out the costs of America's approach to "correction," Ice T offers an interesting analogy:

Each one of us has a criminal in storage we pay for and we take care of through taxes . . . I'd rather take my money and send my criminal to college, give him a chance to get a job, so he can be a productive part of the system. Most people don't even know that it's cheaper to send your criminal to college—even to a private college—than to keep him in prison. At Stanford, you pay around \$21,000 a year to send a person to college—but to keep your criminal in prison, you're paying \$47,000 to \$75,000 a year!

Ice T says he values the respect of prisoners more than anyone else. Having been incarcerated himself on a number of occasions but never "stretched," he can empathize with and appreciate the views of people behind bars. "These guys have made their mistakes, and they are doing their time, but they represent the real heart of hardcore street America." As for sell-outs like Bryant Gumbel and "crazed bitches" like Tipper Gore, Ice T spares no invectives. Gumbel, he says, "is the epitome of the black-skinned white person who would call gangbangers niggers."

On the subject of women, relationships and sex, parts of *The Ice Opinion* will leave women cold. Despite his practice of "telling it like it is" in his music, he advocates a different approach when it comes to relationships:

Some things are better left unsaid. Anybody who tells you they would rather you be totally honest is lying. Your girlfriend might say, 'Tell me, tell me, tell me. At least be honest. I want to know.' She's really saying, 'Lie better than you've ever lied in your life.'

When he gets into his theory on why men steal, it's easy to see why feminists and Ice T don't mix. "If women didn't like criminals," he says, "there would be no crime. If a thief knew women wouldn't accept the things he buys with stolen money, he wouldn't steal." Yeah, right.

As he does at the end of every chapter, the author wraps up his discourse on women, men and sex with the line, "That's my opinion. Who gives a fuck?" Indeed, certain sections of the book, with their unsubstantiated claims and machine-gun style of writing, leave the reader thinking: not me.

Ice T accepts that most people will never understand a rapper's point of view, especially white America. He says listening to rap is like eavesdropping on a phone conversation between two buddies. "When white America picks up the phone, they say, 'Gosh! Why do you talk like that?' And we answer, 'Because we're talking to each other. This is how we talk. If you don't like it, hang up the fuckin' phone.'"

In addition to a brief summary of his life before fame (he was orphaned at age 15, moved to California, joined the military, worked a 9-to-5 job, became a jewelry store robber, then began rapping), Ice T writes with conviction and clarity about his spiritual beliefs and his general philosophy on life. Having never found solace in organized religion, and believing that "no religion is more powerful than one's own spirit and determination," Ice T formed a group called the One Percent Nation with members of his crew in '91.

"The main premise is that one percent of the world doesn't wait to seek out heaven in the afterlife; we strive for it now. We're not suckered in by religions that offer death pay-offs; we already know how to find happiness and how to live in love in this lifetime." According to the One Percent philosophy, the worst hell one can experience is not physical pain, but the emotional pain that comes when you lose a family member, or when the love of your life

abandons you. The ultimate spiritual experience is found in sex.

"We've been compared to a sex cult," Ice T explains, "because we believe the meaning of life—the Holy Grail—is found in the male and female connection, in reproduction. . . The act of love is an act of euphoria. Without drugs, without any stimulant, sex allows you to travel through time or space. One-percenters also accept nonmonogamous relationships: one can, and should, have as many partners as he or she can love. "Romantic impulses should be dictated from your heart to your head," Ice T postulates. "Denying your human instincts is unnatural."

In the final chapter, the author rehashes the controversy over his song, "Cop Killer," which last year came under attack by politicians, cops (naturally), parents and the Religious Right. Death threats were sent to employees of Warner Brothers, including the president. Despite intense pressure to can the album, Warner Brothers stuck by Ice T, determined not to let the cops or any other group control the entertainment it produces. Ultimately, it was Ice T himself who pulled the record, for fear that someone at Warner was going to get killed.

Targeted at police who are brutal and corrupt, the lyrics say it all:

*Cop Killer, it's better you than me.
Cop Killer, fuck police brutality!
Cop Killer, I know your family's
grievin'
Fuck 'em!
Cop Killer, but tonight we get even.*

Ice T's response to the public outcry was, characteristically, "Fuck 'em. Our parents are grieving for the death of our kids. They've been grieving for a long time, and the number of dead cops can't even begin to compare to the number of dead kids." He goes on to cite a compelling statistic: In 1991, three cops were killed in the entire state of California. That same year, 81 people in L.A. alone were killed by cops in proven police-misconduct cases.

The final pages of *The Ice Opinion* sum up the author's approach to life, which, given his success, is probably an effective one: "Don't try to guide or control everything around you, just live it. Get on the muthafucka and ride it hard. It's gonna throw you, it's gonna hurt you, and it's gonna break you, but the minute you try to control it, you'll learn that it's bigger than you."

IN-CELL COOKING



Chef's Special of the Month: Jailed Pad Thai Noodles

1 pkg Oodles of Noodles (chicken or veggie)
1/2 cup instant rice
1 tablespoon peanut butter
1 clove garlic
1 very small onion, finely diced
1/3 cup chopped pineapple
1/4 cup raisins
1/4 cup granola
dash curry powder
dash paprika
dash red hot pepper
2 tablespoons sugar

Boil 1 1/2 cups water. Mix ingredients. Let stand 5-10 minutes. Eat.

*Albert J. Kinan
Enfield, CT*

Shrimp Noodles Supreme

1 Oodles of Noodles, shrimp flavor
1 can of shrimp
3 small packets of mayonnaise
1 packet of Parmesan cheese
1 packet of Kraft French dressing (2 oz.)
1 packet of shrimp soup flavoring (comes with Oodles of Noodles)

In a cup, fix noodles as directed on package (heat in boiling water for three minutes or more.) Drain off broth (or retain it, according to your taste.) In a separate container, mix dressing, mayo, Parmesan cheese and shrimp soup flavoring. Add can of shrimp. Mix sauce in with noodles as desired.

*Lesley Prince Heart
Greensville Correctional Center, Jarratt, VA*

Christine's Frito Chili Pie

1 can chili
1 medium bag Fritos corn chips
1 bag shredded cheddar cheese

Crush corn chips into bottom of casserole dish. Add 1/2 cup of water to chili, stir and heat well. Pour over corn chips and stir lightly. Top with shredded cheddar.

*Christine Wills
Albion Correctional Facility, New York*

FOR DESSERT:

Heart to Heart Peanut Butter Raisin Fudge

1 22 oz. jar smooth Peanut Butter
1 12 oz. bag brown sugar (can sub. white sugar)
3 oz. (1/2 bag) powdered sugar (optional)
1 12 oz. bag shredded coconut
1 12 oz. bag raisins
1 newspaper (Sundays are better)
1 24" piece butcher paper (or just clean paper will do)
1 cardboard soda flat

Line the inside of soda flat with butcher paper or similar clean paper (your food goes on this paper). Combine peanut butter, brown sugar, raisins and coconut on the butcher paper. Mix or knead with your hands until you have one large gob of potential fudge. Place gob in center of butcher paper and flatten evenly with your hands until you have it about one inch thick. Coat the surface with powdered sugar. Leaving fudge on paper, wrap with about 10 layers of newspaper to absorb oil and harden fudge. You can also put fudge in a plastic bag to protect from ants, roaches and other pests. Let fudge sit for 24-36 hours to cure and develop.

*Toni & Johnnie Rivers
Hendry Correctional Institution, Florida*

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Native American Perspective

A Jury of Peers and All That Bull

by Little Rock Reed

The white man's court tries Indians, not by their peers, nor by the customs of their people, nor the law of their land, but by superiors of a different race, according to the law of a social state of which they have an imperfect conception, and which is opposed to the traditions of their history, to the habits of their lives.

— U.S. Supreme Court, 1883

Traditionally, Indian tribes had their own strict codes of conduct, so there was little need for criminal sanctions to be placed against them through any formal judicial structure. If an Indian committed an unacceptable act, the matter was resolved within the tribe, between those individuals and the immediate family members involved. The ultimate goal of this process—a process that was tempered with mercy—was reconciliation, not punishment. In the case of Crow Dog (a Lakota), for example, a discussion between the families of Crow Dog and Spotted Tail (whom Crow Dog had killed) satisfied everyone concerned and the matter was resolved. Everyone, that is, except for non-Indians who neither lived among the Lakota nor had any legitimate interest in Lakota affairs. The non-Indians were simply outraged that their own “morally correct” philosophy was not being exercised. And so it came to be that Indians were tried in the white man’s courts.

To this day, I am unaware of any instance in which an Indian defendant has received a trial by jury of his or her peers in a federal or state court, much less one in which an Indian has received a fair trial. One of the grave injustices that plague the white man’s system is “plea bargaining.”

Of course, it is necessary for the Indian to be tried in order to receive a fair trial, but few Indians even make it to

trial. With the exception of the defendants who are wealthy enough to retain exceptional legal counsel, few criminal defendants of any kind ever make it to trial in the white man’s courts.

From 1987 to 1991 I conducted a survey of the indictments of 612 convicted felons in Ohio’s prison system. In each case the prisoners had pled either guilty or no contest to the charges for which they were ultimately sent to prison. But before I reveal the results of the survey, I will present my own case to you, as I am one of those 612 prisoners.

I committed an armed robbery of

the police and news media that I was very mild-mannered and polite for a robber—nothing at all like in the movies. As a result, one newspaper even referred to me as a “gentlemanly gangster.” When I was arrested, the charges for which I was indicted by the grand jury for the single drug store robbery I just described were:

—two counts of aggravated robbery because I took money and drugs

—one count of kidnapping for each person who was in the store during the robbery (According to the law, if a robber says, “Freeze, this is a stick-up!” he is guilty of kidnapping anyone who freezes because in doing so, they are restrained of their liberty)

—one count of drug theft

—Felonious assault (this charge was the result of one of the customers stating to the police and reporters that when she realized the store was being robbed, she “almost had a heart attack.” Although her statement was merely a figure a speech, and even though this same customer told police and reporters that I was “awfully polite for a robber,” it was totally irrelevant, according to the law.)

—having weapons while under disability

—four counts of possession of criminal tools (a paper bag, a piece of paper, and the like).

My court-appointed attorney assured me that although it wasn’t fair, I would be convicted of every charge because, technically, I was guilty of each

one, even if the only crime I knowingly and intentionally committed was the single robbery of a drug store. My attorney told me that if I cooperated with the prosecutor by pleading guilty to just a couple of the charges, he could arrange to have the remaining charges dropped. He told me that if I would not cooperate with the prosecutor in this manner, he would be pow-

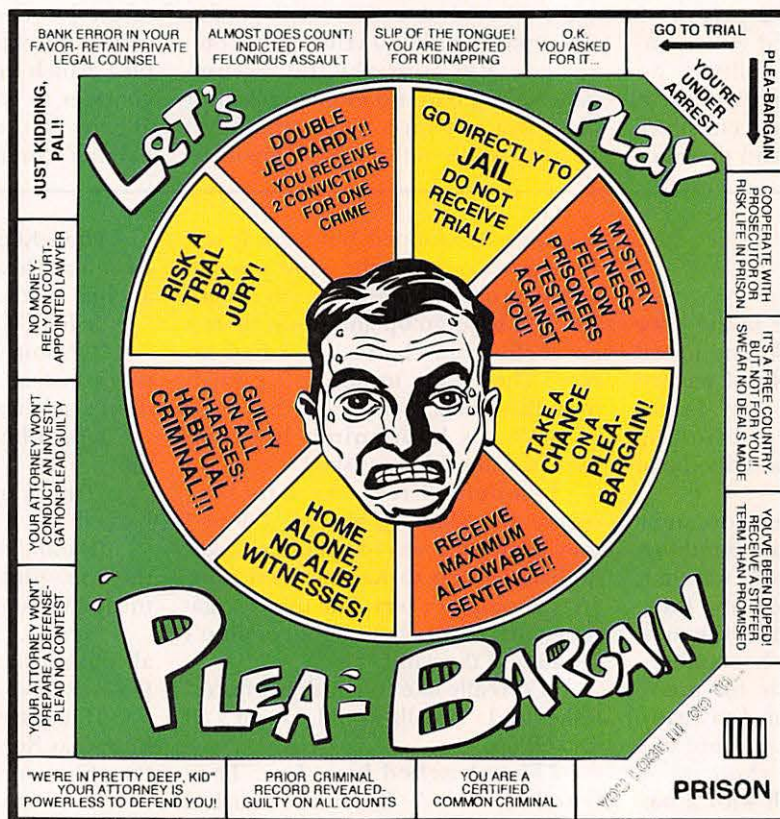


Illustration by Marty Voelker

a drug store in Cleveland, though I took measures to see that no one would get hurt in the robbery. I took money and several types of drugs from the store, all of which were listed on a piece of paper I had brought with me, and each of which I placed into a paper bag I had also brought into the store. After the robbery, each of the people who had been in the store told

erless to defend me. If I took the case to trial, he said I could expect to be convicted and sentenced to prison for each and every charge. He pulled out his calculator, pushed a few buttons, shook his head in feigned sorrow and proclaimed, "I think we better cooperate with the prosecutor, because we're looking at 59 to 195 years if we take a stand at trial." As if "we" were going to do the time together.

I was young, scared and inexperienced in the machinations of the criminal justice system so I believed him. Who would've thought that a prosecutor could be so dishonest as to have me indicted for all those charges knowing that the only crime I committed was a single armed robbery? I pled guilty to one count of aggravated robbery and one count of drug theft—two convictions for one crime: double jeopardy. I received the maximum sentence allowable at that time for each charge, and the sentences were to run concurrently: 7 to 25 years.

Similarly, of the 612 prisoners whose cases were reviewed in my survey, 100% pled either guilty or no contest to the charges they were sent to prison for. Forty-one percent swore that they were innocent and that they

were coerced into pleading guilty or no contest because their court-appointed lawyers refused to investigate the charges or prepare a real defense, choosing instead to "encourage" the prisoner to "cooperate with the prosecutor." Only 8% said they did commit the crimes for which they pled guilty or no contest and felt that they got a fair deal. A hundred percent were instructed by their court-appointed lawyers to state for the record (in the court room) that no plea bargains were made in their cases and that they were pleading guilty or no contest of their own free will. Fifty-three percent stated that they received stiffer sentences than they were promised in return for their pleas of guilty or no contest.

The results of the survey clearly suggest that the overwhelming majority of prisoners in the United States are victims of coercive "plea bargaining" and have never experienced a trial.

One may argue that it doesn't make sense that an innocent person could plead guilty to crimes not committed. But consider the circumstances: You have no money and must therefore rely on a court-appointed attorney whose only energy expended

on the case has been used to get you to plead guilty. Court-appointed attorneys have a clear motive for this, since they are paid the same regardless of whether they win or lose a case; therefore, they make more money in less time if they can convince their client to plead guilty or no contest so they don't have to conduct an investigation or prepare a defense. In some cases, you are also informed that other county jail prisoners who may or may not know you have agreed to testify that they saw you commit the crime or that you told them you committed the crime, and this is, of course, their "plea bargain." Their own charges, which may or may not have anything to do with your case, will be dropped in return for their testimony against you, and you have no alibi witnesses because you were at home alone at the time of the offense for which you are charged. And if you've got a prior criminal record, you know it will weigh heavily against you in the minds of the jurors—especially if your prior conviction was also based on a guilty plea, which the unknowing jurors will consider as conclusive proof that you are, in fact, a common criminal. A habitual criminal.

PL

Lee's Time

(continued from page 55)

a fit. Then this cop came to the door with four thick paperbacks and tossed them through the slot. Now I was trying to read *Hawaii*, by James Michener, but all I kept thinking about was how much I wanted to be in Hawaii.

We call the hole 'three hots and a cot.' Actually it's three of everything: cold food, cold water, cold weather; three hours a week outside; and three showers a week. What I hate the most is never being able to get hot coffee.

Every time they come for me to go outside for recreation, I'm ready. Segregation's rec yard is the size of a basketball court, and it's chopped up into six little cages, each with a basketball hoop at the end. Sometimes, there's even a basketball. You walk into the cage one at a time, then the gate is locked. You put your hands through a slot and they take the cuffs off. Then you have 60 minutes. Beyond the cages is an open, grassy space but it's off-limits except for prisoners on landscape detail.

Keisha and Cakes appeared in that grassy area pushing an old hand lawnmower. They were hoping they

wouldn't be stopped but here it was 40 degrees out and the snow was still on the ground. I could see my breath and had to jump up and down to stop my teeth from chattering. I had no coat. They came to about five yards from the fence.

"What's happening, my non-nubian sister?" Cakes asked.

I smiled. "I feel like a fucking corpse, but what else is new?" I hoped they knew what was happening. Cakes said something to Keisha, then started stamping her feet. She took a cigarette and tried to light it, but couldn't because of the wind.

"I'd really like to get that whore," Cakes said. "I really would. Lee, it's all fucked up."

"They lynched him, Lee. They lynched him." Keisha sounded hoarse. "Jane got transferred to some cushy joint, Maria got parole, and your poor ass is lying down for a year. But Wilson, they gave him 20 years. It was on the news. We saw it on TV. His wife and kids were in the courtroom and they all came out crying." Keisha kicked the ground.

Cakes hollered: "What really pisses me off is watching all those happy crackers running around here like they won a prize or something."

Then Keisha said something, but I couldn't hear her because the wind ate her words.

"What?" I yelled at her.

"Oh shit, I feel like I should be in there instead of you. My advice sure didn't help anyone."

Keys. I heard keys rattling behind me.

"Time's up McMann," the officer barked.

"Damn," I thought. "Okay," I told the cop. "Just let me tie my shoes." I turned back around.

"Keisha," I yelled. "Cut it out. I'm all right with it. I really am. It's cool. It's Wilson who got destroyed."

"Thank you," Cakes said. "You hear that Keisha? I told you she'd say that. She's alright. Lee is alright."

And I was.

"Lee's Time" won Second Place in the 1993 PEN Writing Awards for Prisoners contest. Entries for poetry, fiction, nonfiction or drama should be submitted between January 1 and November 1, 1994. Winners will be announced in early winter. Prizes of \$100, \$50 and \$25 are awarded. Send entries to: PEN Writing Awards for Prisoners, 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

PL

Cellmate of the Month

Rap Sheet

Name:	Kerry Rodney Lee
Age:	46
Birthplace:	Rowe, Georgia
Conviction:	Murder
Sentence:	20 years
Time Served:	16 years
Ambitions:	To start all over

by George Gray

The first thing you notice are the eyes: deep, dark and secretive. You can see the conflicting emotions, which make you want to turn away. But instead you stay, and listen to his tale of crime and redemption.

Kerry Rodney Lee became a runaway at the age of 14. During his teens he roamed the country, and by the time he reached his 20's he was making money the way most rebel-runaways did: drug smuggling.

In the mid '70s Kerry Lee was living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, spending most of his time at a local bar with bikers, college-kids, drug dealers and users. It was there that Lee was to make his last score and commit one of the most sensational crimes in the history of the Southwest.

Kerry Lee had met a college student, William Velten, Jr., who wanted to buy a shipment of Mexican weed that Lee had just run in. Today that amount of dope would fetch in the six figures. They arranged to meet in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains to make the exchange. According to Kerry, when he arrived he was double-crossed. Velten tried to kill him.

In the life or death struggle, Kerry shot and killed the college kid. And then, high on Tequila and Seconal, he mutilated the body in such a way that some claimed it was a ritualistic killing.

It had nothing to do with twisted rituals, Kerry said. "I was angry. I was angry at myself because I had killed someone. I know that basically I'm a good person and I couldn't believe I had killed. I went crazy."

Police discovered the crime the next day, but to Kerry's amazement they didn't come looking for him. Instead, they pegged it on four members of the Vagos Motorcycle Club, a notorious outlaw biker group from

Southern California, which was passing through Albuquerque. With the support of an eyewitness (who later recanted her testimony) the district attorney was able to quickly convict and send the four bikers to death row.

For 22 months, Kerry Lee ran. Physically, he was free, but mentally he was enslaved—tormented by his thoughts, the decision he made to run and the consequences he'd face should he turn himself in. It would be him or them sentenced to die or to a life in prison. With help from God, he says, Kerry Lee decided to come clean.

"They didn't do it," he says. "I decided I was willing to go to the gas chamber and meet my maker as long as I did what was right. It's like being patriotic to the end. You're going to do it because you believe in it and that's all you need."

Once he'd made the decision, there was no turning back. But Kerry couldn't find a lawyer who would represent him as long as he was choosing to incriminate himself. At the suggestion of a lawyer who agreed to take the case, Kerry tried to give the state enough information to show that the bikers didn't kill Velton, without incriminating himself. The district attorney's office didn't want to hear it. They had an air-tight case and wanted to keep it that way. (It was later learned that the district attorney's office and the cops had manufactured and suppressed evidence.)

Kerry knew that a full admission from him was the only way the bikers would be freed. "I wanted to get those guys out of prison no matter what," he says.

Almost two years after the crime was committed, Kerry was sentenced to 20 years in the slammer, and the bikers were freed.

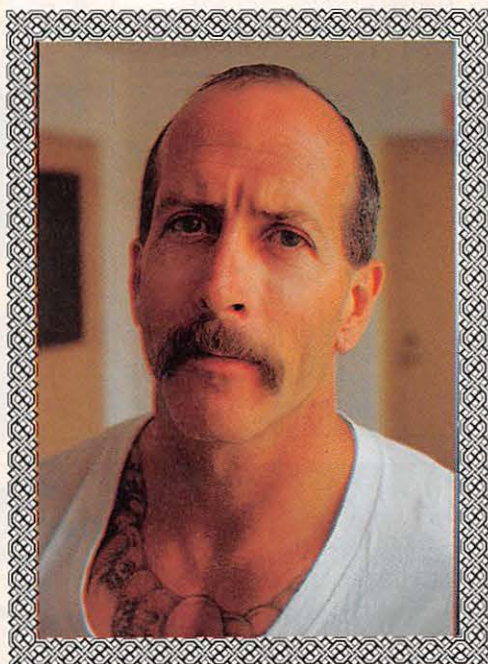


photo by Wendy Walsh

And now, after nearly two decades of hard time, Kerry's bid is drawing to a close. Recently, he went before the parole board but was denied. He feels the board was influenced by a book about his case written by the brother of the attorney who prosecuted him. The book, "Against the Wind," by David Friedman, is fictional, yet Kerry feels it was written to be used against him. He is suing Friedman for defamation of character.

Meanwhile, an author who did a great deal of research into Kerry Lee's case, Daniel Johnson, is writing a book on it called "Grave Consequences." The author may be called in as an expert witness in Kerry's suit against Friedman.

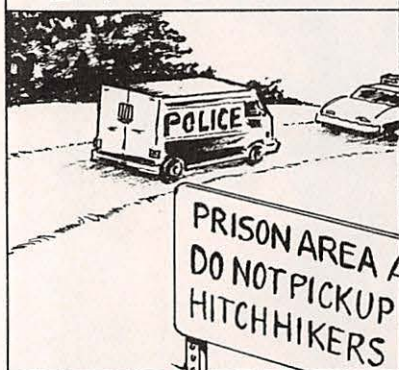
Regardless of whether or not he's offered parole, Kerry won't take it. "They want you to jump through hoops while you're before them and when you get out, the P.O. is just waiting to kick you back in. You're just another notch on his gun."

Fortunately for Kerry, he's just been declassified from a maximum security to a medium security prisoner. He adheres to a rigorous weightlifting schedule to keep himself together.

Toying with a gold crucifix around his neck, Kerry talks about his immediate future. "I'll just do my own time like a man, and when it's over I'll start my life again."

CRIMEJACKER

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO ME. WHAT HAVE I DONE! I'M NOBODY NOW.



AFTER YEARS OF SWEEPING AMERICA'S STREETS CLEAN - PUTTING AWAY CRIMINALS. RAPISTS, KILLERS, DRUG SMUGGLERS. FROM THE LOWEST OF THE LOW TO THE HIGH PROFILE SCUM, I DID MY JOB.



GOD DAMN IT I DID IT WELL! MAYBE TOO WELL ...



I WAS LOVED



EVERY GODDAMN KID LOOKED UP TO ME. THEY WORE MY T-SHIRTS. PRETENDED THEY WERE ME ON HALLOWEEN

I WAS A HERO.

WHEN MY GOVERNMENT NEEDED ME I WAS THERE.



WHETHER I WAS UNDERCOVER TO BUST A BOLIVIAN DRUG-SMUGGLER OR CHASING

SOME PUNK THROUGH THE ALLEYS OF NEW YORK...



CRIME JACKER CONVICTED!

SUPER HERO ON THE TAKE



I WAS THERE FOR AMERICA. I WAS THERE FOR MY COUNTRY



O.K. HERO LETS GO.



I UPHOLD THE LAW. I WAS A SYMBOL PURER THAN THE FLAG BECAUSE I WAS A BREATHING LIVING LARGER-THAN-LIFE MAN. A SUPERHERO DEDICATED TO FIGHTING THOSE WHO MAKE OUR COUNTRY UNSAFE.

NOW BEND OVER BIGBOY

LOOKEE HIM! ALL DEFENSELESS WITHOUT HIS POWERS



"I USED TO LOOK UP TO THAT PIECE OF SHIT!" WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME? OHMYGOD...

LAST CHANCE FOR PUNK-CITY, CRIMEJACKER BOY!

PUNK CITY=P.C.=PROTECTIVE CUSTODY WHERE ALL THE RATS AND WEAKLINGS GO.



NO. I WILL NOT CRINGE IN THE FACE OF CRIMINALITY... I AM A MAN BEFORE ALL ELSE.

THE MAIN YARD. EYES BEAMING HATRED AT ME. FAMILIAR FACES OF SCUM CRIMINALS I PUT AWAY.



HATRED.

RACIAL HATE.

JUSTICE HATE

WHY COULDN'T I SEE THIS BEFORE? WHEN I'D BUST SOME CRIMINAL WHY WAS I SO BLIND THEN? SO NAIVE?

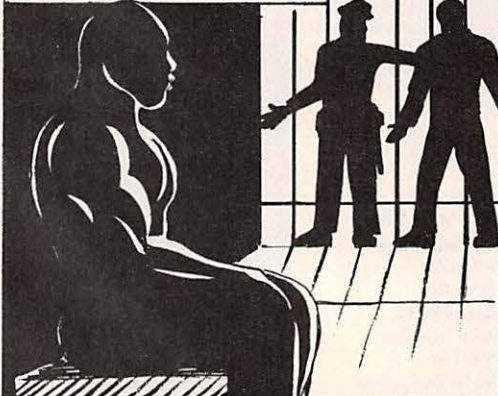
WAKE-UP NEIL! I AM ONE OF THEM NOW. I AM NO LONGER THE CRIMEJACKER.



"I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET SOMEONE SUPERHERO."

"POLITAN, MEET GRANITE JACKSON"

... I BUSTED HIM FOR MURDER ONE.



I AM NOW A PRISONER
I AM NOW #94A233449.

GRANITE JACKSON...
GRANITE JACKSON...
OH YEAH FOUR YEARS AGO...

"YOUR NEW CELLMATE!"

Attica—Then

(continued from page 37)

Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller explained he was constitutionally prohibited from granting either demand. He implied that to give in would be to invite anarchy.

Commissioner Oswald decided there were to be no further negotiations in the exercise yard. He may have feared that Gov. Rockefeller's final rejection of their demands for amnesty might have made the prisoners even more angry and unpredictable than they'd been in previous negotiating sessions. Negotiating, Oswald declared, had to be made on neutral grounds.

The prisoners wouldn't budge, they stated, "The next move is entirely up to him (Oswald)." Anything that results will be the result of the commissioner moving, not us."

Oswald moved at 9:45 the next morning.

The full-scale assault on Attica resulted in more deaths by gunfire than any other prison riot in U.S. history. Canisters of CS riot gas (also known as "pepper gas," is capable of putting a victim out of commission in three seconds or less) were jetti-

soned from choppers into the yard of Cellblock D while sharpshooters were stationed on top of the prison's 30-foot walls and within the cellblock with orders to shoot down any prisoner menacing a hostage. When the command to "move in" was given, all hell broke loose. Rifles set up such a staccato chatter they sounded like machine guns; bullets ricocheted off the brick walls of the prison buildings. From atop the prison walls, you could see bodies jerking along the ground like puppets on a string. Later, autopsies showed some bodies to have as many as 10, 12 or 15 bullets in them.

State troopers, armed to the teeth and wearing Day-Glo orange raincoats, riot helmets and gas masks, swung into action while the reserve of sheriff's deputies, National Guardsmen and Attica correction officers held back until the troopers needed them. A larger force of troopers attacked the rebels from underground, emerging with shotguns and rifles blazing.

The mop-up began about an hour after the troops stormed the prison. At 12:30 p.m., an aide to the Commissioner emerged from the

prison and announced the first death toll. "There are 37 dead," he said. "Nine of them were hostages."

Despite unfounded rumors of brutality to the hostages (castration and throat-slitting were the most frequently alleged), autopsies confirmed that all nine hostages died of gunshot wounds. Since no guns were found among the prisoners following the takeover, the implication was clear: The hostages had been accidentally shot to death by their fellow law-enforcement officials who were trying to rescue them.

The tragedy at Attica shocked the American public from coast to coast. It left in its wake not only a legacy of horror but a slew of questions that, today, are ever pertinent: Can prison bloodshed be avoided? Must our prisons remain the grim and inhumane institutions they were and, for the most part, still are today? If we're smart, it won't take another Attica to teach us.

Parts of this article were excerpted from "Attica," by James A. Hudson.

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Favor de escribir a la siguiente dirección para que reciba un folleto descriptivo preparado especialmente para prisioneros Mexicanos. Escriba a:

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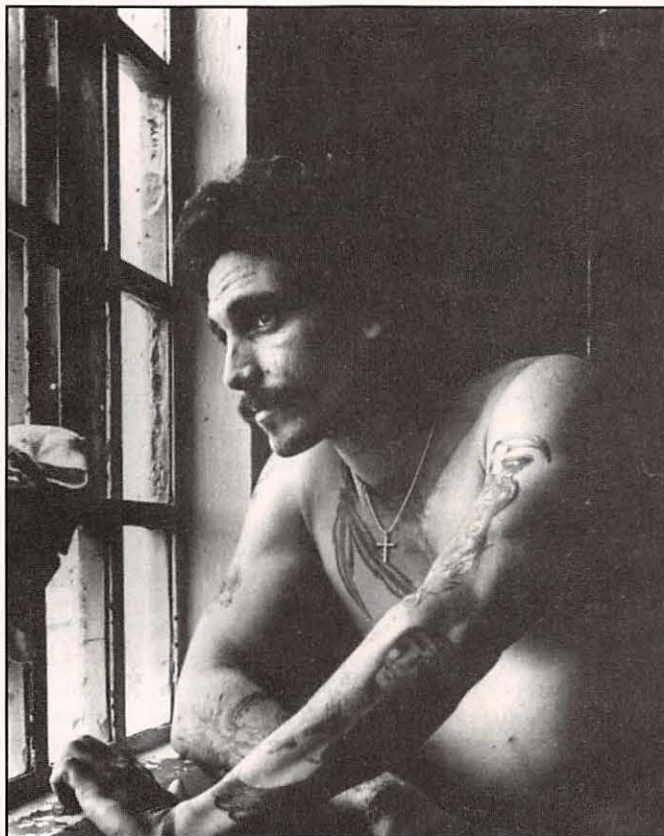
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Tattoo of the Month

"But have you ever heard about the steel? Or the gentle breeze that blows through your window, if you have one? Depression in here never ends."

—Chris Sheehan
Old Idaho Pen



About the photographer: Morrie Camhi spent 18 months at the Old Idaho Pen photographing prisoners and asking them the question: "What do you want people to know about the prison experience?" The result was a book, *The Prison Experience*, available through Charles E. Tuttle, Inc., 28 S. Main Street, Rutland, VT 05701 for \$37.50.

Poetry from Prison

THE SHADOW

The governor sits there,
in reflection
as the clock nears 12:01
he's thinking of re-election
and staring at the phone.

Outside the walls of the prison
a crowd begins to gather
a woman begs others to listen
but to most it doesn't matter.

The prisoner's strapped in, waiting
they've shaved off all his hair
the chaplain stands there, praying
but no one really cares.

Justice is an elusive thing
if you're dumb, or black, or poor
money is the only thing
that matters anymore.

Two wrongs will make it right
you're present, but you're not there
you're hiding from the light
in the shadow of the chair.

—a man on death row
Missouri

THE UNKNOWN CONDEMNED "FAREWELL"

Whether the facts say
it was by accident
in cold blood
or even,
"He didn't do it!"
It doesn't matter now
I've exhausted my last writ.

Perhaps if I expressed
more regret and remorse
would that make a difference?
would it alter the course?
Does it even matter
what the circumstances may have
been?

The issue now is
the State is putting my life to an end.
For all those who have struggled
trying to stop this ultimate fate
please, don't stop now
even if for me it is too late.

There still remains the continuing
question:
Whether the innocent or guilty
full of remorse or none
what purpose is there now
in the killing being done?

—O'Neil Stough
Arizona State Prison

SHOULDA, COULDA, WOULDNA

I shoulda split this way instead of
that way
Then I coulda got away
I woulda, if that snitchin' bitch
didn't tell on me

If I shoulda, coulda, woulda, you see
If it wasn't for them, those and him
I wouldn't be here,
In an 8 by 10 cell
Depressed and so melancholy

The fact, the reality is, and was,
Me!

If I shoulda,
I coulda,
I woulda,
Took a long, deep look,
Inside.

Instead of pissin' and moanin'
Blaming everything and everyone,
Except myself
Or pointing fingers and sitting in a
funk to brood
I shoulda, I coulda
Changed my attitude
Then I woulda
Not be in prison

—Christopher Devore
Michigan State Pen

Ask Bubba



Dear Sir,

I would like very, very much for a free year or two subscription of the *Prison Life* magazine. And I'm not subscribing 'cause that big dope looking Bubba said something about kicking some ass . . . Because I stand 6'3" and weigh 241 with no fat, I'm not worried one damn bit about him. You tell him that I will pull his spinal cord out of that pink asshole of his if he gets to acting up.

Thanks.

Charles Turner,
Gatesville, Texas

Dear Chuckie:

Pink? Fuckin' A, and tight, too. A free subscription? You sniveling, cheap prick deadbeat motherfucker. But 'cause you made me laugh, I'll give you your damn one-year sub. After that, your pink one's mine.

Love, Bubba

Hey Big Bubba,

Just read a little of your advice you gave the cats in the June issue. Man, I thought you might be able to give me a little advice. See dude, I recently caught a case inside the walls of Kentucky State Pen. They said I was involved in an assault on another inmate. But the real sick thing about this is the only evidence they had was the word of the inmate that got assaulted.

Not only did I lose two years non-restorable goodtime, but I also stayed in the Hole for six months. The hole time went slow, and I'm out on the yard again, but now I'm going to face outside charges—30 years on another inmate's word.

Bubba, I have a hard time with the fact that one inmate can get

another convict prison time while they're in prison. Man, what's this new school all about? (You hit me and I'll tell.) What ever happened to the old school? (You hit me and I'll mess you up, shithead.) I sure hope you can shed some light on this mess for me, dog?

Randy Kiper, a.k.a. The Mountain
Kentucky State Pen

Randy, a.k.a. The Mountain:

I hear you, home slice. I've been jailin' since I was 12. Got sent to reform school for beatin' up a gym teacher who wouldn't let me play softball because I forgot my sneakers. (Truth is, Ma was so poor she couldn't afford to buy Bubba sneakers, and I was too ashamed to admit it.) Anyhow, doin' time just keeps gettin' harder because of all the punks and sissy shits comin' to prison nowadays. A true convict can hardly tell who's who and what's what anymore. Rats rule! Look who's ruling our country: Fuckin' holier-than-thou politically correct, lily-livered liberals like Billy Boy and Rodham!

My advice: Live and let live. Be true to yourself. Stand your ground. Of course you didn't assault that wimp. Tell those jerks they can call Bubba as a witness. He must'a hit hisself with that mop wringer.

To *Prison Life*,

First, we are happy to see your magazine is back. Second, I feel your magazine should have more sincere articles, like the one on Herby Sperling. Putting degenerates such as Bubba in your magazine will only degrade the prisoners. Why would anyone want a smuck with no chance of parole answering such serious questions? Take, for instance, the individual considering suicide in the last issue. Bubba said, "Do us all a favor and kill yourself." What would society think of us with this moron telling another inmate to end his life? Where are we going here?

Richard Brady
Lewisburg

Dear Rich, et al at the Burg:

Printing letters from degenerates like you will only degrade the magazine, but fuckit, here we are.

Sure, call me a degenerate. The boys in New York do. Hell, that's why they hired me to write this column for their

prison rag. Who else but Bubba would be able to give advice to a bunch of cons?

But get your facts straight. I never told that guy to kill himself. I said, kill your old self and become a new person who has the self-esteem it takes to survive in this degrading, humiliating hellhole.

See, I'm trying to raise alla you to a new level of consciousness. Bubba believes in transcendence. Who gives a fuck what society thinks? Society is corrupt. Society only cares for tightwads who read Vanity Fair, not bubs like you reading Prison Life. And just because I ain't never gonna get outta the joint don't mean I don't know a thing or two. My body is stuck here, but my mind ain't.

Yo Bubba,

Just received my June issue and I'm hopelessly infatuated with ya! Being assigned a cell with ya wouldn't be my worst nightmare at all but my wildest dream come true. Your picture is pasted up on my wall next to my pillow, where I may drool to my heart's content!

It matters not that you're doin' life plus 40. I'm doin' life, too. But just knowin' a quality dude as yourself exists in this fucked-up world does my head and heart good. It takes a realist to recognize another realist.

If ya ever find the urge to lean on someone, here I am Bubba! And my ankles look *nothing* like Hillary's!

With Honor & Respect—"This drool's for you!"

P.S. I'm not tryin' to be funny or an asshole, either—you're mega-cool, Bubba. I'm sorta tongue-tied now so I'll shut the fuck up. Peace, bro!

Cheri McKee

Broward Correctional Institution, FL

Ma Cheri,

Ah, a romantic woman, now this column's really paying off. Your letter means more to me than the chump change I get from the boys in New York. You're just what ol' Bubba needs to liven up this living death they call life in the big house.

Listen, the hottest erogenous zone of them all is the mind. Stroke me, baby. I'm yours.

P.S. I'd like to tie my tongue around you.

ARE YOU AN INMATE OR A CONVICT?

FIND OUT IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR OWN CELL!

by
Robert H. Norris
FCI Allenwood

THE QUESTIONS:

1. When a new guy arrives on your block, do you ask him what he's in for and for how long instead of finding out if he needs anything to tie him over?
2. Do you think being loud makes you seem tough or impressive?
3. Do you constantly "borrow" from others because your job pays you little or nothing and no one sends you money from outside?
4. Do you get conned often?
5. Do you constantly run to "the man" over any little injustice someone has done to you?
6. Do you have more than one tattoo?
7. Have you ever taken anything from a convict without permission?
8. Have you ever snitched on a convict just because you knew what he or she did?
9. Have you ever snitched to get yourself out of a jam?
10. Have you ever told a convict that another was a snitch just because you heard it somewhere else?
11. Have you ever borrowed something with a promise to repay but didn't?
12. Do you often blame racial prejudice on your shortcomings?
13. Do you create fantasies about yourself or tell outright lies to impress others?
14. Do you feel that if you butt the commissary or other lines that you are getting over on the system?
15. Do you complain to anyone who will listen about the raw deal you got or are getting?

Recently I was accused by someone of being an inmate, not a convict. Of course, that person was wrong and I think I've convinced him of such. But, I thought, "how can a guy really tell?"

When you have answered these questions, go back and do it again, only this time, be honest.

Scoring

1. The fastest way to get a rumor started that you're a rat is to seem too interested in someone's case, especially when he first arrives. If he wants you to know details, he'll tell you without your asking. A YES answer here gets you 10 pts.

2. Nobody is impressed by a loudmouth except himself and other loudmouths. A YES here gets you 8 pts.

3. Ain't nothing wrong with borrowing a little to tie you over, but pay it back when you say you will. Everyone has some talent that can be turned into a semi-legal, if not legal, hustle. A guy next door to me has a locker full of scores just from doing laundry. Ironing, typing, drawing, cell cleaning, even giving massages or rub-downs, (but be careful with this one) are ways that you can keep from becoming a leech. Give yourself 8 points if you're a leech; 4, if you're an occasional one.

4. All of us get conned at some point. But if you let it happen repeatedly, give yourself 8 pts.

5. I call this the "second donut" syndrome, named after an inmate in CA. When this inmate was refused a second donut at breakfast, he filed a series of grievances that extended all the way to the federal courts. If you're getting shafted, by all means use the system against itself. But nobody likes a whiner. Give yourself 8 pts. for a YES.

6. Gotcha! This was a trick question. I know inmates with numerous tattoos and convicts with none. Give yourself no pts. for either answer.

7. If you answered YES to this question, you're not just an inmate, you're a low-life scumbag. 10 pts.

8. See #7. A YES is 12 pts.

9. See #'s 7 & 8. A YES: 14 pts.

10. I once heard a rumor that I was a snitch. When I tracked the rumor

to its source and confronted the guy, he said that it was because I'd been moved from one cell block for two weeks and then back. If you want to spread it around that someone's a snitch, have proof to back up your words. But even then it's not a great idea. It's best to just stay away from that person. Score 5 pts. for a YES with proof and 10 for a YES without.

11. A guy came up to me once and said, "I need a pack of smokes. I don't have any money, and I'm probably not going to get any, but if and when I do, I'll pay you back." I gave him the cigarettes, even though I should have given him the advice in #3 instead, but at least he was direct and honest. I don't advocate borrowing when you know you can't repay. If you borrow something and promise to repay on a certain day then find out you can't, at least be man enough to go to the guy and tell him why. Score 8 pts. for a YES.

12. This is touchy subject. Fact is, there's more violence in prison over race than all other problems combined. There's not much you or anyone else can do about that, but don't use your race as a crutch. Score 8 pts. for a YES.

13. Most convicts can spot a habitual liar a mile away and believe me, they aren't impressed. We all stretch the truth from time to time, but to create wild tales to make yourself seem special just makes you an inmate who lies a lot. YES? 10 pts.

14. 4 pts. for a YES.

15. We all got a raw deal, right? We all got too much time, the prosecutor was out to get us, and the police and witnesses lied. Okay, it happened to me too, but give yourself 10 pts. for a YES.

Over 100 - Go no further—give this magazine to someone else. It damn sure ain't for you.

100-85 - I celled with a guy like you once, but I think he's now in the Witness Protection Program.

85-70 - I wouldn't go to the yard after dark if I were you.

70-50 - I wouldn't lock with you, but I might let you shine my shoes.

50-30 - You might become a convict if you're a "newbie" but right now you're an inmate. Get busy!

30-10 - You're so close to being a convict, so why not try just a little bit harder?

10-1 - You're a convict, you just slipped up once.

0 - YOU NEED A CELLY?

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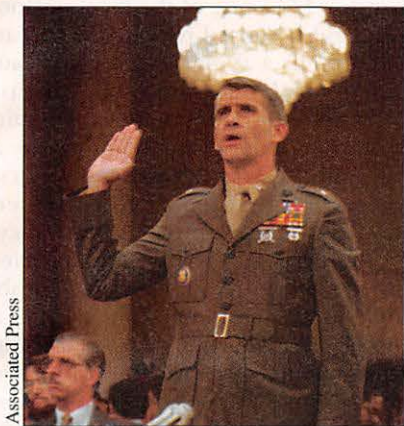
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Levine

(continued from page 49)

Nobel prize-winning president, for gun running and drug smuggling. My friend, another DEA agent named Cele Castillio, the agent who was in charge of El Salvador when North's Contras were running cocaine by the ton up to the U.S., has come out in a new book and told the truth: that DEA and the whole American embassy knew North's people were running dope up to the U.S. Cele was told to keep out of it by the U.S. Ambassador himself, Edwin Corr. He told Cele, "It's a White House operation."



North may well be elected Senator, some say he'll run for President. All Senator Kerry's rhetoric notwithstanding, no government official will ever stand trial for the tons and tons of drugs they helped flood this country with. Why? Because Americans don't know how to fight back, and they are content to swallow any shit the politicians throw at them.

The transcripts of the Rodriguez testimony account for only two of 12 executive sessions that were full of evidence of government cover-up of drug trafficking, all kept secret from the American people. Jack Blum, who was chief investigator for Senator Kerry, resigned from the committee and said, "I am sick to death about the truths I cannot tell." *The Big White Lie* is one of those truths. The transcripts tell an overpowering, nauseating truth.

In 1980, Ramon Milian Rodriguez, a man who is sitting in the Federal can right now for laundering over 200 million dollars a month in drug money, was so overcome by the amount of power he had—he said that he could virtually buy anyone, any country that he wanted—that he went to the CIA and told them what he was doing and the CIA told him to keep on doing it. He named the CIA agents he spoke to.

They later asked him for favors and money in return, including the \$10 million he paid to Felix Rodriguez, the CIA guy who worked directly for North. Milian Rodriguez testified that he made money-laundering deals with the heads of every major U.S. bank in Panama, and that they all knew it was drug money and none of them was indicted—not a banker, not a CIA agent, no one.

You and I both know, we've been there. This so-called drug war is all about money, big money. It's about money and power and political corruption and political cowardice. It's easy to get a street dope pusher and put his face on television, then put him away for 30 years. But if you have political power, if you are protected by the CIA or if you are the CIA or the head of a major U.S. bank, you've got a get-out-of-jail-free card.

I'll give you an example of how unfairly this bogus drug war is being waged, an example from my own career as a narcotic agent. It's the story of John Clemens. John Clemens is a good example of what happens if you're just a walking-around American with no power, and how easy it is to get an indictment and conviction for conspiracy.

On July 4, 1971 I arrested a guy named John Davidson smuggling three kilos of heroin at JFK Airport. He flipped and gave up the financier, a guy named Alan Trupkin, who was waiting for him and the dope in Gainesville, Florida. We were on a plane that night to deliver the heroin. We substituted powder for most of the smack, leaving about a gram of real stuff in the false bottom suitcase. We ended up in a trailer in the middle of a swamp outside of Gainesville. Davidson called Trupkin to tell him that he just got in. This, by the way, was his seventh trip that year. When he called Trupkin, I was taping the phone call. John Clemens, a 22-year-old unemployed musician, got on the phone during the conversation because Trupkin couldn't remember how to get to the trailer. Clemens got on the phone and said, "I know the way. I can show him." The statement was recorded. It was the only statement the kid ever made that could be used against him. So this kid who made absolutely nothing from the deal—they used to toss him a bag of heroin from time to time for favors—showed Trupkin the way to the trailer. He was in technical violation of the conspiracy law and in possession of about a gram of heroin. He was

there. He aided the guy. So he was indicted, convicted at trial and sentenced to 30 years in prison. The smuggler, Davidson, flipped and worked for the government. He got five years. The financier of the operation, Trupkin, got 15 years because he pled guilty in the middle of the trial and made a deal.

Now compare that to North, who's got 543 references to drugs in his personal hand-written notes, including statements like, "Aircraft needed for 1500 kilos," and "financed by drugs," as well as compelling evidence that he profited from his activities. None of this was investigated by professional narcotics investigators, none of it was put before a grand jury. North should be indicted, and some people are talking about him becoming the next President. Meanwhile, John Clemens, as far as I know, is still doing hard time.

You've worked with a lot of informants over the years as a DEA agent. Do you find them reliable? (I thought back to when I was on trial first in the District of Maine, then in the Southern District of New York. In both cases there was no physical evidence connecting me to the marijuana conspiracy, just the testimonies of some lying sacks of shit, yet I got convicted and sentenced to 25 years.)

I never met an informant who didn't lie. An informant will do anything to save his ass. Unfortunately, many informants are a lot slicker than some of the agents. And there are agents who just want to make cases and don't have much of a conscience. That happens all the time. I was hired as a consultant for the defense on one case where the informant was wanted in different countries and so he made a deal with government agents. He was supposed to deliver one Class One dope dealer in exchange for our government protecting him and paying him. So the guy went out and found an ignorant illegal alien who was working his butt off 70 hours a week as a parking lot attendant. The informant told the parking lot attendant that he had a bunch of dumb gringos who were willing to give him money for cocaine and that all he had to do was tell them he'd bring the dope later and these gringos would front him about \$300,000. So the parking lot attendant had a couple of meetings with undercover agents and he played the role the informant gave him. The undercover agent asked for a sample, but the parking lot attendant couldn't even come up with a line

of coke to give him. Next we cut to a hotel room where a hidden video camera caught the undercover agent sitting on one side of a table and the parking lot attendant on the other side. Between them was a briefcase containing \$300,000. They let the guy count the money. In Gomer Pyle Spanish the undercover agent then asked the guy if he would promise to deliver drugs for the money. The guy was nodding his head up and down, his eyes were bugged out. You can see him thinking: Can the gringos really be this stupid? The guy was busted and charged with conspiracy to deliver an enormous load of cocaine. The informant already got paid something like \$17,000 for the case.

Part of my testimony for the defense was that all of that government time and effort and money should be spent on the streets of America getting violent criminals and hard-core addicts off the streets—not illegal alien parking lot attendants. That's one of the big reasons we have 25,000 homicides a year in this country, why whole segments of our country are war zones. We're spending billions to fight a war that doesn't exist. In the last decade we spent more than \$100 billion on this bullshit war and got absolutely nothing for our money. If we had aimed that money at violent criminals and the treatment of hard-core addicts instead of things like the half billion dollars we spent on military radar last year, which didn't even catch a single drug smuggler, and the thousands of bullshit drug seizures and arrests paraded as drug war "victories," millions of lives and billions of dollars would have been saved—including the life of my son who was a New York City police officer killed by a crack addict, and my brother who was a life-long heroin addict. Yet this year our latest "leader," President Clinton, has budgeted more money than ever before, 13.5 billion, for more of the same crap.

In The Big White Lie you recount how you became a total paranoid. You were investigated by your own agency; he began to wonder what side he was on; he came to fear for his life after he wrote a letter to Newsweek exposing the CIA's role in the Bolivian cocaine coup.

I think I'm still alive because I was so paranoid. I didn't tell people I was leaving Argentina because I no longer trusted anyone. While I was cooling my heels in Puerto Rico, the Argentine secret police, the same

killers who worked for the CIA and who were also working for DEA, broke into my house, only, surprise, I was not there. So they sat around all night waiting for me to come home, drinking my booze just like they did when they visited me. The gardener showed up in the morning and they split, leaving the bottle of Scotch and glasses on the floor, just the way they usually did. That's the kind of arrogance these guys have—they literally had a license to kill. Paranoia for a DEA agent working in South America is a healthy emotion.

I wrote a letter on U.S. Embassy stationery to *Newsweek*, return-receipt-requested, telling them that they missed the real story. I told them that the real story was the CIA's secret support of this drug running government in Bolivia and escaped Nazi war criminals. But more than that, I told them the real story was the ultimate betrayal of the American people. Weeks went by and I received the postcard indicating that *Newsweek* had received the letter. Then nothing. A month later, within a 24-hour period, first the Argentines tried to kill me, and when that failed I was placed under investigation by DEA's Internal Security Division. I was falsely accused of everything from black marketing and stealing government funds, to having sex with my undercover partner, a married DEA agent assigned to play my wife. They even wrote me up for playing rock music on my radio and disturbing other people at the embassy.

Then they force-transferred me to Washington, D.C., where I was kept under investigation, followed, my phones tapped, you name it. As a government agent you have no rights, you are literally at the mercy of these people. I was holding on for dear life. In the middle of this madness, I was asked to go undercover to pose as the lover and business partner of Sonia Atala, the woman known as The Queen of Cocaine. When *The Washington Post* reviewed *The Big White Lie*, they called it an "edge-of-the-seat thriller," but questioned how the government could have me under investigation and at the same time send me undercover on their most sensitive case. I have proof backing up every single event that I wrote about. The question should not be posed to me; it should be posed to the people who sent me out on the assignment.

Sonia Atala was one of the people running the Bolivian government, and she was one of my targets. In

Bolivia she had a Nazi paramilitary unit under her command, her house was the main government torture chamber, and suddenly she turns up in the U.S. working for DEA. As it turned out she was also a CIA asset, protected by them. And while she was working as an informant, she never stopped selling dope. She in fact was arrested for selling cocaine to DEA undercover agents while working for DEA and CIA. Of course she was never tried for the arrest because she had *carte blanche* to sell Americans dope.

I am probably one of the most investigated men in the agency because I was one of the most outspoken, and because I represent a threat. I represent a threat to giant bureaucracies making a big buck off this drug war. I don't remember who said it but the quote goes, "If you create a bureaucracy, the bureaucracy's first enemy are the people who created it." That's the nature of bureaucracy. In the drug war, these bureaucracies are created to try and solve the problem, but that would put them out of a job. Now if you think they are going to put themselves out of a job, I've got a Class One cocaine dealer posing as a parking lot attendant I want you to meet.

We've gone from two federal agencies enforcing all the federal drug laws and a \$20 million budget in 1965, when I started in the business, to an \$11.5 billion budget and 54 federal and military agencies screaming for more money when I retired in 1989. The American people have gotten absolutely nothing for their money, but the bureaucracies have profited handsomely; they gobble up this gush of taxpayer funds like hungry animals. Who's paying for it? All of us. And it's not just the police agencies, it is a lot of the so-called "good guys," the treatment-on-demand programs that have absolutely no effect on hard-core drug addicts but which make a hell of a lot of money. According to the *Village Voice*, the guy who heads up Phoenix House makes a \$600,000 a year salary. The Partnership for A Drug Free America and other federally-funded programs that churn out television ads and informational booklets and hold rallies and marches and fund drives really don't want this phony war to go away. There are a lot of people who make a lot of money, which can only be justified as long as we have a drug problem. I'm a threat to all of these so-called good guys. I can very well understand why they would come after me.

PL

Pen Pals

NOTE: ADS IN PEN PALS ARE \$10/ISSUE. SUBSCRIBERS GET ONE AD FREE WITH SUBSCRIPTION. ALSO: ALL FEDERAL AND MANY STATE PRISONS PROHIBIT CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN INMATES. ALL SUCH MAIL WILL NOT GO THROUGH.

Elvis Impersonator will sing your blues away. Intelligent, optimistic, family-oriented, very affectionate, works hard—plays harder, handsome and has a nice, hairy chest. Wants a lady from the old school who wants and needs to be held. Richard Shere, #116320, U.C.I. 44-2163-A1, P.O.Box 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

Creole/Blk guy. College-educated, attractive, artistic, poetic, respectful. Seeking female friend, 25-40, to share photos and fun. Happy letters. Eric Martin, P.O. Box 7500, B60373, A6-122, Crescent City, CA 95531.

My mail is too depressing. I'm an artist in lockdown looking for correspondence. Would like to write homegirl from Philly or New York; likes white and Puerto Rican. George Stone, #806676, Iowa State Penitentiary, P.O. Box 316, Ft. Madison, Iowa 52627.

SBM, 27, seeks an understanding woman of any race to be a good friend. Enjoys writing, reading and romance novels. 5'10", 185 lbs. and looks nice. Will answer all letters. Aaron Collins, #D-30738, P.O.Box 29, Represa, CA 95671-7129.

Handsome Prince with unique style & personality. Smooth, hard body connected to strong, incredible mind. Fearless heart overflowing with love & compassion for the Princess I've been searching for since I stepped into this world in '66. I'm old school and cannot contain my royal love much longer. Where are you, my Princess? Anthony Mungin, #288322, UCIA-1, 45-1254, POB 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

"Friendship" is the closeness people feel as they grow to know each other, is the trust that means more than words can tell, is the richness people find as they share their lives, is the joy that blossoms and grows, is the gift that makes the world forever fresh and new. This is what I seek! Paul Hildwin, #923196, UCIA-1, Box 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

19-yr-old BM on Death Row since age 16. Seeking sincere and friendly pen pals. Race, religion unimportant. Jerome Allen, #704007, 45-2204-A1, Union Corr. Inst., P.O. Box 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

SBM 34, 6'2", 212# seeks compassionate, affectionate, honest, intelligent, disease-free female. Age & race unimportant. Arthelies Humphrey #500932, Ellis II Unit, Huntsville, TX 77340.

Death Row prisoner desperately seeking correspondence with anyone anywhere. Gerald W. Bivins #922004, PO Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46360.

SWM 40 seeks letters from females. For every smile you give me, I'll give two in return. Raymond Hale #554903, Coffield Unit, Rt. 1, Box 150, Tennessee Colony, TX 75861.

Lifer needs to talk to lady lifer. No freeworliders. Let's do life together. William E. Gold #171650, PO Box 900, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

6'3", dark ebony and delicious! Born 1/26/49, reformed and looking for that lady who's ready for a powerful love. C.B. Hassan Taylor #A01834, PO Box 4002, Danville, IL 61834.

Forgotten prisoner. 8 yrs. down and many to go would appreciate letters from anyone inside or out. Richard A. Simmons #189585, 4535 W. Tone Rd., Kicheloe, MI 49784-0001.

Prisoner seeks correspondence. Freddie Utsey 90T5254, Pouch #1, Woodburne, NY 12788.

Lifer desires intelligent, long-term correspondence with real people regardless of age, income, religion or eccentricity. Keith Merritt #461016, Rt. 1, Box 150, Tennessee Colony, TX 75884.

BM 27, 6', 182# looking for someone special. Let's get busy! Calvin Vick, 1300 Western Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27606.

Doing time and looking for answers to stay out. 41 and still falling & reaching out. Backslider. Diane Olivares #1495212, 500 N. Flower St., Santana, CA 92703.

In need of female friends that can appreciate a loving man's company. I like to write books and work out. Henry Jackson Minford #206501, Lucasville, OH 45699.

Hi lonely ladies! I'm Albert. 6'1" 190# and single. Drop me a line and you may never have to be lonely again. A. Davis #N47848, PO Box 500, Hillsboro, IL 62049.

I'm changing my life and seeking penfriends. Interests are fitness, learning, listening & writing. Will answer all. Marvin Miller #281-424, 2075 S. Avon Belden Rd., Grafton, OH 44044.

SWM 32, 6'4", soon to be released seeking correspondence from female. All letters answered. Kenny Calihan #D95027, PO Box 3476, Corcoran, CA 93212-8310.

Male 28, has lost family ties. Depressed from never getting mail. Likes art, wood carving, weightlifting & gymnastics. Willie Davis #D39-100984, PO Box 667, Bushnell, FL 33513.

Do you feel that your child is headed for prison? I'm not a psychologist, just a concerned person that can speak from personal experience. Terry Shockley #39259, Box 7, Moberly, MO 65270.

WM 37 seeking white or Latina lady for friendship/relationship. Kids OK. Enjoy Harleys, horses, traveling & nature. All answered. Daniel Hancock #637251, Terrell Unit, 12002 FM 350 South, Livingston, TX 77351.

Native American (Papago) man, 29, 5'5", 135# seeking correspondence with all interested parties. Enjoy reading, writing long letters, poetry & all kinds of music. Clinton Poe #59867, Florence, AZ 85232.

Young Jewish lady wishes to hear from anyone out there kind enough to write me. Lynda Zeefe #31570, 1479 Collins Ave., Marysville, OH 43040.

Handsome BM wishes to correspond with & meet nice, sincere, down to earth ladies who want to be treated like women. Age & race are unimportant. Merion Johnson #162312, PO Box 5000, Carson City, MI 48811.

SBM 34 seeking other half. The manifestation of our union awaits us. Kenneth Key #A70562, PO Box 4001, Danville, IL 61834.

Freeworld comely male 29, au courart, well-kept & educated seeks lady friends behind bars. Kevin Lewis, 616 S. Prospect, Lima, OH 45804.

SBM 28, 5'10", 160# looking for female friend 18-35 - anyone who's interested in writing a guy who's down. Please send picture. Will respond to all. Embery McBride #EF-207197, PO Box 310, Valdosta, GA 31603.

Male 38, 5'7", 155# has no one to write to ease the misery of prison. Joseph Wright #86252, Camp 29-B, Parchman, MS 38738.

SBM 34, 5'6", 165# seeking correspondence & more with sincere, dedicated woman. Age unimportant. Floyd Nelson #B-94350, PO Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95532.

Easy going artist 43, 6', 180# green-eyed free spirit seeking warm, intelligent lady of any age to share thoughts. Tom Connolly #B-88619, Box 99, Pontiac, IL 61764.

SWM 37, 5'10" lonely lifer will answer all letters. Interests range from philosophy to long walks in the woods. John E. Lorino #78482, MAX Unit, 2501 State Farm Rd., Tucker, AR 72168.

SBM 42, 5'8", 215# Taurus wants to correspond with and hopefully meet a professional female 35-45 any race. Into weight training & cardiovascular fitness. Soon to be released. Harry Ammons Jr. #A-191944, PO Box 5000, Carson City, MI 48811-5000.

SWM 28, 6', 185# Christian first-time offender who recently lost wife & two girls to drunk driver seeks special lady. Glenn "Minnesota" Hazelton #18745, Box 16, Winnebago, WI 54985-0016.

SWM 49, 6', Great health! Loves outdoors, reading, writing letters. Country boy looking for caring lady to share ideas & have fun with. Ken Annack #165-997, 30420 Revells Neck Rd., Westover, MD 21871-9799.

SWM 36 seeking woman to ease his loneliness. No address to parole to. Anthony Byars #209-363, Maximum Security, PO Box 5200, Lorton, VA 22199.

Jewish grandmother doing life without parole seeks correspondence with communicative gentlemen of all ages. Jeri Richards #W-33670, California Institute for Women, 16756 Chino-Corona Rd., Frontera, CA 91720.

SWM, 5'7", 180 lbs, 25, brwn eyes & hair. Seeking females 18-40 for correspondence, possible relationship. Will answer all. Frank Philbrook, #21047, P.O. Box 14, Concord, NH 03301.

31-yr-old WF Christian who lives by the King James Bible looking for male Christian 24-40. Janice Funk #087007-A, Taycheedah Corr. Inst., N7139 Hwy. K, Fon du Lac, WI 54935-9099.

WM, 50, 6'1", 230#. Nice guy looking for younger women anywhere, pen pal or more. Pren Nothnagel H-47805, L-3 113-U, P.O. Box 2210, Susanville, CA 96130.

35-yr-old white boy doing 2 life sentences. Into music and Harley's. 5'10", 150#, long, red hair & grn eyes. Looking for women. Frank Elliott #42954, P.O. Box 1059, Santa Fe, NM 87504.

40-something SBM, 6'2", 200#. Educated & down-to-earth. No friends or family. Seeks female. Needs to relate. William J. Berry, #23739, Ely State Prison, P.O. Box 1989, Ely, NV 89301.

BM, 43, 5'7", 170#. Seeks fun-loving female for a serious relationship. Bobby Peterson #038416, B-66, P.O. Box 221, Raiford, FL 32083.

Widowed Oregonian, 45, 5'10", 160#. Kids & wife died in auto accident. Neat, clean, slim & trim. No family, no mail, no attorney. No visits in 18 yrs. Richard Joe Kidd, Box 29-B72191-C7102, Folsom, Represa, CA 95671.

SBM, 5'7", 155#, 45. Highly self-educated. Loves to read, write letters, play chess & debate. Will answer all. Robert Wooley, #N-50709, Dixon Corr. Ctr., 2600 N. Brinton Ave, Dixon, IL 61021-9254.

BM, 5'11", 175#, handsome & intelligent. Seeking a lady with an open mind and compassionate heart. Sincerity a must. William Speed, #87B1268, P.O. Box 2000, Pine City, NY 14871.

SWM, 44, 6'. Doing a dime for armed robbery. Looking for a she as lonely as this he for friendship & letters. Will answer all. Frank Robin, #8617363, 2605 State St, Salem, OR 97310.

Death row BM, 26, 5'10", 174#. Warm, gentle, intelligent. Never married. Gregory Capehart, #755994, Union Corr. Inst., P.O. Box 221 45-2206, Raiford, FL 32083.

Tired of games and lies. I'm educated, single, good-looking, 5'5", stable and compassionate. Just want the right woman, age & race unimportant. Jose Anthony Rivera, #86A3644, Box 500, Elmira, NY 14902.

SWM, 38, 6'2", 230# seeking single mom who want a good ol' man. Daniel David, #190823, Farmington Corr. Ctr., 1012 W. Columbia, Farmington, MO 63640.

Mail Call

(continued from page 13)

-ed. They're also capable of acts of courage (Sperling), tough love (CASH) and creativity (Martorano).

Our mission is to give expression to the voice of the convict. And yes, if a con's worth glorifying, we'll glorify him.

ONE WHITE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Prison Life:

So you say you're down with "presenting everyone's perspective" (emphasis on everyone), and then you go on to say "women's, African-American's, Native American's, Hispanic's, Asian's, you name it."

I take it the "you name it" part of that paragraph was referring to the whites in America's prison system.

Well I've only read one issue of *Prison Life* (June 1994) as of yet, and I don't want to be prejudgmental in my assessment of your guys' work, though I do have an opinion of the June 1994 issue: It is just like any other magazine I've read, aside from the *New Republic*. It is a sniveling, liberal publication catering to America's so-called deprived. I don't see anything wrong with helping rehabilitate those men and women who are receptive to such rehab. But there is nothing right about glorifying the random victimization of society by most of your readers and contributors.

Now there's a white man's perspective. Let's see you present that. So far with respect,

Steven Czifra
Ontario, CA

PL

Cat J

(continued from page 57)

OF SOCIAL GRACE" is a damn poor epitaph. A "good morning" is a cheap premium to pay, even if it doesn't ultimately garner a dividend.

Push-ups done, I bird-bathe in my sink and wash out my sweat-soaked gym clothes. Putting on a clean set of sweats, I settle down to my second cup of coffee.

The loudspeaker in the housing unit squawks out the name of a Cat J, informing him it's time for him to parole. The crazy has just finished his wino time and he's free to rejoin the world for a beat or two, but not three, because he'll soon be back. I envy him his release from the walls of San

Quentin, but not his lifetime sentence trapped inside a brain that's more than a bit skewed, a mind incapable of coping in modern society.

Minutes later, incredibly, I hear the Cat J refuse to leave his cell for parole. The man states with impeccable Cat J logic that it's cold outside. No way he's going to leave a warm cell with breakfast about to arrive for the uncertain shuffle of the streets.

The guards huddle to discuss their quandary. They could call an extraction team to Taser 50,000 volts into the madman and yank his bod out of the cell by force. As much as they'd enjoy the spectacle, the required rules violation report for "refusing movement" would void the Cat J's parole and they couldn't kick him out the front gate. Each and every day more Cat J's flood into San Quentin sent by the boys in blue. The guards are forced to move some bodies out to simply free up cells.

After some screaming, a lot of threats and a little discussion, the Cat J agrees to leave if the guards will give him breakfast first. When the guards quickly agree, the Cat J senses he's on a roll and holds them up for more concessions.

The condemned men in the tiers listen in disbelief, many calling out, offering to take the Cat J's place on parole. The guards ignore the dead men as they continue their parley. Finally, the Cat J departs with breakfast in his belly, a bag lunch in his hands, a pack of cigarettes rolled up in his sleeve, and a triumphant grin on his face. The loony-toon will have a few weeks Cat J-ying around in the world before the boys in blue ship him back to continue his life sentence on the installment plan.

After the housing unit eats breakfast, it's time for exercise yard. There are six small concrete yards for the housing unit, each so small they resemble dog runs. The yards are side by side, separated from each other by chain-link fences.

Four of the yards are for condemned prisoners. The other two are disciplinary yards for non-condemned prisoners from the general population who have received a rules violation report from some guard, so they're sent to security housing for punishment. The rules violation could be as serious as mayhem, or as silly as going through the chow line twice. One guy was written up for aggressive eye contact with a guard, whatever that means. Though most of the men in the disciplinary yards

are not Cat J's, the disciplinary yards are where the Cat J's are assigned to exercise.

Arriving on my yard, I enjoy the early morning sunshine while starting to work my biceps with a curl bar. Idly glancing through the fence, I spot a young guy that I mentally mark down as trouble-looking-for-a-place-to-happen. He looks about 16 (they seem to get younger every year), and he's proudly flashing his first prison tattoo. It's scabbed, still healing from the needle.

Across the yard from the youngster is a Cat J doing the thorazine shuffle, head looking down in the gutter for cigarette butts, take home and fire up in his cell. The kid steals up behind the Cat J and punches him in the skull, right behind the ear. Down to the ground goes the Cat J, but like most lunatics he seems impervious to pain and leaps back to his feet and the fight commences.

I carefully place the weight bar on the ground. I don't want to make any noise that would attract the attention of the guards. Glancing at the catwalk, I intently watch the guard assigned to the disciplinary yard. The green-garbed man has just spotted the altercation. Leaping from his chair, he fumbles at his assault rifle in a panicky manner. At last he chambers a bullet and his weapon is ready to fire, to kill.

Backing away from the fence, I watch the guard swing the business end of his rifle toward the combatants pounding away at each other. I glance at the hands of the prisoners and feel reassured by the absence of weapons. San Quentin policy requires a warning in a non-life threatening situation. I feel confident that the guard won't shoot, at least not yet. The rifle finishes its arc, the barrel staring down at the two combatants, and a sharp crack echoes in my ears. A cloud of red mist explodes in the air, surrounding the two fighters as they crumble to the ground. Fragments from the bullet rattle past me, sounding like gravel kicked up from the spinning wheels of a car skidding down a country road. Men on my side of the fence fall to the ground, clutching their suddenly bleeding legs.

The guard on the catwalk over my yard joins the scene. Taking charge, he chambers a bullet in his rifle with a mechanical clack and bellows: "Onthemotherfuckingground RIGHT NOW!" Then he blows his whistle to summon help.

My casual assurance long gone,

my body is hugging concrete. Reluctantly raising my head, I see another guard on the catwalk above me. He's swinging his rifle around randomly. I wonder if he'll join the insanity and shoot too. For a fleeting moment our eyes meet. I see he's pumped up, his eyes bulging with adrenaline. But panic is absent. He's in control. Looking closer, I can see disbelief in his eyes in response to the quick shot fired by his panicked fellow guard. The disbelief overflows, spilling out of his eyes and taking over his face, generating an expression of contempt for the other guard's inability to control himself and the situation. I begin to feel confident that this guard won't fire his rifle, sending another bullet ricocheting randomly about my yard.

My eyes flick back through the fence to the two combatants. I note that the guard has not only shot without warning, he's shot the wrong prisoner! The victim, the Cat J, is shot just above the elbow. As I watch, the Cat J calmly wraps a sock around his arm just above the meaty gash where blood is pumping freely, splattering onto the concrete. The Cat J finally pulls the sock tight with a feral tug of his teeth and the blood flow slows to a trickle. I shake my head in amazement, thinking that this Cat J is one tough sonofabitch.

Guards come running with a stretcher and unlock the gate. The Cat J rolls through and is tossed onto the stretcher for the ride to the hospital. I can already hear the scream of an ambulance in the distance. As the stretcher passes my yard, I can see the Cat J's blood-soaked blue prison clothing contrasting beautifully, hideously, with a face that's growing increasingly white.

The wannabe tough guy who through dumb luck has escaped unscathed from the violent scene is ordered to the gate. I watch the youngster flex his new tattoo in defiance while the guards roughly slap chains onto his body and lead him away. As he passes by my yard, I hear him snarl to the escort guard: "I kicked his ass. I'll kick your's too!" The guard simply shakes his head wearily and sighs.

Guards begin to remove the wounded men from my yard. They've been hit by lead fragments that splintered off the bullet as it passed through the Cat J's elbow. The wounds look superficial to me. But after years in this house of pain, my definition of a superficial wound is

any wound on someone else's body.

After the bleeding men are led off to the hospital, the guards call the rest of us one by one to the gate. We're chained, taken to locked cages and strip-searched for weapons.

The guard searching me asks: "What happened out there?"

"Don't know," I answer warily. Some canine got it into his head to bust a cap."

"Yeah, bad luck for Johnson."

"Is he going to be OK?" I ask.

"Don't know. He didn't follow procedure. Bad shoot could cost him his chance to make sergeant."

Spinning the words through my head, it dawns on me that Johnson is the guard who pulled the trigger, not the Cat J.

"How's the Cat J?" I ask softly, trying to keep my voice casual, disinterested.

"The med tech said they're going to whack off the arm for sure." With an absent, careless shrug of his shoulders, the guard added: "Maybe we'll all get lucky and he'll just die."

Michael Wayne Hunter, 35, grew up in Sunnyvale, CA. In February of 1984, he was found convicted of murder in San Mateo County and sentenced to death row at San Quentin.

PL

11 DAYS UNDER SIEGE

(continued from page 33)

guisher. Along with the lack of food and water, it was impossible to get any sleep. I would lie on a mattress, but my mind would still be racing. Just as I was on the edge of sleep, my eyes would pop open and I'd sit up and look around to make sure no one was creeping up on me. I'd go through this routine over and over.

By now, National Guardsmen, state highway patrolmen, SOCF security and FBI agents had circled the prison, along with more than a thousand heavily armed personnel dressed in camouflage and goon squad black. Army helicopters flew overhead; sharpshooters lined the roof.

The major concern of those of us inside was that the troops would launch a full-scale assault as they'd done in the 1968 uprising at the old Ohio Penitentiary. If that happened, many of us would be killed, and while most of the convicts had no part in the riot, they'd be shot dead just like the ringleaders. There would be no distinction between guilt and innocence. But I also knew that

somewhere inside L-Corridor there were seven hostages, and they were the only thing that stood between life and death, bullets and negotiation.

A team of convicts set up a phone line and established contact with the prison staff and the SOCF negotiator. The convict negotiators connected a tape recorder to the phone line and recorded every conversation so that those inside could be kept informed of the progress. The prison authorities assigned a negotiator who was clearly operating above his level of competence. He began by calling the convicts "a bunch of clowns" and demanding that they surrender. Subtlety and patience were not his forte.

Eventually, the state woke up to the seriousness of the situation and flew in a special advisor from Georgia. He turned the talks around with a high degree of professionalism and won the guarded respect of the prisoners.

"We want every stage of these talks covered by the news media, sir," said one of the convicts. "We know how the prison administration operates, and we don't trust any of them. If this isn't covered by the media, the state will do nothing but stall and renege on any progress made."

News coverage would restrain the outside troops from beating or killing the convicts once this was over. The troops would also be restrained from bum-rushing the prison if they were under the eye of the camera. But the state wanted the situation kept under cover, with only selected information reaching the outside via their public relations office.

Not surprisingly, the state released a story alleging that the riot was a racial war and that the prisoners refused to let the media talk to a convict spokesman. When they did allow one of the major Ohio newspapers to speak with a convict by phone, they quickly pulled the plug when he began to list the prisoners' demands.

Inside the prison, the convicts rigged up a p.a. system using a tape player and two large speakers taken from the rec department. They set these up near the windows facing the large media camp in front of the SOCF A tape recording was played: "The prison authorities want you to think that this is a racial war. It is not! Whites and blacks have united to protest the abuses of the SOCF staff and administration. We want the FBI and we want a peaceful ending to this. . ."

The tape played on, listing

11 DAYS UNDER SIEGE

demands. A SWAT team was sent to remove the system, but the speakers of the battery-operated tape player were set up so that they only could be reached from outside. Officials sent up helicopters hoping to drown out the sound of the message. Every time the tape would start to play, the chop-pers would take to the air.

Another group of convicts began painting messages on bed sheets and hanging them out the windows for the media to read. Prison authorities tried to move the media out of the area so they couldn't see the sheets, but it was too late. The cameras of the local and national news didn't miss any of it. The next day, the painted sheets made front-page news.

Meanwhile, inside the prison the riot was gaining momentum. The convicts were cliquing up and surrounding themselves with their road dogs for protection in case the unpredictable happened. Along the hallway several prisoners were laid out with broken bones or other serious injuries that required medical treatment. A few of the convicts built a makeshift infirmary and went to every cell collecting any medication or medical supplies they could find. Using the stage area of the gym, they rolled out a dozen or so mattresses for those too fucked up to walk. That first night all of the mattresses were full. One of the wounded was bleeding so profusely that I didn't think he'd last the night.

The self-appointed medic found a needle and some thread and went to work stitching up the guy's neck. In an hour he was stitched and laid out on a mattress. He was one of the lucky ones who would live to tell his story. The unlucky ones were piled on top of each other like a heap of dirty laundry. Later the bodies were wrapped in blankets and dragged out to the rec yard. Two of them thought to be dead jumped up and broke camp as soon as they were laid on the grass. They ran straight toward the National Guard, who didn't know whether to shoot them or run from them. A roller thought to be dead lay on the yard for several hours playing possum while numerous convicts who had clustered there kicked and assailed him. When the coast seemed clear, he hobbled over toward the fences where armed guards covered him as he made his way across the yard to the K-side gym. That he survived was surprising. One of the prisoners who was running across the yard was the prisoner Val and I saw

lying in the L-Corridor with a badge pinned to his body. How he managed to lie perfectly still for all of those hours, including the painful moment when the badge was being stuck to his body, is still a mystery.

When prison authorities saw all of the bodies dumped in the rec yard, they began to realize this was more serious than they'd thought. So when negotiations continued, attitudes were more strained.

"We want food and water! You people think we're playing games. We'll bring this fucking place down! Now get us some food and water and stop with your fucking stupid games," the convicts demanded.

"Listen up!" the negotiator responded. "We're working on food and water. We'll get it together and I'll call you back as soon as it's ready. Just hang on for a couple hours."

Several hours later the supplies came and were left in the yard. A team of Masks brought it in and rationed it, which greatly reduced the tension. The downside was that the prison authorities would now try to use food as a bargaining chip. Their mistake was in thinking that now they were in a position to call the shots.

The negotiations continued like a ping pong match, neither side wanting to lose the first point. The siege had been going strong for days and very little progress had been made. Prison authorities still wouldn't agree to live media coverage.

"You either get the news media in here or these talks will end!" the convicts yelled. "We don't have to talk at all!"

But the officials acted like it was just a game. med like it was just a game. "We can't let a TV crew inside because of security reasons. It can't be done!"

Several more bodies were dumped into the rec yard. The phone began to ring.

"Okay. We're working things out with an Ohio news network for a live TV interview. Can we get a hostage in return, as a show of good faith?"

"A hostage is no problem. We'll bring one of your people out when we come to do the interview. Set it up and call when you're ready."

The following morning, before the interview was scheduled, a group of masked prisoners explained to those manning the phones that more food and water was needed.

The authorities saw this as a chance to show who was in control. "We can't change the original deal. You said all you wanted was a TV inter-

view and we got it for you. Now you're playing games. We'll give you the interview but nothing else. If you want the food and water, you'll have to give us two hostages. It's the only way!"

The Masks refused to turn over the two hostages. A few minutes later another group of Masks came to the phone. They called themselves the "hardliners."

"Here's what's gonna happen," said a spokesman for the hardliners. "You people are going to bring us more food and water with the TV interview for one hostage. This is not negotiable. If you play games we'll send you a hostage—but he won't be walking out!"

Still, the authorities denied the demand and asked to talk with the original negotiator. Returning to the phone, the negotiator tried to convey how serious the hardliners were.

"All we're asking for is food and water. We know this won't cost you a thing. If we don't get it the hardliners will take over! There's nothing I can do. You could lose a hostage for something as basic as food and water!"

A local radio station had received word of the exchange, and expressed concern that a hostage might be killed. The same day, a spokesperson for the prison authorities released a statement to the media: "We don't take this too seriously. We believe it's a serious threat, but it's a common ploy used during a hostage situation."

Later that day, a hostage was killed. His body was placed on a mattress and carried into the rec yard by six convicts. Everyone waited for the National Guard to hit the joint, guns blasting anything that moved.

Suddenly, one of the convicts at the back window yelled out: "They're crossing the yard! The state boys are in the rec yard heading this way!"

I ran to the window to see how much time I had before they reached the walls of L-Corridor. Outside, a light fog had begun to roll in, and from the center of the rec yard about 30 National Guardsmen marched forward in V formation.

"Get your motherfucking asses back across that yard, boys, or you'll get one of these hostages hurt!" a rioter yelled at the police.

All movement came to a halt. The phone began to ring. Before the prison officials could say anything, the prisoner manning it yelled: "Get those police off the yard now! What the fuck are you trying to do?"

They cleared the yard. It was later discovered that they were only in the

yard to serve as security while the news media set up a conference table and moved their equipment into place. Though tragic, the murder of the hostage served as a catalyst. From that moment on, things moved forward quickly. A special negotiator from Georgia was now supervising most of the talks. A horde of 35 "experts" swarmed the prison authorities who were manning the phone banks.

The state wanted the siege to end without further bloodshed. They wanted the prison back under their rule, the remaining hostages released unharmed and themselves out of the national media. Most of the convicts felt the same way. The takeover had been dragging on in a slow blur, and people on both sides wanted to get on with their lives.

Live TV and radio coverage was soon arranged. To show good faith, two hostages were released. The remaining five would be held until the day of surrender.

One of the rioters' major demands was that the 409 prisoners inside of L-Corridor be represented by competent legal counsel to assure their safety and the protection of their rights. The authorities quickly agreed to these demands, and an attorney from Cleveland was flown in. He met with the convict negotiators to hammer out a contract. It was decided that they would surrender the following day.

Inside, the mood changed dramatically and activity shifted into high gear. Demolition crews were formed to destroy as much of SOCF as possible. Unit managers' offices were gutted, files destroyed and windows, walls and ceilings were bashed. Each cell was hit. Toilets, sinks and windows were busted; cell doors were removed, plumbing destroyed, and cabinets ripped off the walls. The control panels in each block were dismantled, and all the wiring and electrical components were ripped out or set ablaze. The sounds of destruction could be heard by the troops surrounding the prison. They stared as though expecting the walls to fall and the prisoners to come pouring out into the rec yard.

The prisoners packed up their personal property, preparing to leave a bad memory behind. High five's, laughs and jokes filled the air, and the last of the food was given out in the most generous portions we had seen since the riot began. It wasn't a celebration of what had been accomplished over the past ten days as much as a reaction to the incredible

relief that this thing was finally coming to an end.

The next afternoon, prisoner negotiators went through L-Corridor collecting names of convicts who were willing to transfer to other prisons. As part of the agreement, the prison authorities had approved mass transfers. L-Corridor would be closed for a couple of years or at least until all the damage had been repaired. This meant that hundreds of beds had to be found in a system already working at 185% over capacity. I didn't care where I ended up. I just wanted to leave SOCF. Val felt the same way. Our names were added to the transfer list. We knew any place would beat the shit out of where we came from.

Val and I walked into one of the blocks that was now opened and sat next to a fire. We had our property packed into large plastic trash bags and we were waiting, ready to walk out the door.

Out in the rec yard the conference table was full. State officials, media, legal counsel and prison negotiators sat facing each other. Each party was furiously signing copies of the 21-point agreement that the lawyers and prisoners had prepared.

I watched from a window as everyone shook hands and laughed. It was an inappropriate, false show of fellowship. Hell, I knew they held each other in contempt, but at least it meant that agreements had been reached. If part of the wrapping of the package was blatant hypocrisy, then so be it.

Every major TV station had its cameras focused on the door that would soon open and release the first of the surrendering prisoners. Inside, the prison negotiators were getting together the first group to leave.

The sick and the wounded went first. Some were busted up so badly that stretchers had to be brought in to carry them out. Bloodied T-shirts and dirty makeshift bandages hung off their bodies like rags off scarecrows. Those able to walk on their own limped or hobbled as fast as their feet could carry them, eager to put distance between them and the source of their injuries. Convicts watched the process from behind covered windows to make sure everything was on the up and up. If anything happened to the first group, the exchange would no longer be honored.

The surrender went smoothly, and at 10:30 p.m. Val and I walked into the rec yard with a group of 30

other prisoners. We were met by the special negotiator from Georgia, who escorted us to the state patrolmen.

"Alright, men, listen up! When I direct you to come forward, you are to walk over to that officer there," said a state official pacing in front of us. Pointing at me and two other prisoners, he shouted, "You, you and you. Move up!"

I walked forward.

"Listen carefully to every word I say! Put your hands on your head, interlock your fingers, look straight ahead and don't move!"

I stood there while one man held my hands together on top of my head and another searched me for weapons. After tying my hands behind my back with nylon rope, the officials escorted me to the K-Corridor gym. My shoes swished through the wet grass as I walked away from the most bizarre 11 days of my life.

Two hours later I and over a hundred other convicts were put on three prison buses and shipped to the Mansfield Correctional Institution. The bus stopped at a red light in a small town, and through the steamed windows of the bus, I could see a digital clock glowing a distorted "4:00 a.m." I looked over at Val. He was off in a world of his own, probably thinking of home and family. It seemed like the right thing to do, so I closed my eyes and went home, too.

PL

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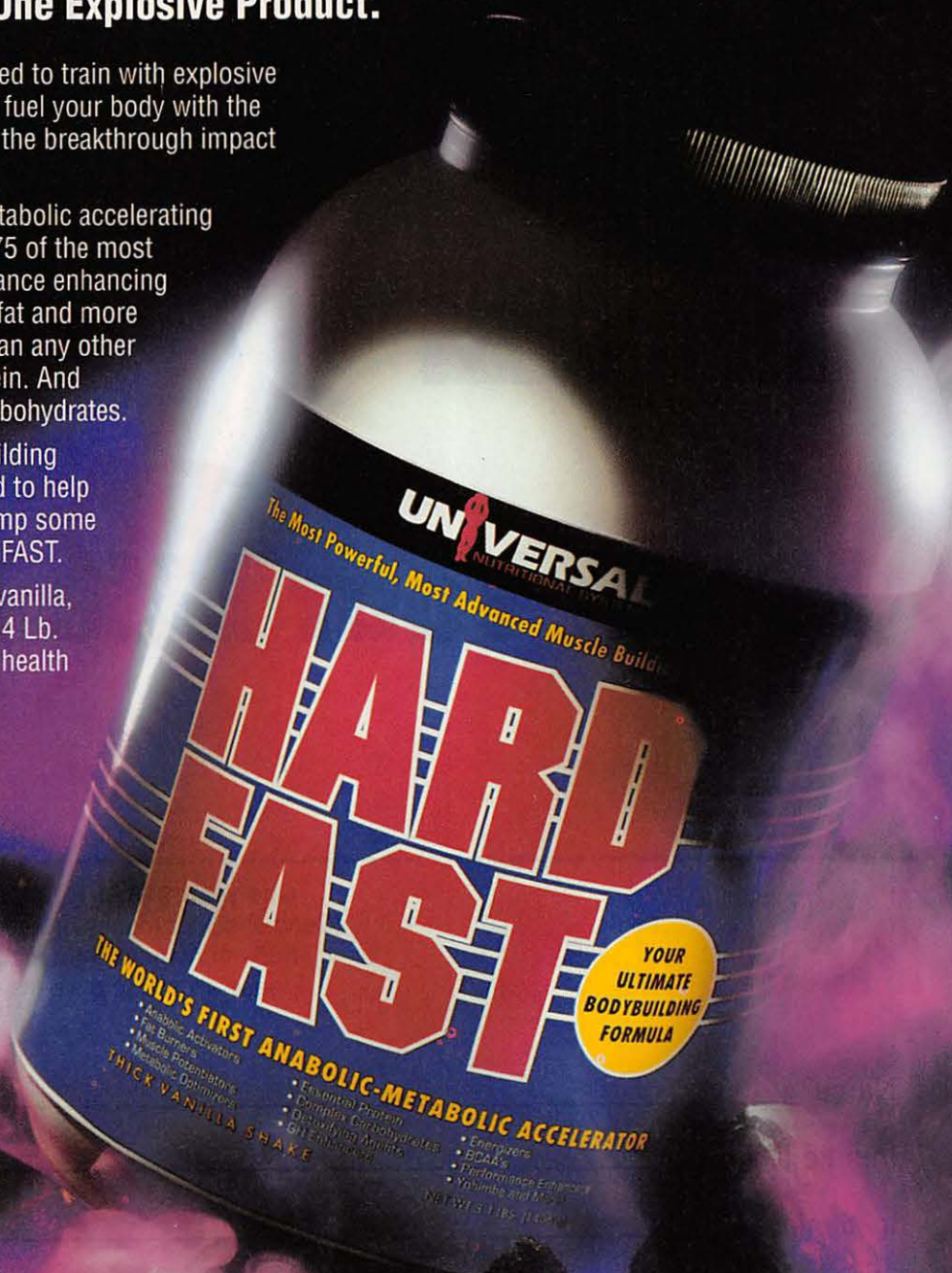
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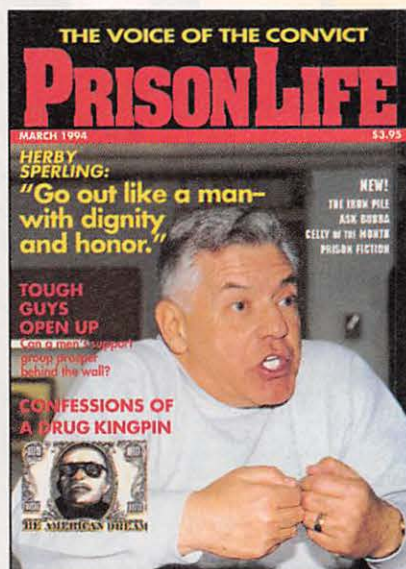
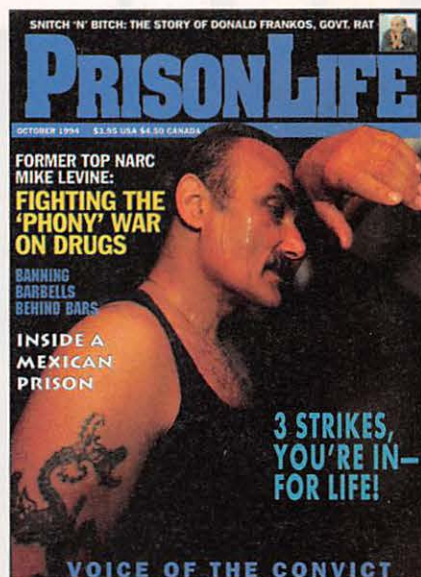
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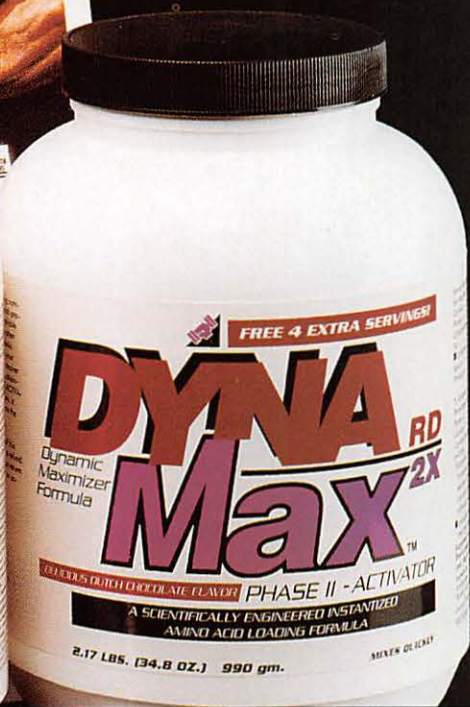
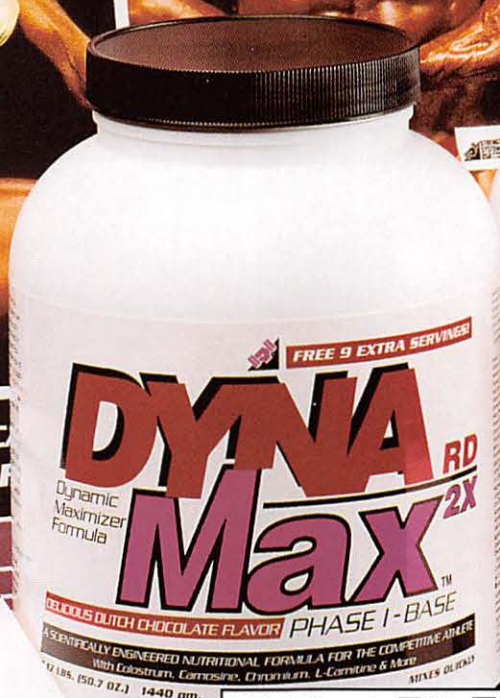
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