PART THREE

New Haven

17

Heaven

I don't like to commit myself about heaven and hell -
you see, I have friends in both places.
- Mark Twain

NEW HAVEN Correctional Centre, a minimum-security institution in Burnaby for young-adult offenders, is the Elysium of corrections in Canada. It is based on the Borstal philosophy, which was born in England almost a century ago and inaugurated in one wing of a prison in Borstal, Kent, in 1902. The Borstal concept evolved into a rehabilitation program for offenders between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, based on the premise that imprisoning youthful offenders with older offenders would only teach them more crime. The program was based on a "definite indeterminate" sentence, in which the length of sentence depended on how long it took the resident to complete the Borstal training program to the satisfaction of the headmaster or director and his board. Tom Courtenay was a "Borstal lad" in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner;* Brendan Behan was moved to write of his experience in *Borstal Boy.* The present president of the Borstal Association of British Columbia is a graduate of New Haven. Numerous prominent lawyers and other professionals are graduates of New Haven.

In Canada, the New Haven Act was passed in the B.C. legislature in 1949, giving the province an indeterminate sentence like that in England. The mandate of New Haven was to take only first-time

offenders between seventeen and twenty-three. The first twelve inmates in what is now the only British Borstal program on earth were marched over the ridge from Oakalla to New Haven.

The place is quite unlike a prison. The atmosphere is free and relaxed: no fences, no concertina wire, no uniforms. It has been in operation since 1937, although it closed during the war and was re-opened in 1947 by Selwyn Roxborough "Rocky" Smith, probably the most influential man in B.C. corrections this century. After the New Haven Act was passed in 1949, the new Borstal-style program there was a minimum of nine months long - or as long as the director determined was necessary to give the "lad" the tools he needed to cope with life in the community as a good citizen.

However, by the time I arrived at New Haven in December 1987, the indeterminate sentence had been repealed, the Young Offenders Act of British Columbia had raised the age of offenders who came under the Criminal Code of Canada to eighteen, and the minimum time for the program had been reduced to four months. At Oakalla, residents were called "inmates," at Vancouver Pretrial they were "prisoners," at New Haven, they were "trainees."

When you think of New Haven, forget everything that television and movies have ever insinuated into your mind about prisons. There are no guns and no locks. Occasionally we need handcuffs, but we always have a hell of a time finding them. When we do, then we have to find a key.

The guards are not guards but vocational instructors and dormitory supervisors. The Borstal program deals with the total individual. He goes to bed at 2200 each night, lights-out at 2230. He is up at 0600 in the morning. He is required to shower and shave. He is required to shower after work. He is required to shower after mandatory physical training. He is allowed no facial hair. And his hair must be trimmed so that his ears show and the length in the back clears the collar. A contract barber is brought in to give them a professional trim. If the barber isn't coming in for a few days, we use a volunteer to chop the hair to the proper specifications, albeit with a few divots to be ironed out by the professional barber.

Trainees do not wear uniforms. When working in the shops they

may use prison greens or overalls of some other colour. It makes sense because the material is cheap and tough. They work in the shops from 0800 in the morning until 1130, with a coffee break. Then lunch break for half an hour. The meals are magnificent. Then back to work until 1500, with another coffee break in the middle.

Between 1500 and 1700 there is time after showers to telephone home or play pool or ping-pong in the large lounge. Or watch the forty-inch TV Or run around the full-sized track. Or have a game of softball or touch-football or soccer. Or stroll out to the pond and feed the ducks. New Haven raises its own cattle, pigs, chickens, and ducks, as well as vegetables of every variety. The place is virtually self-sufficient.

The point of the Borstal program at New Haven is the opposite of that of Oakalla and Vancouver Pretrial, where the point is to subtract people from society and warehouse them at great cost. New Haven tries to maintain as much contact with the community as possible. A trainee comes in as a "pre-junior." There is a board meeting once a month where each trainee is assessed. He passes from pre-junior to junior to intermediate to senior to senior/temporary absence, at which level he receives passes to go home on weekends, to go on job interviews and take employment, or to go out each morning on educational leave.

During the day, trainees work on vocational crews overseen by vocational instructors: kitchen, farm, wood-shop, metal-shop, clean-up, or on various community projects, sometimes in conjunction with other ministries such as Fisheries or Forestry. Three nights a week trainees attend academic classes. Each trainee is assessed by the teacher and given assignments according to his level of achievement. Many take correspondence courses at the university level. Others attend technical schools.

On afternoon and night shifts the dorm is overseen by dorm supervisors, who are also case managers. The dorm is divided into four teams of ten beds each, and two staff are assigned to each of four teams. Each team has a team captain and an assistant team to the highest office on the campus: a trainee who is senior duty monitor for the month. Each shift has a duty monitor, who chases about with a

clipboard taking the count, and who can tell staff where any trainee is at any given time. It is an honour system in which responsibility and accountability are handed in layers to the trainees as they rise through the ranks of the program.

Program is the key word. To many of the young men who come to New Haven, it is the nearest thing to a home they have ever experienced. They receive complete support from peers and staff for their accomplishments, as well as discipline and structure. The approach is holistic. If the kid has low self-esteem because he is skinny, the weight-lifting group takes him in hand and puts him on a program. If he is fat, he is encouraged to look to his diet. If the problem is acne, it is looked after immediately. If a trainee's posture is bad, it is the case manager's job to get the kid to pull his shoulders back, stick his tits out, maintain eye contact, and converse standing on his hind feet. Teeth are taken care of. Life-skills are taught, including how to prepare a resume and how to look for jobs. Physical training is rigorous and mandatory, vocational work is mandatory, and great collective pride is taken in the proper keeping of the grounds.

We get to know the trainees' families, and they get to know ours. I was on duty one night when fellow-staffer Bernie Cox showed up with his two boys. His older boy was a computer nut and dashed off to check out what the cons were doing on the computers. His younger boy is a chess freak and loved to come down and vanish upstairs to take on all comers at chess. Afterwards they would take Dave into the lounge and teach him to play pool. New Haven graduates stay in touch with staff and bring families back years later to show them the place where their lives were turned around.

On my first visit to New Haven, I was very impressed with what I saw and heard. I'd been forced to go on disability leave from Pretrial because the stress and violence there had brought on symptoms of heart failure, and I was not enjoying hanging around the house. I was looking for an opportunity to get back into corrections in a less stressful environment.

Director Andrew Burns, who was showing me around, walked us out toward the farm area. On the left was a lovely pond with an inlet

stream at the upper end, weeping willows around the edges, and geese and ducks on the bank. Burns grabbed a handful of pellets from a metal container and threw them straight down into the water, nowhere near the ducks. I was mystified. He grabbed another fistful and threw it straight down again. I was about to point out that the ducks were over on the right when a rainbow trout that weighed at least ten pounds swirled on the surface below us to eat the pellets. Then at least six more joined in the feeding frenzy. I wanted to work here.

We walked around the grounds some more and discussed what dreams Burns had for expanding the program: the previous director had let the library go to hell. I asked about the possibility of putting together a computer-education program. What about a campus newspaper? He told me that in earlier times there had been one, but it had died. The possibilities were virtually limitless. This would be an opportunity for me to utilize my teaching skills, my criminology studies in case management, and all the life experience I could muster.

18

First Shifts

Some of us are like wheelbarrows - only useful when pushed, and very easily upset.
- Jack Herbert

DIRECTOR Andrew Burns had told me that wearing a uniform was optional. I asked him what his druthers were. He said he didn't have any, but he was going to have me dead-head a couple of afternoon shifts just to observe, and I might wear the uniform so that the trainees would know I was not just another pretty face. Five minutes after walking down the drive and into the dorm, I regretted wearing the goof-suit. I might as well have been wearing a ballerina's tutu. The staff and cons looked at me like something from outer space. The instructors wore bits and pieces of uniform as work clothing and there was one guard who wore a uniform on day and afternoon shifts, but no one took uniforms seriously.

The staff office is called the bull-pen, for obvious reasons. It has windows so that staff can see into the lounge, the lobby where the phones are located, and the upper lobby where the bathroom is located. I was paired up with an old-timer with a handlebar moustache. He had been there since Christ was a cowboy and my two shifts were his last before retirement.

I had asked Burns for some program study materials and he'd handed me a few pages on Borstal philosophy that were written in the thirties. He assured me that the staff and trainees would point me in

the right direction. Then he said he had one important word of advice for me.

"Yes?"

"Relax."

"Relax?"

"New Haven is so unlike anything you have experienced in corrections, particularly Pretrial, that the only way to get it is to relax and just let yourself float with it."

Al, my handlebar man, was all grunts and monosyllables. A trainee dashed in dressed in rugby pants and T-shirt, and asked him if he could go on another team and get something. Al shook his head. Another asked to go up to the weight-pit. Al nodded. And there was a kid hanging around in the bull-pen with a clipboard. This was the duty monitor. His job was to keep track of where everyone was all the time. His performance would be evaluated at the end of the shift. I would gradually come to find out that everything was evaluated and everything reviewed on board day (the last Wednesday of every month), when it was decided who would be promoted, demoted, or held at the same level.

The trainees came in from the shops and took off their work-boots before going up the few stairs into the teams. Some went up and napped, some hit the track and began doing laps, others were doing chores of various kinds. My God, there were sixty-eight acres for all this traffic to get lost in. These were convicted criminals and I was standing around in a uniform and people were flying off hither and thither. Nobody seemed worried. What the hell would make them come back? I was still a correctional officer and an escape was an escape.

Al grunted that if they were going to be "walk-aways." they usually walked within the first three days. They hadn't had any intake of new trainees for a few days, so not to worry.

He yelled at the duty monitor to get him the senior duty monitor. A tall genteel Native kid entered and Al tossed him the keys off his belt and told him to show me everything.

The kid had lots of presence and breeding, whether acquired at New Haven or at home. Only those with strong leadership qualities

made it to senior duty monitor. He told me so much my head spun. First, we entered the lounge where there was a full-sized snooker table, a ping-pong table with room for Olympic-style play, and a forty-inch TV where about half the count were sitting in rows of seats watching MuchMusic. The duty monitor proudly told me that all this top-of-the-line equipment had been bought with profits from projects they had done in the metal, wood, and other shops. They welded, repaired vehicles and repainted them, and made fencing which was sold through local lumber companies. Later they secured big contracts with Canada Post to refinish metal mailboxes and wooden sorting-boxes.

We then went back to have a look at the medical room where doctor's parade was held and the nurse and psychological people held their counselling sessions, and to the dispensary which had two beds and a bathroom with a bathtub.

Up the stairs from the level on which the bull-pen and lounge were located were the teams: Heath, Stanton, Horniman, and Davies - all named after early staff at the institution. The teams played all sorts of tournaments against one another and competed on Saturday clean-up to see which team would be deemed the cleanest.

Each team had ten beds. Around each bed there were chest-high risers which afforded privacy. Each had an ample closet for clothing and books and other personal effects, and a bedside table with a drawer. There was a light above each bed for reading. The teams were very neat. Unlike at Oakalla, there were no walls and ceilings filled with porn shots. Unlike Pretrial, there were no bulletin-boards where family shots could be placed. But as I was to find out on morning shift, during inspection, inside the closets was open-season. Porn books were not allowed in, but the inside of virtually every closet looked like an Oakalla drum - pictures materialized as if by magic. But no one messed with the inside decor of the closets so long as the clothing and effects were neat and the closet was free of dust and tobacco grains. The pictures were traded around as kids trade baseball and hockey cards. When someone was released, he bequeathed his collection to his closest buddies.

The senior duty monitor explained that there was inspection each

morning before breakfast, but serious cleaning was done on Saturday, which was more or less white-glove time. As we walked from team to team there were young men reading or dozing, but they had nothing to say to a new uniform.

Even in December, as we walked through the afternoon, New Haven seemed a bubble in time where one could stop and focus without being hounded by distractions. A tree break protected any view of the place from Marine Drive. There were just the buildings and acres and acres of arable land.

Finally the duty monitor asked where I was from. Pretrial and Oakalla. This impressed him, and he asked me a few questions about those places as we left the dorm and headed over toward the shops and gymnasium. Then he found out that I wasn't just visiting New Haven, and wondered which team I was assigned to. I explained I was working the slot vacated by a guard called Bailey, whom I hadn't met. He said it was likely I would be assigned to Heath Team, which was Bailey's team, and he was right. I was primary case manager for five kids and back-up case manager for the other five on the team.

We visited the gymnasium, which has to be the best-equipped in the B.C. corrections system. Bill Boxleitner (who was to become a close friend) oversaw the condition and purchase of sports equipment.

We took a quick look at the barns and tons of farm equipment. There was a small herd of cattle, pigs in their own barn, and a huge chicken-coop, as well as the aforementioned waterfowl. And there were dogs and cats attached to the place and some of the staff brought their dogs in on afternoon and night shifts.

Then the youngster mentioned that we ought to be getting back to the dorm because it was almost supper time, so we picked up the pace and arrived just in time to see the teams getting ready to go up to the main building, the heritage administration building that housed the dining room and kitchen.

When we got back to the dorm, the trainees were bunched up into their teams, waiting. From the porch of the main building the duty monitor blew the whistle. One team went out the door, butting cigarettes before leaving (no smoking between buildings) and walked in

an orderly fashion up the hill. I went up the hill with Al to oversee the line (the handling of food in prisons is a very weighty issue). When one team had been served by a squeaky-clean kitchen crew dressed in whites complete with hats, the duty monitor blew his whistle again and the next team came up. The food was delicious and there were seconds. Everything was home-made, including desserts. They sat four to a table, as at a restaurant, and watched their manners. The staff sat at one corner. At the end of the meal, everyone remained seated until the duty monitor asked permission of staff to dismiss them.

First he called "Quiet!" then waited until you could hear a pin drop. Then he looked at Al. Al nodded. He made a few announcements he had written on his clipboard and acknowledged that we had a new staff-member - me - who was doing his first shift at New Haven. I stood.

"Don't let this silly costume fool you. I was trying to hang around incognito." They chuckled politely.

The duty monitor then dismissed them by rank or by whatever order staff said - in the event one table had been boisterous, it would be dismissed last - and everyone filed back down the hill for the evening's organized activities.

On his way down, the duty monitor took down the Canadian flag and carefully folded it with a volunteer's help. Putting up the flag and taking it down was an essential part of a duty monitor's routine. The program was filled with details like this on which they were evaluated. It was the duty monitor's job to keep track of everyone. To stay on tap in case staff had messages for trainees. He was graded on his appearance during the shift.

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays there were academic classes for two hours (and, once I had the computer-education program up and running and two P.C.s installed in the dorm, those participating, if they had their other studies caught up, could remain down in the dorm with me for instruction). On Tuesdays and Thursdays, there was leather club, church groups came in, and there were Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and Adult Children of Alcoholics meetings. And every night there was

some form of vigorous exercise in the gym for at least thirty minutes. Sometimes aerobics, sometimes calisthenics, or games like basketball or floor-hockey or volleyball. In the summer the playing fields were filled after work and after supper.

Then I was taken up and introduced to the cottagers. These were not trainees. They were any age from twenty-four to their sixties. They could be provincial or federal people in custody. Usually they were white-collar types rather than violent criminals. Some were in for impaired-driving charges, and some for non-payment of child support. They worked on the various crews but were not required to participate in the more structured parts of the program. Quite often they tutored the trainees or ran the laundry. There were only six of them.

The next cottage over was the chapel, which was used when the pastor could get enough together for a service. Each new intake had a session with the chaplain who, like his equivalent at other institutions, handled news of death in the family and "Dear John" letters.

The next cottage was used for the leather club and other crafts and had a piano and a couple of guitars for the musically inclined.

The last cottage was the old segregation unit, no longer used. If an infraction was bad enough to warrant segregation, the trainee was taken up the ridge to Oakalla and pulled his seg time there.

My first shift was "crazy Tuesday," an evening with every kind of twelve-step meeting imaginable. A church band was in to put on a performance in the lounge and it was leather-club night. Bodies were streaming in every direction and volunteers were rushing in and out of the bull-pen asking for keys. Only two staff were running the whole show.

Between 2000 and 2100 that night, I was alone in the office. The farm foreman (each crew had a foreman and an assistant foreman) came in and asked me for a form. He had to tell me which of my keys to use to get into the key-box. Then he had to explain to me that his crew went out and did a final check on the animals, filling out the form for the instructor the next morning. If they didn't report back within a certain time, they were responsible to him.

At around 2100, it was cookies-and-cocoa time. The kitchen crew

had organized food and drink for the meeting going on in the main building and those left in the lounge lined up to receive cocoa and cookies at the bull-pen door, which was a Dutch door with a counter for serving. It kept nerds from grabbing more than their share and sprinting away.

At 2200, everyone filed back from his activity, and trainees broke into crews to clean the lounge, telephone lobby, and upper lobby, and the duty monitor, chased staff out of the bull-pen so he could sweep and mop and make coffee for the on-coming night shift. At 2230, it was lights-out. There was an intercom in the bull-pen which would allow us to listen to each team to see if there was any talking or horse-play going on. Then we toured each team to say goodnight.

It was all so amazingly complicated, yet so orderly, without guards standing over everyone demanding that this or that be done. If problems occurred, the staff spoke to the senior duty monitor, who spoke to the proper team captain. If necessary, a parliamentary session was held in the lounge among seniors and those eligible for temporary absence and chaired by the senior duty monitor. If something couldn't be solved, a trainee came to staff as a last resort.

The staff had plenty to do interviewing the kids who made up their case-loads, and writing volumes in their files, taking care to note positive things as well as negative. The place was a veritable paper factory: temporary-absence applications, parole applications, work-release applications, applications for courses, and for tutoring. And most of it had to be done on afternoon shift. The trainees couldn't be kept awake for case-management interviews on graveyard, because loss of sleep might mean loss of a finger in a saw in the wood-shop.

The staff's shift schedule was set up on a sixty-three-day cycle, with as many as seven days in a row on and a maximum of seven days in a row off. It began with three graveyards and four afternoons, then days off; next, four graveyards and three afternoons, then days off; and then would come five day shifts in a row.

The graveyards involved closing down of the grounds, closing the main gate, which was a single bar and simply kept drunks and neckers out but wouldn't keep out anyone sneaking in to make a drug-drop, nor bar the way for anyone walking away or simply sneaking up the

hill for a quickie in a car parked in a lane. We also had to secure the main building, set the telephones to relay to the dorm, and file reports which came in on the printer from Oakalla.

Graveyard was a good time for catching up on files. Or writing. Or, as usual, trying to keep from dozing off (frowned upon). Or bringing in videos and watching them in the lounge (frowned upon). Every now and then there was excitement. Perhaps someone would be caught sneaking in - there were far more problems with people sneaking in to steal things or drop drugs than with trainees escaping.

We had a faulty silent fire-alarm system which suffered seizures from time to time. The suited-up firemen would show up at the dorm door ready for action complaining that the gate was locked. We would have to go through the long process of calling the alarm company and fill out incident reports and the pissed-off firemen would disappear cursing the alarm company.

One graveyard there was a scuffle on a school night in the classroom while I was supervising studies and tutoring. I walked into the room and the two scrappers jumped apart - without my saying a word. I pointed out that fighting was a chargeable offence. They nodded. I also said that while punching someone you're angry with in the head can be a momentarily satisfying experience, having an ex-Oakie, ex-Pretrial screw break up the fight was an experience they would remember for a lifetime. They stared with wide eyes, then nodded. I said that if they were prepared to kiss and hug and become betrothed then the incident had never happened. They nodded. Good. I returned to the other room. The scuffle never happened, and there was no more friction between them. Truly I was in heaven. The place was a prison guard's dream.

Only once did a look or a shout fail to stop such nonsense. Both kids were "iffy" placements at New Haven. They had done maximum juvie time at Willingdon Youth Detention Centre and were a little sub-New Haven standard. One of them had barricaded himself behind a door of one of the teams after taking something belonging to the other. The young ape from whom he had taken the object was shouldering the door and the noise brought me over the top of my desk, out the bull-pen door, up the stairs, and around the corner. Any

other trainee would have backed away instantly at the sight of me, but this nitwit saw me and kept shouldering the door. I grabbed him by the back of the neck and clamped, then walked him toward the bull-pen. Trainees were rushing out of the teams to watch. In front of the others, I could see that the thought of attempting to deck me crossed his mind, but he thought better of it.

I kept hold of the neck until we got into the office, then tossed him into a chair for a chat. I closed the door and began to talk to him. I happened to glance over at my partner, who seemed stunned. It took a couple of hours to get the two trainees sorted out, and afterward I asked my partner, Sorensen, why he had been looking at me.

"I've been here for five years and that's the only time I've seen a staff member get violent with a trainee," he said.

Violent? Grabbing an inmate to whom you have given a direct order to cease destroying the place is violence? I shook my head. "Well, in my place, what would you have done? Kissed his ass and let him destroy the door and frame?"

"I probably would have yelled for you."

"Check."

I didn't even charge them. In three years I laid only two charges at New Haven, compared with five on my first shift at Pretrial.

No one liked day shift. The day man was the go-fer. He drove vehicles to pick up supplies for the shops, and for the bursar who made up canteens. The good news was that because of the location of New Haven at the bottom of a ridge, they couldn't radio the cars and make the day even crazier. You left with a list of errands in the morning and a list in the afternoon. Quite often you had to pick up new intake at Oakalla, pick up payroll, or go as far as Pretrial on some errand.

As soon as I was settled in, I was determined to jazz up day shift and make it fun. The dress code didn't allow blue jeans or runners. I began by buying a pair of black leather runners and strode into the office and pointed out that these were walking shoes, as I didn't run. Then I bought bizarre fluorescent belts and gaudy shirts and ties. My

crowning achievement in dress came one morning when I walked in for breakfast and one of the cottagers looked at me and said, "Christ, you look like a test pattern for an Afghani TV station."

The philosophy of New Haven calls for maximum contact with the community. I rarely left the campus on day shift without one or more trainees to assist me on the errands. If it was a money transaction, I gave him the cash, he made the purchase, and it was his responsibility to deal with the merchant and present the bursar with proper receipts and change. Often they would accompany me to Oakalla where there would be some seven-foot rookie at the gate armed to the teeth with .38 and radio and looking like he had a poker up his ass.

Dressed like a nightmare, I would motion him close to the window of the vehicle and say "I'm Yates of New Haven, president of the gay, grey guards. We've received your application for membership and it's being processed. You have the gay part right, but the grey is a problem. However, for a few hundred dollars we have a product called Portuguese formula. It's not Grecian, but it's close."

Needless to say, I was waved through in short order where I would go into Main Gaol and cause more havoc with my attire - particularly in records, where Derek Van was in charge and would go along with anything. We would embrace before Mounties, sheriffs, guards, and cons and he would have me model my outfit - to the absolute macho horror of all. It was wonderful.

At New Haven the day man comes in at 0700, organizes his schedule for the day with the principal officer, and gets the keys to a vehicle sufficient to the tasks at hand. One day I had a hospital run - two young fellows to take down to Vancouver General Hospital, where they were going to have their wisdom teeth extracted.

They were two very interesting kids. One was a tall, skinny white (a wigwam-burner in Native parlance) named Jones, who was affable, as well as hyper and yappy. The other was a short Native (wagon-burner) named Oliver from the Mount Currie Reserve. This reserve is notorious for its vitriol against whites. In times past, when you drove through the reserve, there were aerosol-paint signs that read "THIS IS MT. CURRIE, WHITE-EYES, WATCH YOUR ASS." "THIS IS INDIAN

TERRITORY. ANYBODY WHO FUCKS WITH ANYTHING ON THIS RESERVE WILL BE SHOT." The Indians who come to jail from Mount Currie are a tough lot.

Natives do extremely well at New Haven, and few escape. I don't know why. It may have something to do with the fact that the New Haven atmosphere simply does not support ghettoing. The Native kids do not hang out with Native kids nor the whites with whites. A group going off to the weight-room may include a black, an East Indian, an Asian of some sort, a Native, and a couple of nondescript Anglos or Celts. This happens in spite of the fact that we do not attempt any sort of quota system based on ethnic background on the teams in the dorm - an open bed is an open bed; but we could wind up with half a team of ten being of Asian extraction and they still wouldn't clump up and yammer in Cantonese.

Having been worried about the human penchant for racism most of my life and having been fed that same media pap about racism as everyone else, I was really curious to see how the prison race gangs put it all together. It was during my last days at Pretrial and the New Haven years that the so-called Asian gangs began their ascendancy. At New Haven, we had first the honcho of the Red Eagles (Chinese), then the boss of the Lotus gang (Chinese, Japanese, and white). And several members of these gangs and others. They may well have connections with the triads, but I have seen a number of red-haired and freckled members of Asian gangs. And Natives. And East Indians.

It is possible that prisons in the United States have a more profound sense of race than in Canada, but I doubt it. The Chicanos I have had in prison have shown no interest in ganging up with other Hispanics. If I have five blacks in a unit, one or two might be American (but from different cultures in different states, with little in common), another might be from Trinidad, one from Haiti, and so on. The black from Trinidad would probably find more in common with a Hispanic from Colombia, which is a Catholic country, or a Tahitian with an Algerian so they can pass the hours France-bashing.

In short, the racial issue in Canadian prisons is a non-issue. Bear in mind that before the Natives had Europeans with whom to war,

they warred against each other. Their traditions are different from band to band, let alone from nation to nation, as are their languages.

One time I had among my cases a Colombian drug lordlet who spoke no English. I teamed him with a black Brazilian who had both Portuguese and Spanish as well as English. But as soon as the Colombian had enough English to associate with other cons of his colour and station, he abandoned the poor Brazilian, who was simply in on an immigration hold. This is the only instance of racism I can remember.

I never did - at any of the three institutions - find the racial families I had expected.

The Indian trainee from Mount Currie, Oliver, had character - not because he was Indian, but because he was Oliver. He stood straight, short though he was. The constant expression on his face would frighten a charging rhino, so rocky and inscrutable it appeared. Everyone knew not to fuck with Oliver.

On the other hand, Oliver never looked for trouble. He never heavied others. He did his own time. He did his own program of work, school, P .T., hygiene, and month by month was promoted from pre-junior to junior to intermediate to senior and, finally, senior/temporary absence. Oliver had served as assistant team captain and team captain. He had served as senior duty monitor: the trainee chief executive officer. And he had done all this without kissing any ass, without ever being assigned extra-duty hours for screwing up, and certainly without ever being charged under the *Correctional Centre Rules and Regulations* for a major infraction. He was his own man. There were skills to be learned at New Haven and he filled his tool-box. Quiet as he was, he even joined Toastmasters. The experience didn't turn him into Almighty Voice or Daniel Webster, but he held his own and placed in the final standings.

Usually on the way to the hospital I'd take a fairly circuitous route, hitting all the main places where women could be seen. It doesn't very much matter whether they're nurses or office workers or whoever; the kids love to see girls. Never mind the fact that their girlfriends are in every Sunday to visit them and they get off campus frequently. Never

mind that we have lots of women on staff and they see them every day. It's the principle of the thing. The trainees like to pretend they're in jail and never see women.

So this time I drove Jones and Oliver through the Metrotown complex and they took note of the gorgeous ladies there, and we drove down Kingsway and saw many a lovely standing at a bus stop. Then we drove into the Vancouver General Hospital area, where there were thousands of nurses wearing tight-fitting uniforms one could almost see through.

I was not very talented at day shift because I never knew when to go to bed; I'd be lucky if I got four hours' sleep before I drove an hour to work. Once I got to the hospital or dental office or wherever, I would try to find a comfortable chair that wouldn't destroy my gimpy back, and nod off.

Not only would I nod off, I'd sit in a position so that when I did nod off, I'd snore. When I fall asleep and snore, it scares the hell out of me and I awaken as though I'm under siege. This always gave the trainees a giggle, and they'd move a little farther away from me, as if they didn't know me. Then I'd set about dozing off again.

At the hospital with Jones and Oliver, I found the chair I was looking for and sat down. And nod off I did. And snore I did. And wake up.

Jones went into hysterics. But Oliver, ever in control of his emotions, his dignity, his pride, managed only a *sourire*. Because he was cool and he was tough.

I dropped my chin to my chest again and had another shot at diving into doze. Before I could, a voice was whispering into my right ear.

Jones (sotto voce): "Hey, Mr. Yates, would you mind if we rode the elevators?"

I (normal tone): "The elevators? Your appointments are right here on this floor, right around the corner there. The nurse is coming for you in due time."

Jones: "Yeah, we know where we're supposed to go. We just . . . uh . . . want to ride the elevators, if you don't mind."

I (whispering now): "Why?"

I looked over at the elevators. This part of Vancouver General is

heritage-quality. The elevators had the old brass-handled manual doors that you yank open and try not to get your head smacked by while you reach through and grab the handle of the inside hinged web-work door, which must also be opened and closed manually before the contraption will go up or down. When you get in, the damned thing lurches and seems to move an inch an hour.

Finally Jones said, "Well, it's not really for me. It's Oliver."

I whispered back: "Why doesn't Oliver ask?"

"He's embarrassed."

“Why?"

“He's never been on an elevator.”

This woke me up instantly. My God, how little we know about the experiences of one another, about backgrounds, about the people we meet and deal with. Mount Currie is located less than one hundred miles from Vancouver, with jet-set Whistler between the two places. Oliver had been in our program for maybe six months. At age twenty-one, he had never been anywhere on this planet where he could ride an elevator.

I said: "By all means, ride the elevators.”

The two of them stood with dignity and walked to the elevators -not too fast. Oliver looked at the door system as if it were a contraption of the devil (which indeed it was), but Jones stepped in front of Oliver and handled the doors like a professional elevator operator. Before the doors could damage their manhood, they jumped in.

I didn't time how long they were gone. I was far too amazed to doze again. Then I heard the sound of the elevator door.

The white kid had a smile on his face as though he had just performed a miracle and Oliver was doing his best to be cool. But his eyes were as big as any other kid's on earth who had just had his first rollercoaster ride. This was a complete revelation to him, a kid who had scampered up and down mountains all his life and probably faced down grizzlies, but had never been in an elevator.

Oliver continued to do well in the program and was finally allowed to go out on job search. One day around Christmas I was striding through the Metrotown mall, hell-bent on getting somewhere quickly, when I felt a tug on the tail of my shirt. It was little

Oliver. He had on his street clothes: rugby pants, an AC/DC T-shirt, and a jacket brought in by the Salvation Army. He also wore the biggest grin on his face I have ever seen.

"Man, Mr. Yates, this is really somethin', isn't it? This is really fuckin' somethin'."

The mall was tarted up for the season. It had multiple levels and elevators made of glass and all manner of gauche glitter. Jaded as I was, this was a mall like any other mall to me. And it was a Christmas like any other Christmas - mostly a mess.

I stopped in my tracks and looked around. Remembering the elevators, I saw what to Oliver must have been like Henry James's image of Paris: "a jewel which is at once all surface and all depth." And I put my arm around the kid's shoulder and said, "Goddammit, Oliver, it really is somethin'. "

We stood there looking high up at the upper levels and down at the lower levels, where people streamed though their shopping. Oliver added quickly, "I'm on my job search. I just thought I'd take a short-cut through the mall, it's more direct."

"Perfectly reasonable to me. There are some construction sites around here that look like they could use a skookum dude. Might give 'em a try."

"Yeah."

We went our separate ways down the marble hallways. When I looked over my shoulder, I caught Oliver looking back at me.

"Really somethin', man!" I shouted.

"Really somethin'!" he said. And it was.

19

Education at New Haven

He who opens a school door, closes a prison.
- Victor Hugo

THE KIDS felt involved and proprietary about my new computer-education program because the computers and software were purchased with money from a contract with Canada Post for the refurbishment of their equipment. The boss and I made up a computer shopping-list and then went to the software outlets as a team. As a professional Scot, Burns was determined to get the best deal possible. I did the talking and wheeling and dealing while he stood there and looked directorial and signed whatever needed to be signed, leaving his card with the merchant. We did our best to give the impression that if they gave us a hell of a deal on the software package, the entire British Columbia bureaucracy would stampede through their doors. What a team. We should have been ashamed of some of the deals we pulled off. We weren't. They virtually paid us to take the software out of the stores and load it on the computers: resume programs, several word-processing programs, grammar checkers, typing tutors, programs to make banners and signs. We loved these forays.

As soon as the computer program was in full swing, instantly the whole place took on a new look. Computer-generated signs were posted everywhere. And we had a new office: that of the computer

monitor. Team captains could make signs having to do with team cleanliness, work-crews, and so forth, under his watchful eye and assistance. Many of the kids learned skills through the program that opened up new, legal career-paths for them, earning them terrific incomes. Norman Huntington was the most successful.

Norman and Abbie Matharoo were booked in together as co-accused. Matharoo was a particularly dark and skinny East Indian; Norman Huntington was a particularly light and skinny WASP. Just looking at their teeth, clothing, and skin, you assumed that these were two sidekicks from good families. Then from listening to how well-spoken both were, it was clear that both were as well-educated as you could get by age twenty.

When I looked at their files, I couldn't believe it. These ninnies had been nabbed on robbery thirteen times - mostly Ma and Pa grocery stores - with a pocket knife. On each and every charge, the Crown had to prove theft and assault beyond a reasonable doubt. And if they had been nailed on thirteen, how many more had they gotten away with? Lots.

And why would two well-bred young men go on a robbery spree? Their only explanation was that they were bored and tried it once and got away with it and so kept doing it. I don't think they knew the exact number of robberies they had done in a period of a couple of months. They could have gotten fourteen years on each count. They didn't because they had never hurt anyone. And neither one had any previous record.

Abbot Matharoo was hyper and yappy but remained aloof during the time he was at New Haven. He did just enough vocational work to get by. He had a couple of years of post-secondary work and so was allowed just to read under the supervision of the teacher. Staff didn't pay much attention to him. There wasn't a hell of a lot the program could do for him other than get him in physical shape. He was determined to be above the rest of it all.

I told Matharoo he'd better get his act together or he'd never make parole. He had all his paperwork in on time, but I was sure they would dork him on the first try given the seriousness of the charges. I'll be

damned if he didn't go in and fast-mouth his way into parole. We never heard from him again.

Norman Huntington was another story. He was as quiet and composed as Matharoo was loud and jittery. Unlike Matharoo, he jumped into the program and took what he could from it. He had grade is and a year of university, but he had never touched a computer before coming to New Haven. I started him out doing simple menu-driven tasks like making signs. It was love at first touch. He was gone on computers. He moved into word processors, databases, spreadsheets, and when he wasn't working on the computers, he was reading about them. Burns and I brought in a computer-assisted design (CAD) program for him. CAD programs are about as tough as computer programs get. He was on top of it in no time, and Burns had Huntington designing, to precise scale, all sorts of buildings, including new shops and changes to existing buildings.

Huntington became computer monitor and held every other office New Haven offered, including senior duty monitor. He was so busy he decided not to go for parole but take two-thirds of sentence and walk out without probation. He was as good a role model as ever came through New Haven. And he was a natural teacher. Whether he was explaining the responsibilities of a duty monitor to a new intermediate or explaining the difference between base and extended RAM, he was patient and clear in his presentation.

Eventually, it was time to go. He had a lovely girlfriend who had a job and had arranged accommodation for the two of them. He was enrolled in Douglas College to take drafting and he had a job lined up as a clerk in an engineering firm.

Norman stayed in close touch. He and his girlfriend would drop by of an evening to see the staff and trainees and sometimes come for dinner. He often telephoned to tell me about the fancy computer equipment and plotters they had at the engineering office. He knew it would make my mouth water. I countered by asking whether he got to play with the toys, knowing he didn't, and I could hear him grinding his teeth over the phone.

One evening shift, on a crazy Tuesday, he called with an impish

tone. I was going out of my mind with people running in and out of the office, screaming questions, horseplaying outside the office, and the religious troops were queuing up to ask for keys to the chapel, consultation rooms, whatever.

"Norman, go on, but make it quick, it's Tuesday, man."

"Right, okay. I just have to know how much you make?"

"I dunno. Last time I heard, we were the lowest-paid prison guards in Canada, including Newfoundland. Somewhere between eleven and fifteen bucks an hour. Then there's shift differential. A few more cents per hour on afternoon shift and a few more for graveyard. Some years there's a lot of overtime, some years not. Depends on the call-board. There are a lot of variables."

I was nodding at one kid who had weight-lifting gloves on to give him permission to go to the weight-pit. Shaking my head at another kid who was playing air guitar because he wanted to go up to the chapel and practise. "The Christians are using the chapel. You can, however, go up there and quote John Lennon that the Beatles were bigger than Jesus and come back and report what their reaction was." He shook his head. He wasn't going for it. He trotted back to the lounge to play pool. Back to the phone.

"Yeah, Norman, where were we?"

"How much would you say you make a year? I've been figuring. Around twenty-five thousand."

"Yeah, fine, twenty to twenty-five thousand. Is this research for a class? I thought you were doing drafting, not criminology."

"Just listen. I got a raise."

"That's nice, Norman, you're a good boy. Now, I'm busier than a one-legged man in an ass-kickin' contest, you dingleberry. Get off the phone and let me go completely crazy."

"Mr. Yates, Mr. Yates, listen, I got promoted."

"What?"

"I was doing my clerk stuff and walked through the computer room with all the big drum plotters and consoles. One of the big partners in the firm had a CAD program up but was having trouble making a part he was designing for a big hydraulic piece of equipment pivot on its axis, and then he wanted to zoom it. I was going to shut

up and keep about my business but I didn't. I said, `Excuse me; and asked if I could help. The guy barely knew I worked there. He asked if I was familiar with the program. I said yeah. He got up and told me to sit down. He told me what he wanted. I did it. Then he gave me the size he wanted me to zoom it. Then he gave me some other co-ordinates and I finished up the drawing for him and sent it off to the plotter."

"You're a good boy, Charlie Brown."

"Uncle Mikey, shut up. I'm just getting to the good part."

"Okay"

"He went in his office and got me the specs on a couple of other projects. They were easy, man. I banged 'em out and dropped them on his desk. And the next part is really unbelievable. He looked at the drawings and then took them and dragged the other partners into the boardroom for a meeting. After a while, they asked me to come in. They told me they were giving me a raise, and promoting me to draftsman and they would pay for all further schooling I might need to stay abreast of computers and CAD programs."

"Hey, congratulations, man. How much did you get in total with those robberies. Five hundred bucks, you said?"

"Yeah, but get this. Not counting benefits, I'm making sixty-five thousand bucks a year as of today. Lisa and I are going to buy an apartment . . . Mr. Yates, are you there? Not too shabby for a twenty-one-year-old kid, eh?"

"Is this for real?"

"For real. I'm no good at bullshit." This was true. He couldn't even tell a joke without cracking up before the punch-line.

"Well, good on ya, Norman."

"Yeah." The kid was so full of joy he could hardly talk.

"I just want you to know I'll be thinking about this for a long time. Like the rest of my life."

To my everlasting surprise, ping-pong became as useful an educational tool as our shiny new computers were. At most jails, staff supervise programs, but they don't actually join the cons in such

things as sports. At New Haven we played on the floor-hockey and baseball teams and got involved in pool and ping-pong. After dinner one night, one of the kids came in and got the ping-pong paddles and balls. "Why don't you come on out and play a game with me?" he asked. "I'll really make you look bad."

"Are you the best player on the campus?"

"No, but I'm pretty good."

"I only play the best of the best."

"Carver Zilber is about the best."

"Tell him that if he wants to graduate downward to second-best, I'll take him on."

I had watched the kids playing ping-pong and hadn't noticed much talent. They all loved the grand slam that usually went straight up in the air, smirched the ball, or missed the other side of the table by a country mile.

I liked the Zilber kid. He was about six-feet-five and had a hell of a reach. He was Native and had been adopted by whites up in Pemberton. I kept insisting that with a name like that, he was Jewish, not Indian.

"Bullshit, I'm a chug."

"What do you think I am."

"You're a wigwam-burner."

"Wrong, I'm two flavours of wagon-burner plus nigrescence [African] plus a bunch of Missouri Valley Irish," I declared. He held his skin by mine to show he was darker. Actually, I was a little darker because I had been out in the sun. "You see, you were misclassified. They should have made you do time on a kibbutz in Israel with your own people."

"Yeah, we could play Jews and Indians."

After I made my ping-pong challenge, Carver appeared at the door of the bull-pen and gave me the eye with a big grin. "I hear you think you can play ping-pong," he said.

"I'm the Muhammad Ali of ping-pong, only prettier."

"Give me a break."

"That's what you'll be saying if you play ping-pong with me."

In

my undergrad years, I had been singles and doubles champion, but I didn't tell him that just then.

"Let's go."

Carver served me a fast ball with lots of overhead spin. I undercut it and lobbed it high back to him, knowing that he would sucker in and slam it with everything he had. I was right. It hit his side of the table before it whacked into the net. I smiled. He wound up with the same serve, with the same result. At the end of his service, it was 5-zip, mine. I gave him two serves with opposite spins and he couldn't return either one.

"I believe that's a skunk, Carver."

"It's a fucking fluke. Change sides."

I could hear the kids who had been watching telling those playing pool and watching television, "Hey, Mr. Yates just skunked Carver."

"Bullshit! That fat old grey-haired fart?"

"Yeah, I was watching."

By the time I had skunked Carver three games in a row, we had the whole dorm gathered around the table watching. He began to get the hang of what I was doing to him, and managed to return a few balls gingerly, but never enough for a rally. He had never seen a real defensive game before. Mostly, they simply played by slamming the ball from one side to the other and whoever could keep it on the table won. But Carver had a dynamite reach and a deadly offensive game that was very narrow in scope. After ten games, we were both drenched with sweat and Carver slammed his paddle down on the table. He hadn't gotten closer than 5-ai. "Fuck, I couldn't beat you if I had a federal sentence," he moaned.

I walked over to his side of the table. "Let us look at this rationally. When I was your age, I was really pretty good, and you have great potential. I'm thirty years older than you are. Now, it makes sense that if you just pay attention, you'll learn how to kick my ass, but you have to broaden your game. I'll never give you a game. That would be insulting. You'll have to win any game you get from me."

"I've played a lot of ping-pong, but you do stuff I've never seen before."

"Tomorrow night, we'll play again. In the meantime, take it just a step at a time. First, when you lock onto the ball with your eyes, you zen the ball. Concentrate on it so hard that you almost become the ball. Never mind who's watching the game. Block them out. Get into a trance. Your body will do the rest. And don't blow off energy by screaming and swearing when you lose a point. You fuck up your attention. Next, as you follow the ball with your eyes, pay attention to the contact it makes with my paddle. I've been killing you with undercut. The only thing that will cancel undercut is undercut. You do a mirror-image of what I do and eventually you'll wear me down because you have energy and reflexes on your side."

"I don't know."

"Think it over and we'll see tomorrow night."

Another kid stepped up and said, "Play me, Mr. Yates."

"Can you beat Carver?" No.

"When you can beat Carver, I'll play you."

Those ten games launched an interest in ping-pong that no one at New Haven had seen before. The line-up for the table was long. When I came on duty the next night, Carver was waiting for me at the dorm door. "Do I get another shot at you tonight?"

"Yeah, we better play. I'm so damned stiff and creaky from last night, I need the exercise."

"I'll take advantage of that."

"Don't count on it."

"After last night, I won't."

We played another ten games and Carver began to practise what I told him rather than try to win the games. His scores were marginally better than the previous night and I only skunked him once.

"How long do you think it will take? That's twenty games."

"Depends on how much time you put in playing with the others and practising what I said. You have to get to the point that you don't beat your chest when you get a point by fluke. The only ones which really count are the ones you get by skill when your concentration, strength, and co-ordination all come together. And the point of the game must become the hypnotic sound and dance of a great ping-

pong rally. It doesn't matter who wins at all, just that it has been a great game. To win is nothing."

Carver chewed on that for a while. Then I had about a week of days off.

In time, Carver began to get the spiritual side of it. Carver would apologize for a flukey point and we complimented one another on great returns. I noticed that when he played others, he carried the same etiquette into his game with them. It caught on. If someone slammed a ball wildly into the wall in anger, five or six trainees would tell him he was a horse's ass.

Game by game, Carver's scores crept up. Then he would get as much as a five-point lead or more and I would advance on the table and change the game completely by shortening it to a fast no-spin game and the lead would disappear. One card at a time, I showed him my whole hand.

Hot weather came and we took the table outside and played in the sun. The director and the probation officer would sometimes watch with other trainees as Carver got closer and closer. Eighty games came and went before we were finally getting to deuce scores. On the eighty-first game, we must have gone seven or eight adds into deuce when Carver won with a dramatic slam that I got my paddle on but dropped just short of the net.

We were both bagged. I went around the table and shook his hand. "You see? Didn't I tell you it would happen?"

He nodded. Out of breath. "Yeah, but like you said also, it's no big deal. You were right."

From that point on, we played fantastic high-level ping-pong. We would trade games one night, and the next night one of us would be slightly off and the other would take the best six or seven out of ten.

And all the time that I was playing Carver, he was bringing along the talents of other trainees. By the time he was released, he had brought along a kid named Bartlett to the point where we were all three playing at about the same level. When I brought in expensive five-ply paddles from home, we played only with those. And I never backed away from playing only the best of the players.

Recreational ping-pong reached far more trainees than the

computer-education program did, and had more far-reaching implications for their lives. In the end, these kids had learned a lot about skill-development, and about winning strategies that they could apply to any aspect of their lives and any goals they chose to reach for. They learned, often for the first time, that with correct application, rather than physical force, they could achieve just about anything they wanted.

20

Hoods in the Woods

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science.
- Albert Einstein

IN THE good old days the staff at New Haven were paid to take the trainees climbing, boating, and on various other activities. But by the time I arrived, money for such things was no longer available. There was a time when members of the Borstal Society volunteers, getting a bit long in the tooth now, volunteered to take the kids here and there, but in my time the most active volunteer was Bill Box-leitner. On his own time he organized such things as outings to hockey games for up-country kids who would likely never have an opportunity to get to a pro hockey game. By and by it dawned on me, while talking to one of my shift partners who was a climber and had been there for twenty years and remembered the good old days, that there had to be a way to get a hiking program together. But he wasn't going to do anything on his own time, not after having worked there during the better days of being paid to do it.

I worked up support among staff for the nifty new idea I had of a hiking program. I bounced it off Bill Boxleitner before taking a run at the director. I even went so far as to choose the first hike: Wedgemont, a local glacier north of Whistler Village, near Mounts Wedge and Rethel. I collected a bunch of text and maps about the place and, with materials in hand, I charged in to have a go at Andrew Burns. It would

mean taking only those who were senior/temporary absence because I would have to be doing this on my time and they would have to be on leave, an important technicality. Otherwise I'd have to be paid, and there was no budget for such stuff. And it would have been over-time to boot.

"I like it," Burns said. "And I think Luke Burton will like it. I'll take this material and present it to Luke and see where we go from here." Burton was our district director and New Haven was the pride of his kingdom.

The hike I had selected was high - up to about nine thousand feet, to the very toe of the glacier, so we had to wait until the snow was off the trail. That meant late July or early August. That allowed plenty of lead time to put together equipment, select the trainees, and get everything approved.

It was the beginning of a wild odyssey of paperwork. Burton's first response was that the project was creative and we should start preparations while he chased clearance from Victoria. As soon as I mentioned it to the other staff- especially Boxleitner, Meg Trumble from the Borstal Society, and Bob O'Callum, who had recently transferred in from the Oakalla hospital - and the trainees, there was all-around
enthusiasm. The trainees began to calculate who was likely to graduate to senior/T.A. by the time of the hike, which was targeted for early August. We had a couple of months. When Dave Sorensen, the P .O. who had been there for almost thirty years, heard of the hiking idea, he was sure that there were some old wooden-frame back-packs gathering dust somewhere on the campus. Eventually we found a pile of parts of packs high up on the third floor in a room off the museum and personal-effects rooms. The trainees and I began to work on them and we wound up with five complete packs.

In the beginning, it was expected that the mandarins of corrections policy in Victoria would check their manuals of standards and operations and appropriate legislation and come back with a simple go or no. The idea had been pronounced "creative" by the district director. From a bureaucratic point of view, it was sound because it required no money to speak of. The kitchen would provide food, which it would have to do in any case. If we had one restaurant meal

on the way back from the hike, it would be at the expense of the trainee participants, who would withdraw ten or fifteen bucks from their accounts as they would with any temporary absence. It was close enough - just above Whistler - that we could do the hike as a dayhike. We would travel in an institution vehicle, thus covering everyone on government insurance. And, since I would be doing it on my own time, it would not involve staff costs, nor set a dangerous budgetary precedent.

There were clear regulations for juvenile programs like Outward Bound, with guidelines for qualifications of staff, and so forth. Likewise for simple outings like bike rides through Stanley Park. But Victoria went nuts because what I proposed had attributes of Outward Bound activities and attributes of other outings, but the proposal was neither, and I hadn't all the formal certificates required for Outward Bound instruction.

Numerous questions came back through Burton and Burns. How many hours would be required? Did I have a certificate in survival first aid? It began to look as if it wasn't going to go. The probation officer, John George, was one of those people who is a wind-sock; he guessed the direction of the power and jumped on the bandwagon. And his attitude was rapidly changing from enthusiastic to I-don't-think-it-will-happen. He had mysteriously begun to hear the wrong kinds of noises and started to pour cold water on the project. Burns said we should continue to plan until a final decision came in from Victoria.

Unfortunately, Burns was going to be away on holidays at the time of the hike. Then Burns was gone, the time was nearing, and there was still no decision, only more questions from Burton, who came in once a day to sign releases and do other paperwork of Burns's, and John George, who had assumed other of Burns's duties.

Were there any plans to climb in any areas where there was no clearly marked trail? No. This was a provincially designated and maintained trail which was well described and mapped and photographed, in documents that each of us would have. Did I have a topographical map? Yes. Compass? Yes. Altimeter? Yes. First aid kit? Burns had gotten a fancy fanny-pack first-aid kit before he left.

Silence. Frowns from John George. Finally, one day I came in on shift and George intoned, "Mr. Burton has some serious questions about your proposed hike."

"Where is he?"

"At the district office."

"You have the number?"

"You're going to call him at district office?"

"If you give me the number." I jumped on the phone and asked Luke Burton how it looked.

"They haven't said a final yes."

"How would you call it?"

"Continue with your preparations. Just one last question. Have you hiked this trail yourself?"

"No, I specifically chose a trail I hadn't hiked so that my level of anticipation and adventure would be consonant with that of the trainees. I think this an important element. I have checked with the Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C. to make sure that all bridges and parts of the trail are passable. No rock-slides or wash-outs."

"Right, sounds good to me. I agree with your sense of spirit of the thing. I'll have something definite for you no later than tomorrow."

When I got down to the dorm, I found the five eligible trainees standing around the door looking down in the mouth. They said that George had told them the hike was pretty well off.

"I'll tell you when the hike is off. I've been fighting this paper war for all this time and I just spoke to District Director Burton, and he's in our corner. He said to continue preparing. Give me the checklist and a report on what things we still need." They brightened up and I later ripped a strip off George and told him to keep his mouth shut. I was dealing with Burton directly.

One kid was just getting over mild pneumonia and had to be checked by the doc. Another was a physically lazy sort and I was surprised that he wanted to go along. Victoria had decided that one supervisor to five trainees maximum was the acceptable ratio, and we thought that was reasonable. I had tried to find another staff-member who was free to go, but it wasn't to be. Those who would be willing to

go had shifts the day of the hike. For later hikes I would find both staff and civilian volunteers.

The next day, Luke Burton drove over personally to tell me it was a go - with a look in his eye that told me Victoria had been diffident and would be looking at the results of this hike very closely.

The sick kid wasn't allowed to go and the lazy one bailed out. The three remaining had been pumping weights and running the track for a couple of months. I spent the next day with them going over the equipment. They had organized everything. Davey was foreman of the metal-shop and had gone over the Suburban from bumper to bumper. Rafferty had co-ordinated the food with the kitchen. And Anatoly had laid out all the equipment in the dispensary. We would be up at about o33o and leave the campus at around five. That would put us at the trailhead easily by daylight.

There were a few final decisions about clothing and other incidentals. Anatoly and Rafferty had been home and brought back their expensive cameras because I promised to bring a tripod and cable and give them some pointers. In a previous incarnation I had made a living as a photographer and was packing my two ancient Nikons.

They didn't have hiking-boots, but they had agreed to wear two pairs of socks (the outside pair wool), per good mountaineering protocol, and we were all going to wear moleskin patches on our feet's "hot spots." Mountaineers look to their feet above all.

Anatoly decided he would wear runners instead of boots. The four of us had a huddle about this. Said I: "Now, when we leave here tomorrow, aside from the joint vehicle and food, you guys are really on your own. You're on T.A. and I'm on a day off: Technically, we're just four guys going on a day's expedition. What you wear and what you do is up to you. We have no idea what we're going to encounter in the terrain. The work-boots you guys decided to wear have shanks and steel toes. Probably better protection than my boots. If you were leading the rest of us on a pilot project that might have important implications for all outings to come, what would you advise the trainees?"

"Boots. I hate 'em, but I'll wear 'em," said Anatoly.

Thus we reasoned together about all details. They hit their beds early, fearing they might be not be able to sleep for their excitement, and I headed up the hill to my apartment, scarcely believing that the whole thing had finally come together. I spent the next several hours pacing up and down from bed to TV set worrying about what would go wrong, what we had forgotten.

The kitchen crew got up early and threw something together for breakfast for us. They had the packs loaded. We stowed them in the Suburban and hit the road.

I had brought along a portable recorder so that each of us could record his impressions on the trail and later write an article for the New Haven paper. Tape-recorders were contraband at New Haven. I had also brought a handful of rock-and-roll tapes we could sing along with. They kept switching tapes and describing the view of the Squamish highway on tape. In Squamish we stopped for a quick fix of junk food, then rolled on northward, past Whistler Village (where we planned to have some hot food and check out the jet-set young ladies after we came off the mountain), and coaxed the old Suburban farther and farther up the log road. The clearance of the vehicle was good, but it didn't have four-wheel drive, so we pulled off finally and donned packs and boots.

The dawn sky looked indecisive. It wasn't supposed to rain, but when you get above five thousand feet, you enter white-out country. Cloud can drop on you in a matter of a couple of seconds, the fog so thick you can't see your feet.

The trail was steep and rough and surprisingly varied. I always hike with a ski-pole and had brought one along for each of them. I thought it would be a war to get them to use them as walking-sticks, but they tacitly agreed to humour me. I might just know something they didn't. After a couple of hours on the trail, it turned into root city. When you step on a wet root, your foot slides suddenly sideward, and it can be quite treacherous unless you have something to steady yourself. After about an hour over the roots, we hit an old rock-slide. I slipped and banged my camera against a rock and jammed the lens-cap. It wouldn't come off. Davey was the mechanic and Anatoly the

electronic whiz. Between them, they finally unjammed it so that I could use the wide angle.

When we got to about seven thousand feet, we were walking through wisps of white-out and the sky was not visible. This gave me some pause, but we kept going because it didn't seriously affect visibility of the trail.

On the lower parts of the trail, I had hit a pace and wouldn't budge from it. The kids whimpered and complained that it was much too slow. I had been hiking a good deal that summer and was in good shape. I tried to explain to them that all exercise is training-specific, and while their running and weight-lifting didn't hinder them, they still hadn't been walking trails. Rafferty and Anatoly insisted on charging ahead. We agreed on a buddy system. You keep your partner on visual, and they all had to stay within earshot. They flew ahead and then waited for Davey and me to catch up and razzed us. I insisted that they drink more water than they wanted and lectured about water and hypothermia and heat prostration. By the time we were on the final approach to the lip of the lake and sight of the glacier, they were listening to every suggestion I made. And there was no more razzing. We were far above tree-line and the approach was a lichen-covered scree slope. Good place to rest and have a drink and a bite to eat. Scree meant big steps up from boulder to boulder, and everything was wet from the fog condensation.

We had heard a Swiss couple coming up behind us comparing our Coast Mountains to the Alps and deciding that the Alps were much superior. You could hear voices clear as a bell half a mile behind. The kids kept asking me what the Swiss were saying and I had been translating. The kids were honked off by the foreigners who didn't show proper respect for this grandeur. I told them to hang on and let them pass and just watch me. When they came by, the Swiss couple switched to English, "Hello. We're from Switzerland, visiting."

"Ja, ich weiss. Schone Landschaft, nicht?" I replied.

They were visibly embarrassed. The kids loved it. "What'd you say, Mr. Yates?"

"I said `Yes, I know. Nice landscape, eh?"'

"Right on. Do all the tourist assholes think that nobody in this country speaks anything but English?"

"Seemingly... Probably part of the Ugly American syndrome."

The redeeming aspect of the scree slope was the wildlife. When the first marmot whistled, Rafferty thought one of us was a ventriloquist. I pointed out the varmint and it was telephoto time. Then I saw a rock rabbit, a pica. And then there were picas and marmots all over the place and we were all burning film like crazy. Anatoly decided he would make slow advance on a marmot. The whistling sound they make is what the village of Whistler is named after. Some of them are as big as badgers and wolverines. We stood quietly while Anatoly stalked one marmot with his Nikon. I couldn't believe how close he got. On two or three shots with a normal lens he filled the frame. It took him half an hour to get that close. By that time, it was final-ascent time. Rafferty and Anatoly scrambled for the top almost in a dead heat, but Anatoly was the more nimble and he vanished over the top first. Rafferty popped over a couple of minutes later.

Davey was glad enough to hang back and proceed at my pace. He was the skinniest of the bunch, but also the heaviest smoker. Good kid. He was in jail as a victim of his own metabolism. The doctor had given him some medication and he had no way of knowing it wouldn't mix with the beers given him by his fiancee's father. Before he came down, he had stolen a police car and there had been a high-speed chase with bullets flying all over hell. He was lucky to find himself alive and in jail in Dawson Creek. Davey had no prior record of any kind, unlike Rafferty, who had the distinction of breaking and entering the home of a famous Canadian movie star for booze and finding all sorts of amazing and unexpected items, and Anatoly, who also had a long juvie record before entering the adult system. I'll always remember Davey saying to me with a big grin as we started up the last hundred yards of near vertical scree, "Guess we've pretty well got her beat now, eh, Mr. Yates?"

"Roughly twenty-five per cent, I'd say," I said traversing my way up.

"I mean we're almost there."

"Yup." I stopped and looked at him puffing up behind me with a

disbelieving look on his face. Then I looked up at the hovering whiteout and hoped we'd get a good look at the glacier before it hit us.

We were now exposed to the wind that was whipping around the col. When we were perhaps half-way up I heard a noise and looked up. There was Rafferty's upper body and head looking over the edge shouting something urgently, but I couldn't make out a goddamn word. Then he was beckoning us up furiously. What raced through my head as we sped recklessly up was every possible disaster. I thought perhaps I had misread the topographic map. It was supposed to flatten out at lake level on top. In my mind's eye, I saw Anatoly hit the top and instantly drop off a cliff... and Rafferty had stopped just short . . . The closer we got to Rafferty the harder the wind blew in our ears. Then we fired over the top. And there was the turquoise lake from which the stream we had crossed and followed all day flowed. And the refuge but and even an outhouse. And, in the distance, the Swiss couple heading back toward us. I was standing beside Rafferty who was pointing at the lake and glacier (Anatoly was booting down the trail toward the Swiss). "Ah, fuck, Mr. Yates, isn't that the best, the most beautiful fucking glacier in the whole fucking world. . .” He was jumping up and down and slapping his thigh, sweat rolling down his forehead from his hairline and into his eyes.

"Do you mean to tell me that you almost gave Davey and me heart attacks just to get us up here, where we were coming anyway, to see your glacier?"

"Well, isn't it the most beautiful glacier?"

"You said you've seen a glacier before.”

"Pictures.”

"Yeah, a great looking piece of ice.” We started toward it. Anatoly was booting toward a trail along the left side of the lake toward the toe. I cupped my hands and whistled as hard as I could. He turned around. "Stay away from that trail to the ice. Wait for us.” He stopped near the but and waited. The Swiss nodded as they beetled back toward the ridge. We caught up with Anatoly. When we caught up, I unslung my pack and reminded them, "What did we tell Burton about the flight plan? We said no technical climb. Glacier climbing

requires crampons, different boots, ice-axes, and jumars. We eyeball the glacier. We don't step foot on it.”

"Aw . . . just at the edge?"

"Nope, I did that once on Helm, but at least I had an ice-axe. It was foolhardy. I slipped once, but I arrested with the axe. I was lucky to get off with my old ass still alive.

"We just shoot pictures this time. If this hike goes well, maybe we can get a guide to rope us up and take us across a glacier on some later trip.” They all dumped their packs. And we began to dig into the huge lunches that Stan Watson, the kitchen program instructor, had prepared for us: sandwiches, all kinds of fruit, even macaroni salad in plastic containers held together with strong rubber bands. We had been packing a hell of a lot of weight. Stan must have given us ten pounds of food each.

We ate and relaxed and rested and shot pictures. But before we could finish lunch, the white-out dropped on us.

"What now, Mr. Yates?"

"Let's go have a look at the cabin.” It was a tin chalet. Rugged as hell. Enough floor space for ten or twelve people to sleep on the combined footage of the loft and main floor. We could get through the night here if the white-out didn't lift. But when we looked out the door, it was already lifting, and we heard voices in the distance. We looked around the cabin. A couple of very athletic and very gay hikers were headed toward us. These kids were not very enthusiastic about homo folks. They were already looking at one another.

The two were very pleasant, but much preoccupied with one another and getting their gear inside in the loft. They were definitely staying for the night.

We went back outside and continued with lunch. The white-out returned and was fogging up my glasses. I could just imagine a night in the refuge cabin with the cons and the couple. I could hear Rafferty saying to Davey, "I didn't know gearboxes climbed mountains.” I could see the headline: OLD POET-GUARD DIES REFEREEING FIGHT BETWEEN CONVICTS AND GAYS AT 9000 FEET. They were all about the same age, early twenties.

The white-out got thicker and the kids had that "What now?"

look. I had told them that white-outs can last a few minutes or keep you on a mountain for a couple of days. I sure as hell didn't highlight the possibility of white-out when putting together the proposal for Victoria. We would be fine for the night in any case.

Then the white-out blew off as quickly as it had dropped. It still hovered overhead. I cleaned my glasses and suggested we all fill our water-bottles in the lake. Because of the fog we couldn't see the very tops of the spectacular spires of volcanic rock around the lake, nor could we see the very top of the glacier, but we still got some superb photographs.

The gays had vanished into the refuge cabin and were arranging the loft to their liking. In it was a log-book for visitors. We had all entered our names and the date. Anatoly had stayed in for several minutes. We got on his case about what he was doing.

"Writing a note to my girlfriend telling her how I really feel."

"Is she going to helicopter in to check it out?" Rafferty asked, and we needled him to hurry up. The white-out was looking nasty again. I was making odds on whether we could make it the couple of hundred yards to the ridge before it dropped.

Just about that time, two cowboys from Alberta popped up at the rim and started down the trail. They made it before the white-out dropped again. They had huge back-packs with sleeping bags and inflatable mats and were climbing in western shirts and blue jeans. They, too, were going to overnight. They hadn't climbed in cowboy-boots, but they were cowboy and redneck from head to toe otherwise. They put down their packs and "howdyed" the hell out of us, and Anatoly was laughing so hard he had to walk down to the edge of the lake near the glacier. Then he called us. We were all choking back laughter and jumped at the opportunity to get away from the Albertans who hadn't yet discovered the surprise in the cabin.

Mercifully, the white-out lifted again and we could see the rim. I suggested we grab our packs and go for the gusto. We hit the trail just as the cowboys were gathering up their gear to go in the cabin. We hot-footed it to the rim and started down the steep scree. Skeins of white-out were hanging here and there. By the time we got by the big rock-slide, I figured we were in the clear.

Back down on the protected trail, it was windless.

Our conversation rocketed from one topic to another. Anatoly had the idea that he could take a nine-volt battery and get massive voltage from it and then return the voltage to the battery, which would recharge it. It would be a limitless source of energy.

"Anatoly, do you know what you'd have if you made it work?"

"Perpetual-motion machine." Rafferty jumped in.

"Right."

We were back down on the rooty part of the trail. I was just ahead of Rafferty, who was bringing up the rear. I stepped on a root and invented several new balletic airborne routines before finally landing squarely on the expensive fanny-pack first-aid kit. Instantly the kids were warning me to watch it. "You got us in here; now you have to get us out." We had already made a plan that if something happened to me, one would stay with me and the other two would take the keys and go for help.

The condensation of the white-out was falling in huge drops from the boughs of the trees. Davey went down, then went down again while getting up. Anatoly was in the lead; he went for a skate and then fell.

Never have I lectured on as many subjects as I did that day. Rafferty had a million questions about photochemistry and journalism. Davey wanted to know why if he stopped smoking, he would have better wind. Anatoly's mind was always whirling. He was writing a novel longer than *War and Peace* that we were serializing in the newspaper. They wanted to know about the lichens hanging from the trees, and that led to my childhood and the Spanish moss hanging from the cypress in the swamps in South Carolina, and that led to Tony Joe White, which led to a general discussion of music ranging from Metallica to Bach. I had to keep sending down the bucket into the well of memory to remember the name of every alpine flower we encountered: Indian paintbrush, foxglove, cow parsley, pearly everlasting. It was endless and exhilarating and the talk helped because Davey and the others were beginning to see what I meant about climbing up being only twenty-five per cent of the hike. They were leaning on their ski-poles heavily and trying to lower themselves

down step by step without bending an ankle. Then they began to complain out loud and asked why I wasn't complaining.

"I'm tired and sore too, but I do this all the time. Rafferty, what happens every time you bump up another ten pounds on the bench-press and try to break through a plateau?"

"I'm a little sore the next day."

"But not sore enough to make you give up pumping iron?"

"Naw."

"Remember that tomorrow."

The last couple of miles on the trail were hilarious. It was getting pretty dark. The three of them would beetle ahead of me and out of sight. I'd come down the trail and they'd be lying on their backs, resting on their packs. I'd walk past them and they would jump up, charge on ahead, and then lie down again.

It was a short drive from the trailhead to Whistler, no more than five miles. Anatoly and Davey were dead asleep when we arrived for the hot meal.

We had been fourteen hours on the mountain. I called the joint to let afternoon shift know we were okay and headed home. Davey and Anatoly couldn't get out to eat. Rafferty and I found a pizza place and got a big one and some pop. They were bagged.

By the time we got back to New Haven, they were all asleep. We had been a total of twenty-two hours away from the campus. They dragged their asses to their bunks in the dorm and slept with their clothes on, leaving me to unload the gear and stow it back in the dispensary. Then I drove up the hill to bed myself.

Anatoly stayed in bed for a day and a half. Davey booked off work for half a day. Rafferty went to work, but when I came down in the afternoon he hobbled over to me.

"Damn, Mr. Yates, aren't you sore?"

"Yes, but not as sore as you are. You did things with your muscles and ligaments yesterday that you don't customarily do. You just have to get some blood to the places you exercised. Go up to the main building and go up the stairs two at a time and come down the stairs two at a time. Do that twenty or thirty times and tell me how you feel."

This was a revelation. He felt a lot better after he'd tried the stairs and trotted off to persuade Davey and Anatoly they should do the same.

When all the film was developed, we had a magnificent album for New Haven, which Burns sprung for, as well as duplicate prints. There were many other hikes with plenty of adventures and silliness and great memories, but none was as memorable as the day Uncle Mikey's Hoods in the Woods was born. I still write to two of the three kids who were with me that day, and see them from time to time.

21

Tales of Coitus Interruptus

The impromptu forms of sex in prison are to the accepted sexual forms what guerilla warfare is to formal warfare.
- Commissioner Horst Schmidt

IN THE summer, the farm crew needed extra manpower. They used numerous trainees, cottagers, and, later, even the intermittent inmates. Farm-crew duties included all grounds-keeping, as well as care of the livestock, planting and harvesting, care of the greenhouse, and the running of all kinds of back-hoes, Cats, tractors, and tractor-related equipment.

Working on the farm crew successfully for a long period conferred status on an inmate. It meant that he could be trusted to work without close supervision. The instructor couldn't be everywhere at once with sixty-eight acres to supervise. The trainee could be off by himself with his shirt off, enjoying the sun, and he could also be the designated mule to pick up a drug-drop or a bottle of booze and stash it for the crew who came out after dark to lock up and check on sick animals or the feed supply.

If the farm instructor had any special instructions, he would leave them with afternoon-shift staff to pass on to the foreman or to oversee themselves. There were certain areas that were out of bounds for trainees in general, unless by special permission, and other areas that were out of bounds on visits days.

One crazy Tuesday, when the self-help support groups and

religious types inundated the place, we had the usual groups in during the evening, with traffic heading in every direction. In the middle of it all, around 2030 hours, the two farmers designated by their foreman to do evening check came in to get the clipboard and form and keys.

They waited to do so until the bull-pen was filled with people jumping around and asking questions, and the kitchen crew was attempting to set up coffee and cookies. I was a bit amazed that these two nitwits had made it to the farm crew. Both had been walking on the edge of disaster since they entered the program. Each of the two, Jantzen and Hardy, had received "hours" (extra duties) and been confined to rack (his bed area in his team) for being out of bounds (in another team or any place designated out of bounds), but had done nothing to get them into serious trouble.

There was something about their manner that started the stop-watch in my head. It usually took about twenty minutes to do the farm-check rounds, unless an animal had to be medicated (which might add ten minutes). Intermittently over the next hour, while finding temporary-absence and parole applications, helping to fill them out, dashing next door to bail one of the kids out of a computer problem, and stepping to the door of the lounge to threaten the herd with mayhem if they didn't turn down MuchMusic, there was something nagging at my consciousness. Finally, I looked up to my right to see if the farm-check clipboard was back. Nope.

I called the duty monitor in to see if Jantzen and Hardy had reported back to him. Nope. I called in the farm foreman to see if he had seen them. Nope. And he offered to dash out to the farm to check on them. I thanked him anyway and said I would handle it.

I told Mike Schwarz, my partner, that I was taking a walk to do a little farming in the dark. I grabbed a flashlight and both radios and handed one to Mike. Just outside the door, I did a radio-check and started by looking around the main building, sticking to the shadows. Then I passed the pond and entered the farm area.

The big barn door was wide open and all the lights were on. I stuck my head inside. Nothing. No noise. Without turning on the flashlight, I passed the chicken shed and pig shed. It was a bright moonlit

night. There was a little glassed-in alcove at the end of the connected buildings. I eased up to the window and looked in.

Suddenly I was looking at the back of the head of Hardy. Then I looked down. A young woman was on her knees in front of him applying oral relief. She looked up and saw my outline. Coitus interruptus. Hardy looked down and saw her looking up. He turned around and saw me and burst into tears. She, on the other hand, got up and composed herself very nonchalantly. As I stepped around the corner to the door, I hit the radio: "Portable One to Portable Two, I need you out here on the double."

"Roger." Mike Schwarz was athletic as hell and could run like a deer.

I walked into the barn and addressed the interloper, "You're under arrest, young lady. Both of you come with me."

I yelled for Jantzen to come out. Not a sound. Then, as Schwarz flew around the farm gate, Jantzen came out of the barn door. Schwarz asked him what he was doing in there. He bumbled and stumbled around. Mike had good instincts. He told Jantzen to come over and stand with Hardy and the girl. I'd take the three of them back to the main building, while Schwarz looked around some more. I walked them down to the P.O.'s office. The P .O. had been listening to all the action on his radio.

I had the two cons and the girl up in his office and we had been there for about ten minutes when Schwarz showed up with a tall girl who was still pulling bits of hay from her sweater. Schwarz had headed up into the loft for a look. There was a lot of hay up there, but he was sure there was someone under there somewhere. He finally had to pick up a pitchfork and threaten to jab it into every square inch of hay in the loft to get her to come burrowing out.

Schwarz took the boys into the P .O. while I questioned the girls. As she emptied her purse, one girl sheepishly withdrew a condom. I told her that in spite of the various illegal things that she and her friend had done that night, the carrying of the condom showed that her sex education hadn't been entirely wasted, and praised her for it. Both girls were under-age, one from a group-home and the other living at home.

Hardy continued to boo-hoo throughout the proceedings to the complete disgust of staff and the other three culprits. Then the girls were taken home by the horsemen who, like the rest of us, could hardly maintain an official mien in view of a situation wherein two young women would break into prison for an assignation with two idiots who presumed they could be missing from the count indefinitely without being missed.

Tweedle-dumb and Tweedle-dumber were charged, internal court was held, and they were transported over the hill to the Oakie segregation unit (after stops at records and the hospital). On the way over, I told them to write to the director and apologize and ask that their sentence be shortened. After about three days, he sprang them early, and they returned to be razzed by the other trainees for lousy planning. Both were fired from the farm crew. Come board day, neither was promoted, and they lost remission time. As far as anyone knows, neither attempted to import female company again. Like everyone else, they waited until they reached senior/temporary absence, at which time they could go home and screw themselves cross-eyed, and come back bow-legged.

Because contact visits occurred weekly at New Haven and security was minimal, it was not unusual for trainees to attempt conjugal visits in unlikely circumstances. One graduate came back for a visit to his alma mater with his wife and his teenage son, in order to show the boy where he was conceived: behind the New Haven gymnasium, an area definitely out of bounds. It was probably the quickest place to get to when kissing and groping got out of hand. It was a blind spot to any of the administrative areas.

We tried to make all visits pleasant and thus didn't intrude with guardly presence too obviously. We would amble from picnic table to picnic table outside on visits day, meeting parents and uncles and babies, and eventually work our way around to the back of the gym to take a quick peek.

We had a tiny Moslem East Indian with us for a while. Allah must have had a serious grudge against this dude. He was as round as he

was tall. He couldn't get anything right. If a trainee said boo to him, he would burst into tears and materialize in the bull-pen to tattle and whimper. We would have to settle him down and tell him that in jail you don't come to staff with everybody watching and fink on people, because this gets you labelled and you wind up with knots on your head faster than you can rub them; then we'd talk to the team captain and get him to lean on the team not to crowd the guy. The East Indian was too fat to play sports. He was a hypochondriac and asthmatic, and so lazy he was fired from one work-crew after the other.

His wife came in on a visit one day wearing traditional dress, with trousers and a shirt cut at the sides. She must have been eight months pregnant, and he looked pregnant, too. He was wearing rugby pants with an elastic waist and no fly. Later the P .O. just happened to go for a stroll around the back of the gym where he found this ninny attempting the near-impossible with his wife. Given their morphologies, it would have taken a week and required assistance. But it did give us the final ammo to ship him to the Oakie hospital to do the rest of his time. It was protective custody for the lame of brain and limb.

Rob Richie was tall, skinny, bright, but generally nondescript. He had been involved up-country in drug trafficking on a small scale and had had a few scrapes with the law. In a small town, it is difficult to get away with something like dealing dope indefinitely. Then came one scrape too many involving more dope than the RCMP and the local judge could live with, and he got solidly busted. He cooled his heels in Kamloops for about a month until we had a bunk for him, and then he was New Haven-bound.

The kid was quiet and easy to get along with, but he was one of those who ranges from the middle ground to the background of the human landscape. He did all right as a pre-junior, except that he was first posted to the kitchen crew. He didn't take well to working in a confined space. So he was moved to the farm crew where his work reports improved almost immediately. He flourished on the farm crew. He moved up through the ranks in the general program and moved up from farmer to assistant farm foreman to farm foreman.

In time, his parents came down from the Peace River country for a visit and brought along his fiancee. They came in the middle of the week and a special visit had to be arranged. It was the policy of the institution to maximize contact with the community. Some of the trainees had relatives who worked on Sundays and had to visit in the middle of the week. Unless the policy was abused, New Haven was always flexible enough to accommodate.

His parents were very pleasant blue-collar people who were distressed that their son was in the pokey, but glad to see that he was part of a program like New Haven. He took the three of them on the grand tour, lingering long at the various farm projects.

Rob never seemed to prefer one project to another. He was as happy to run the machinery as he was to work in the chicken-house, handle the cattle, or tend the pigs. He was foreman during the time that we had the great chicken debate. One of the farm crew had seen a program on free-range chickens and other animals versus those kept in enclosures for the duration of their lives. The whole campus chose sides and the debate was on. New Haven sells eggs and the money goes into the Inmate Welfare Fund. If they couldn't find the eggs, they couldn't sell them. In the end, the farmers and instructor decided on a compromise measure: to allow some of the chickens to range while the rest remained in the coop.

Rob never made senior duty monitor because he simply hadn't the presence for it, but he did make assistant team captain and team captain of Stanton team, as well as farm foreman. When he reached senior/T A., he went up-country for Christmas and New Year. However, in temporary absences to come, he went to the Dick Bell Irving halfway-house and spent his time getting to know Vancouver. He wrote to his girlfriend often, but never seemed to miss female company. Several of the kids from Vancouver offered to fix him up with dates, but he declined.

He decided he liked Vancouver. On job-search T.A., he found a job with a commercial flower outfit not far from New Haven. They liked him and sent back good reports. And the job had opportunities for promotion.

So he built his parole plan around the job, enrolling in the B.C.

Institute of Technology to upgrade his business knowledge. He had an uncle in Burnaby who would underwrite his efforts. When he stepped into his parole hearing, he had crossed every *t* and dotted every *i* of the elements they were looking for. His folks came down, his fiancee came down, his local uncle was present, he had a line on an apartment and could stay with his uncle until he could move in, and he had names of counsellors and registrars to whom he had talked at B.C.LT. In short, he blew them away with his presentation and won parole on his first roll of the dice.

And Rob Richie was out the door. He stayed in touch by phone and he kept in touch with one or two of the local kids who dropped back to visit from time to time and called to catch up on New Haven gossip. He obtained permission from the director to come back to New Haven to attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings. The job was going well. The fiancee had moved in with him and found employment. Everything was going his way.

One afternoon shift, my partner was Mort Vedder, who was an auxiliary, a teacher in North Vancouver who was running for alderman for the fourth time. The kids and I had been whacking away on the computer designing a questionnaire for his campaign for most of the shift. It had been good practice for them. And fun for us all. But my ass had turned to stone and my neck and shoulders were stiff and numb. I needed a walk. It was about 2200 and the graveyard shift would be there in another half-hour. I strolled out toward the farm, which had been locked down by the new foreman and his crew a couple of hours earlier. It was a warm summer night and it smelled great. But as I passed the pond, the "hint of pig," to use Lawrence Durrell's phrase, was stronger than usual. I paused at the pond and leaned on the fence looking at the pattern of moonlight upon the water, filtered through the weeping willows. It had been a very satisfying shift. I reflected on the big return we got on any effort invested in the program at New Haven.

I would have turned back at the gate to the farm, but I noticed that the light was on in the pig barn. I could tell because the door, which should have been locked, appeared to be slightly ajar.

If someone were going to break into the barns, this would be the

perfect hour, between the time of the farm-crew lock-up and the first patrol of graveyard. We had had equipment stolen before. Most recently, a number of air-compression tools from the wood-shop had been lifted.

I tiptoed up to the door. The lock had not been japped. It had been unlocked. The key was still in the lock. I quietly pulled the key out and slipped it into my pocket. Whoever was in there wasn't going anywhere. I was blocking the door.

I eased the door open and looked in. The six or eight pigs picked up on my presence and began to squoink and snort but they were used to humans and didn't kick up much of a fuss. The door was at one corner of the enclosure. As I peered through the dim light toward the opposite corner, I discerned a human form with its back to me. It had a shirt on, the shirt-tail out, and the jeans were bagged in the back and at the knees as though the belt had been loosened and the fly opened. The legs were slightly bowed to keep the pants from dropping to his ankles.

I thought I could determine some backward and forward movement and thought maybe it was one of our trainees who had imported his girlfriend and was getting it on standing up in the pig barn, of all places.

During my prison career, when I have surprised someone doing something he shouldn't in a place which was off limits, I had a terrible habit of yelling "Hey!" at about a hundred and fifty decibels. It not only scares the hell out of whoever is doing whatever, it usually rattles me that such a noise came from inside me.

I opened my mouth and out flew the almighty "Hey!"

Goddamn, I wish I hadn't done that.

I suddenly had six or eight airborne big pigs pirouetting in the air, squealing their heads off and ramming the boards of the enclosure, threatening to destroy it. I was hanging onto the door trying to keep from being killed by a porcine juggernaut and inwardly cursing myself for stirring them up. A cattle stampede is nothing compared to a pig frenzy. I kept glancing over at the figure which seemed to be hitching up its clothing and reaching forward. In front of him was a pig which he had tied to the corner post loosely. I say loosely because

it seemed to take no time for him to slip the short length of rope off the pig and post and toss it off into the darkness of the barn. The pig joined the others leaping and rushing and roaring around the enclosure. I was motioning to the person I still couldn't recognize to come toward me and attempting to dodge and shush the pigs at the same time. I knew you said "Soooooooey" when you wanted to call them, but I had no idea what sort of noise to make to assure them they were not under siege. The kid was up on the boards out of harm's way.

Finally, he began to ease his way around the edge toward me, squishing through the dung and straw. As he entered the light, I saw it was Rob Richie. Finally he crawled over the pen and was beside me. I turned out the light and closed the door and locked it.

"Where'd you get the key?"

"Had it made on T.A." I remembered that the farm-key had disappeared some months earlier and we had to use the P.O. keys until we could get another made and then the missing key turned up again.

"Do you have any idea how much trouble you're in?"

He nodded.

"For a pig? Gawdalmightydamn, you fucking nitwit!" Now that I hadn't been killed by rampaging porkers, I could feel hysterical laughter coming on. The sight of all that flying, wheeling, squealing bacon came back to me and I was gone. I sat down on the bench outside the pig barn, put my head between my knees and roared until I didn't have a molecule of breath left to laugh with.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the little bastard tuck the last bit of his shirt in his pants, pivot and sprint up the trail toward the Southview part of the property. I brought the radio up to my face, but exploded into laughter again. I plunked the radio down on the bench and reached in my pocket for my chewing tobacco. I opened it, but feared I would begin to laugh again, swallow a great glob and begin to hiccup wildly. I stuck it back in my pocket.

All the way back to the dorm, my mind was full of likely scenarios. In courtrooms where the kid is charged with bestiality or about to be breached on his parole and is appealing the breach, I could see myself being asked, "Officer Yates, can you identify the pig? Did you actually see penetration? Were there any other witnesses?"

Just about that time, the ministry had closed Pine Ridge Camp because of cutbacks and were threatening us. Burns and Gosse were doing battle at all levels to keep the institution open. I wasn't going to jinx them. Anyway, by the time I got back to the dorm to grab all my gear and drive home, I was still too convulsed to talk to anyone. Some of the kids accused me of walking out to the farm and smoking wacky tobacky, and it must have looked that way. I dropped the radio in its charging nook, walked out the door, and drove up the hill.

22

Board Day

We are all just prisoners here of our own device . . .
The last thing I remember I was running for the door.
I had to find passage back to the place I'd been before.
- The Eagles

THERE 1S no better illustration of the commitment on the part of staff and trainees to the program at New Haven than board day, which is the last Wednesday of every month. This day is the pivot of the entire program, and it pulls together all parts of the New Haven tradition. Up from the bull-pen to the board came the duty-monitor slips for the month, neatly punched and threaded on a clipboard, as well as the extra-duties book (the record of all extra-hours assigned, confinements to rack, and other minor penalties). The handmade wooden lock-box containing all the trainee progress-log files resided upstairs during office hours and travelled down to the dorm for afternoon and graveyard shifts. On board day, it was usually in the administrative offices before breakfast.

Doing an imitation of Robin Williams in Good *Morning Vietnam,* as day man one board day, I whipped through the teams screaming, "Good morning, New Haven! Arise and go now . . . Those words are from Yeats, the lesser poet. Today is board day. First I'm going up to the meeting and sink all of you, and then I'm going to stay after shift and boo and hiss."

"Oh yeah, Mr. Yates, you just want to hang around for the steak dinner and banana cream pie."

On board day, getting them out of bed, cleaned up, inspected, and well-behaved at breakfast and lunch were no problem. For the trainees, from the standpoint of work, board day was like any other day, except everybody was "lookin' good." They knew their instructors would be going up to present their evaluations of the trainee and to defend them.

By nine, Colleen, the office manager, would have organized the boardroom and rounded up the board members: director, probation officer or senior correctional officer, sometimes a principal officer shows up, the day man (who is the day-shift dorm supervisor), and any other line staff who cares to drop in. All input was welcome.

About a week before board meeting, the board reports were distributed to staff in envelopes with the case manager's name on each. One whole side of the legal-size form inside was filled with boxes and there was a generous space at the bottom for lengthy comment by the case manager. The flip side of the sheet had room for comment by back-up case manager and comments by all other dorm staff. Each staff member was required to comment on the progress of every trainee monthly. Comments varied from the glowing to the critical. With ten comments by line staff, it was easy for board-members to spot a mere personality conflict in a negative remark, as opposed to a constructive remark pointing up some deficiency.

In addition to the monthly board-report summary remarks, the board reviewed each progress-log from the date of the last board meeting, and earlier when necessary.

The sheets were rated in the categories of dependability, self-confidence, self-discipline, co-operation with staff, co-operation with peers, respect for authority, sportsmanship, cleanliness of the living area, setting and carrying through example and leadership.

If the trainee rates below average in four categories, he is not promoted. And this is the portion filled out monthly by the case manager only. If the trainee has been charged or has fallen behind in work or academics, he will begin losing days of remission - as many as six for his dorm behaviour, six for his vocational work, and three for his school work. With enough negative comment by staff other than case

manager, he can be held back or demoted despite an average or above-average report from the case manager.

The pre-juniors are considered first. Pre-juniors are those who are admitted between board meetings. Ordinarily the board automatically passes them on to the junior level at the next meeting unless they have destroyed the place and utterly blown the program. Usually this would indicate that they are not suitable for an honour-system program and the likelihood they would be sent elsewhere is high.

Then come the juniors. It is assumed they have had their period of adjustment and know the program sufficiently that they can be judged by junior criteria. At each level the microscope is stronger and expectations higher.

At the intermediate level, the trainees work closely with the senior duty-monitor, who arranges his schedule of duty monitors for morning and afternoon shifts for the whole month. Intermediate is a make-or-break level. When a kid makes it from intermediate to senior, you can notice the change in his sense of responsibility. The seniors and senior T.A.s carry the heaviest burden of role model.

It is great to watch them come into full bloom at this level. They know they're getting close to T.A. and the whole world is going to trust them to go on social temporary absence, job-search, then work release and educational T.A. And they've earned every step of the way.

After the board members have sifted through the reports (it takes some time to read all the comments from so many staff about forty trainees), one instructor after the other is sent in to present his evaluation of his crew.

By this time, everyone is well-focussed. When the instructor enters and delivers his evaluation, the atmosphere changes somewhat. The kids at work are very visible to everyone, including the director, who moves around the campus in a non-spying way and gets to know the trainees, as does the probation officer. The instructor controls as many days of remission as the dorm staff, but his crew is being judged by only one observer.

We had one instructor for a time who didn't make the transition from working in maximum to the open setting of New Haven very

well. To say the least, he didn't bring out the best in his crews. In one case, we had a black kid with a long juvie record who had worked his ass off in all parts of the program. It was extra hard for him, because he hadn't fully decided whether the attention garnered from doing well in the program was preferable to the attention that came with minor rebellion.

Often, in the midst of debate among dorm staff, instructor, and probation officer, it was necessary for the director to step in and referee and render a deciding vote when the forces seemed divided. The problematic instructor wanted to dock the boy three days of remission for not doing enough work. Before the rest of us could jump the instructor, the director was in his face: "I've watched that kid down there working like a dog; he's into body-building and loves physical work." The instructor protested and then everyone jumped into the fray. The boy didn't lose his days of remission. But this meeting, like many board meetings, went well past noon and had to be finished up after lunch.

On board days, the kids get off work at three. They quickly shower and set out the chairs in the main lounge of the dorm in an auditorium arrangement and bring in a lectern. The director enters with the board reports. Silence falls over the showered, shaved, and clean-clothed trainees, and over whatever staff have elected to sit in. The director begins with a recounting of the history and purpose of the board meeting and the read-back. This takes about ten minutes.

Then, as his name is called, each trainee rises and stands while every word on the board report is read aloud before all and every officer who has written each comment identified. As each report is concluded, it is announced whether the trainee has been promoted, held back, or demoted. Each trainee who is promoted is resoundingly and sincerely applauded. For those who are held back or demoted, there is silence, but no derision.

Following the read-back comes an especially elegant steak dinner with a sense of a century of tried-and-true tradition still in the air. The trainees congratulate one another and the seniors begin to plan what they will do on their first temporary absences. Into the evening, the new senior duty monitor is appointed, as are the new team

captains and assistant team captains, and work begins on putting together a fair plan for the various crews who will be responsible each night for cleaning the lounge and upper lobby, duties for the teams, and so on. The computer monitor assists them in typing up the various lists on the word processors. All the organizational problems are theirs to solve, and by the time they leave New Haven, they are well on their way to organizational wizardry.

A kid named Davey was coming up for parole soon. His institutional record was flawless. He had participated in and excelled at every New Haven program that came down the pike, including the maiden voyage of Hoods in the Woods. Inasmuch as the beef was fairly heavy -no matter how well a parole applicant has prepared, there is always the wild card of "intent of sentence." At this point, when all "roots in the community" and institutional-record criteria have been satisfied, then the process becomes quasi-mystical. The discretion of the parole board in interpreting intent of sentence is essentially unlimited.

When I came back on graveyard after a few days of annual leave, it was the Sunday before the Tuesday of Davey's appearance before the board. I checked over his application for parole. It had been filled out by a probation officer who was part burn-out, part malingerer, and part simply perverse. An essential ingredient of the institutional record is the institutional record summary, which is to be filled out by the case manager, or by the back-up case manager if the C.M. is not on shift cycle. Anderson hadn't lied about Davey's record, but he had couched the report in such flaccid and tepid language that it was sure to torpedo him. However, it was too late to redo the summary. The papers had already been processed. I needed to pull one out of the hat. Tuesday was two days away and I had two graveyards to pull.

I told Davey to put me on the appearance-list for the day of the parole hearing. I'm sure that between Monday and Tuesday the probation officer ripped through all the manuals looking for some regulation to prevent my appearance. This just wasn't done. On the other hand, there was nothing inscribed by the gods to prevent my doing so.

There was, however, one problem. The applicants lined up in order of appearance in the boardroom of the heritage main building, and it was impossible to know how long each hearing would take. I was scheduled for graveyard shift the night before. Davey would have to eyeball the progress of the queue, then call and wake me up in time to get a coat and tie on and get to New Haven. I had a graveyard on each side of parole day.

Tuesday came. At seven I headed up the hill to bed. Damn I was tired. I had just plunged over the edge into alpha sleep when the phone rang. "Mr. Yates, It's Davey. Matharoo is in there now and I'm next. All my folks are down from Prince George. It should be at least an hour before you need to be here. Is that enough time?"

"Yeah . . . fine." I was dead. Somehow I made it out of the shower without drowning, shaved, and got my best bib 'n' tucker on.

I dozed in the hall while waiting. Once I got inside, the three-person parole panel gawked at me. It was rather awkward. I assumed that it must be my red-eyed appearance. Maybe the collar of my sports coat was up. Possibly I had grannyed instead of Windsored my tie. I apologized. It did nothing to alleviate the tense atmosphere. All four of us in the room were writhing and nothing was happening.

Finally, a grey-haired gent introduced the panel and explained that they were a little taken aback. It was the first time they had ever seen a guard appear at a parole hearing.

"Normally, I wouldn't be here," I admitted. "The appearance of the case manager would be redundant to his written summary of the trainee's institutional record. I am here because I have just returned from holidays and the summary was written in my absence, and not to my satisfaction. The text you have before you doesn't accurately reflect this young man's experience at New Haven." I listed the number of foreman positions he had held, his work as senior duty monitor, his drug- and alcohol-program attendance, and his demeanour on the hike. Although still half-asleep, it seemed to me that I was holding forth like the silver-tongued devil I am. They were all nodding like ornaments in the back window of a car. And I don't think they were listening to a word I said.

When I paused, they began firing questions at me about me. Was I typical of New Haven staff? Yes, I thought so. Would other guards in similar circumstances appear before them? The best of them would, without a second thought. On and on they went into my background, what institutions I had worked at before New Haven and how on earth had I made the transition from Oakie and Pretrial to New Haven.

I had no inkling I would be such a novelty. If they didn't parole Davey after this interrogation and loss of sleep, I was going to flip. I went home to bed. He was paroled, but he had another week to serve. He said that when he went into the meeting after me they were still astonished that I had made an appearance and began asking him questions he couldn't answer. After he went back to Prince George Davey called me a couple of times, but he was very busy in a heavy-duty mechanic-apprentice program.

During the ten years I had been a guard, I had never been to charm school or any other do put on by the Ministry of Attorney-General. So when Director Burns asked me whether I'd like to attend a forthcoming corrections conference, I thought it was a joke. But Burns didn't seem to be joking. He wasn't.

When I got to the conference, I must say I was very impressed. They had people there who talked about financial planning for wage-slaves. They had workshops on day care for shift-workers. It was so well put together that I had to make deals with others to take notes when workshop schedules conflicted. I went expecting to be disappointed and came away with the feeling that I had just attended the best conference of my life.

The first and last sessions were plenaries. The conference kicked off with a motivational speaker and wrapped up with three speakers from the media. On the last day, at the last session, there was a panel of media types from radio, television, and the *Vancouver Sun.*

Chuck Foote, the principal officer who did my evaluations, later told Burns: "During the conference, I was beginning to think that

Yates was sick. Then when the rest of us were standing at the back of the room at the media thing and Yates sat alone in the front row, I knew the shit was about to hit the fan."

My experience in corrections had given me a very different view of media than I had had when I worked in the field. Countless times I and others had called journalists to persuade them to do stories on interesting programs we had cooked up. Nothing. Many of these people I knew in my writing capacity, others were people I had known or who had worked for me when I was a CBC executive. I couldn't budge them even by calling in favours they owed me. They showed up only to report escapes, riots, or allegations of "excessive force" by staff:

The maximum units (especially remand) accepted this relationship fairly stoically. However, the juvenile sentenced units and adult-program units like New Haven needed media mileage, because they require a constantly renewed volunteer base. When you come up with a good program, adult or juvie, the kids jump aboard and suddenly energy and logistical support are in short supply. Thanks to the paucity of media support, our volunteer base at New Haven was comprised chiefly of line staff blowing their days and hours off work. Those of us who used our time off had no regrets about what we were doing.

It was the obdurate spirit of the media that created the adversarial nature of the corrections-media relationship. At that final session, the room crackled with "fear and loathing" on both sides. Gordon Hoag, who introduced the media panellists and had some prefatory remarks, could scarcely contain his own rage. He was director of Willingdon Youth Detention Centre (the juvenile counterpart to Oakalla), and the mayor of White Rock to boot.

For thirty or forty minutes, the panellists held forth on journalistic ethics. There was so much news to cover that they simply couldn't be everywhere all at once, nor could they cover a great many of the stories in which they were personally interested. The kid from the Sun was obviously embarrassed by the radio and television idiots. I felt particularly testy about the television reporter. The last major riot at Oakalla involved the escape of thirteen industrial-strength

inmates. All but one had been apprehended. This television reporter made B.C. corrections look like Bozo City by making contact with the last hold-out and filing a report each night showing the inmate yammering into the camera. The reporter claimed source privilege and refused to tell police, corrections, or anyone else the whereabouts of the escapee.

Principles aside, and the image of law enforcement aside, the inmate had a long history of violent crime and this jerk journalist was putting the public at serious risk. This kamikaze pilot was taking his life in his hands just by showing up at the conference. He was about as welcome as the rapper Ice-T at a police convention following release of his "Cop Killer" number.

When the panellists finally finished and the floor was open for questions, no one went to the microphone. Hundreds of line officers from all over the province just sat or stood there, arms crossed, silent and sullen. I rose to speak with no idea where to begin, but begin I did. Before I said a word there was scattered applause from the back of the room.

"Gentlemen, I have been in media, as a reporter, in production, as an ad rep, as an executive, and on air, longer than any of you up there - with the possible exception of the man from the talk station. I won two International Broadcasting Awards for my radio work. And I didn't win them for misrepresenting and outright lying as you have just done before us.

"Your representation of the face of media today makes me ashamed that I ever had anything to do with media. You speak of journalistic ethics as though you could afford any. Why don't you have the stones to say that riots and escapes sell newspapers and win ratings? Prison programs that work, that save the taxpayer millions of dollars in the long term, just aren't what the public wants to read, see on television, or hear debated on talk radio.

"You aren't ethical, you're moral cowards. Right here. Right now. Cowardice is associated with the colour yellow, as in Hearst-Pulitzer yellow journalism. As in tabloid print-journalism. As in tabloid television.

"You stand there in your arrogance as though you don't dance to

the tune of program directors and story editors and city editors, all of whom are being crowded by your sales department, circulation, and latest ratings.

"You do your utmost to depict inmates and line staff within a stereotypical adversarial relationship; it plays better to the public. Common sense would tell anyone that this is not accurate if inmates and guards are to live under the same roof for years on end. But then you're not in the common-sense business. You're not even in the news business. You're in the bad-news business.

"There isn't a person in this room who will argue with me when I tell you that a great shift is one in which no one has tried to kill himself or someone else, and in which there have been no injuries. But then that's not what you're looking for.

"When you have the opportunity to interview inmates, you catalyze their complaints about staff and conditions. When you interview prison personnel - and this is rare -you carefully cut the tape or edit the interview so that we emerge as the knuckle-dragging assholes you have made the public come to expect."

(As I spoke it was getting crazier and crazier behind me, with screws calling out: "Fucking A, Yatesie . . . Nail that TV asshole's nuts to the floor.")

"The institutions for which we work are a part of society and belong to the public. They are built and maintained by the taxpayers. The taxpayer has a perfect right to a tour of what he owns, to question staff, to question those inmates who waive protection of their confidentiality. Were it not for your perpetuation of taboos, I think the public would come through and have a look for themselves. Most certainly, they can't look to you for accuracy. And that, gentlemen, is unfortunate for us, for you, and definitely for those who bear the financial burden of maintaining the criminal justice system."

I stood to leave and noted that those behind me had the doors open and were filing out. The deputy minister and other Victoria brass were present. The D.M. rushed up onto the stage and grabbed the microphone: "Well, we certainly don't want to leave the impression that the Corrections branch considers the media the enemy."

That was the last I heard as he continued speaking to an empty hall. Outside, a friend from Pretrial praised my speech and added that my ass was probably grass - a possibility that was just dawning on me. But back at New Haven, there were many smiles from the brass, and not one word of reproach.

Postscript

There are guards who are more pleasant to be around than others. There are inmates on the unit who are friendly, others aren't. In other words, people are people. How is this different from the street? There are neighbours you like and neighbours you don't, in jail and out of *jail.1've done a lot of time . . . People are people.*

- John, a seasoned inmate, Vancouver Pretrial, CFOX interview, 1984

IN MANY WAYS, it seems fitting that I completed this segment of my memoirs at this time. Issues of crime and what to do about them surround us in all media, especially in television programs like "Cops," "Unsolved Mysteries," "Law and Order," "L.A. Law," and "NYPD Blue."

If the percentage of the population apprehended in criminal activity were proportional to the percentage of media time and space devoted to crime, half the people of the planet would be behind bars. Or would they?

There are new directions in crime and punishment being tried, especially in the United States. Most of these new directions have to do with warehousing people in different ways, outside prison, including electronic monitoring (the convict sits at home with an electronic ankle-bracelet that alerts his custodians should he fail to report when specified or move outside specified boundaries). They have very little

to do with offering them skills that might lead to options other than crime.

Sooner or later we must ask Corrections to catch up to the rest of the criminal justice system. And, given the rising crime rate, Corrections had certainly better come up with some good ideas in a hurry.

The present trend in Corrections is to supplant the well-trained, experienced line officer with formidably secure architecture and sophisticated technology. But, in my experience, there is no substitute for staff, for jail-wisdom, for experience. Not computers (although they can greatly assist). Not fancy alloy bars.

In a frenzy of short-term accounting, provincial and federal governments are paring down the human component of the corrections system. This is the wrong road. Warehousing people in high-tech structures with vapid environments not only hardens the core of the still-changeable criminal, but burdens the taxpayer with long-term social costs. Both law-breaker and law-abider lose.

There are very serious responsibilities attendant upon not killing criminals. I think these have been very poorly defined and even more poorly shouldered.

Until recently in the history of civilization, we have killed criminals, not detained them and made them a burden on the citizenry after their conviction. They have already been a burden to the economy at the gateway of the criminal justice system by committing the crime, and a burden to the victim and the insurance company for their violation of person and property. If the state does not kill lawbreakers, then rehabilitation must be pursued, scientifically and imaginatively.

Programs such as New Haven indicate the better road, despite the fact that there will always be a few cons who are not amenable to any stripe of rehabilitation nor crazy enough to be routed to psychiatric institutions. "Dangerous offenders" may well have to go to ultra-secure prisons, but there is no way to proceed with the rest of the convicted populace (since we no longer exile or kill them) but to *presume them amenable to rehabilitation until proven otherwise. I* have watched carefully and thought about this for a long time.

This book has involved three groups of people: People in custody.

People not in custody. And guards who are neither in custody nor free of it.

Those who happen not to be in prison at the moment tend to think of themselves as free. Those who were locked behind bars early in their lives and have become "institutionalized" feel free only when in jail. These people have no talent or disposition for filing tax returns, remembering Aunt Flossie's birthday, obeying the speed limit, or attending the PT.A. Being told by people like me when to rise, when to eat, when to change their clothes, suits them just fine. Just as it's hard for people on the outside to understand how anyone can love being in prison, the "institutionalized" cannot understand how anyone can love mowing the lawn, joining the Rotary Club, or running for office.

The line screw shuttles daily between these two worlds. We belong to the population in custody incompletely and we belong to everyday citizenry only incompletely. I'm not sure we ever know exactly who we are, but in our best moments we have some sense of being "very special people." We know that very few people can do what we do at all, let alone do it well. It is a high-wire act worthy of the Flying Wallendas.

Early in our careers as line officers, we are admonished to "leave it at the gate." I've yet to meet a prison guard who can leave it at the gate successfully. We're told to find someone we can talk to, who will help us "offload" the stress. Then we're told that it's against the law to speak to a civilian (your spouse, your best friend) about an incident or a case. The guards we might speak to likely were there at our side during the very incident we need to offload.

When I went to work at Oakalla, I knew nothing about correctional systems. I was, in fact, not aware that anyone (other than a few philosophers like Jeremy Bentham, who is revered by the literati as a weirdo) had spent much time thinking about time as a way to repay society for having broken the law. As young as this concept is in the history of ideas, it is something that the twentieth century has taken for granted.

The most ignorant of citizens is wed to the assumption that because someone has been caught breaking the very relative thing

called the law (and the law is what it says it is at a given time and in a given place), he or she must pay the price of loss of humanity - all rights and privileges - by being locked in jail, where only inhuman things happen. This symbolizes his or her loss of humanity. Who, before reading this book, would believe me if I said this or that man, who has murdered more than one person, is my most dependable worker on the tier? Most people prefer to think that one illegal act colours all further acts. And that's nonsense. There are all manner of people who do something criminal in a moment of passion or desperation. Then there are psychotics who wind up in jail simply because they've contravened some statute of the Criminal Code; we watch them carefully and send them to Forensic for a psychiatric profile. And the man who gets drugged or drunk and commits an atrocity returns to his status as human being when his mind has washed free of the chemicals. When he relates to the world of prison as a human being, the prison relates to him in coin.

Those outside prisons seem to take for granted the impressions of prison life they read and see in the media. And so they consider people who work the line in the criminal justice system (including police, judges, and counsels) to be something less than fully human in a kind of filth-by-association paradigm. Prison staff resent this stigma, which is constantly re-energized by the media. This has made prison staff wary and uncommunicative. And this stance, in turn, has made the media even more certain that prisons have much to hide.

Until this cycle of mistrust, skewed as it is on both sides, is corrected, the stereotypes and taboos will persist, and understanding between taxpayer, inmate, media, and prison staff will remain unlikely.

As I hope *Line Screw* has shown, the reason that line staff and inmates have a working relationship is precisely because jail-wise inmates empathize with the problems of guards and jail-wise guards appreciate the world as seen from the vantage of inmates. Rookie inmates and rookie guards may upset the balance of the unit for a time, but their ignorance is taken into account by the jail-wise line.

After more than a decade of thinking about the line, I conclude

that those who comprise it - inmates and guards - do their respective jobs rather well. I can't say the same for middle- and top-management public servants, who are at the merry of political winds.

I further conclude that one who has spent as much time in jail as I have must possess an abiding love of prisons. Let me put it this way: the only career I pursued for a longer period than my career in corrections was teaching at university. On the best day at university, when my lecture was brilliant and my students were being enlightened beyond our wildest collective expectations, I was participating in the *ornamental.* On the worst day in prison, when everything was going wrong, I was participating in the *essential.*

To work the line is to be involved in the essential, the critical, the line between living and not living. Line cops, line screws, trauma-team members - all of us live on the line between life and death; we do this for a living. And some of us grow addicted to the work. After going to work at New Haven it took my body months to shed its expectation of a daily adrenalin rush. We have been called danger-junkies and various other disparaging terms. We don't get too excited; we know the value of the work we do, as do the cons, and, occasionally, the administration, when it remembers the line.

I wouldn't trade the prison segment of the line for any other segment. A prison is a magnificent living organism with a better balance of energy and form than most parts of society. The inmate code is as legitimate and respected a set of human mores as any code of conduct ever confected by Emily Post or Amy Vanderbilt.

Prison society - behaviour between guard and guard, inmate and inmate, guard and inmate - is perhaps the most accelerated dimension of human culture in the sense that most chemical reactions are speeded up by increased pressure, temperature, surface area, agitation. The law takes inmates and guards and places them in a container and applies as much pressure, temperature, and agitation as the system can deliver. The higher the population count, the greater the surface area that reacts to such pressure. Each change that comes from on high, if not gradually introduced, produces a reaction in the form of riot, sit-down, and so on. There is no time in prison for long-held

grudges or back-biting. If there are problems, the explosion happens immediately. The resolution occurs immediately.

To get explicit: In my opinion there is not one well-managed correctional institution in North America. Not one. If ever the concept of shared-governance should apply, it is in corrections. Presently, because the public fear the stereotype of prisoners and won't penetrate the taboo of prison and examine what they own and maintain, prisons continue to be places where empires within empires are born. In this climate, any sort of inhumanity can occur.

This book, as you know by now, is not an expose. There are no hidden brutalities or graft in the Canadian system to expose, that I know of. But our system is rife with opportunities for exploitation in many forms unless and until the public looks seriously at what we do with criminals.