

Population of prisons still rising

OLYMPIA (AP) — The past year brought no reprieve for the state's jammed jails, which were more crowded than the previous year despite efforts to reverse the trend, a study released Monday shows.

Statewide, the average daily population in city and county jails was about 6 percent greater than capacity, despite a 2.8 percent increase in jail space in 1993.

In 1992, the average daily population exceeded capacity by 5 percent, the Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs study showed.

"The overcrowding started in our urban areas, but it has been spreading out," said Kurt Sharar, a spokesman for the Washington State Association of Counties.

"As we all know, there is more crime to fill up the jails. But the other thing, not so visible, is the large number of new laws that we get year after year."

This year it was more jail time for animal cruelty and for drunken driving and for gun-related crime," Sharar said.

The tougher penalties are hardly by themselves. "But if you start adding them up, year after year, they have a real impact on jail population," he said.

Many cities and counties are pouring scarce resources into construction and expansion of jails, and the Legislature last year passed a measure permitting the state's 39 counties to share \$50 million a year in motor-vehicle excise tax revenues for criminal-justice costs.

Lawmakers also gave the counties the power to impose a sales tax of a tenth of a penny to pay for jails or other criminal-justice needs.

In addition, local authorities are trying alternatives to jail, including electronic bracelets and other forms of monitoring in the community.

Among other findings of the study:

-The five most overcrowded county jails in 1993 were Whatcom, Snohomish, Grant, King and San Juan, in that order.

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Police officer cops laughs in second job

PORTLAND (AP) — Willie Halliburton's a cop. He should be in control. Tough. Fearless. The whole bit. Only problem is his stomach. It's fluttering. And he feels like a suspect preparing for a sit-down with a detective.

Right now, he's standing along a back wall inside Harvey's Comedy Club, awaiting the emcee's introduction.

He breathes deeply. Relax.

This is the moment he dreads and yet craves. One side of him wouldn't mind slinking out the back door; the other can't wait to get on stage.

Out on the street, it would be yes, sir; no sir; right away, sir. But in here it's a different game. If the crowd spots one weakness in him, one tremble in his voice, they'll be on him.

As a cop, the 28-year-old Halliburton faces some of Portland's toughest and most dangerous criminals. In that life, though, he has a gun and a badge and the respect normally given to people who carry both.

In here, he's armed only with his wit.

The emcee gives him the signal.

"Are you ready for your next comedian?" The crowd yells.

"He's been doing comedy off and on for three years. He's a police officer, and he's the funniest cop in America. Give him a hand."

Halliburton emerges from the shadows. He leaps onto the stage and plunges into the glare.

"You got a lot of gangs on the West Coast. Bloods, Crips, Asians, Skinheads. You even got Yuppie gangs. You see them in Beaverton, standing on the corner, Levi Dockers sagging down, a 40-ounce bottle of espresso in one hand and carrot cake in the other."

Once, there were two Willie L. Halliburtons.

A cop. A comedian.

In recent months the two have melded. The street now is part of the act, the act a part of the street.

"There's a lot of negativity out there," explains Halliburton, who works on the Portland Police Bureau's Gang Enforcement Team. "I have to find ways to break through that."

And the cops?

'But what I really like is that he allows the public to see another side of police.'

— Kevin Warren, police officer, Portland

They love him.

At a recent show, a table full of Halliburton's brothers in blue howl as their colleague struts on stage, doing his best Michael Jackson imitation.

"I was surprised at how funny he was," says Officer Kevin Warren, who patrols the streets with Halliburton as part of the gang team. "He was really polished. But what I really like is that he allows the public to see another side of police."

"You know what gets me? Legalization of drugs. How many of you guys think we should legalize drugs? Raise your hands. Well, I know who to follow home tonight. Police officer on stage talking about drugs and you raise your hands."

Halliburton never imagined himself in a uniform. At least not a police uniform. He played football at Kansas State University and wanted to be a professional, but he was cut following a tryout with San Diego.

He majored in social sciences and considered social work, but instead became a deputy with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office in Olathe, Kan. He wanted to help people.

After moving to Portland, Halliburton and his wife were short on money while they waited for a job to open in the Portland Police Bureau.

They both found part-time jobs and then one day Halliburton saw an ad for an open mike contest at a comedy club. The winner would get \$200.

He wrote some jokes at home, entered the contest and won.

He needed \$450 for the rent. So he quickly went out and won two smaller comedy contests.

And then he was on his way.

At first, Halliburton didn't tell any cop jokes and mentioned his hobby to only a few friends in the bureau.

Eventually, he began seeing the humor in his job and incorporated it in his act. Now, more than half his routine centers on police work.

Soon, word spread through the bureau that one of their own was a comedian. At crime scenes and in the locker room, Halliburton found himself being cornered by fellow officers who said they'd heard the rumors.

He'd tell them the truth and fellow cops started showing up at his shows.

In February, Halliburton dropped his stage name.

"I came out of the closet, so to speak," he said. "I felt I was a solid cop and a solid comedian."

For a 15-minute standup spot, Halliburton makes about \$200. He performs infrequently at local comedy clubs in Portland, Vancouver and Seattle.

He has signed with Portland agent Rachelle Moody of Rose City Talent. She believes he has a future as an actor and comedian.

"He has great talent," Moody says. "He's got it, whatever it is. He's going to be auditioning for a part in a movie."

Halliburton, who hasn't seen the script and does not know what role he is up for, would love to be an actor. But he also enjoys the rewards of police work.

"One day an officer called me and said there was a kid he wanted me to talk to," Halliburton recalls. "He was a on the verge of trouble. He had some gangster buddies and he had some straight buddies. And he was teetering."

"I went to his house one day, and we talked. When he found out I was not only a police officer, but a person who cared he really opened up. We've been talking now for nine months. He's in high school. He's staying straight and just got a job working part time in a hospital."

A cop.

A comedian.

Some nights, the cheers are loud and long and raucous.

On other days, the applause is so soft that only Halliburton hears the sound.

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