

HARD TIME

You think coronavirus quarantine is hard? Try it for real.

BY TED POINT



In Oregon, in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic, we are all locked down and quarantined. Being a prisoner, I know more than a little about this. Over the three decades of my incarceration, I have tried many ways to cope with lockdowns and with the ongoing quarantine that is my life.

In here there can be total lockdowns when no one can leave their cell — not for work or chow or visits or programs. One of the cell blocks was locked down two weeks ago when a guard tested positive for the virus. At other times the entire prison is on lockdown because of a fight in the yard. There are also what you might call individual “lockdowns” when a prisoner is sent to the “hole” for some infraction. The hole is solitary confinement. But mostly life in here is just one big lockdown.

To a prisoner, it really doesn’t matter how he does his time. No matter where or how, it’s time. It’s just one

day closer to the end, whatever the end might be. To a prisoner, the time is the punishment. I think you out there might realize this right now as your COVID lockdown days drag on and drag by.

But comparing your lock down to mine is like comparing Pee Wee football to the NFL.

Now that you have time on your hands, try this little test to see what lock down time might really be like for those of us inside:

Empty all the contents out of your bathroom except for one roll of toilet paper.

Place a lumpy pillow and a thin, itchy blanket in the bathtub. This is where you’ll sleep.

You are allowed one book (a King James Bible).

Imagine the worst high school cafeteria food delivered to you on a tray.

Lock yourself in for a week.

This is “hole” time.

Inside, we quit worrying about ourselves long ago. What’s the point? Right now we are worried about our people on the outside. We are doing what we call “hard time,” contemplating all the wrongs we did in our lives, the price our people, friends and loved ones paid and continue to pay because of what we did. And how their lives are even harder now. And how once again we can’t be there to help.

That’s what we think about. It’s about the time, time away from everything that is anything. Time as punishment. Now our loved ones are doing hard time too. COVID-19 will come and go, but the prisoners and their families will continue to do time.

“Ted Point” is serving a life with the possibility of parole sentence at Oregon State Penitentiary. He is a member of Lauren Kessler’s Lifers’ Writing group.

SUPPORT *EUGENE WEEKLY*

Like a lot of businesses here in Lane County, *Eugene Weekly* is locally owned and operated. We have been serving up progressive journalism within our community every Thursday for nearly 40 years. During this difficult time we are asking for your financial support to keep our voice heard throughout the greater Eugene-Springfield area.



For a limited time anyone who contributes **\$50 or more will get a ‘Local & Vocal’ Eugene Weekly T-shirt** in return as a thank you while our supplies last. We will also throw in a free copy* of our newspaper every Thursday!

**Your red box location may vary.*

We know there are a lot of worthy causes in our community to support during this time of economic hardship. Do what you can to help, not only *EW* but support our advertisers, your favorite local restaurants and nonprofits. Every dollar helps.

SUPPORT EUGENE WEEKLY AT
SUPPORT.EUGENEWEEKLY.COM

OR MAIL DONATIONS TO
1251 LINCOLN ST. EUGENE, OR 97401

THANK YOU from all of us here at

EUGENE
Weekly