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O.S.P. Correspondent

Behind the wall

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by Floyd Mack #35054

A plea for mercy to the Oregon State Parole Board.

In February 1979, I will appear before you for a review of my parole date, which is February, 1982. In 1972 I received a parole set of ten years for murder. Under the present system I realize that might not sound like much, but for a seventeen year old boy it sounded like the end of the world. There are many mitigating circumstances that I hope you will consider when I appear before you this time.

At the time of my crime I was seventeen years old. There was another boy, aged sixteen involved in the same crime. He was convicted of bludgeoning a woman to death; he received a fifteen year sentence for second degree murder and was sent to McLaren School for Boys. I was convicted of shooting a man to death and received a life sentence for first degree murder and was sent to Oregon State Penitentiary. I suppose I really shouldn't say I was convicted, because I pled guilty to the charge. I fail to understand how a judge can allow a seventeen year old boy plead guilty to a first degree murder charge. There was no premeditation to the crime. The other boy did approximately fifteen months at McLaren and was paroled; he has now been discharged from parole for two years and is a free man. In return I have been incarcerated in the Oregon State Penitentiary for six years. At the time of my review hearing I will have exactly seven years in prison. I maintain that there is a great discrepancy in the amount of time I

am having to serve and the amount of time the other boy had to serve for the same crime that happened at the same time. I realize that I was made out to be the instigator of the crime, but that is not true in any way.

At the time, Attorney General Lee Johnson requested that I be retained in the county jail until after January 1, 1972 before being sentenced; the idea being that the mandatory ten year date set for murder was being dispensed with at that time, and I would not receive one. But, even though the parole board was setting lifers an average of seven years at the time I went before them, I received a ten year set anyway.

I am not trying to justify my crime to you. I have never denied my part in it. I am merely trying to show you how many discrepancies there are. I realize that I was responsible for the death of another human being, and I will live with that knowledge for the rest of my life. Only I know how sorry I am for what happened. I have suffered deeply for my past and for the person who's life I took. I wish with all my heart that I could undo that damage I inflicted on that person and his family, but I cannot.

I am an intelligent and capable man. I have much potential to make it in society. I have been involved with several psychologists and groups since my incarceration, and my last few psychological reports have been very favorable. In fact my last report recommended a parole date cut, but the date cut never materialized. I have received my G.E.D., and have two terms of college with a 3.5 GPA to my credit. I have completed a course in Vocational Body and Fender, and

graduated with a very good report from my instructor. I plan to pursue this trade upon my release. I have never been inside the Segregation and Isolation Unit, and have had only four minor disciplinary reports. I have been in honor cell blocks since the first six months of my incarceration. I have been involved extensively with the outside building projects of the lifers club. I have built many items for senior citizens, children, and many other people who could not have afforded to have the work done without my help. This has all made me feel very good about myself.

You speak of punishment for the crime, but just how much punishment is enough??? Fifteen months was enough for the other boy. I would like to know why I am being treated so much differently. You say that the institutional accomplishments of us inmates don't count, but what happens to someone like myself who came in here at such an early age and have accomplished nothing in the outside world? I would think you would have to take into account all my accomplishments since my incarceration. No one can punish me more than I have punished myself for my past.

I have a very beautiful and inspiring wife who has been with me all this time. We have been through many discouraging and difficult times, but our love for one another gives us the strength we need to stand up and face all the negative things that happen to anyone in this

situation. I owe everything I am and everything I will be to my wife. She saw good in me when I couldn't even see it in myself. And she worked to make it possible for that good to emerge. She is the incentive I needed to change my life and accomplish the things I have.

My wife's devotion has helped me grow to like myself and others. Compassion has developed in me, along with an appreciation of human accomplishments. I no longer wish to be an outlaw, I want to be a husband and someone I and everyone who knows me can be proud of. For the first time in my life I feel like an adult; a man who is responsible for his own actions. I blame or praise myself for my own actions. I now talk where before I struck out with frustration from not being able to communicate. I love being able to express myself so easily and freely.

I have strong family ties and they will help me and my wife in any way we need them to upon my release. When I am finally paroled I will have a job and place to live waiting for me. I would like to be paroled to California, as that is where all of my family live. So with all that I have said I respectfully request that you consider cutting my parole date to February, 1980. That would allow me to have some time on Work Release to build up a little money so that I can be more financially sound when I am paroled. I truly hope you can find it in your hearts to give me a chance to show everyone that I can make it in society.

CSA recommends staff training, community involvement

The Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice has announced that it will design a human relations and cultural awareness training program for correctional personnel in Oregon penal system.

The program is the result of the CRS investigation of charges of discrimination made by Oregon State Penitentiary inmates during the recent visit to that institution by NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Hooks. The investigation was made at the request of Reverend John Jackson, president of the NAACP, Portland Branch.

Robert Lamb, director of CRS's Northwest Regional Office, said the training program will be designed by a CRS team, including a correctional consultant. The training will be conducted by the Corrections

Division.

Lamb said the prison administration was very cooperative in providing information and in facilitating communication with inmates. Among the complaints indicated by inmate groups that met with CRS staff were: complaints related to ethnic food, religious facilities, funds for entertainment, Spanish translation of rules and regulations, vocational trades, extended waiting times for visitors, etc.

Lamb said he will contact the Portland and Salem Branches of the NAACP to attempt to increase community involvement and to find a solution to the need for a halfway house in the Black community.

CRS is an area of the Justice Department that helps resolve disputes involving the rights of minority groups.

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