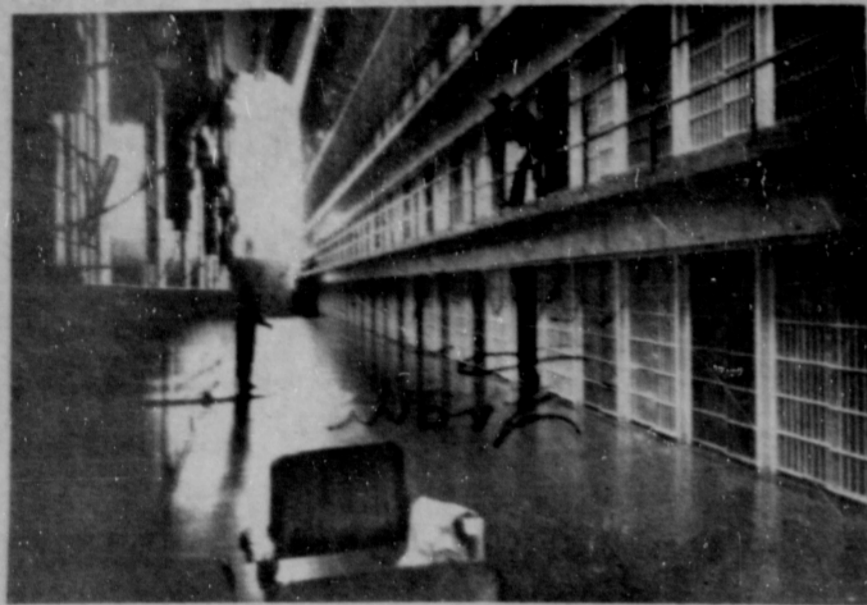




Larry Baker #35021,  
O.S.P. Correspondent

## Behind the wall

Julius D. Snowden #38013  
Poetry Editor



Oregon State Penitentiary is a dismal and lonely place at Christmas time.

To those men who are housed in O.S.P.'s Isolation and Segregation Unit (the hole). "Behind the Wall" dedicates this week's column to them as a Christmas gift.

The following articles are written by men serving time in S&I, and the opinions expressed are of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the "Behind the Wall" staff, O.S.P. administration, population, or of the Portland Observer.

Donald Danford #32323

Christmas? I'll think of a lot of things. I'll think about the meeting I just had with the parole board and how they told me I have a serious psychiatric problem and cannot be considered for release until I am over it, how they told me that no, they wouldn't qualify me for the one program that deals with the problem, how they put me in an absolute cross by refusing to do anything for me and making sure no one else can. I'll think about 1976 when they did the same thing. I'll think of a prisoner in a Texas hole that read one of my articles and wrote, "Keep writing; someday someone will listen to what they are doing to us." I'll think of a prisoner in an Ohio hole who was being transferred because he is a writer. "Keep writing," his letter read. I'll think — wonder — about how many others are locked into no-win positions. I'll think of a society that thinks they are being protected by these walls and can't understand they are being endangered by these walls. And I'll think about the prisoner who will walk free today. I hope he makes it.

Eugene J. Graham #37922

I have found true philosophical meaning of Christ Jesus teachings. The simple things in life are most meaningful. Love thy neighbor as thyself for I am thy neighbor. I hear the cry of love. The ones who cry the loudest give the least of themselves. The most valuable things in life cannot be seen. So you see as I sit here in the solitude of my cell I am not alone for my faith gives me peace and comfort. I not only study how to die but to endure torture, exile and causing in word, and to give up all things that are not my own. I have given up all my body desires and wants before death takes me of these haunts. In the solitude of my cell.

Daniel Jones #38957

As long as I live I shall remember Christmas of 1978. Not only will I spend it in prison but I will spend it locked in a cell in Segregation.



I look back at the two other Christmas' I've spent as a prisoner and they seem almost a joyous occasion. The sound of my mother's voice on the phone telling me I'm loved and all the holidays in the future we will be able to see each other. I haven't been allowed to call my mother for six months now. It will be another year before I hear her voice again.

I tell myself to grow up and stop feeling sorry for myself. Everyone on the tier tries to ease the feeling of despair by telling jokes and making fun of the guards. The Chaplain passes out Christmas cards to remind you where you are. You thank him but feel like salt has been rubbed in a wound.

What is the purpose behind all this? They say I'm being reformed. They say this will make me a better person. They say a lot of things that don't make any sense at all. All I can say is that I won't be responsible for what I am in the future.

Calvin Deadder #40641

Holidays in a penitentiary mean nothing to a convict, or shall I say at least for me personally.

This might be hard for some people to understand so I will try to explain why this is true for the majority of people doing time here.

For instance, myself. I am doing 65 years and I have been locked up for a year of that so far.

When I was first put in jail it was very hard for me simply because everything that my life was about was taken away from me.

My girl friend, family, car, apartment, clothes, friends, money, etc. etc. The only thing to do to relieve the pain that any normal person

would feel is to forget.

So over the last year I have conditioned myself to do so.

What I am trying to say is that a man in here goes through so much pain in mind, with such things as I have listed above, that I feel it is ridiculous to think that he would let something like Christmas get to him too much.

Michael Stephens #40611

To be locked up during the Jewish Holiday, away from my children, my brothers, my sisters, not being able to partake in the celebrations, taste the special foods, drink the wine, not being able to worship my God at the side of my loved ones, not to hear the songs of praise and devotion, not to see the flame that burns in remembrance of those who died for their beliefs in Jehovah, singing the tris-ful chants that make the spirit strong, not being able to kneel down in a Holy Place to pray, not being able to hold my wife, or to comfort my son and daughter — I am lost. There are no words to describe the misery. My heart breaks anew each morning, and I die with no honor each night.

"The Angel of the Lord encamps around them that trust Him, and delivers them."

Konrad Garcia #40261

I'm in the building and I sit in cell 315. I've just finished my breakfast and my syrup bath — meaning — the guard that just gave me my tray, spilled syrup all over my bars, traystand, my leg and foot, and my letters. I brought it to his attention that I didn't really appreciate that and none other was his response, except, "so f---ing what." After he proved the presence of his emotionally unstable attitude, I decided not to ask if I was the one who had to clean it up. So after the tedious job of cleaning the sticky mess off me and my property, I lay back and think of all the joy-filled Christmas' I've lived in the past.

There are so many special little moments that I, and I'm sure others have taken advantage of, and may have even thought they were boring. Oh, how I wish I could live one of those special little "boring" moments now, or even if I could watch my kid playing with his new toys or ride his bike, or even just contently sit and eat his candy.

It is very painful to think that I am eighteen years old and in the inhumane clutches of the Oregon judicial system serving a 100 year sentence with a possible parole date 430 to 720 months away. My crime? What is my crime? you say. First of

### HELLO FOR CHRISTMAS

by Larry Baker #35021

— I —

Met a friend the other day  
Who had come from miles away  
Just to simply say, Hello For Christmas

She thought I would not recognize  
That same familiar smile, with sparkles in her eyes  
Flashing out to say, Hello For Christmas

We had written many letters, time to time  
Each had become my treasure  
With precious words to memorize.

You see! A prison cell has been my home  
And she had become the closest friend I'd known.  
In my dream to come and say, Hello for Christmas

— II —

It was very awkward at the start.  
For two people only used to speaking with their heart,  
In a letter, on a page, Hello For Christmas

But how do you speak to this angel,  
When tears start forming in your eyes.  
Do you speak her name in a joyful voice,  
Or do you whisper it with a sigh?

We talked and talked about many things.  
As I glanced at her three year wedding ring  
On the hand of my friend, who had come  
to say, Hello For Christmas.

— III —

Before we know where the time had gone  
It was time for her to leave and move along  
This friend who came to say, Hello for Christmas

As she turned to say goodbye,  
She gifted me with a familiar smile.  
Sparkling eyes that would say, Hello For Christmas

So as I write this poem tonight,  
Fresh memories of my friend in sight  
Who had merely come to say, Hello For Christmas.

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**Happy Holiday Season —  
but remember:**

POSITIVELY NEGATIVE

WE DRANK FOR HAPPINESS AND BECAME UNHAPPY  
WE DRANK FOR JOY AND BECAME MISERABLE  
WE DRANK FOR SOCIABILITY AND BECAME ARGUMENTATIVE  
WE DRANK FOR SOPHISTICATION AND BECAME OBNOXIOUS  
WE DRANK FOR FRIENDSHIP AND MADE ENEMIES  
WE DRANK FOR FREEDOM AND BECAME SLAVES  
WE DRANK FOR STRENGTH AND FELT WEAK  
WE DRANK FOR BRAVERY AND BECAME AFRAID  
WE DRANK FOR CONFIDENCE AND BECAME DOUBTFUL  
WE DRANK TO MAKE CONVERSATION EASIER AND SLURRED OUR SPEECH  
WE DRANK TO FORGET AND WERE FOREVER HAUNTED  
WE DRANK FOR RELAXATION AND GOT THE SHAKES  
WE DRANK TO ERASE PROBLEMS AND SAW THEM MULTIPLY  
WE DRANK FOR SLEEP AND AWOKE WITHOUT REST  
WE DRANK FOR MEDICINAL AND ACQUIRED HEALTH PROBLEMS  
WE DRANK TO FEEL HEAVENLY AND ENDED UP FEELING LIKE HELL  
WE DRANK TO COPE WITH LIFE AND INVITED DEATH

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