



Behind the Wall

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

Help a Kid

by Jack Pruitt

If I could help a kid understand the system better I would try to explain how the bureaucracy works. A person's jacket or file is born at the kid's birth and grows right along with him. Every time he gets into trouble, a note goes into his jacket. I remember seeing my jacket at the juvenile detention center. I cannot even imagine what it looks like today. That jacket, two inches or two feet thick, will follow a person around all his life.

You may hear people say that a juvenile record won't be used against you when you become an adult. But that's not quite true. Although your record can't be used against you to prove you've done something else, any record will surface when sentencing time comes.

The kid may think, "Well, I'll quit when I turn eighteen." Okay, let's even say you do quit unlawful activities. If ever again suspected of a crime, falsely or not, the past will convict you. The question isn't how they prove your guilt, but how do you prove your innocence.

Once you have the jacket of a criminal everybody will be that much more willing to put motives up against you. They can always twist the truth enough to frame you. Juries are easy to persuade. If you're the suspect and you have a record, human nature takes over. Peoples' impressions are too suspicious, too biased, they twist what they see and hear to fit that bias. Many people are convicted wrongly, because of such unintentional bias. So intentionally or unintentionally, people force you to prove your innocence or convict you (i.e., guilty until proven innocent).

This human characteristic toward bias comes from—not only strangers, or officers of the law, or juries—but even from your own family. Once you've been in trouble, everybody has you pegged. When you do something that can be interpreted as suspicious, it will be so interpreted. Let's say you've been straight for five years, even now, when you go out on a Friday night, the family thinks you're out "raising hell" with the boys. It's only human nature. You may not realize it, but what other people think can become very important, especially if you've ever been accused of something.

Don't think I'm complaining or trying to change people. I'm just passing on knowledge. Human bias is there and you will always depend on what it can do.

What people think of you will always depend on what they've seen you do in the past. It's only smart to a point. So when you say you're going to quit your thieving at eighteen remember that you won't be able to prove that to me when the time comes.

Women and the law

The Governor's Commission for Women has recently completed a second printing of its legal handbook for women entitled "Women & the Law: Laws of Special Interest to Women in Oregon" and is again distributing the handbook statewide.

The handbook deals with legal concerns in a question and answer format and covers topics including marriage and divorce, domestic violence and rape, property and debts, wills, employment, education, credit, insurance, health and the Equal Rights Amendment.

The handbook is available through the county extension service. Additional information about the handbook and its availability can be obtained from the office of the Governor's Commission for Women.

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Prison band, Soul Train, practices for upcoming performances.

Putting it together with music

Who wrote the notes to 'prison blues'?

It's not an easy task capturing the same sounds with feeling and transferring them onto the reed of a saxophone. Or to lay back and pluck the strings of a guitar to the point where your toe is keeping the beat.

If you happen to live on the 400-inmate fifth tier, known as E-Block, at O.S.P., it's normal to listen to the mixture of a driving 'jazz' guitarist combining his notes with the 'country and western' sounds of a slow moving harmonica player.

The funny thing is that after a few nights of listening to the same rhythmic beat of the same song over and over again will not only irritate the brain waves but freak out whatever sanity you might have had left. So you call out in an unnatural voice: "Hey fool, give us a break."

Or better yet, you find yourself shouting, "Take that mess to the yard."

The beat goes on

At this time you start questioning the motives of the judge who sentenced you to O.S.P. He didn't say anything about your having to put up with ten or twelve musicians trying to practice separately on ten or twelve tunes all at one time. You also start questioning yourself, too.

"Wow! Was that last crime worth all this?"

Once or twice a month the prisoners at O.S.P. are exposed to a jazz, blues, or rock-n-roll band, and you find yourself in absolute amazement by the quality of music some of the inmates can actually put together, especially when a Black group called The Soul Train starts to demonstrate its talents in jazz and

blues.

Larry Westbrook's magic fingers rippling across the keyboard of his electric piano; Melvin Tillman's soft strokes on the strings of his bass guitar; the elbows, palms and fingertips of Thomas Hamilton while finding the right rhythmic beat on his congo drums; the exciting professional mastery of drumming displayed by Frank Lewis; the sweet mellow tones William Grandy displays on tenor sax.

Now you're really pulling your hair out, that is if you've got any! Because the question now becomes, where in the hell has all this professional talent been hiding? Surely not in the same cells you've had to labor in when you wanted to stick a few pins into a voodoo doll representing that chump practicing a musical instrument when every one is all celled up for the night.

The selection of blues and jazz these individuals (The Soul Train) has conquered must truly be applauded after every performance, because the group will make you want to "boogie" one minute and cry the "homesick blues" the next.

Don't let the golden voices of Phillip Carter and Isaac Boyd get tangled up among Soul Train. Lord-have-mercy, some mother's child inside this penitentiary is in trouble.

A man and his music has always played an intimate part in the Black inmate while in any prison, and O.S.P. is no different. Many of the prisoners take time while incarcerated to really get down and know their instruments. If you don't believe me call the Superintendent's office and make arrangements to sit in on a session while the inmate musicians are putting it altogether.

Prison Poets

Julius Snowden,
Editor

I KNOW I DID WRONG

As I sit behind the walls,
Of this manmade hell,
Thoughts of me dying here
In this five by six foot cell,
But I know I will not die alone,
For God is watching from His throne.
If people could only understand
That life is more important than
Living in sin.

I had my chance to be a different man,
But lost it all when I killed another man.
I know I did wrong, but I pray every night,
And I cry in my bed, that I wish
I could give my life, to bring back that other man.

God forgive me for all of my wrongs.
Lord, I have lived my life wrong.
God help me understand, that there is
More to life than just living it in sin.

(Anonymous)

LIVING

To touch the cup with eager lips and taste, not drain it;
To woo and tempt and court a bliss and not attain it;
To fondle and caress a joy, yet hold it lightly,
Lest it become necessity and cling too tightly;
To watch the sun set in the west without regretting;
To hail its advent in the east the night forgetting;
To smother care in happiness and grief in laughter;
To hold the present close not questioning here after;
To have enough to share to know the joy of giving;
To thrill with all the sweets of life is living.

by Edwin Dorsey #40530

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JULY 1979

ON SOCIETY:

I live in the crowds of jollity, not so much to enjoy the company as to shun myself.

Samuel Johnson

ON SUSPICION:

Always suspect that which seems probable, and begin by believing what appears incredible.

Emile Guboriau

ON SUSPICION:

All persons, as they grow less prosperous, grow more suspicious.

ON SUSPICION:

All persons, as they grow less prosperous, grow more suspicious.

Terence

ON SUCCESS:

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson