



Behind the Walls

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

David Wright #39816
Assistant Editor

By David Wright and Ben Davis
(Two inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary)

When I started preparing this, I ran across something by Mark Twain. He said, "When I was a boy of fourteen my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years." I couldn't help but think of my first meeting with John Akin when I read this. Three years ago during my very first days at Oregon State Penitentiary, after I had gotten over my fear of locked doors, my fear of uniforms and tattoos, John Akin addressed my admission and orientation group. When he left ten minutes later, I was scared to death again. If I had only known then what I have here -- proof that John is really a pussycat -- I would have spent the last three years knocking on his door every morning at work line, tugging on his coattails every afternoon in the chowhall, and asking God why a man from Illinois went to work in Oregon.

John Akin was born in 1920, in a little coal mining town north of St. Louis. A characteristic of a normal child is that he doesn't act that way very often. It comforts me to know John is still normal, he never left any doubt. John picked up a lifelong nickname while still a baby. Weighing less than two pounds at birth, John spent the first weeks of his life laying around, not crying when he was hungry, not screaming when he was angry, and not burping when he was full of it -- John to this day, is a man of manners. In fact, he didn't make a sound for the first six weeks of his life. They believe this was because he was premature. I've often noticed he's before his time.

At six weeks old, John came out of his shell. He started crying whether he was hungry or not, and screaming because he was angry all the time. No one has been able to shut him up since. Don't look at me like that, Marge is the one who coped out on you.

John was raised under circumstances similar to most of us convicts in that he was raised without a father. He lost his father when he was seven. His mother, Ernestine, raised John and his sister by washing and ironing laundry.

John lived and breathed baseball in his childhood. Rumor has it he slept with a baseball glove. Marge,



John Akin, retiring OSP administrator.

his wife, would have us believe it covered up a set of brass knuckles -- standard equipment while growing up in a coal mining town. But the other day, about lunchtime, I saw John in a hurry -- and he is fast. If my legs were that long and skinny, why waste time with equalizers. Just prior to his high school baseball debut, John's sprinting career came to an abrupt end with a broken ankle.

John graduated from high school. The St. Louis Cardinal Stadium, John's favorite hangout, and the baseball greats of his time, was soon playing second fiddle to the local honkey tonks, Hank Williams, and Jimmy Rogers. Instead of hitting, throwing, and running, John was flirting, fighting, and drinking.

There's a Chinese saying about grinning: "as long as a man is grinning no one knows what he's thinking." This has worked well for John over the years. But when he tried to join the service, the Navy rejected his crooked smile -- apparently the Navy figured if a man couldn't bite right, he couldn't fight right. So John moved to Chicago and went to work for the American Can Company. But with World War II, the Navy changed their policy and accepted John and his crooked smile. His induction ceremony was held on Soldier Field in 1942.

In the Navy he worked on a PT boat in the South Pacific, and no he didn't get to meet John Kennedy or Ensign Parker!

While John's PT boat was in dry dock at Bremerton, Washington, for repairs, John had plenty of time to pursue flirting, fighting, and drinking; he was quite a honkey tonk man. One night in disgust, he returned to the boat vowing to give up the night life. Thanks to a good buddy and a blind date, he met Marge, and after a lengthy court-

ship of six weeks, John and Marge said their do's and don'ts -- which were to love, to honor, and cherish, for better or for worst, til death they do part.

John was discharged from the Navy when his first son, Norman, was fourteen months old. For a while after his discharge he worked at various jobs in sawmill and as a brickmason.

In 1945 he yearned to learn, quit work, and started college. He was torn between deciding upon a career in the ministry or social work. At Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, he supported his family by working as a dive-bomber -- picking up paper with a nail in the end of stick.

In 1951, when number two son, Elmer, was a year old, John ventured west again and settled in Bremerton, Washington, where he worked in counseling. His career at OSP began in 1952 under Warden Alexander. His career flourished, keeping him busy, so busy in fact, that in 30 years with this institution he has only had time to plan two vacations; the first, in the early fifties, was foiled by a sit-down strike, and John sacrificed a suntan at the coast; the second, in 1968, after extensive plans for a good time in Canada, met with a prison riot.

John hobbies have included painting houses and fishing at Detroit lake. Unfortunately, until recently, he hasn't caught any fish in the lake, a few, maybe in Admission and Orientation, but with eloquence, not hooks. John has actively assisted in Cub Scouts, Little League, and Basketball programs over the years.

Now John is retiring after thirty years at OSP. He's probably looking forward to a rest. Do yourself a favor, don't plan any vacations!

Cell Talk

Asmar Abdul Seifulla, Editor
aka Joe West 40404

Not long ago "Cell Talk" ran an article based on the sexual atmosphere of prison and how prison breeds homosexuality and perversion. In response to the article I've received limited comments, most being positive. Because of the implications and issues surrounding Conjugal visits for prisoners now housed in the Oregon penal system and because of the encouragement received from outside and inside sources, I'm going to run a series of articles based on the pros and cons of Conjugal visits.

At this point I would like to share some response that I received on the subject at hand. This is a letter I received from Circuit Court Judge Donald L. Kalberer, St. Helens, Oregon, who shares the same viewpoint as this reporter. Please remember that Donald L. Kalberer is a judge sworn to uphold the law. He sentences guys like myself to prison and I never thought that I'd see the day when I'd be on the same side of the bench with a judge but I commend Judge Kalberer on not only being sympathetic but also in the action he has taken on a very important issue. I further encourage all interested parties to follow his honorable lead. This letter was sent to all - Circuit, District, Court of Appeals and Supreme Court Judges in the state of Oregon. If there is anyone that you personally can contact, please do so immediately - I would also like to receive copies of your comments pro or con to use as material for "Cell Talk."

In conclusion to my opening statement, "Cell Talk" I would like to salute Judge Donald L. Kalberer for recognizing the need for natural sex for men and women confined in a perverse and unnatural atmosphere. "If prisoners aren't allowed to fulfill the most basic of human drives and desires while they are incarcerated, how can they be expected to conduct themselves in a natural way when they're released."

Dear Gany:

It has been some time since I've mounted the soap box but since I'll soon be retiring from the judicial ranks and won't have many opportunities, I thought I should take on one last cause - FORNICATION.

I'm enclosing a copy of an article by Joe West, an inmate at OSP, that I would like you to read - primarily because I agree with his message.

Conjugal visits for our Oregon inmates has long been a controversial subject and the pros and cons have been weighed but I truly believe that it's time the governor and the Legislature implemented fully this program.

Lest many of you who know me think I've turned into a bleeding heart, let me assure you that such is not the case - I still believe in such things as capital punishment and that we need and should build another penitentiary to alleviate overcrowding.

The Joe West article and my decision to write to you preceded the recent events in New Mexico but they gave me impetus to get busy and write.

Both Governor Straub and Governor Atiyeh have said no new prisons and that community based corrections is the answer to our

prison problems, yet today we have badly overcrowded institutions (OSP designed for 1110 presently has 1446) and with no relief in sight except the "one in, one out" system. In addition there are 282 prisoners on out count; work release, escape, in court, and for other reasons.

Over the years I have watched the Legislature, the governor, the courts, the corrections people and the public sidestep, step over, jump over, go around and turn their backs on the fiscal problems, housing problems and overcrowding problems of our penal institutions. That reminds me of my days growing up on the farm. In walking the pasture lands and in the barns I became very deft of foot in sidestepping, stepping over, jumping over, going around and turning my back on those brown round problem areas.

"We keep doing that with Conjugal visits."

In thinking of this problem I've come to the conclusion that the creator of the Superman comic strip character must have been an ex-convict. I say that because if I were to be given a one year sentence, let alone 5 or 10 years, therefore going without the pleasure of female company, I too, would be able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.

The simple fact of the matter is that if you lock up healthy males for any length of time without female companionship they are going to eventually screw something, whether it be a cellmate, fellow prisoners or keyhole. Those of you who are pre-Geritol age will know of what I speak. Those who are presently on Geritol will know of what I speak and be occasionally concerned. For those of you for whom Geritol no longer works and therefore aren't concerned, I would only ask that you reminisce, remember and become concerned.

There will always be crime, criminals and jails. Some criminals get probation, some are executed, but those who are ultimately housed should be treated humanely, not molly coddled, but treated humanely. Turning them into homosexuals or having a system that "forces them into sexual situations that deform them for the rest of their lives," does not rise to the stand of humanity.

The emergency board has recently been asked to approve the hiring of 33 additional guards at the penitentiary because of overcrowding, prisoners sleeping on floors, and other tension-causing problems. There is presently a serious problem at the penitentiary and it will continue to get worse.

They are under staffed in all areas. The men have to wait in line to see counselors or have paperwork done, there are only 3 dentists, the hobby program is full, the work program is full. In addition there are more men now than during the 1968 riot! We can continue being deft of foot in stepping over, sidestepping, jumping over, going around and turning our backs on those "brown round problems areas."

33 more guards will not keep the roof on the barn, nor will 133 more. Let's get busy and work on something constructive.

I would appreciate it, if you agree with me, that you write to the Governor and your legislator, so we can get something going on Conjugal visits. This type of visit from loved ones will do much in assisting the prisoners to put up with the frustrations and pressures of our over crowded prison - it may even be the one thing that keeps the roof on the barn.

Love and Kisses

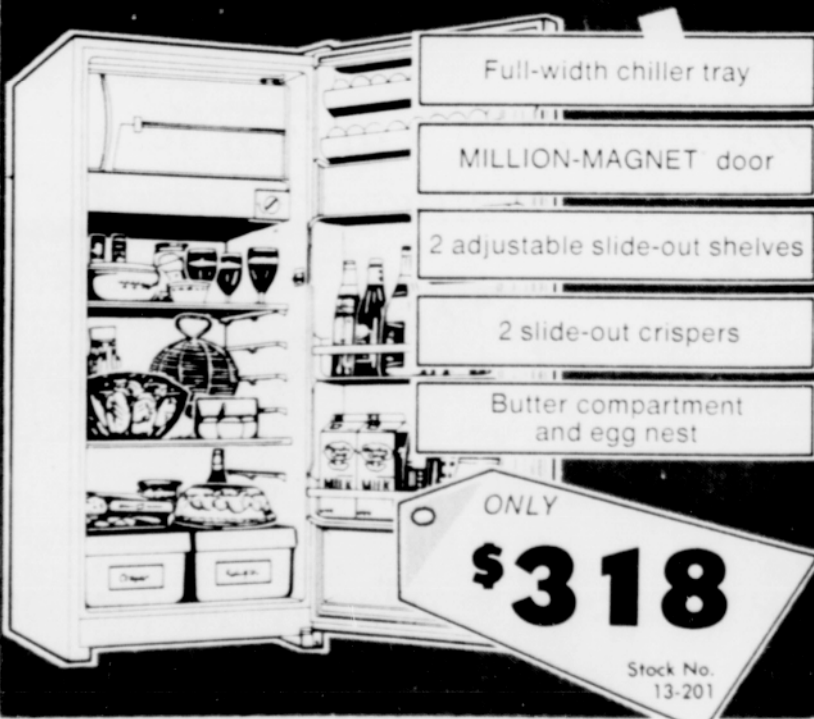
Donald L. Kalberer
Circuit Judge

Space-Saver!

SMITH'S
home furnishings

**ONLY 2 FT. WIDE BUT
BIG IN VALUE**

Whirlpool 12.9 CU. FT. REFRIGERATOR



There's lots of storage room packed into a little space with this big-value model. 11.14 cu. ft. fresh food storage is topped with storage for 1.76 cu. ft. of frozen foods. Come in today!

we give you more...

SMITH'S
home furnishings

**EASY
TERMS**

30th and S.E. Division
Shop 9 to 9 Tuesday thru Friday
(Closed Sunday and Monday)

234-9351
Saturday 9 to 6

The House Of
EXODUS

Alcoholism Educational and Treatment Center

1518 N.E. KILLINGSWORTH
PORTLAND, OREGON 97211

284-7997

APRIL

EXODUS

Resolves the Mystery and Secrets of alcoholism and drug abuse! A one hour presentation called the "GREAT DIALOG" reveals the truth about addiction.

This presentation is suitable for school classrooms, Assemblies, P.T.A. meetings, Church Social groups, Counselors or any group desiring to know how alcohol and drug addiction really works.

Call 284-7997 8am to 4:30pm Monday thru Friday.

A PERSONAL MOMENT
FOR THOSE WHO CARE

Man has invented tools and machines to do our work. We have become excellent artists. Medicine has now eliminated many diseases and made others less severe. Even parts of space are being explored and new knowledge gathered for future use. With all this wealth of knowledge, still no one can explain exactly what love is. Is this because love is still life's greatest discovery?

PRESENTED BY

**AMERICAN
STATE
BANK**

2737 NE Union
282-2216