

Idle Convicts Present Greatest Problem at State Penitentiary

(continued on page three)

uses the library. Studios all.

"Oh, I'm one of Milton Reynolds' victims. You know, the ball pen."

The young librarian, a forger from Portland, chuckled at his and added that westerns are the most popular books in the library. He said, are "rape-os."

He defines as "James M. Caldwell and similar crooks." Murder mysteries are not read.

Prisoners may also order books from the state library. But again, they are limited by booklists. There is no browsing. Most popular books borrowed from the state library are books about aviation and auto mechanics. A surprising number deal with fishing.

Consistent use of the library can improve a man's mind. Take, for example, the case of Ed Primrose, formerly of Wasco County, now of 2605 State St., Salem. Primrose, a man with six years of schooling, shot the police chief at Dallas. He began his life sentence May 30, 1919.

Now 37, Primrose is known as the best read man behind bars. Guards say he's read every book in the prison library and a good many of those in the state library. He has become a cultured man, they say.

Prisoners with little education attend the prison school where grade and high school subjects are taught. It used to be that a man who went to school couldn't work. Now, however, a convict can spend a day in each place.

Writing letters is a pleasure, if not a time-consuming, distraction. Because of the small censorship staff, inmates can write three letters a week, and they must be persons on an approved list. No more than 10 persons may be on a list. Only exceptions are given to members of the State Board of Control, the Parole Board, and to prospective employers of men who are almost ready to leave.

Letters to the board of control and the parole board are not censored. Others are. The inmate signs an agreement authorizing censorship. No agreement, no mail. Forbidden are letters "containing language offensive to any race, nationality, religious faith, political party, or any group of citizens, or criticizing any state law, policy or act of the institution, or any of the officials of the state, or letters containing obscene language."

Outgoing letters are limited to two pages, must be written on a special prison form, and must be written on only one side of the paper. Double-spaced typewritten letters are permitted.

Letter writing is further limited by the high cost of stamps, which are 3 cents each. Many men broke with nobody on the outside to send them money and with no paying jobs. They are in a bad way, although there is one possible way out.

If a man has no money for a letter, he may petition for postage for one letter a week.

They can subscribe to magazines and newspapers and may receive books from the publishers. But papers, magazines and books may not be sent by friends. Crime, detective and sex publications are forbidden.

Now and then a "true" detective magazine is smuggled in. It is a sport for the convicts to hunt for write-ups of their own exploits. They have found them, too.

MANY INMATES have typewriters and work on becoming authors, although anything they send publishers must go through censorship, and counts as a letter. A few pound away on their novels, some remember William Sidney Porter, whom the world knows as "Zerkow," wrote his best stuff behind bars.

A direct result of these literary ambitions is the magazine, "Shadows," written and printed inside the wall. A well-put-together monthly, it resembles "The New Yorker" in its approach, with perhaps a dash of the high school literary journal. Journalistically, it is good. The staff gets away with mild criticism of the penitentiary and parole policies.

O'MALLEY ISN'T altogether satisfied with "Shadows." He admits it has high literary merit, and that it advertises the prison to hundreds of subscribers on the outside. But he doesn't think it does much for the rank-and-file of the inmate population. He wants it changed.

Inmates may not receive food, except tobacco through the mail. The pen furnishes the necessities. Inmates must come from the \$15 month each man is permitted to spend through the canteen system. He has \$15. Some inmates had money when they came in. Others have a little on prison jobs, and receive a little from friends' money on the outside.

Chewing gum is forbidden inside the wall. A wad of well-chewed

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BRIMMS PLASTI-LINER



IN TWENTY OR THIRTY YEARS a man can read a lot of books, especially when there isn't much else to do. Seventy-five per cent of the prisoners in the state penitentiary use the prison library. Many more borrow books from the Oregon State Library.

Caviar Sale Brings \$211 Into State Till

PORTLAND —(P)—The State Fish Commission is \$211 richer Wednesday as a result of its Tuesday caviar and sturgeon auction.

The fish, containing 94 pounds of roe from which caviar is made, were killed in blasting in the Columbia River at The Dalles, where a dam is being built.

The Portland Fish Company bought the fish and roe. Mel Carlson, a company representative, said the caviar probably would be sold in San Francisco for \$7 or \$8 a pound.

gum can be turned to too many other uses.

RULES ABOUT visitors are similar to the mail regulations. The approved visitor list is also limited to 10 persons. If a convict wants to correspond with or receive visits from a woman not his wife, the prison authorities check carefully. They approve only if the prisoner's wife, if he has one, or the girl friend's husband, approve.

"We don't want to get mixed up in anything like that," says O'Malley.

On busy days visits may be limited to 15 minutes, which is rough if a visitor has traveled hundreds of miles to see a husband or son. Convict and visitor sit across from each other at a crowded table. A screen is between them, and a guard is watching. Other couples may be only inches away at the same table. Prisons in this country have a long way to go before they permit the "conjugal visit" some Latin American prisons allow.

Children from 5 to 16 may not visit. "Too tough on the kids," says O'Malley. "Take a kid who hasn't seen his father for several years. Then he sees him here. All his life that kid will carry a picture of his old man behind bars, and that's not good."

O'MALLEY HOPES to ease up on mail and visitor restrictions, as soon as he has staff to do it. He feels it's important for a prisoner to keep up his contacts with "dear friends" outside.

Prisoners are not supposed to gamble. Neither are soldiers. Now and then guards come upon

a vat of "pruno," which is prison slang for any home brew stewed up inside the walls. It might be rice wine or crude whiskey. More likely it is a potato derivative, because, guards say, potato mash requires no yeast. Stills have been found in cells, in the kitchen, in the hospital, laundry and industrial buildings.

Perhaps the most ambitious drinker was the convict who found a barrel in the yard and decided it was just right for a still. After numbering each stave, he dismantled the barrel and smuggled it into his cell, piece by piece. When guards found it, he had a good batch brewing in a prohibition-era still, complete with copper tubing.

"NIGHT RECREATION" is a new policy. Now men can leave their cells in the evenings to play games or visit in the corridors.

There is a weekly movie in the mess hall, but there are no crime films.

One of the great social events inside the wall is mealtime. The cons can talk while they eat now, but they can't linger over cigarettes and coffee.

The mess hall serves more than 1200 men in an hour. The room is cleared in an hour and a half. Men line up with trays in three lines, serving themselves to everything but meat and dessert. In front of them is the eternal mess hall sign, "Take all you want, but eat all you take."

IN THE CELLS prisoners can listen to the radio—by earphones. Programs are picked by the front office, however, and the only way to tune a program out is to turn off the set.

One of O'Malley's ambitions is to increase the prison athletic program. He wants a full-scale intramural program, plus several teams which will play in Salem leagues.

"Of course," he admits, "all of our games would have to be at home."

Officials who talked with their manager Monday night said he complained of severe stomach pains. Diagnosis of his ailment has not been announced.

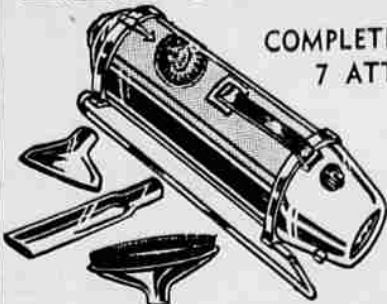
Mountain States Chief Under Doctor's Care

A. J. Moore, manager of Mountain States Power Co., Springfield, has been under doctor's observation in a Eugene hospital since Sunday evening, company personnel said Tuesday.

Officials who talked with their manager Monday night said he complained of severe stomach pains. Diagnosis of his ailment has not been announced.

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