

Di Tardo Won't Accept Release From San Quentin Prison Cell

By WEBSTER K. NOLAN
United Press International
San Quentin, Calif. — (UPI) — In the annals of crime and punishment, Tony di Tardo ranks as a maverick.

The aging convict, who celebrated his 88th birthday Thursday by blowing out the candles on his prison-baked cake and puffing contentedly on a big cigar, flatly refuses to leave San Quentin State Penitentiary.

It's enough to make any other convict weep with disbelief, but that's the way Tony wants it. And that's the way it has to be, because California law says no prisoner can be paroled against his will.

Tony was sent to prison for murdering his wife. That was in 1920. In 1945, the state adult authority offered him his freedom.

Prefers Prison
But Tony pulled the surprise prison reverse-play of the year with this "thanks-but-no" reply:
"When I leave here, it will be feet first."

To prove that he means what he says, Tony has refused parole on eight other occasions. The adult authority doesn't even bother to offer him his liberty anymore. Tony tells reporters frequently that he won't leave the "Big House" because he is too old and too comfortable. For the past three years he has occupied a private room in the prison hospital and, within that limited area, he does pretty much as he pleases.

"A good pair of boots," he smiles, "and a good heart and a home like this is all that a man can want. I stay here, come hell or high water. This place has everything to give me a good life."

Born in Italy
Tony di Tardo's "good life" began in 1875 in Cappuccio, Italy. He migrated to Buffalo, N.Y., in 1902 and came to San Francisco as an iron foundry worker two years later.

At the age of 45, the proud father of three children, he shot his pregnant wife to death.

During the trial, Tony con-

tended that he had been drinking and that somebody slipped something into his wine. He said he didn't know what he was doing. But the court sentenced him to death by hanging.

The sentence was later commuted to life in prison and Tony began his long, lonely residence at San Quentin, across the bay from San Francisco.

The short, stocky Italian was assigned the tasks of cell tender and supply distributor. He performed his chores — maintaining the cell blocks and assisting the guards on

their rounds, for 34 years. He became a trusted inmate — so much so that he was even allowed to keep the key to his own cell.

Listens to Opera
Tony's pleasures in life were the occasional visits from his family and the solitary moments in his cell when he listened to Italian operas and waltzes on his antiquated Victrola.

After a few years passed, the family visits ceased. As Tony remembers it: "Children stop coming long time ago. Brother stop sending me money in 1947. Maybe he's dead now. I don't know why they no come."

"I don't give a damn." But the white-thatched convict with the crusty manner still enjoys listening to his Caruso records, even though his opera house is a drably-painted infirmary and his companions are professional attendants.

"Why for I wanna go out?" he once asked. "I intend to live to 100 and I'll celebrate that birthday here to. I just wanna sit here in my rocking chair. I'll stay here until the Big Boss calls me."
"When St. Peter tells me, 'Come on Tony, I go quick.'"

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Grange News

Phoenix Grange
The recent meeting of Phoenix Grange opened with Master Lloyd Whiteside presiding. Among guests was State Overseer Roscoe Roberts, who was escorted to the master's station. Other guests were from Ft. Klamath Grange.

Mervin Hixon reported that milk producers will be unable to stand much more reduction in prices. He also told of a chemical for root crops that should be applied between March 10 and 20.

Charles Hockersmith said many Oregon counties rated high in farm products with pears getting the credit for Jackson county. The pear decline situation of Washington and California was reported by Charles Johnson.

During the insurance report, Roberts noted the requirements necessary to qualify for Grange insurances. A letter from the Grange Insurance association was read regarding returned refund checks for lack of proper addresses or other causes.

Resolutions read were those concerning subordinate Grange members receiving the Pomona degree at the state convention; the amendment to the school reorganization law and the resolution relating to Phoenix - Talent schools.

A county conference will be held at Central Point Grange at 8 p.m. Wednesday Jan. 30.

Elderly Warned Against Schemes To Filch Money

Washington — (AP) — Chief Postal Inspector H. B. Montague has warned elderly citizens that all manner of crooks are out to filch their money with schemes ranging from land fraud to fake youth nostrums.

Montague testified before a special Senate committee on aging which is conducting hearings on frauds and quackery affecting older persons.

He said mail fraud is on the increase and "experience has shown that certain schemes have particular appeal to elderly citizens, many of whom have been victimized by these promotions."

524 Convictions
There were 524 convictions for mail fraud during 1962, an increase of 21.6 per cent over the previous year, Montague said. Federal investigators have adopted new techniques to catch these "white collar bandits" but they are still at work in large numbers bilking the public of millions of dollars every year, he said.

Montague listed these frauds as having particular appeal to the elderly:
Advance fee racket: Owners of small businesses are induced to sell property to secure loans they never receive.
Vending machine schemes: Swindlers offer part-time employment for persons wanting to supplement family income. The victim is induced to buy the machine that brings him no money in return.

Sewing machine promotions: Housewives are talked into buying machines at excessive cost to make money at home making garments.

Worthless Lots Sold
Land frauds: Retired persons are sold worthless lots as far away as Brazil through beautifully illustrated brochures sent through the mail.

Medical Frauds: Elderly persons are sold nostrums advertised to restore youth.
Dr. Ronald W. Lamont-Havers, national medical director for the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation, told the committee Tuesday that arthritic sufferers are constantly subjected to fake gadgets and medicines advertised as a cure.

"The publication of books and magazine articles (reporting alleged cures) is one of the greatest frauds being perpetrated on the American public today," he said.

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