

Fifty-eight months I spent behind the wall. I got gum problems from it. One and a half dentists for two thousand men. Takes you a week to six months to get in to see him. Then all he wants to do is yank them. They've got an inmate in there cleans your teeth. He's had one week—one week—of on-the-job training. And if that doesn't scare you, the guy who gives you an electrocardiograph has the same credentials. That "half" dentist's a guy who just serves on some committee for dental health and has to do all the bookkeeping for his division or something. Same's true of doctors. One and a half. The guard determines whether you get to see a doctor. He's got two bottles on his desk. Aspirin and antacid. That's how bad the food is. All that starchy and steamy stuff. The combination is horrible. You get to the doctor and you don't see him. There's an MTA (medical technical assistant) and he looks at you and decides whether you really need to see the doc.

If you have all your teeth out, it takes them a year or more for the false teeth. By then your gums have shrunk. The bones recede and if you complain they'll take that much longer to get another pair. They put a filler in—you ever hear of that?—just like that red wax they use to make impressions with.

The prison (Lewisburg) was built in 1932 for 950 men. Now there's 2,000. The average federal prison in America is 75 years old. The average state 85. County jail 75. When they had me in Chattanooga the jail was 125. Been condemned. They put me in a cell within a cell—a place where they used to stow guys who were waiting to be hanged. I was there four weeks while that appeal was going on. The federal prisons—Atlanta, Leavenworth, Lewisburg, Terre Haute, etc.—are so isolated none of the inmate's people can visit him. If you get news that somebody in your family's sick you have to decide whether you want to see her before she's dead or after—they won't let you do both. You have to pay the guard to go with you even though he's already on the federal payroll. When Jo had a heart attack they let me go to San Francisco—unaccompanied—and I was back (gone two weeks) to the minute. Ten days later I was driven to New York to appear before a Grand Jury by two marshals, with handcuffs and leg irons solely for TV, radio, and the press. They've made studies in European jails and found that 99 percent of the men on furlough come back on time. And half of the remaining men were back within two weeks.

Half the guys in prison shouldn't be there. White-collar or first offenders ought to be put on probation. You take a kid from West Virginia and lock him up with professionals from New Jersey and New York, he's going to learn a few things and it ain't going to be how to go straight.

Of course when you get out, they give you sixty-five dollars, a bus ticket and an awful suit. And if you complain the guard says, "Sixty-five dollars is enough to buy a .38. You'll be right back in anyway."

You get this constant "unfaith," this ragging. Like a kid. You tell him "no" enough he'll never understand the meaning of yes, of what he can do, can accomplish. Even when you go to church in the can the preacher yells about how bad you've done, all the wrong you've committed. Jo's Catholic. She went. Says she's never seen anything like it. One priest listened to an inmate's confession, then reported him to the war-

den. Everybody gets sucked up into the system. They may be on your side at first but it doesn't take long for them to be pulled right in.

After crowding, the second worst thing is the people who run the prisons. The guards can't fit into society. They couldn't get a job anywhere else. Two things they're looking for: security and routine. They don't have to think and they get a pension. They're hoping against hope they won't be involved in a riot. You walk up to one and say how long you been here, he won't tell you how long, he'll tell you how long he's got to go. He won't say, "I been here five years," he'll say, "I got fifteen years to go." Invariably. They had this riot so they convinced the authorities they needed twenty-eight more people. They advertised. Got twenty applicants. No more. They couldn't pass the written test so they eliminated the written test and had an oral and they couldn't pass that, so they eliminated that, said it didn't really prove anything. Said "on-the-job training" was the answer. When I was at the meeting of lawyers and judges, Judge Ritchie told Carlson, head of the Bureau of Prisons, "I have to agree with Mr. Hoffa"—he'd spent two weeks traveling around the prisons. They don't give the guards a psychiatric test, don't see if they can handle people. They have a year trial period. I'd ask them what jobs they'd left and I came to the conclusion they were looking for federal security. Without exception they looked better in the guard uniform than in the clothes they came to work in. You have to come to one conclusion: it was the best thing that ever happened to them.

Conditions will never improve unless (1) we send them to school, (2) pay more money, and (3) make the job more human—the guards are serving time just like the inmates. It's just as inhuman to them as it is to the guy in the can.

As long as you're going to have mass prisons you're going to have mass thinking. The guards get so they hate their superiors. They're changed every ninety days and if you want to hear some griping, go around to them ten days before they're transferred—when they've got their new assignment.

It all goes back to the sardine condition. There are three tiers to each cellblock—49 people to the tier—roughly 150 people in each block. One guard to a tier. What ordinary guy would risk his life walking up and down those halls day and night? They stuff—not put—*stuff* 2,000 men into a building made for 950. That's the basic problem. And they never learn. Even the new prisons—and they have fifteen new prisons being built—none of them exceeds 500, but I guarantee you in two years they'll exceed that by double. And even 500's too big. They don't have to have that many people in prison in the first place. The judge doesn't have to send first offenders to jail—he can put them on probation, put them under supervision. California tried it and proved it. They've closed prisons.

People talk about rehabilitation. There's no such thing. They're talking from nothing. They tell you there's a small-motor repair shop. Well, it's for forty-eight men. Forty-eight out of 2,000. And they teach 'em leather stamping. Who the hell's going to give you a job on the outside leather stamping. Basket weaving and stuff like that.

You'd think they could try outside rehabilitation—on-the-job training with a real job. The

PRISON



By Jimmy Hoffa

dictionary says rehabilitation is making you the way you were before, but you and I know it has to mean making somebody better than before.

I put the truck drivers of this country in coats and ties, helped them achieve a better life than they'd ever known and I don't notice it's done the country any damage. I'd like to see the prisoners—those who can be helped—reaching for the same kind of dignity. You're not doing anybody any good, dehumanizing him, containerizing him. You make him hate his guard and through the guard, society as a whole, the people who put him there, and eventually, you make him hate himself, and then you've got a man who's hard to help.

It's a matter of economics. When you figure out what it costs to keep a man in a federal penitentiary—the money you lose in taxes by his not working, the cash it takes to feed and clothe him (such as it is), the risk you run in making a bigger and better criminal of him by this "school" you put him in—this hall of experts where the best criminal minds in the country—and they get caught, too, no matter how smart they are—where the best criminal minds congregate to improve their skills and to corrupt one-time offenders with the promise of future gold, the risk you run in corrupting the inmate's family—kids at home who have to, because they aren't supported, and who are shamed by their parents' incarceration, kids who *have* to turn to a life of crime, the cost in maintaining these pyramids of penalization, the cost of fertilized crime, then you got an idea where your tax dollar's going.

We've set up an organization—NAJ (National Association for Justice—it costs about \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year to operate). We finance it out of voluntary contributions—and we're working to keep people out of prisons and to make a prison an institution that will work for society, not against it. So far, you know what our biggest trouble is? Getting the wardens to let the guys use the phone.

Granted there are people who are criminally insane. But it doesn't help them to put them in with inmates who are not. There ought to be careful psychiatric examination of prisoners and guards too. And there should be a sharp distinction made between where you put civil offenders and criminal offenders. People talk about the criminal mind like it was something they were born with. I think—if it exists at all—that half the time it's a mind that's picked up in prison. A human being is like a tree. You strip it of its bark, cut off its leaves and branches, trim it to look like nothing, deprive it of water and food, and then see what it puts back into the air. You can't do it. And they never learn.

This is not something new. Look at Charles Dickens. Down through history. Now we have more crime than ever and they wonder why. I'll tell you why, criminals pick up all their tricks in prison and they proliferate crime when they get out.

The whole thing's personified by the hole. The threat of that hangs over you all the time. There's no window in there, no ventilation. No wash basins, no shower. One toilet. If you want to wash your face or get a drink you get it out of the toilet tank. Half the time they strip you naked. Nobody speaks to you, you never hear the sound of a human voice. There are no books in there, no reading matter, and half the time it's

pitch black. They let you take a shower once a week. There's no appeal. They slide your food into you. Now is that man going to come out of there and say, "Gee, how can I do better? What can I do to help society?" No, he's going to work his bitterness on our world until he's extracted some of the time and debt he feels—and I agree here with him—the debt he feels society owes him.

In a way, the riots that were taking place in prisons all over the country when I was in Lewisburg helped matters. Just like they held the hole over us and the promise of inhumane treatment—denial of chance of parole—all of a sudden, there was something hanging over them. The same fear, the same deprivation of not only constitutional rights but human rights, of trial without jury or judge, of punishment without justification. But it just scared them, it didn't improve anything permanently except "security measures"—for *them*, not the inmates. It all operates on fear.

Fear and deprivation. They take everything away from you. Even your name. I was #33298. One day they called down over the squawk box, "Number 33298 report to the warden's office." I



didn't go. They called it again and I still didn't go. Finally they came down to the cell and I said, "You call me by my name and I'll go. You can say #33298 Hoffa if you want to but I don't answer to a number. I'm not a number." So they stopped calling everybody by his number. That was one good thing.

When you lead a sedentary life—like you obviously do in prison—it's hard enough to get yourself in the frame of mind for self-improvement—self-preservation—and when you do and you finally get some time to go to the gym or the library, those facilities are either nonexistent or so small and overcrowded the average inmate just says to hell with it and takes out his frustrations and pent-up energy some other way.

They ought to have big space for that—wide space. You calm down a lot of violence in people—anybody ought to know that—when you let them exercise their bodies and their minds.

One of the most potentially dangerous areas is in the weight room. There was an incident at Lewisburg—a guy was using a barbell and another man came up and said, "Hey, I want to use that." And the first guy said, "Okay, hold on to your shirt and I'll be through in a minute." The

second guy says, "No, I want to use it now." So they got in a fight and the second guy stabbed him.

The weight room—all the recreation areas—is minuscule. One small yard for 2,000 people. One hundred chairs. They try to warehouse human beings. You can't keep your mind or your body in shape.

They say 40 percent of the inmates are homosexuals now. They ask them when they come in if they are. They seem to be proud of it nowadays.

I don't approve of so-called "conjugal visits." The way they're set up, your wife comes to see you in the prison and everybody's making wisecracks, insulting her. They have this special wing and everybody knows where you're going and for what. You bring a cow to a bull, you bring a mare to a stallion, but you don't bring a wife to her husband. All the jokes, all the vulgarity. It may be a good idea but you can't take the institution of marriage—the very basis of our society—and strip it of all its dignity, reduce it to a situation like the breeding of cows. Furlough's the only answer to that problem. That's something to look forward to, something to work toward. And it's been proven the inmates come back. Ninety-nine percent. Some of them can't stand it on the outside and come back early. You ought to see the homos banging on the gate to get back in to their "daddies."

The prison authorities have got to stop trying to put you down. They knew I'd cooperate—knew when my wife was sick I was back to the minute they told me—knew I was completely reliable, completely harmless, but when I went to the Grand Jury hearing in New York they had to put handcuffs and shackles on me, an iron band around my stomach. Had to do it. Parade me up and down in front of all the photographers and reporters.

They humiliate you. Strip you of every vestige of personality. Take your clothes away, tell you which pictures you can have on your wall.

Some of the kids come into prison, and it takes three men to hold them down to cut their hair. They don't like it. They have a certain way of dressing, of looking—you take that away from them and they have nothing.

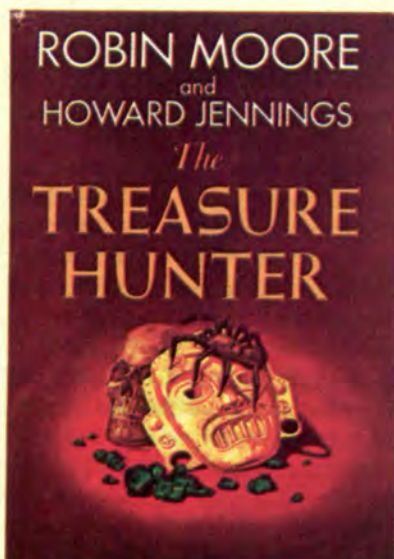
Hair's not going to hurt anything. They used to shave the troops back in Peter the Great's time but that was because of head lice. There's none of that today and if there is, the inmates pick it up in filthy quarters.

And clothes. What harm's that going to do? Give the prisoners a little pride in themselves and maybe in the institution too. Then maybe they'd want to make things work better.

Halfway houses are an excellent example of how people can be rehabilitated, how they can return to a money-making, family-raising, useful existence. These establishments house and rehabilitate at the same time and at a fraction of the cost and potential danger of your state and local prisons. The houses operate on the theory of the family unit, of people banding together for their mutual good, and indirectly for the good of the community. They are usually located in ordinary neighborhoods, close to town to make up for the lack of automobiles, and when its members succeed, when they get a job or "make it" as they call it, the whole house feels it's succeeded. I've been to these places—they're in most U.S. cities—

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The Post Recommends



ROBIN MOORE
and
HOWARD JENNINGS
The
**TREASURE
HUNTER**

The Treasure Hunter
Robin Moore and Howard Jennings
Prentice-Hall, Inc.
\$8.95

This is a true story of a man's lifelong search for treasures. The search has made him rich and has given him incredible experiences of high adventure. Through the steaming jungle of South America and in the highland deserts of the land of the ancient Inca, Howard Jennings pursued Spanish and Inca gold. Robin Moore, his lifetime friend and sometime companion in adventure, here helps Jennings tell his incredible story. Perhaps you have always had a yen to search for lost treasures. This book would be a good place to begin, for it actually pinpoints the location of several still undiscovered treasure hoards.

Time Of The Unicorn
Barbara Jefferis

William Morrow & Company, Inc.
\$6.95

The time is the twelfth century; the place is the barren coast of Portugal; the cast consists of thirteen survivors of a shipwrecked vessel, a strange mixture of aristocratic Normans and crude English peasants. If you have ever wondered about life during the Crusades, about the mentality of the times, this novel will give you keen insight. The eighteen-year-old heroine learns how thin is the veneer of goodwill and how readily people who are themselves threatened will allow hate and fear to dominate their behavior. From accusations of witchcraft to the rites of exorcism to administrations' ordeals, all the elements that make for a spellbinding novel are present in *Time of the Unicorn*.

Baseball's Great Moments
Joseph Reichler

Crown Publishers, Inc.
\$9.95

This book deals with the most memorable moments in postwar major-league baseball, beginning with the spectacular hitting performance of Ted Williams in the 1946 All-Star game and ending with Nolan Ryan's strikeout record, set on September 27, 1973, when he threw his 383rd strikeout of the season. The photography is very impressive, with photos on almost every page. This book pulls the reader into the action. It's as if you were there, sharing the frustration and triumph known to every major-league ballplayer.

Parrish For The Defense
Hillary Waugh
Doubleday
\$7.95

This is a courtroom drama, full of suspense, written by one of America's best-known mystery writers. The novel focuses on Cleveland Parrish, a criminal lawyer who is both famous and feared. He takes a murder case in Connecticut and, in his zeal to win it, ruthlessly maneuvers to present an airtight defense. In doing so he threatens to destroy everything in his path, even his client, if need be. The story builds irrevocably to the scene of the trial itself.

How To Turn Plastic Into Gold
Martin J. Meyer and Mark Hunter

Farnsworth Publishing Company
Distributed by Arlington House Publishers
\$6.95

You may have an overnight gold mine in your purse or wallet—several of them, in fact. The authors of this book maintain that a buying revolution is sweeping the nation, and that skillful use of credit cards can help you not only save money but make money. You will learn how to make the most money from credit cards, with maximum safety, how to cut credit card interest rates, which credit cards to avoid, and why the checking system is headed toward obsolescence.

The
BOAT of FATE
A Novel
KEITH ROBERTS



The Boat of Fate
Keith Roberts
Prentice-Hall, Inc.
\$6.95

This historic novel is set in ancient Rome, yet it is hauntingly contemporary. Violence surrounds young Sergius Paulus, and his society is rapidly changing all around him. Waves of barbarians attack Rome from without, and from within, a new religious sect, those who are following Christ, continues to pull followers away from the worship of the Roman gods.

Sergius Paulus finds himself forced through a series of adventures due to the chaotic nature of the time in which he lives. He struggles to wrest a bit of happiness from his world and on many occasions finds himself struggling to preserve his very life.

The Boat of Fate is an exciting, thought-provoking novel that presents an authentic picture of the last days of the Roman Empire.

Hoffa

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and you get the feeling of normalcy, the idea of a natural unit. Doctors work with the houses and counselors. The houses are like real homes—the women make curtains, help with the food, while the men do odd jobs—they do right because there're people in the house they have feelings for. You catch more flies with honey than vinegar. You build on hope.

Also you should use the know-how of people in jail. We had two doctors when I was in. Several lawyers. Bobby Baker, Carmine de Sapio. Now what's the good in making people like that stuff mattresses? They could be used to the prison's advantage.

When I look at the work that needs to be done in this country today, the rivers and streams—the vacant lots—that need to be cleaned up and you've got people—strong men, locked up doing busy work, it just seems stupid.

Of course, a lot of the feeling that prisoners have to be locked up out of sight came from the old chain gangs. I wonder how many men would've tried to escape if conditions had been even barely human. You don't want to put people on display but I think most prisoners would be a heck of a lot better off if they don't lose complete contact with the world; and one of the best ways to do that is to let them see it every now and then.

You can watch the average man in prison deteriorating every day. It didn't change me. I wouldn't let it. But I had four things going for me the average guy doesn't. (1) I had enough money. (2) I knew my family was taken care of. (3) I had lawyers who were fighting for me, and (4) I had enough activity to keep my mind active. The cases against me—civil, criminal and tax cases—occupied me. They even tried to cut down on the number of lawyers I was allowed to have. The number of visitors, the number of people I was allowed to write to. The number of Christmas cards I got. Ten thousand. They tried to get me to say I didn't want to see half of them, said it was too much trouble for the mail room. I said that's your problem, not mine. We proved time after time they photostated my letters. "Jimmy," the warden said, "we have to be hard on you so the press won't say we're soft because of who you are." That's it in a nutshell. Arbitrary treatment. They treat you any way they want to. Whether they like you. Whether they don't. Or whether they're completely indifferent to you.

My applications for parole were turned down every time. None of the explanations given me were valid. They've got to establish a fair system for parole. The idea of parole is to bring about improvement in behav-

ior; it is a system set up to gauge real repentance—it should be set up so you can't fool the parole board and officers and it should not be based on whim—whether they like you, or your nose or your necktie.

Maybe prisons are a necessary evil, I don't know. There are countries where they don't exist—Iceland, for example, where they don't have crime. The one thing you don't want to do is add to crime's being a paying proposition.

I intend to keep up my work in prison reform whether I get back into union work or not. I think every employer is obligated to give ex-cons jobs. I had over 400 letters I sent out to get jobs for these people. If they can't get jobs, they fall right back into crime.

People are not packages. They can't be stored in a warehouse and opened later for use. The merchandise will die. That's the first step in prison reform.

Rehabilitation—serious rehabilitation—is the second step. Third, inmates have to know their families are all right. That's got to be part of the rehabilitation program.

There ought to be an inmate—a spokesman for the entire prison—on the board, somebody who can speak for the prisoners without fear of reprisal. The prison riots of the last few years have proved that.

And prisoners have to have some way to let off steam. Recreation—of the mind, the body, the soul. If an exercise bar is going to keep somebody from being killed, it would seem to me a small investment.

After a man has committed a crime he doesn't experience a metamorphosis—like a butterfly in reverse. He's still a man. It's been shown time and time again prison's no deterrent. It doesn't stop a single soul from doing anything. And it worries me that it starts a lot of people doing a lot of things that are detrimental to themselves and to society and to the whole prison system. I was treated worse because of who I was but nobody ought to be able to say that. Fair treatment is free. It ought to be the norm. These aren't hard changes to make.

Nobody can really talk about prison—can really know it—unless he's been there. I'd like to put all these people who talk about how much progress has been made in the can for about ninety days. Even one day. You can't talk about it unless you know. You can't even know which direction reform should go in.

It's a bad loss—of time, of money—if we can't listen to the pain of people who've been behind the wall. We know what it's like, and the damage it's doing. Improvements would significantly reduce crime in the streets. I think that's worth taking some trouble over. **X**