

From the Inside to the Out, of Prison - A Commentary

By Brown Bear
a.k.a. Jay B. Mallott

Take it from one who has learned...the hard way, that contrary to trash put out about prison life by Hollywood, there is not one thing in being a prisoner or of prison life that is glamorous. I'm not going to make any long winded speeches, all I hope to do is to give my Native People a few words in "plain King's English," what you CAN EXPECT should you ever pass through the main gates of one of these institutions known as prison, then pass through the myriad of other gates as you pass through the security system that leads to "final gate or solid steel door" which in turn becomes your "domicile" for an eternity, your 6 x 8 foot cell.

Most of us are used to getting up early, right? Well, here you can plan on being up at 6:30 A.M., 7 days a week. At 6:30, you've a choice of four or five chores that may need to be done aside from your morning personal habits. Should you need to, you must go to the laundry for exchange of clothing, go to the pill line if you require medication, go to the sick call line if you hurt and need to see an MTA. It's almost impossible i.e., if you want to go to chow also.

Chow! forget it! if you've ever been served decent meals at home, then forget it here. Oh the basics are okh, but the cook, whew! what cook? You can pretty near bet the chow's all going to be cold, watered down coffee, the works. Your only consolation is; it could be worse, or you could be in Thailand or Cambodia or even in some places, the bush, right.

If you're lucky like this guy was and get sent 5 or 6 thousand miles away from your family, friends, relatives, loved ones, wife or husband or girl/boy friend...for the most part, you can kiss em' all good-bye. Why, because its just a matter of time (usually 6 months to a year) until the letters from hime trickle down to a virtual STOP. It's just a matter of time until you get that "dear john" from the girl or boy friend, husband or wife. Eventually, the closest "family members" write once a year or so and even they stop in ever so many instances.

Phone calls? once a week for 15 minutes if you're lucky

enough to have someone call at the outrageous prices the Bell System charges nowadays.

Visits? who can afford to go to Pennsylvania, Florida, Missouri or all of those places where Alaska Natives are invariably sent in the Federal Penal System even though they are supposed to be an Alaska State Prisoner? Can anyone think of a way to spend Gov. Hammond's 3 or 4 billion dollar oil royalties? Well, even if they did decide to build an adequate prison, only the Non-Native would be assigned to that relative luxury probably.

Movements? what are they? well, every hour on the half hour, about 20 or 30 gates "clang" open. And that is when you are "allowed" to go wherever it is you have to go. To the library perhaps or the hobby shop, to work, yes to work for nothing is free you know. You pay your own way by working for nothing. Or if you have a good job, you might earn ten bucks a month to pay for a four dollar carton of smokes and a six dollar bag of coffee. Or you could be a "slave" out at industries for as much as sixty-eight bucks per month provided you gain seniority enough.

Nothing is Sacred, Nothing is Private, Nothing is Yours. Should you cut your finger? you could be written up and charged with destroying Government Property. To get written up is a no-no, because that means that you could spend a few days or weeks in the "infamous hole" or administrative segregation as it is more commonly referred to by those who don't want people to know that there is a "hole" or "solitary confinement."

About the cut finger? well if you happen to need attention, forget it! go find a band-aid. First, you have to go to "sick call" at 6:30 A.M. They give you an appointment to see an MTA (Medical Technicians Assistant) later in the day. Then you might get to go see the PA later in the day if its serious enough. Then if the AP (Physicians Assistant) decides that its serious enough, then he might refer you on to a real bonafide doctor who'll call you a "goldbrick," give you an aspirin, tell you to get some rest (on your own time of course) and send you on your way.

If you really have a medical problem! then get set for a real

months on end succession of delays, because every time you want to see "your doctor" you have to go through the self same process just described above every time unless your lucky enough to be able to define your symptoms well enough to be placed on "call-out" which merely means that they may get back to you at some obscure time in the future.

For an Indian, Eskimo or Aleut who is used to gazing out the tent flaps into infinity, or at the sea, the mountains, the tundra, the forest, the birds, the bears, the seals, the whales, the walrus, the surf, the sun, the moon, the stars or of listening to the wind, the rain, the snow, the surf, the trees, the birds or the bees.... forget it! All you'll have are the memories to sustain you and 40 foot walls to unbrain you.

Freedom? you must have experienced freedom as all of us Natives from the Concrete Jungles of New York, Boston, San Francisco or L.A. or even Anchorage or Faribanks don't know what Freedom Really Is, do they? I mean, my village for instance, is 250 or 300 miles from its nearest neighbor. Now, thats Freedom.

In these "joints" if you are lucky enough to get on the second or third floor (if they have them) once in a while, you can "look out" over the top of

the 40 foot wall to glimpse the reminder of the great "eagle" in one of local birds to experience "Freedom" for that's as close as you'll ever get to freedom until your "time is served" for "whatever crime you did or didn't do that your Non-Native jury convicted you of.

Money? stop right now and try to count on 1 hand, how many folks you could really count on to send you the money you'd need for cigarettes and coffee, junk food, candy, a radio or batteries. If you're lucky, you'll get a buck or two because there are always too many mouths to feed and bills to pay "out there" to keep body and soul together and the wolf from the door.

Booze, Hootch, Rotgut, Poison, Hair o' the Dog that Bit You Yup, thats right, Alcohol & Drugs, thats the easiest way to get to one of these places where you can live the life of riley, have all your bills paid for you by the State of Alaska, food or sort to eat 3 times a day, no clothes to buy, no rent to pay, no hospital bills, no worries, NO VISITS, NO MONEY, NO PHONE CALLS, AND YOU'VE GUESSED IT.....NO FREEDOMBooze, Alcohol, Drugs, call it what you will, stay at it long enough and its likely to get all of the lovely things described above.

If you like, I'll tell you more as

time goes on about day to day incidents for your reading pleasure or is it displeasure? Nevertheless, I've just mentioned alot of the routine of the day to day drudgery of prison life.

Haven't even gotten into the Raping's, the robberies, the muggings, the knifings and stabbings. The killings. All of things that I read about that are going on in Anchorage every time I'm lucky enough to get one of the newspapers that trickle in here from some unknown source.

Why mention that? well, for one reason its that every so often its a Native that I'm reading about. Me for instance. But also of many others. I see them in the "vital statistics" page in every paper I get. Natives being raped day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. and even then you can bet that victim and/or the perpetrator was most likely hyped up on Booze.

When you are sitting in here on some lovely Christmas or New Year Holiday Season or on Thanksgiving, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day; then what will you think of all those "GOOD TIMES" you had swilling up that BOOZE? What will you be thinking about when you don't get any amil anymore because your people don't want to answer cause all you do is ask (See INSIDE, Page Ten)

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for money or why wasn't someone home when I had a chance to call or all you have to tell them is of your troubles, heartaches, pains and misery of the sould in a place where all semblance of "SPIRITUALITY" in the sense of "FRREDOM TO PRACTICE NATIVE SPIRITU-ALITY" is a thing of the past?

That's The Way It Is-During

This Christmas Holiday Season of 1979 and the Happy New Year of 1980 that is just around the corner the Great Spirit wil-ling. And that is the way it will continue to be in this Snake Pit and all others like it. Care to Join Me? Well, just keep on Boozing it up and you'll stand a good chance. It could be sooner than you think!!!

Meanwhile, if Tundra Times

chooses to print any or all of this "LONG WINDED, PLAIN KING'S ENGLISH SPEECH," Then please do have a Very Merry Christmas and a sane and Happy, Successful New Year..... WITHOUT BOOZE YET!

In Native Brotherhood,

I Have Spoken,

Brown Bear a/k/a:

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