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# Martinez Jail Riot Bamed On Boredom

By RICHARD GAIKOWSKI

**MARTINEZ.** The number one enemy of sheriff's deputies inside the County Jail is boredom, not any of the prisoners, not even the hardest criminal. Boredom was the root of last week's riots. There is nothing to do inside except sleep, play cards, read, if a dude can lay his hands on any printed matter, watch television is a privilege which has been denied since the riots and talk.

Most of the time the prisoners talk or just sit and stare out the bars at the blank walls. They talk about why they're in jail, their families, past crimes, and sex. Sunday night while trying to sleep, I overheard two dudes, three cells away, talk about ways of getting inside a supermarket undetected at night. One was telling the other how to disconnect a burglary alarm when a train passed by drowning out the conversation. After the train passed he was finished and I had missed my instruction.

## BANKS RISKY

They then debated the advantages of using machine guns or shotguns for holding up a bank. They both decided banks were real risky. Supermarkets are easier and don't arouse the authorities or the public as much. Back on the shotguns one said, "Man, I like to see the way that blast sort of lifts the guy up and punches him back." The other admitted he had never seen a man shot but that it must be a sight to see.

But the number one topic of conversation inside is sex. It is the first topic of conversation in the morning. It is debated in the afternoon and most often it is the last thing the dudes think of talk about at night, after the lights are turned out and they finally drift off to sleep.

## ARABIAN NIGHT

During my 38 hours as a dude, I heard literally hundreds of tales of erotic conquest. Cynical techniques, unheard of by authors of marriage manuals, were discussed in elaborate detail. It is easy to pick out the dudes who have been on the inside for any length of time. The newcomers seldom talk of sex, but the oldtimers continually talk about it.

In a military barracks sex is also the chief topic of conversation. But never in my two years in the U.S. Army did I ever hear the sex act discussed in such detail as I did during my 38 hours inside the jail.

In the females life of a soldier, pictures of girlfriends are permitted and pictures of plump girls are plentiful.

Inside the jail, however, these are not allowed.

Homosexual affairs are also

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the second of a series of exclusive inside reports on the Contra Costa County Jail in Martinez. Following riots last week and subsequent criticism of jail management, Richard Gaikowski, managing editor of the Martinez Morning News-Gazette, a Glendon Publication, got himself arrested and jailed and spent 38 hours "inside" to get a firsthand report on conditions.

discussed. Prisoners who have served stretches inside before talked the freest about it.

There is a special lingo used to discuss homosexual activity. It takes a while for the casual listener before such terms as "prune" are properly understood.

"I heard one dude who had spent some time in the joint (jail for San Quentin) discuss with another oldtimer an affair he had had the last time he was there. Both were married men. Both were going back to the joint."

## KEPT IN CELLS

During my 38-hour stay I was never approached nor did I see any moves being made toward anyone else. But the reason for this probably was we were never let out of our cells into the day room.

In the county jail there is no physical exercise program to divert the prisoner's emotional and biological drives. The sheriff's office is unable to use the exercise yard on the roof since completion of the 12-story County Administration Building. Undersecretary Harry Ramsey said it would be difficult to control the prisoners while people, particularly women, watched. There is no way to block the view.

## SEVEN STEPS

Within the cells there is little room for movement. The cells are seven paces long. I know. I walked it 197 times Sunday afternoon.

The dudes actively seek the trustee jobs, but not because of the few added privileges. Instead it is something to do to help kill the boredom.

One of my cell-mates, the one with long experience in prisons, thought he had been promised a job in the kitchen before the riots. Sunday he heard another dude got it. He became very emotionally upset and wrote a letter to Lt. Ray Stoffels, pleading for the job.

If he is sent back to a state prison he wants to go to a work farm because the inmates get to work long hours. "Time really flies then," he said.

## CHANCE OF PACE

The prisoners didn't riot last week because of bad food or because they were being mistreated. Instead the riots brought some excitement inside those gray walls. It was a way of letting off steam.

Rioting is contagious. Thursday night a small number of inmates went on a rampage in their cells on the second floor. Tension was high all day Friday and that night it spread to the main floor and involved most of the inmates there.

Judge Betsy F. Rahn's attack on the sheriff's management of the facility which was made public Friday morning was not

known inside until Sunday. It was not a cause.

One dude told me the rioting prisoners decided only after the focus started that they had better make some demands to make it look good.

## ANOTHER BREAK

The dudes didn't really mind the lockup following the riots. This was a break in the routine for those who had been inside for any length of time. They enjoyed seeing all the extra bulls on duty. The deputies were afraid, not for their lives. Instead they were afraid of more trouble. The dudes knew this and they enjoyed this small bit of power they had.

## TOMORROW: WHO'S BOSS, THE SHERIFF OR THE INMATES?



## CITY EMPLOYEES JOIN NORTH BAY UNITED CRUSADE DRIVE

City employees organized for the United Crusade campaign recently in a meeting held at City Hall with Assistant City Manager David Solenberger, chairman. In the front row, from the left are Gloom

Harris, George DeWitt, George Lyon, Virginia Russell, Homer Fletcher and Solenberger. In the second row, left to right, are Ted Blackwood, Manuel Silveira, Harold Landahl, Bob Low, Erwin Fol-

land and Bill Hendricks. And in the third row are James Brown, Jack Nitt, Kenneth Welch, Sam Gansler, Mildred Watson and Frances Prodry. See-John Photo.



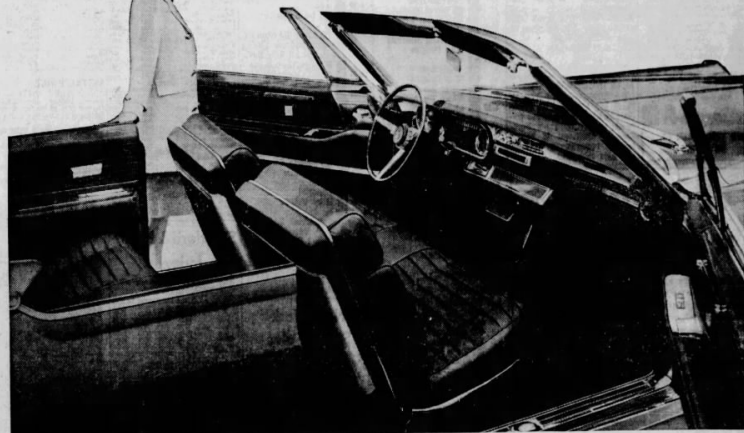
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