

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Elderly Jail And Too Many Inside

By RICHARD GAIKOWSKI

MARTINEZ—There are ex-convicts, hardened criminals, perverts and sadists in the Contra Costa County Jail, just as Judge Betty F. Rahn contended in her attack on the sheriff's operation of the facility.

This is the reason many are on the inside.

There are also some innocent persons locked up. These are the ones who have been charged with some crime and for one reason or the other are unable to get bailed out but who will be proven innocent at their trials.

There are also persons who have committed some minor crime such as violating a traffic regulation. These persons are not real criminals.

Yet inside the jail everyone is treated equally like hardened criminals, ex-convicts, perverts and sadists.

But this is not the Sheriff's Office fault so much as it is the fault of the jail.

The south portion was built in 1963. The women's section which can hold 10 inmates but seldom has more than 10, and a couple of isolation cells are located here, along with kitchen facilities and other offices.

Construction on the main portion of the jail was started in 1964 and completed in 1965. It was one of the four prisons built during World War II.

Special permission was required for the steel used in its construction. Permission was granted because of a large number of war workers who flocked to the county to work in the Richmond shipyards.

The jail was built by wartime standards. It is a maximum security facility with the main portion consisting of 36 four-man cells.

But the sheriff's office makes no attempt to segregate the inmates according to the crime they have been accused or convicted of.

When I was taken from the tank during my 30 hour stay in jail it was strictly by chance that I landed in Cell 5, bunk D on the second floor.

The deputies took of us, up the doors of cells with

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is last of a series of exclusive inside reports on the Contra Costa County Jail in Martinez. Following reports last week and subsequent criticism of jail management, Richard Gaiowski, managing editor of the Martinez Morning News-Gazette, a Gibson Publications, got himself arrested and jailed and spent 30 hours "inside" to get a firsthand report on conditions.

empty bunks, and told us to take the first empty bunk we saw. Weekenders, individuals serving a sentence over a series of weekends, can not be considered dangerous criminals but they are assigned to cells in the same manner.

With only three deputies on duty on any shift they don't have time to shuffle prisoners from cell to cell which would be required with the existing jail to segregate the inmates properly.

The only solution is to either provide enough deputies to do this, expand the present facility, or build a new jail designed in such a way as to make segregating prisoners practical.

Another alternative, as Judge Rahn suggested, was to have the weekenders turn themselves in at the county's prison farm near Clayton where there is adequate room.

140 LIMIT
The largest number of male prisoners the jail can handle is about 140. When the number goes over this total and if often does, the sheriff is in trouble. He then has to start sleeping the men on the floor in the day rooms.

This presents grave security problems.

The county has a responsibility for the safety of an individual in jail. With a staff of three deputies inside the jail, it is practically impossible. Everyone is at the mercy of the code. Under Sheriff Harry Haney said no prisoner has ever been murdered inside the county facility. But this would appear to be due to good luck, more than anything else.

There are several reports of prisoners being beaten up.

But basically, after spending

30 hours inside, I must say Sheriff Walter F. Young is doing the best he can considering the facility he has to work with and the size of his jail staff.

The food, while not the best I've ever eaten, was edible and the diet well-balanced. For breakfast Sunday I had toast, applesauce and coffee. At noon the fare included mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, sliced tomatoes, a piece of steak, tapioca pudding and coffee. The steak was tough and since prisoners are given only a spoon to eat with I was forced to fight with the meat with only my hands and teeth. The evening meal Sunday consisted of two cold meat sandwiches and coffee. Breakfast Monday was lukewarm mush, toast, juice and coffee.

"GOOD EATING JAIL"
My one complaint, the one who has seen the inside of a large number of prisons, said this was "the last eating jail" he's ever seen.

There was only one complaint made by the prisoners during the visit which I believe was a legitimate gripe. This concerned visiting days. Presently they are allowed visiting privileges through a small glass window in the county's prison farm near Clayton where they are allowed visitors on Sunday also.

Obviously it is difficult, if not impossible, for members of inmates' families to come to Martinez on a weekday afternoon if they are working. The authorities should do everything possible to help these prisoners maintain ties with their families if there is to be any hope in rehabilitating them.

Time goes very slowly in jail and even a short sentence can seem like a long time. My 30 hours seemed more like 30 days.

Vallejo Times-Herald

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This is one of the scenes and part of the cast of "Dimey and the Witches," the William Gibson fantasy that will be presented by the Benicia Old Town Players Oct. 29, 30, 31 and Nov. 5, 6, 7. Left to right are Edith Lewis, Bridget Villani, Rhea Leonard, Thelma Batchelor and Ronald Johnson. — Times-Herald Photo.

Surgeon General Will Visit Travis

TRAVIS AFB—Major General Richard L. Johnson, the Air Force surgeon general, will be guest speaker at a dinner to be held by officers of the USAF Hospital Travis, Oct. 22.

He will address members of the staff of the hospital, one of the largest in the worldwide Air Force, at the formal dinner to be held at the base Officers' Open Mess, hosted by Colonel James P. Jennings, hospital commander. Commanders of area military hospitals, as well as Western Transport Air Force (WESTAF) and base headquarters commanders will be guests at the evening affair.

The surgeon general has held the top medical post in the Air Force since December 1963. Previously, he served as command surgeon, Pacific Air Forces at Hickam Air Force Base, before his transfer to the Postage as deputy surgeon general in June 1961.

Son of a prominent Dallas, Tex., family, the general attended Southern Methodist University for his pre-medical education and won his doctor of medicine degree from Baylor University. A graduate of university ROTC training, he was first called to active service while completing his medical



MAJ. GEN. BOHANNON

... top post.

internship at the famed Parkland hospital in Dallas.

The general is a member of the American College of Preventive Medicine and of the Aerospace Medical Association, as well as a number of other professional organizations. His decorations include both the Army and Air Force Commendation Medals.

Awarding Of Bids For New School

VACAVILLE—Awarding of bids for the sewer construction at the Eugene Paden School is expected by the board of trustees of the Vaca Valley Union School District at 8 p.m. Monday in the district administration office.

Superintendent J. P. Forney will report on building progress of the Paden School and the school finance election. Discussion of the Winton Act, which deals with employer-employee relations, is also scheduled, along with other routine business.

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25 Houses For Fairfield

FAIRFIELD—Building permits for 25 new homes, in Parkway Estates unit number three, costing \$35,425, were okayed this week by City Building Inspector Phil Scott.

The house and garage units will be built by Demar, Inc. and will be on Atlantic Ave. and Atlantic Court. Six of the houses are costing \$12,810; four, \$12,671; seven, \$12,641, and eight, \$14,791.

H. G. Kreuter also received a house permit, for a \$25,637 structure at 615 Branford Court.

Roof repair permits went to J. Eriehier, 1110 Ohio St., \$386; W. Brown, 721 Nevada St., \$386; and Mr. Edwards, 725 Nevada St., \$386. Arnold Sent, 1349 Texas St., received a permit for \$50 repairs.

Thirty-six permits, totaling \$77,241, were issued for the week.

Motorist Unhurt In Auto Crash

FAIRFIELD—A Solano motorist apparently escaped injury yesterday afternoon in a spectacular one-car smashup on East Travis Blvd. near Railroad Ave.

The driver, Johnny Dooley, evidently lost control of his car, plunged into a ditch and crashed into a telephone pole.

CHP officers said the car was damaged beyond repair. Dooley was taken to Solano County Hospital in a Fairfield ambulance, but doctors said he had no apparent injuries.

Vallejo Dog Wins At Reno

Wycliffe Gwynne, a black standard poodle owned by Mrs. Mary Herak Burns of 142 Lavin Way, earned high honors recently in the annual dog show at Reno, Nev.

In the conformation class, Wycliffe Gwynne was judged first in open classes, winners high and best of opposite sex, winning championship points plus a silver trophy and three ribbons.

In her obedience work in Open A, Wycliffe Gwynne placed third in the class with a score of 19. She won her third leg, giving her a CDD (champion dog excellent title). For these awards, she won another silver trophy and another ribbon.

Mrs. Burns, who was accompanied to the Reno show by Cora Eshel, her assistant, is widely known for her three AKC registered black poodles and for her training ability.

She is trial secretary for the 10th annual obedience trials to be held at the Solano County Fairgrounds Nov. 7 under the auspices of the Vallejo Dog Training Club, Inc.

AA Will Hold Open Meeting

The Vallejo Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous will hold an open meeting at 8:30 p.m. today at 522 Marin St.

Sam De L. of Santa Rosa will be the speaker.

All persons who may have a drinking problem are invited to attend. Refreshments will be served at the conclusion of the meeting.

Vacaville City Planners Meet

VACAVILLE—Subcommittee reports and any business from the floor are the only items scheduled for the meeting of the City Planning Commission at 8 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall.

A Benicia Frolic On Grave Matters

The Benicia Old Town Players now have in rehearsal the William Gibson fantasy "Dimey and the Witches," described by the author as a frolic on grave matters. The play will be in production during the witching season, Oct. 29, 30, 31 and Nov. 5, 6, 7. Production is patterned after the Players' highly successful dinner-theater presentation of "Anniversary Waltz" last season.

Fridays and Saturdays a no-host cocktail hour will start at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. with curtain time at 8:30 p.m. Sundays, cocktails 4:30 p.m., dinner 5:30 p.m., curtain 7 p.m.

James Harper, well-known in East Bay little theater, portrays Dimey. Linda York, Napa, plays opposite him as Amy. Other members of the cast, from Napa, Solano and Contra Costa Counties are: Thelma Batchelor, James Higgins, Ronald Johnson, Leonard Juel, Jacqueline Kee, Rhea Leonard, Edith Lewis, Donald Parkhill, Bridget Villani and Robert Waters. Charles McDermott, Vallejo Junior College drama coach, directs the production. George Herbert, musical director, and Thelma Batchelor, director of dance sequences. Harry Bauer is the producer, as he was for "Anniversary Waltz," in which he also played Mr. Gans.

The dinner-theater production will be staged at the Benicia Old Town Theater (I.D.E.S. Hall).

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