



**San Quentin Warden
Robert L. Ayers Jr.**

SAN QUENTIN NEWS Mission Statement

The San Quentin News is once again an authorized publication. Warden L. Robert Ayers Jr. determined having a news paper for the population would be of benefit to all. Speaking on the issues important to prisoners, we the staff at San Quentin News shall seek to include everyone. A voice, for everyone, it will give the many different views and perspectives of prison life. San Quentin is known by name all over the world; what's done here, is copied by many. Death Row, Lifers, H-Unit, and even the Reception Center have a use for good and relevant information on what is going on around them, and to them, and a story to tell. The "What" in "What's going on," shall be the message. A focus on the reduction of recidivism is going to be an essential part of this paper.

The following areas are our primary topics: (1) Educational: Acknowledgments of Graduating students, and featuring students and instructors from basic-education through college and vocations. (2) Rumor Control: Finding out what is "really" going on in a situation. (3) Sports: Getting the scoop on who's at their best game. (4) Special Events: Peace Day, Graduations, Concerts. (5) Legal: General Medical and Housing issues; major court rulings. (6) Interviews: Key Staff Q&A, SQ Volunteers and Visitors of interests. (7) Editorial: Commentary of "life" here at SQ and reflections therein. (8) Writing: Poetry and (very) short prose. (9) Programs: Features of SQ self-help programs. (10) Religious: Features of Religious services and interviews of Chaplains and Others. More news to come as we figure things out...

San Quentin Fact:

Two of the Wardens in the 2008 San Quentin Calendar were already deceased when their photos were taken.

INTEGRATING PRISON CELLS

Suzan L. Hubbard
Director Adult Institutions

California's prisons have long been integrated. Women's housing, dining rooms, camps, classrooms, programs, work assignments, yards, visiting and dorms already have integration policies in place.

The Integrated Housing Program will give us more versatility in housing male inmates, assist in gang management, reduce racial tension, break down prejudicial barriers and attitudes and reflect community values.

However, this plan does not call for forced integration. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is not mandated to integrate the entire inmate popula-

tion with respect to in-cell housing. Current safety and security measures will remain. Employees are still expected to use sound custodial decisions for safe housing.

Should there be a race-related incident, the plan would be temporarily suspended. Offenders who pose a threat to one another will be separated. Safety is paramount.

Historically, the CDCR used race as one factor in housing decisions, primarily at reception centers. The new regulations ensure that race will not be the sole determining factor. We are confident this plan will work and promote inmate integration where safe and appropriate to do so.

"TOUGH ON CRIME" BILLIONAIRE INDICTED

Kenneth R. Brydon

Henry Nicholas III, co-founder of Broadcom Corporation, was indicted on 21 charges including drug possessions, drug distribution, and spiking drinks of unknowing victims with the drug ecstasy. Nicholas is the one who funded the last minute effort to defeat Proposition 66, which would have modified the 3 Strikes Law, and result in the release of 3 Strikers with non-violent misdemeanor offenses. His current project, is the voter initiative that will be on the November ballot titled: "Marsie's Law." According to current Federal law a life-term may be imposed if convicted on a number of charges. In the State of California, his charges could result in multiple Three Strike sentences being handed down.

"Marsie's Law" results in turning most life "with" the possibility of parole, into a life "without" parole. The passing of these laws would increase the length of parole denial from that of one year to a maximum of five years, to that of a

minimum of three years and a maximum of 15 year denial. This process would suppose that the "normal" denial would be for 15 years.

This law seems to be intended to be applied retroactively, so, even a seven-to-life sentence, would suddenly jump to a 15-to-life upon appearing in front of the board after this law is enacted. Henry Nicholas's daughter, Marsy, was murdered in the early '80s, and he has taken to using his wealth to support what are harsh penalties for all prisoners. Marsy's law also will undo court settlements that required Parole Violators be given certain due process rights.

Information indicates that Mr. Nicholas is undergoing treatment for abuse of alcohol. Like many prisoners, he is being introduced to a 12-step program which teaches tolerance and forgiveness. Perhaps a second chance for everyone, including himself, would be a good thing...

Men's Advisory Council Sammy Johnson, Chairman

The Men's Advisory Council ("MAC") was developed to be a conduit for the General Population Inmates to the Warden and all Department Heads as well as Correctional Staff. It is this Council's Position to effectively represent and communicate the opinions, grievances, suggestions, and recommendations of the inmate population at San Quentin.

There are two primary directives of the MAC: The first is to seek to improve inmate/staff relations. The second is to promote the general welfare of all inmates at SQ.

In order for any relationship to work within a social society, a gated community, marriage, or a common arena, there must be first and foremost a line of communication and a common interest. As many of the veteran staff retires, they are being replaced with younger Correctional Officers fresh out of the Academy with the understanding that all inmates are hostile and not to be trusted. This in turn, breaks down the line of communication, especially here at San Quentin where it is needed the most.

SQ affords more programs than any other prison institution in the State of California with the common interest of Rehabilitation. And, in order for rehabilitation to achieve its goal, Staff, the Administration, and the Inmate population must communicate their community interests.

In order to promote the general welfare of all inmates at SQ, this Council's objective is

to achieve and establish with in the Laws and Regulations governing procedures and guidelines the least restraints and restrictions possible governing its classification of this Level II prison at SQ. By this process, impacting the on-going rehabilitation process towards re-entry of all inmates back into mainstream society.

In order to accomplish the improvement of the general welfare of all inmates at SQ, this MAC seeks to improve the following list of everyday concerns and necessities. These are only but a few listed concerns:

SQ Integration policy and forced participation.

Culinary Food Quality, Quantity, and Sanitation.

Laundry Exchange (inconsistency).

Notification of Institutional Program changes within units by staff.

Canteen concerns (can exemption, healthier items & price increases).

Institutional Digital Cable Conversion (before February 17, 2009).

The social objective and concerns of this MAC is the betterment of all aspects of living condition and the healthy relationship of Inmates, Staff, and Administration. It is also our interest that all inmate concerns in this social community are needed and valued. A closed mouth does not get fed. Remember, "Respect increases the quality and quantity of a community."

SQ's Law Libraries Serve All Segments Of The Population

by John E. Dannenberg

San Quentin has two fully compliant law libraries plus three satellite partial law libraries to serve the prison's diverse population. The Main Law Library is now located in a renovated section of the old laundry building on the lower yard and serves the North Block, H-Unit, West Block, Gym and Special Program populations. The SHU library, located in the Ad-Seg visiting area, serves the Row and Ad-Seg populations. The satellite libraries are located in North Segregation, East Block and the Adjustment Center.

Two Senior Librarians, Tom Brobst and John Nelson, supervise the Main library, including its recreational book section. A third Senior Librarian, Doug Jeffrey, runs the SHU library. The Main Library employs five prisoner law clerks and five general

circulation clerks. Duties of the law clerks include ordering all law books and supplies, filing and updating the law book collection (for all five law libraries), maintaining standard legal forms, and assisting inquiring prisoners at the law window. Additionally, the law clerks do legal copying and respond to questions referred via the SHU librarian.

Newly added to the Main Law Library are five computers which provide users with lookup capability on court-mandated (*Gilmore*) case law plus Title 15, the Department Operations Manual, California court rules, the California Digest, the Federal Digest, *Witkins* and California Jurisprudence research tools. The computers provide word search capability over all volumes which greatly speeds research, but no printing or

typing capability is provided.

The Main Law Library collection includes all California case law from 1860 on. Federal case law books include the district court rulings (Federal Supplement) and appellate court rulings (Federal Reporter) from about 1940. SQ's U.S. Supreme Court case law goes back to 1790. The current validity of any past case may be researched using Shepard's Citations. Additionally, one may use Shepard's to research statutes, regulations, court rules and jury instructions. To research California law by topic, California Jurisprudence is a comprehensive legal encyclopedia citable in court pleadings. Additionally, the venerable *Witkins* legal research book series provides detailed (and citable) advice on California criminal and evidence

law.

Several available books aid the prisoner user to formulate and prepare legal pleadings. The California State Prisoners Handbook is an excellent starting point. It covers prison regulations, administrative appeals, habeas corpus petitions and mandate petitions. The two-volume Appeals and Writs series is popular with prisoner litigators, too, adding discussion on applicable rules of court. Of course, the library carries the rules of court (state and federal) in separate volumes, but they are often difficult to comprehend. California criminal law questions are best answered in California Criminal Law and Procedure. Similarly, federal habeas corpus law is thoroughly reviewed in Federal Habeas Corpus Practice and Procedure.

ANDREW GERARD LEAVITT

July 02, 1959 – May 25, 2008

Andy Leavitt paroled on a Sunday night. It wasn't the way anyone wanted to see him leave, but in the end, we welcomed his release from pain. He showed great courage as he fought the good fight, remaining polite and caring to those around him, even when knowing his time in this world was to be cut short. He arrived at SQ in June of 1982, serving 25 years to Life. Soft spoken, he worked as a Machinist in the Vocational Machine shop.

A journeyman machinist, Prison Industry constantly pursued him, where he could make top dollar. Yet, he stayed on in Vocations to mentor other students. Andy was a accomplished teacher with patience that made him the one everyone went to for help or



guidance. Andy's parents, Victoria and John Leavitt, were there with him not only in his closing days, but in his life throughout his incarceration. Mr. and Mrs. Leavitt visited Andy and his brother David weekly for all of Andy's 26 years here at SQ.

The bitter-sweet of seeing a child die in prison, was surely offset with truly knowing that their son was a man of whom they could be very proud of. His parents rightfully saw him as the man he'd become, opposed to the crime committed in his youth. On Friday, May 30, 2008, a memorial service was held in the Catholic Chapel to honor Andy. Some were there who knew Andy for upwards of 25 years. May his passing bring more meaning to those still here.

JOURNEY TO A.A. DEGREE

Michael A. Tyler

I never thought education would be so much fun and rewarding. It's funny how things look one way at first, and then change right when you finally accept how they look. My journey

to an A.A. Degree involved more people than I thought. The major figures were: my mother, my aunt, all the volunteers, the other students, and, finally, myself.

In January 2004, it began here. My mother always gave me the reinforcement of, "You can do anything you want with a little work." So, I signed up for college in one of those moments of "I can do anything" attitudes had come upon me. Those moments seemed to pass fast.

I remember telling the coordinator of Patten University, Jody Lewen, "I can't quit any more!" I saw it had been too much of life already. While my mother brought this type of understanding, I had to do my part. Mom was a great role model; I wish I'd used her sooner.

My aunt always sees the glass half-full, and uplifts me in her own ways. She doesn't know the role she played. Seeing how she understood made me want to learn even more just from our conversations. She showed the importance of getting an education in



the long run.

The tutors and instructors are special! These beautiful people help in the best of their capabilities. Sometimes, just by repeating the question, other

times showing you step-by-step, and always with real respect!

The other students played an equally important role. Everyone came together for one purpose – to learn and to help each other. I know there were a few times where I didn't get the grade I wanted and instead of putting me down, the other students lifted me up and reminded me that we all have bad days, and that tomorrow I can still do better. That sounds so simple, but that's the underground work we do for each other to keep us going.

Now, my part in all of this: I could not allow myself to give up or disappoint the rest. Work in the day, and school at night was hard. Squeezing in home work was hard, but now I see its value in a better life. It's meant the world to me, affecting every part of my life positively.

To those reading this, education does change your life. Everyone, both free and in prison, should be offered an education. A brighter future for everyone isn't a bad thing.

The California Supreme Court has accepted several cases for review to determine when, if ever, the fact that a person committed a murder in the distant past no longer supplies reliable evidence that he is currently dangerous.

Lifers who are eligible for parole and who have appeared before the Board of Parole Hearings are well acquainted with the Board's use of their commitment offense as the primary reason to deny parole. Lifers who have been found suitable for parole and have had their suitability finding reversed by the governor know that their crime, usually committed decades ago, still matters.

We have to live with our decisions. We cannot turn back the clock or hold back the years and undo the wrong we have done to ourselves and others. For those of us who have taken a life, the pain we have caused is irrevocable. No amount of positive programming can fill the hole we left in the family of the victim of our crime. We can show our repentance in the path we choose and the decisions we make now.

Courts in California are striving to achieve a balance between the immutable harm done to the victim and their loved ones and to the requirements of the parole statutes, which state that parole should be the rule rather than the rare exception.

Many lifers now see themselves as victims of injustice. Justice is not an abstract principle. It is relational. Justice promotes good relations between people and groups of people. Injustice breaks down good relations and breeds anger, hostility and violence.

The concern for justice should not be confined to just those of us who must appear before the Board to gain an opportunity to rejoin free society. In 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote the "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." He was responding to eight white clergymen in Alabama opposed to civil

disobedience. They feared his actions would incite civil disturbances.

He wrote: "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Moreover, I am cognizant of the inter-relatedness of all communities and states. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all."

Two quotes are engraved on the wall of the museum of Jewish Heritage. "Remember, Never forget," and, "There is hope for your future. As lifers we can never forget why we have spent the past years in person. But if we as a society believe in redemption and that people can rehabilitate themselves then a real hope and future must be extended to those who have complied with the requirements for parole. In *Capriello v. New York State Board of Parole* 800 N.Y.S. 343, 2004 WL 3112628, Judge Wetzel wrote:

"Murder is obviously a very serious, tragic crime involving this loss of a human life...Each day, the court interacts with defendants accused and convicted of terrible murders, as well as the families of the victims. Those families come to court, listen to the evidence, weep at the crime scene photos, and speak passionately about their loss at the sentencing of the convicted defendants. There is no greater agony than that of a family member of a murder victim, and this court acknowledges and empathizes with that pain. It is a pain which does not abate over the years and nothing can become to relieve that suffering. The only variable that can change in this situation is the defendant... [some] defendants...take advantage of the opportunities in prison for rehabilitation, move on in their lives to do service in the community, to make amends for their actions, and to make contributions to their families and to society. Their achievements, as great

as they are, will never erase the horrendous brutality of the past, nor can it ever fully compensate society for the damage which has been done. However, in a system which is premised on the hope and possibility of rehabilitation, and a statutory system which mandates a serious, rational and meaningful evaluation of the statutory criteria, we must allow an individual who has taken advantage of opportunities to rehabilitate himself to move beyond a horrific act of many years ago and to rejoin society to contribute according to his ability."

The arbitrary practice of the Board in reciting the facts of the murder at a parole hearing and using that as the basis to deny parole has been exposed primarily through habeas petitions filed in proper. The unselfishness of inmates assisting others for the common good has resulted in favorable state court orders in cases like *In re Elkins*, *In re Viet Mike Ngo*, and from the Federal District Court in *Jerome Thomas of Habeas Corpus*.

Perseverance and commitment are required to gain release through habeas petitions. The Attorney General routinely appeals virtually every favorable ruling from the lower court. Misguided and sometimes selfish advice comes from fellow Lifers and self-proclaimed jailhouse lawyers counseling individuals not to file. Many Lifers have been dissuaded from seeking relief from the courts against the Board or Governor for parole denials. An ancient principle from the Torah admonishes us not to put a stumbling block before the blind. Lifers need to become informed about the legal process and the pertinent cases dealing with parole issues. Through respect for other viewpoints and approaches, Lifers have been able to bring issues relating to parole before California State and Federal Courts. Continued success will come from applying wisdom as Hillel states: "If I am not for myself, who is for me. If I am only for myself, who am I. If

CALIFORNIA REENTRY PROGRAM

Kenneth R. Brydon

Resources for a successful parole are available through the "California Reentry Program." This program is brought to SQ by a group of volunteers. Available every Tuesday night in H-Unit, and every Thursday night on the Lower Yard in the "Old Laundry." The program also provides assistance for Lifers who want help in developing Parole Plans for the Board. Allyson West leads the group of well-educated, highly motivated individuals who sacrifice their own time to offer the following:

- A. Career Advice, giving guidance and assistance in what field of employment best for you.
- B. Employment, finding job opportunities in the field of choice.
- C. Education, continuing education,

from GED, Trade Schools, to College, and the financial aid to attend.

D. Housing, transition housing, and other assistance for living arrangements.

E. Substance Abuse Treatments, the California Reentry Program is connected with the "Bay Area Services Network" which can help you in locating help in overcoming addiction.

F. Miscellaneous Issues, such as, attaining identification, attaining transcripts, child support and parental rights issues, parole agent contact, attorney referrals, etc...

G. Monthly Workshops, are held in H-Unit for the following: Resume Writing, Job Interviews, Effective Workplace Communications, Assessing Your Skills and

Interests, Labor Market Information (who's hiring), the filling out of Job Applications, and, occasionally, Health and Immigration workshops. The H-Unit Workshops require sign-up, to be sent to "Allyson West c/o Education Department."

The Tuesday's California Reentry Program is available by showing up when announced in the dorm. Thursday's program, in the Old Laundry, requires being on a movement sheet; requests to be placed on the movement can be sent to: "Allyson West c/o Education Department." Or, if you see Allyson, ask her to include you. Ducats will no longer be issued; only the movement sheet is necessary.

California Reentry Program
P.O. Box 483
San Quentin, CA 94964

We Don't Scare Straight... We Communicate!

By S.Q.U.I.R.E.S.

Imagine, if you will, being a prisoner in one of San Quentin State Prison's most secured and notorious housing units. This is the housing unit where most outsiders consider all hope to be abandoned and lost. This is the place where some say they keep California's most dangerous, incorrigible, and irredeemable souls. This place that I am speaking of, is California's "Death Row" or the now politically correct "Condemned Row." The men and women in California who carrying the title of, "Condemned Inmates," are the very individuals most people believe cannot be trusted with anyone else other than their own peers (other condemned inmates). They are the group of men and women who have not only given up on themselves, but also their families, communities and ultimately society. They are "Societal Outcasts," from which nothing positive can come... So they say. If we look back at the history of Condemned Inmates, we will find a myriad of men and women with a wide range of crimes that had an extremely negative impact on societies yesterdays, todays and tomorrows. Most people will continue to focus on that negative light and see nothing else but a man or woman who is now only wasting the state's time and money... Ladies and Gentlemen, this is far from true, from this world of cement and steel, a rose from concrete can grow.

So let's take a look at that history again; this time, let's look a little deeper. If you dig below the surface, you will find a host of Condemned men and women who have reached back out to their families and communities by way of authoring books, letters, periodicals, etc. I will not attempt to make any excuses for crimes committed, but instead I want to make an attempt at shining a light on the compassion that still lies in the hearts of these people who some believe have nothing else to live for. If you listen to what I am saying, and you dig just deep enough, you will find a man by the name of Ross "Patch" Keller. Ross Keller, convicted of murder with special circumstances was given the penalty of a "Death Sentence." In the early sixties, Ross Keller, the father of a growing son, was faced with a difficult challenge. He like many other incarcerated men placed himself in the situation of not being able to care for his family. Ross Keller's son was being influenced by the negative influences of society and ultimately began traveling the path of his father. Ross Kel-

ler came up with an idea of a program that could possibly help him, help his son. In a desperate attempt, Ross Keller drew up a proposal to create this program. In 1964, San Quentin's Utilization of Inmates Resources, Experiences and Studies other wise known as S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. was born, holding its first workshop with "at-risk" youth from the San Francisco Bay Area. Although Ross Keller's son was unable to attend the first workshop, he did eventually gain admittance into a later workshop. However, Ross Keller himself was unable to attend the workshop due to his being a prisoner in this facility.

Today, 44 years later, S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. holds workshops for at-risk youth that are mentored by the incarcerated men of San Quentin. The workshops provide close communication between the youth and the inmate participants, which has proven to be beneficial in many cases. During the sessions, every effort is made to establish a rapport with the youth. When needed, a verbal confrontation may be used by a S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. member to deal with a specific youth. This verbal contact has opened up problem areas which otherwise could have gone undetected. Also included in the S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. session is a tour of the lower exercise yard where the youth come in close proximity of mainline inmates, where the youth are offered graphic descriptions of life and existence at San Quentin. The youth also have the opportunity to tour housing units where they experience being placed in a cell for a period of time.

S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. like many programs in San Quentin State Prison has planted a seed and nurtured a relationship with its outside community creating an environment that is safe for communities to come in and be educated with this incarcerated community. In most cases, parents of teenagers who have trouble with their youth may seek advice from many sources: psychologists, psychiatrists, family counselors, teachers and judges. But few go to a source that speaks with the voice of experience about impulsive acting out and its consequences-incarcerated men, who have committed serious offenses. These men have invaluable information on the cause, as well as the devastating affect, of their behavioral problems.

If you have any questions regarding the San Quentin S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. program please contact:

Marie Rodesillas:
415-454-1460 ext: 5382
Ernie Pulliam:
415-454-1460 ext: 5348

Communities Unite – Promote Health Care

By The T.R.U.S.T.

In an environment created of iron, stainless steel, cinder blocks and concrete, are an accumulation of men who have committed a mixture of crimes ranging from drug dealing and petty theft to kidnap and murder. In this cruel, man made environment, live individuals who don't follow the rules, disobey laws and simply don't get along well with other men and women who are their polar opposites (law-abiding citizens). When we walk down streets, people clench their property and in some occasions, cross the street all in the fear of being robbed or criminally violated in some manner. Currently housed in a population of approximately 5,300, we, the incarcerated men of San Quentin State Prison are viewed as individuals whom society must be protected from. As an incarcerated man, this reporter can happily and easily contest that we are not the cancers of society. But don't take my word for it; instead, allow me to share with you an interesting dynamic that is in place here at San Quentin State Prison.

On this cool May morning, I was blessed with the opportunity to participate in San Quentin State Prison's 6th Annual Health Fair. This is an event that is hosted by the San Quentin T.R.U.S.T. for the Development of Incarcerated Men in conjunction with the National Trust for the Development of African American Men, the Alameda County Health Department and the Urban Male Health Initiative. The purpose of this event is to promote "Good Health" within self, family and community and to educate the incarcerated men in chronic health issues pertaining to gender, race and age. Every year, Dr. Arnold Chavez of the Alameda County Health Department pours his heart and soul into the recruitment of Health Care professionals for our annual health fair. What was once the hardest sell in the world for Dr. Chavez, has easily become an abundance of professionals who jump at the opportunity to participate in this annual event. Dr. Chavez remarks, "In the beginning, I was only able to get 10 – 15 Nurses and Health Specialists to participate in the event. Now I have over a 100 people each year who try to clear their calendars to participate in this day at San Quentin." This year's bunch of enthusiastic professionals included specialists providing information on Sexually

Transmitted Diseases (STD's), Risk Reduction, Cancer, HIV/AIDS, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), Nutritional Values Counseling, Blood Pressure testing, Body Mass Index, Glucose Testing, Cholesterol Testing and yes... Yoga! While Alameda County Health has always been at the forefront of volunteering, this year has brought a group of new faces. Entering the San Quentin health fair arena for the first time were doctors and interns from the University of California, San Francisco which provided information in the fields of Geriatrics and Nutrition (Healthy Choice Recipes). Mildred Crear, an Oakland native, has been in the Health Care profession for 44 years, currently heads the Black Nurses Association (BNA) and was manning the Glucose Testing table. Mildred, a Registered Nurse who is here for her third visit states, "I return each year to empower people, give information about health care so the men in San Quentin will know and understand their numbers (Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, Sugar and Body Mass)." Mildred continues by stating, "I hope the Receivership will improve the health care here in San Quentin and perhaps work together with outside organizations to help this process. Mildred went out on a limb by stating, "Maybe they will make the food better." Bless her heart! During Mildred's first visit, she was very skeptical about coming to San Quentin because she feared the unknown. At the end of our day, I was able to ask Mildred how she felt and she responded by simply stating if she could, she would take us all home with her. When she comes in she feels... Comfortable! And has no concerns while she is here and has stated that she feels safer here then she does in her own community at times.

While the focus today is strictly on promoting health, Dr. Gary Mendez, executive director of the National Trust, states in a speech provided to the population attending the fair, In making this statement Dr. Mendez lays down a challenge to the incarcerated men to make a change; and they respond. In droves, the men of San Quentin start showing up and participating in the different booths. As you make your way around the makeshift, "Medical Complex," a picture of unity shows very clearly. Outside in the front yard, where

rows of tables are lined up with professionals providing valuable information to the incarcerated men, genuine smiles, pleasantries and gestures are exchanged by both sides. Those people who were once afraid to be around us are now excited about having us around them. If you paid close attention, you actually saw several members of the T.R.U.S.T. actually working side by side with health care professionals assisting in not only passing out information, but sharing their own health experiences with other members of the incarcerated population thus giving the men a face they can put on this experience.

Katchie Ananda, a 20-year veteran yoga instructor, was asked about her experiences here at San Quentin and how she felt about being here. Her response was simple... "I am just happy to be able to give to your community." You can see this by the way she consistently kept a full room during the fair as she was teaching men different techniques in breathing, medication, relaxation and concentration. Katchie is here on her second visit to the Health Fair, but is actually a Brown Card holder here at the prison. She remains very active with our population as she teaches yoga class on Fridays. What was probably the warmest part of my day, was watching Ms. Arnette Hayes. Arnette was providing information regarding STD's and clearly had the most active booth. Arnette, also on her second visit, clearly accepted the role of the "Mother" to the younger members of our population. Her demeanor: cool and calm... And in control.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the picture being painted to you is just a simple artist's stroke of the brush when compared to the larger mural that has been created... While the focus was on health, this day showed two communities working together hand in hand to accomplish a common goal: promoting good health and a healthy lifestyle. This reporter has witnessed all six fairs that have been presented to the San Quentin population and as an incarcerated man, it is always a pleasure to be present when they take place. It is during these days that we the population show that we may have been a cancer at one period in our lives, but now we are in remission creating a healthy body and soul.

DON'T QUIT (2008) By Mona/Texas T.

When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.
Life is strange with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out;

Don't give up though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you can never tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,
That you must not quit.

SHAKESPEARE'S BEST PERFORMANCE

Michael B. Willis

Wow! We made front page news in the Marin Independent Journal (March 04, 2008, Tuesday), for performing Shakespeare's "Much to do About Nothing." Who would've think it? Well, truth be told, I wouldn't have believed it before June 2005. Me, quoting Shakespeare!? In prison? Believe it or not, that's just what I'm doing now. Using terms like, "then, though o'er, etc..."

This all began for me walking through SQ's Arts in Correction's Door looking for their Creative Writing Class. There stood the then "Director," Johnathan Gonzales, and his two students J.B. Wells and Ronin Holmes. Boy, were they smooth and cordial. I informed them that I was looking for the Creative Writing Class (Ronin provided me with the

information because he was also a participant in the group). So they encouraged me to recite some of my poems, and I've been with our troupe ever since.



The first piece I performed was Jacques (7 Ages of Man) "All the World's a Stage" from "As You Like It." This is also where I met Professor Aldo Billingsley from Santa Clara University Arts and Theater Department. Suffice it to say,

he is a giant in comparison to myself in height (and on the stage). He and his students from Santa Clara performed scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Our group has grown and we've changed directors to Suraya Keating (who challenges us to reach our potential). I would've never imagined the impact that performing classical literature could have on my life. I returned to school and obtained my GED and I'm presently

receiving my AA College Degree. My attitude and outlook on life have changed. I am not just ready for success, I'm prepared for it. I shall accomplish great things. Keep your eyes open and enjoy the show.

"LIKE ME"

abdul al tawqui

Listen Lil' Homie... i'd rather have you like me, than to be like me, See, cause if you were like me, peace would be unlikely, See, i live in a world where its likely, some convict will knife me, or the guntower will snipe me, so I'd rather have you like me, than to be like me...

i'm thinking...even if you were to like me, which is unlikely, you'd probably be shisty, still in the street's going dumb being hip-hop, lowdown, dirty, just like me, aint nobody written me, my only contact is when somebody fight's me, but even still, i'd rather have you like me, than to be just like me...

i wish i could make feel my heart... its cold and icy, treacherous, just like prison life be, yet...you out there actin bad, yeah lil' homie, you gon end up like me, a has been, a might be, or in the cell wit some bandit tryin to make his wify, liven life could be

done easily, yet instead we choose to struggle and live deviently, over lookin all of life's possibilities, then have the odacity, to ask the question why me, See, i'd rather have you like me, that to be just like me...

look thru my eyes and you'll see a color that's bloody, walk in my shoe's you'll need boot's cause its muddy, strip naked, squat and cough, spread you cheeks everyday made to feel dirty, simply, i'd rather have you like me, that to be just like me...

not mindin nobody, not liven honestly, cost me my family, rejected by society, got me hatin everybody, MATTER FACT!

i don't want you to like me, hate me and berate me, cause in the end, i'd rather see you you liven nicely, instead of liven life in prison, JUST LIKE ME...

SAN QUENTIN GIANTS "WINNING" SEASON

David Marshall

The San Quentin Giants have managed to win more than they've lost, so far. This past Saturday (May 31, 2008) there was a sense of "wow" that the "Santa Monica Suns" had come over 500 miles just to play the game we all love, Baseball!

While the San Quentin Giants have plenty of dirt to overturn before they can claim they're real contenders, thoughts of the Suns seemed to be that of, "No problem here."

The Suns had their struggles, as did the San Quentin Giants, but, after 5 innings, it was 9-0 (San Quentin Giants). With Chris Rich on the hill, it was the 3rd time around for the Suns batting order, and they got to Chris and produced some runs. Our coach, Kevin, pulled Chris to be succeeded by Marvin, who pitched for 2 innings, and walked 5 batters, and

hit 2 batsmen. Marvin appeared upset the coach pulled him, but what coach wouldn't.

The Suns scored, San Quentin Giants then tacked on a few more, and it came down to the 8th and 9th innings. San Quentin Giants up by 7 runs, the Suns rallied for 3 in the 8th, and 2 in the 9th. With the score 13-11, San Quentin Giants, the Suns had the tying run at 2nd base, 2 outs, and the count 3-2. The Santa Monica Suns popped up to end the game, final score 13-11, San Quentin Giants.

It seems that all the San Quentin Giants want to do is just play baseball, the re-living of that old childhood game. Those flashbacks of fame, and the need for trusting each other and the losing of sleep about this or that. Really, though, what San Quentin needs, is the best 9 threw 9 innings.

OVERALL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Helen Ameeta Singh

"If you have come to help me you'r are wasting your time...but if you have come because you liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

I was honored to be asked to write for the SQN. My hope is that this can be a space that helps facilitate healing and change. The above quote came from the (Australian) Aboriginal Political Activist Group in the 1970s. It is this spirit that I would like to introduce myself. My name is Helen Ameeta Singh; I am a therapist and have been fortunate enough to co-facilitate a group on mental and emotional health and wellness for the "TRUST" here at San Quentin. I look forward to creating a space to talk about some of the things that impact our overall health and wellness, which I see as being made up of the physical, spiritual, and mental/emotional as-

pects of us.

Physical health is how our bodies are functioning and feeling. It includes things like nutrition; what we are eating; where exercise fits into our daily lives; any medical conditions we may be struggling with.

Our spiritual health and well being is made of our individual beliefs around what sustains us. It helps give our lives meaning and keep us going, especially in the really tough times. Being connected to what gives our lives meaning is important to our overall health and wellness because it allows us to continue to stay connected to our own humanity as we exist within systems of oppression (such as the prison environment) that seek to dehumanize us.

Our mental/emotion health is how we think, feel and

act as we cope with life. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices in our lives. As we increase understanding about ourselves and what motivates our behaviors, we become more able to make changes to those behaviors that are negatively impacting us.

Being incarcerated, is very challenging to a person's well being in many ways. Think about those three aspects of your overall health and wellness. How healthy is your body, spirit and mind right now? Are any of your behaviors causing harm to any of these parts of you? How do you support and nurture these different aspects of your overall health and wellness in the challenging situations that you're in?

Until next time, peace and blessings...Helen.

A SURVIVING SOUL

Dominique McDowell
The Healing Circle/No More Tears

They say when death nears, your priorities change; so with my experience with that, I have a question: What is your hope in the face of death?

I see a lot of people live on hope, but it's truly a hopelessness because the hope never manifests to become true: "They just don't believe in miracles!"

I live with the homeless, I play in the dirties playground populated with bodies whose souls has slipped through the cracks of communities and end up stripped of all essence. What you see in me, or what you see

in you is all that's left after the soul has been tested, degraded, mis-lead, lied to, forgotten, slandered, abused, neglected, manipulated, and looked down upon. And what hurts the most is: "I don't even know how to cry." All of my tears have been handcuffed years ago, so don't act like you don't feel my pain in this diabolical scheme of soul-snatchin. So be prepared for sacrifice, it builds character. My soul always tells me that, and, plus deep inside I know, if I wasn't built for this I'd be dead by now.

"Things do not change; we change."

--Henry David Thoreau

"Learn to behave from those who cannot."

—Sanskrit

SHARED EXPERIENCE

CO-EDITOR: MICHAEL HARRIS

It has been said on many occasions, "If these walls could talk, what stories would flow from them." Well, San Quentin now finds itself in a unique position to once again have its walls speak. For the benefit of future generations the San Quentin News is here, for everyone to share/express their thoughts, experiences, and ideas of the past and present.

The human beings that are encapsulated inside these prison walls have the power to change themselves, as well as influence others in positive ways. Some of us will never get out and others will. What has become the obvious is that we *can* learn from our mistakes, and so *can* others, *if* we, as a community, are brave enough to share in this undertaking.

San Quentin News intends to

be the vehicle to communicate what's going on inside that impact our lives. At the same time, to convey our hopes and dreams to an outside world.

As a prisoner/human myself, I know that we are products of our life's experience. It is not our individual, or collective, faults. When it comes to the behavioral information we receive from birth, and our various environmental backgrounds, we must deal with the cards in our hands. Nevertheless, we are responsible for our actions which have produced our different incarcerations. Yet, *all* humans are responsible for the present. The question *now* is what will you do? What, about the knowledge of life, will you share?

Coming Next Issue:
-More on Integration
-What's up Digital TV?
-Convict to Warden
-SQ Film Production
-Graduation Ceremony

Send Submission to:
Education Dept. / SQ News
Death Row Stories Welcome

San Quentin News

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