

# San Quentin News

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Top row: Jaimee Karroll, Bilenda Harris-Ritter, Will Packer, Vu Pham, George Lamb. Second row: Leonard Rubio, Mitch Zak, Keith Wattley, Fr. Stephen Barber, Third row: Hector Oropeza, Keith Wattley, Micael R. Harris, Lynn B. Cooper, Troy Williams & Jonathon Simon

## Proposition 9 Called 'Catastrophic'

By ALY TAMBOURA

A symposium to address the possible far-reaching impact of Proposition 9 on the State of California was held in the Catholic Chapel Friday. Attended by inmates, special interest groups and sponsors of the proposition, the symposium made for emotionally charged dialogue.

Proposition 9, also known as Marcy's Law, is a proposed amendment to the California Constitution, which if passed in November's election will give victims of violent crime more rights relating to prosecuting offenders, receiving restitution and attending the parole hearings of convicted criminals.

Proponents of the proposed

amendment believe it is needed to repair flaws in "The Victims' Bill of Rights" passed by voters in 1982. Opponents argue that the proposition unfairly increases prison sentences by increasing parole board hearing denials from the standard 1 to 5 years, to a statute maximum of 15 years, which they say will essentially increase already long prison terms to excessive and unjust lengths.

Proposition 9 Campaign Director Mitch Zak explained, to an engaged audience, why he believed that the proposition should be passed. "Politicians use public safety as a political football," said Zak, stating his support for the proposition.

Prison inmates and visitors to the prison showered Zak with

the problems they anticipate the proposition will cause to inmates, prisons, and the state's finances.

Troy Williams addressed the audience from a particular position of being both a Lifer and the brother of a victim of violent crime. His heart-wrenching explanation of the effects the proposition will have on him and other Lifers moved at least two people in the audience to tears.

Opponents of the proposition say that the proposal will cost hundreds of millions and take away hope from Lifers who have served out decades of time, and are currently eligible for parole. "What happens when you give a man a 15 year

See *Symposium*, page 4

## 'NORA' ON THE BALLOT

California voters will be voting November 4th on one of the most major changes in California criminal law in a very long time, known as "The Nonviolent Offender Rehabilitation Act" ("NORA"). It is a multi-faceted shakeup of California's justice system. Tens of thousands of those who would previously be incarcerated, including youths under 18, would now be placed in treatment instead of lockup.

The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office projects that NORA will reap \$1 billion a year or more in savings to the

California prison system. These savings are even more profound when measured against expected increases in the prison population and the annual CDCR budget.

Here are the key components of NORA:

- Prisons would be required to provide rehabilitation programs to all exiting inmates not less than 90 days before release.

- CDCR would be required to pay for rehabilitation programs for all parolees and for former parolees, who could request services for up to one year after discharge of parole.

- Prisoners whose crimes are nonviolent (with no prior strikes or no prior sex offenses requiring registration) would be able to earn time off their sentences with good behavior and by participating in rehabilitation programs.

This initiative, Proposition 5, would remove the power of the governor to appoint Parole Board members. Parole periods for qualified nonviolent offenders would be limited to between 6-12 months, compared with up to three years under current law, with earlier discharge upon completion of a rehabilitation program.

—Kenneth Brydon

## Team Exodus Breaks New Ground in West Block

400 Reception Center inmates living in West Block and the Gym attended a reentry fair Saturday, September 06, on the West Block Yard that provided information for successful parole back into the community.

Initiated by inmate Westley Barry (aka, "Preacher"), and facilitated by West Block Lieutenant D.

Footman, information booths were arranged on the walls of the West Block Yard that offered information on: drug and alcohol counseling, medical

(HIV and Hepatitis C prevention and care), job training, education, mental health counseling, family counseling and housing assistance. Various members of the Protestant Chapel assisted in distributing Bibles and other valuable spiritual study materials.

Preacher, a four-time champion of the television show "American Gladiators," seeks to inspire individuals and bring his sports discipline to others. With 11 years incarcerated, Preacher created the self-help

program titled "Team Exodus." Along with others, he has been facilitating the curriculum: "Grown Men Business." This program addresses the recidivism of repeat offenders in prison. Through this two month study program, they are called upon to "Own up to their responsibilities to themselves, their families and their community."

Footman observed 30 to 50 inmates attending these classes, and appreciates the true value in packaging elements of rehabilitation

within the San Quentin Reception Center. With the exception of basic education, only the bare essentials of opportunity have been available to these individuals.

Beginning in the Gym, Preacher later expanded the program to include those in the West Block Unit. The 300 men from West Block who completed the Grown Men Business training, were the first allowed to attend the Team Exodus Resource Workshop.

See *Exodus*, page 2



Lt. Footman

## Transferring California Inmates to Other States

The number of California inmates serving their sentences in California Out-of-State Correctional Facilities, or COCFs, surpassed 5,000 for the first time in September. A growing number of San Quentin inmates have been processed, endorsed and readied for involuntary transfer to one of the four states currently participating in the program.

The transfers, which reached a total of 5,101 as of Sept. 25, 2008, were initiated as a result of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's October 2006 Emergency Order on Prison Overcrowding. They were authorized and funded through Assembly Bill 900, a massive \$7.9 billion prison reform bill signed by Schwarzenegger in May 2007 which set a goal of housing 8,000 inmates out of state by next summer.

The transfers have allowed the CDCR to remove a total of 5,386 nontraditional beds statewide, according to a statement posted on the CDCR website. Nontraditional beds are beds

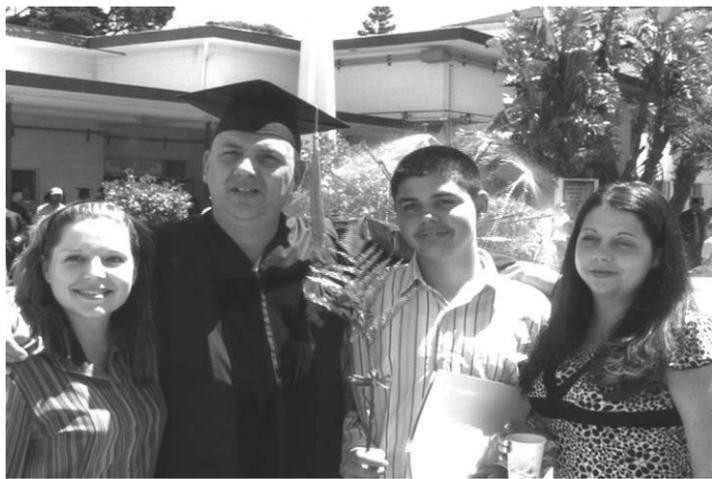
placed in areas not designed to accommodate beds. The statement said that as a result of the transfers, 17 prison gymnasiums and dayrooms have been cleared of inmate beds since August 2007, a reduction of 27 percent, and have reduced the total of nontraditional beds still in use throughout the system to 14,232.

A growing number of SQ inmates have completed the multi-level screening process, been endorsed for out-of-state transfer, and are awaiting the long bus ride to the hub facility in Wasco where they will await a flight out to a COCF in Mississippi, Tennessee, Oklahoma or Arizona.

The COCF's three in Arizona and one in each of the remaining states, are all privately owned and operated by the Corrections Corporation of America under contract to the state of California. Indiana was previously involved in the deal, but is not currently accepting inmates for placement.

See *Inmate Transfers*, page 8

## THE FAMILY THAT OVERCOMES TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER



Elizabeth, Vince, Vince Jr. and Kea

In Jan. 2005, Vince Russo began taking correspondence courses through Ohio State University, pursuing his bachelor's degree. He borrowed a book on Hinduism in order to complete his first reading assignment, and then plowed into reading the material before the official assignment had arrived. There are many difficulties in attending college in a prison: lock-downs, going to work, getting mailed-in assignments from the professor, and then sending them back, having all tests proctored by those qualified to sit in that position, and then having the space to take the written tests.

Initially, the costs of the courses were paid for by a wealthy benefactor who was paying the expenses for a number of associate of arts graduates who were pursuing an advanced degree, but in time that money was exhausted, and he was using his own paychecks from his Prison Industry job to cover it.

Along with his job and school, Russo also remained dedicated to many self-help programs, as well as continuing to practice his Buddhist faith. He was on the ground floor with the Day of Peace program,

which last year was a large success, and days and nights during the week that he wasn't active in some sort of program and/or work were the exception.

In addition to these, Russo also had (has) a loving family whom he has remained devoted to. Every weekend his wife and his young son, Vincent Junior (a.k.a. "VJ"), were in the visiting room with him. VJ, now 14, was his father's delight, and, in spite of the limitations visiting imposes, parenting was done with love and nurturing that brought up this young man, and, before VJ, two daughters (Elizabeth and Kea) that any father would be very proud of.

Approximately three years ago tragedy struck Russo's life, his daughter, Kea, was in a serious car accident. A high speed head-on collision placed her in the hospital with numerous broken bones. Russo continued his life and schooling in here, while doing everything in his power to comfort his wife, daughters and son. Slowly her injuries and she resumed a normal life.

Life moves forward, and Russo continued to hold on to balancing his "model-prisoner" program in here with being a positive role-model for his son and family in the visiting room.

On April 05, 2007, Vince Russo's wife passed away, the woman whom he had married before coming to prison, and had stuck with him for 25 years of incarceration.

His daughters brought him the sad news, once more in the visiting room; where they shared their grief. A 13-year-old son had lost his mother and a husband had lost a devoted wife. Persevering, the family now pulled closer and Russo was more determined to complete what he'd begun. VJ had his choice of which sister to live with, and both daughters continued to take turns bringing in their brother on a weekly basis to see his father.

In June of 2008, Russo received his bachelor's degree, and his son and daughters were there with him in the Garden Chapel as he got up on the stage to speak and receive his diploma. The story of overcoming does not end with the accomplishments from inside, but also with VJ, who, inspired by his father, also maintained his grades and received 3.5 Grade average for quarter, and a 3.6 average for the entire school year. At the end of the VJ's school year, he was also awarded the *Character Award* handed out to those who overcome great challenges; this honor is not given every year, and he is now inscribed on a plaque that sits in the Principals Office.

Russo is now strategizing on his next step – getting his masters degree. One daughter is married, and the other is engaged. VJ is his Dad's greatest fan, and it's looking like this young man will one day go to college; where he'll have plenty of inspiration in seeing things through to the end.

—Kenneth Brydon



Ed Ballenger with the Magnetic Wave Machine

## Machine Shop Receives State Fair Award

### Award Winning Magnetic Training

San Quentin's Vocational Machine Shop has once again shown that precision is award winning. Four students, Ed Ballenger, Steven Hayes, William Branson, and Anthony Adams, entered a project for the 2008 California State Fair. They manufactured and assembled a Magnetic Wave Machine that was designed by engineers at The Exploratorium, a hands-on science museum in San Francisco. The project was awarded first place and outstanding group project in the Industrial & Technology Education Competition General Technology Group Project, Division 0755, Adult Class. The project was judged as excellent in general appearance, function/practicality, general finish, and workmanship. The judges comments were as follows: "Belongs in a museum or Exploratorium," "State Fair quality work," "Great job, highest quality, quality documentation," and "Best work I have seen in years."

This was the first complete Magnetic Wave Machine that the Machine Shop has manufactured. A couple of years ago, two other students manufactured parts for the original Magnetic Wave Machine that was later assembled by The Exploratorium and put on display at the museum. The original project was able to happen through a partnership with the non-profit museum that supplied all of the necessary tooling and materials while the students provided the labor. The partnership with The Exploratorium and other non-profit organizations allow students the opportunity to work on industry projects while also giving back to the community.

Mr. Saenz, the shop instructor, was so impressed with the display at the museum that he wanted an example built for the shop. He also wanted to enter the project in the State Fair hoping to duplicate the first place awards received by three of his students in the 2004 State

Fair for a commemorative medallion.

The students machined the key parts from 6061 Aluminum utilizing a Haas Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) Vertical Machining Center. The students are learning how to operate and set-up the machining center. They are also learning to program the machining center using *ESPRIT 2008 CAD/CAM* (Computer Aided Design/Computer Aided Manufacturing) software donated by D.P. Technology. The machining center was donated by the Haas Foundation in 2002 along with a CNC Turning Center. The donations of this equipment and software allow the students to obtain up-to-date training to prepare them for working in the machine tool industry.

The students truly thank the generosity of Mr. Saenz, Ms. Sheldon, and the other San Quentin teachers that pitched in to donate the bearings and silicone-rubber tubing that were needed for the project. Without their support the project would have never been completed.

Mr. Hayes was very fortunate to recently parole. His parole officer granted authorization for him to travel to Sacramento where he accepted the first place and outstanding group project awards at the State Fair on August 14, 2008. Mr. Hayes is currently furthering his education and working to support his family utilizing the skills he learned in the San Quentin Vocational Machine Shop. The craftsmanship and dedication to learning the skills of a machinist allowed all four of these men to earn another win for San Quentin's Vocational Machine Shop. The prize that is even more important than the ribbons is the skills these men are learning that will allow them to be productive, contributing, and successful citizens upon their re-entry into society as Mr. Hayes is currently showing us all.

—Leonard Rubio

## Exodus

Continued from page 1

Once those in West Block were complete, the 100 men from the Gym who had also completed the program were allowed to benefit from the and resource

"In my working the Center, I've men why continued re- prison" "many of there's noth- for them. doesn't she added. Footman "Let me fix



Preacher Teaching R/C Offenders

information fair.

thirteen years Reception asked many they've con- turning to Footman said, them said that ing out there And that sound right," "Alright," continued, that for you.

Instead of you going to them, I'm bringing them to you."

A total of 14 agencies from outside, and another eight programs that are already a part of the mainline re-entry program here at San Quentin, along with a total of 55 outside guests, brought information concerning counties throughout Northern California. Fresno, Humboldt, Oakland, San Francisco, Sacramento and Solano counties were all represented.

At the end of the event, informational material had run out at every booth, and a 1,000 questions had been answered by the outside guests. Future plans are in the works for a summit that is tentatively scheduled for February, and a second bi-annual Team Exodus resource fair for March 2009.

## NO MORE CANTEN DUCATS!

At the completion of the October Canteen Draw, Inmate Trust office will no longer need to process canteen ducats says Chief Accounting Officer Larry Ward. For Mainline, H-Unit, and Reception Center, sticking your ID in the window is the ticket to do your shopping.

During this transition, there will be several in normal delays in operation. From October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008, up to first draw of November 12, 2008, postings of money to accounts (Hobby, Pay, Mail and Electronic deposits) will be handled as timely as possible.

Mr. Ward also notes that first draw may not happen on the exact day scheduled. This same operation is now in effect in several of CDCR Women's Prisons, and will be state-wide soon.

# Religion

## NORTH BAY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY ACCREDITATION

San Quentin Garden Chapel Christian Fellowship has recently been fully accredited under Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. This occurred and became effective in the spring of 2007. This is a "Contextualized Leadership Development Curriculum" for the student with the desire to pursue a bachelor degree in theological studies. The degree can lead to a career in the ministry or in a faith based counseling field.

About 15 San Quentin prisoners have taken, or currently are taking, several courses. One

benefit of enrolling in the theological study classes is you can continue the studies on-line over the internet when you leave San Quentin, if you're not finished with all your classes. These are the type of classes that you need to apply for, by contacting Pastor Dr. Morris A. Curry in the chapel.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary was established in 1944 and has incorporated San Quentin's North Bay School of Theology under their long-term successful program of turning out some exceptional missionaries, pastors, and peo-

ple in various forms of ministries.

The main thing that I've especially enjoyed and found very satisfying was the high quality of the staff that has come inside prison walls to teach the classes. Dr. Duane Christensen has taught the Old Testament survey class from a Hebrew perspective. His knowledge and background are outstanding. He wrote the study materials we use. We are lucky to have such a high caliber education in a prison environment.

—Ed Kie

## BUDDHIST PROGRAM

In 1998, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship ("BPF") was contacted with a request for assistance in forming a Buddhist religious program at SQ. The BPF director, Hozan Alan Senauke, assisted and contacted his Dharma Brother, Seido Lee de Barros, who agreed. After a tremendous effort... on Sept. 05, 1999, SQ's Buddhadharma Sangha held its first Buddhist Religious Service. During a partial lockdown, 20 men made their way to the Garden Chapel and met an extraordinary Dharma teacher and Zen priest. Seido has continued weekly services and this Sangha has flourished.

Every Sunday evening men of various faiths come together for "zazen" (seated meditation), "kenhin" (walking meditation), and to listen to and discuss the Dharma in a way that offers freedom in the midst of chaotic prison life. These men are gaining useful tools for re-entry into society. The name Buddhadharma Sangha means the following: "Buddha" is the awakened one, or one striving for peace; "Dharma" is the teachings of the Buddha; "Sangha" is the community of practitioners who practice peace or more peaceful ways to live.

Amid the vernal splendor of Lumbini Garden, Gautama, the Buddha, was born in 566 B.C.E. He was the son of a wealthy and powerful king, Suddhodana, the ruler of the Sakya Clan in Kapilavastu, in what is now modern Nepal. The Buddha was given the name "Siddhartha," which means "He who has attained his aim." He passed away at the age of 80, leaving the following message to his sorrowing disciples: "The Dharma which I have given you shall be your teacher when I am gone." So great has been the influence of this Dharma that today it is estimated that one-third of humanity pays homage to the Buddha's noble teachings. The supreme goal set before all Buddhists is the escape from suffering, ignorance, illusion, and the attainment of truth and enlightenment. Only in the pursuit of this lofty ideal will human-kind find the true meaning of happiness and joy. He who loves the Dharma lives happily with his mind at ease.

The Buddhadharma Sangha meets every Sunday evening in the Garden Chapel. Services are from 5:30 to 8:30. The group hosts other activities: all-day meditations called "sesshins," various ceremonies and teachings for those who wish to delve deeper into the Soto Zen lineage. All are welcome.

—Ron Singler

## JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Open services are offered at the Garden Chapel Saturday mornings 10:30 – 12:00. Bible study is Wednesday evening 6:30 – 7:45 PM in the back room at the Protestant chapel.

## EAST BLOCK PROTESTANT

Those who wish to restart East Block Protestant Services are advised to contact Pastor Dr. Morris Curry via U-Savem Envelope. Please provide your name, CDCR number, housing, and what exercise yard you're on. Send information to: Protestant Chapel, Attention: Pastor Curry.

# Sports and Entertainment

## TENNIS LEGEND WALKS ON COURT



Inside Tennis Team with Brad Gilbert (Back row fourth from the left)

Last month Brad Gilbert came to San Quentin to visit with the Inside Tennis Team, giving pointers on how team members could improve their game.

For those who don't recognize the name, Brad Gilbert is a former U.S. tennis champion and author of the book

"Winning Ugly."

Gilbert hung out on the lower yard with the men for the afternoon, teaching and having some good down to earth fun. Dominating court with the grace and wisdom of a true champion, the men of San Quentin were both inspired and honored by Gil-

berts visit.

"When you are the master of your mind, you will master the art of winning," writes Gilbert in his book.

The former champion, who successfully battled to become the forth ranked tennis player in the world, treated the Inside Tennis Team to a very special day, giving instruction on both tennis lessons and what it takes to be a winner off the court.

Gilbert, with his kind words of wisdom, fit safely into place with the seasoned tennis players of San Quentin. His visit left a lasting impression on all who were in attendance.

The Inside Tennis Team and coach Don Denevi say, "Thank you, Brad Gilbert."

—R. E. Calix

## THE WARRIORS WINNING WAYS

The San Quentin Warriors basketball team began their season on March 29, 2008, and now sport a winning record of 17 wins and 8 losses, said Head Coach, George Lamb. With another 7 games to go, it looks to be a heading for another winning season.

The mission of the San Quentin Warriors is to use sports as an outreach ministry. It's designed to help men discover challenges in their own personalities and character, and developing those areas through a spirit of good will and competition.

The Warriors basketball

team is open to any man with the right attitude, spirit and



Saturday Morning Competition

love for the game. It doesn't matter your race, religion or time being served. With the season drawing to a close,

new players are welcome ONLY for those with exceptional talent – "Other's need not apply" (this season).

The entire team extends great appreciation to outside volunteer and Team General Manager, Steve Irwin. Recognition is also due for the winning season to the assistant coaches: Danny Cox and Fred Reynolds. George Lamb states in closing, "It is our goal to go undefeated for the remainder of the season." All games will be on Saturday mornings at 9 – get out there and support the team.

## FOOTBALL FANATICS IN THE HOUSE!

The San Quentin Blues Brothers football team is sporting a winning record with three wins and one loss into their sea-



Will Packer

son. A good mixture of North Block and H-Unit of all races, and has a good practice program. With a large group of fans following them, Kudos to Coach Will Packer.

You can never achieve victory if you accept defeat.  
—Vince Lombardi

## LAST MONTH'S SUDOKU SOLUTION

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## SUDOKU

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# PROPOSITION 9 – Marsy’s Law

By DAVID MARSH

In the Initiative-happy world that is California politics, where well heeled citizens with a personal ax to grind can and do, in effect, purchase permanent amendments to our state’s Constitution, millionaire and Broadcom cofounder Henry Nicholas III is back for another shot.

Nicholas, himself facing an array of drug and stock backdating charges that could conceivably net him a total of 360 years behind bars if convicted on all counts, is widely credited with ensuring the passage of the three strikes initiative when he donated almost \$5 million of his personal fortune toward the effort when it appeared to be facing defeat. Many analysts now credit The Three Strikes Law with the longer prison terms that have resulted in hopelessly over-crowded prisons and jails.

Nicholas is again back in the political arena as the deep pockets and inspiration behind what proponents of Proposition 9, or ‘Marsy’s Law’, call a far reach-

ing victims’ Bill-of-Rights. Proposition 9 would, among other things, mean a wait of up to 15 years for a parole hearing for those inmates sentenced to a term-plus-life with the possibility of parole, and prevent state and county jails from using early release programs as a means of dealing with the state’s chronically overcrowded jails. The proposed law would also open parole hearings, and guarantee a chance to be heard at them, to almost anyone with only a slight interest in the case.

Proponents say that Marsy’s Law would constitutionally guarantee to victims of crimes the assurance of restitution, as well as broadening the role that victims could play in various legal proceedings against the offender. It also seeks to extend protections on the release of victims’ confidential information, and make it more difficult for the accused to gain release on bail.

Opponents of the proposed amendment are quick to point

out that many of the supposed victims’ protection guarantees were long-ago clearly set forth in the 1982 voter approved ‘Victims’ Bill of Rights’, Proposition 8. They maintain that Proposition 9 is unnecessary and an expensive duplication of effort that would seriously deplete the states already vastly over-burdened treasury at a time when it can least afford it.

By prohibiting early release of inmates from overcrowded jails and prisons, the measure, says opponents, would force financially strapped cities, counties and the state to make drastic cuts in many priority programs such as education, health care and services to the poor and elderly.

They maintain that the draconian changes proposed for the state’s already clearly dysfunctional parole system would effectively remove the ‘possibility-of-parole’ clause included by state statute and the courts in most Lifers’ sentences.

# COMMON SENSE ON PAROLE

By MICHAEL R. HARRIS

One of the biggest problems with Proposition 9 is that it wastes a lot of taxpayers’ money. The criminal justice system is already overwhelmed with wasted money and wasted lives, and this proposition does nothing to help. It actually makes it worse.

The arguments favoring Proposition 9 are flooded with half-truths and political rhetoric.

The average cost for locking up someone in a California

prison is \$43,000 a year. One report concludes that it costs \$1,000 per month in healthcare for any Californian over age 45.

It can be argued that it costs even more for prison inmates because of safety and security concerns. This means that the average Lifer costs the state \$55,000 or more per year. A prisoner advocate says some 5,000 Lifers are eligible every year for parole of the estimated 26,000 Lifers currently incarcerated. Only 80 are released, and 95 percent of those are released by court order, not parole.

Consider this: If just half of the eligible Lifers were paroled each year, it would save the state some \$250 million annu-

## One Man’s Opinion

ally, plus help relieve overcrowding.

I’m talking about releasing people that have served 20-plus years in prison and have met all the necessary requirements for release. Think about it, ladies and gentleman, you would have doled out adequate punishment to criminals and become more fiscally responsible in the process.

Anyone who really cares about justice and fiscal responsibility should grab an oar and start paddling, because we are

all in this boat and we will ultimately sink together. The oar is a ‘No’ vote on Proposition 9.

Think of state government as a business: How could this company not go bankrupt? Who is the CEO managing this train wreck?

Everyone understands that criminals should be punished for their crimes. We all need to also understand that when they have been punished according to the law, they should get another chance at life and liberty.

**“Anyone who really cares about justice and fiscal responsibility should grab an oar and start paddling...”**

## Symposium

Continued from page 1

“What happens when you give a man a 15-year parole denial who has served 30 years on a 15-year-to-life sentence, what happens when you take away a man’s hope?” one inmate asked



Jody Lewen, Director of the Prison University Project  
Left: Michael R. Harris Right: Jonathan Simon

of the panel.

The question asked by most of the opponents of the proposition was, can a state with an already cash strapped budget afford a law that will add more debt? “California will have to spend hundreds of millions to save tens of millions,” said inmate panelist George Lamb, speaking on the possible fiscal impact Proposition 9 will have on the state.

Bilenda Harris-Ritter, crime victim, attorney, and trustee for the National Organization of the Parents of Murdered Children (POMC), spoke on the burdens that current laws have on the family members of the victims of crime, who have the right to attend yearly parole hearings of the offenders who murdered their loved ones. Harris-Ritter, whose parents were murdered, expressed her views in support of Proposition 9 to a very sympathetic audience.

Speakers from both sides of Proposition 9 agreed that victims and their families should

have enforceable constitutional rights. The opposing sides differed when it came to taking away many of the rights prisoners have in relationship to rehabilitation and the pursuit of reentry into the community.

Keith Wattle, prisoners’ rights attorney and staunch opponent of Proposition 9, stated

his views to the crowd. “This proposition is trying to keep people in prison longer under the coat of victims rights... there is consistent evidence that locking people up for longer periods of time does

not work,” said Wattle.

According to guest speaker Jonathan Simon, professor of law and associate dean of the Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program at Berkeley, in the past 5 years over 1000 laws have been enacted enhancing prison sentences.

“California is in the crosshair of a major human disaster, this over-emphasis on violent crime is responsible for 8 percent of California’s general fund, California cannot afford to do this all over again,” said Simon.

The symposium was orchestrated by Patten University at San Quentin/ Prison University Project, sponsored by Jody Lewen and Jennifer Scaife. Leonard Rubio and Victim-Offender Education Group Facilitator and Catholic Chaplain Fr. Stephen Barber, co-hosted the event.

A copy of Proposition 9 is available for review by inmates in the prison law library.

If everyone howled at every injustice, every act of barbarism, every act of unkindness, then we would be taking the first step toward a real humanity.

—Nelson DeMille

## DEATHROW CONCERNS

I have some concerns on the news paper. You mention that death row stories are welcome, and yet there have been no letters, or mentions of anything about death row.

Not only that, there is continued news about the graduates and educational accomplishments on the mainline, what about us who have graduated on death row; there’s no mention and that is wrong because they look at us as monsters and I believe it continues to look like that without your help and acknowledgements.

The recent paper published

some really not so funny jokes, and you could of used that space to talk about education achievements here on death row.

I submitted a paper mentioning about getting my GED in May, long before this paper came out, and there was no mention of it. I worked just as hard, if not harder than guys on the mainline – give us the same respect you give your fellow mainliners, we deserve it also.

—J. Capistrano

See: “Editors Need Help,”  
Page 6.

## Mailroom Update

By DAVID MARSH

A flurry of overtime in the mailroom, as well as a temporary shifting of staff and responsibilities, has resulted in mail reaching its inmate recipients in a much more timely fashion lately. Sgt. Amrhein, the mailroom supervisor, said the recent hiring she has done to fill two vacant staff positions on her staff will help to ensure the mail will continue to flow on time.

While the number of inmates within the walls has continued to rise over the years, the number of budgeted positions in the mailroom has fallen slightly. Currently, says Amrhein, a staff of six sorts and processes a weekly average of over 8,000 pieces of mail.

Article 41 in the Department Operations Manual, revised July 26, 2008, states that all first class mail will be processed and delivered within seven calendar days of receipt from the post office. Mail is generally received at the institution within two to three days of when it has been postmarked.

“We have redirect staff coming in from different units to help, and we will continue to work whatever overtime is necessary to keep the mail on time,” says Amrhein.

## NO MORE CANTEEN DUCATS!

At the completion of the October Canteen Draw, the inmate Trust office will no longer need to process canteen ducats, says Chief Accounting Officer Larry Ward. For the Mainline, H-Unit, and Reception Center, sticking your ID in the window is the ticket to do your shopping.

During this transition, there will be several normal delays in operation. From October 24, 2008, until first draw of November 12, 2008, postings of money to accounts (Hobby, Pay, Mail and Electronic deposits) will be handled as timely as possible.

Ward also notes that first draw may not happen on the exact day scheduled. This same operation is now in effect in several of CDCR Womens’ Prisons, and will be state-wide soon.



## ON COMING TO SAN QUENTIN

By TOBIAS WOLFF

I've never done time, but in all honesty that's more a matter of luck than virtue; I was in and out of trouble during my teenage years, some of it serious, and it wouldn't have taken much for me to find myself heading down the wrong branch of one of those forking paths we continually find ourselves facing in this life.

So it's not hard for me to imagine myself here in San Quentin. Perhaps partly for that reason, the approach always puts an icy hand on my back – the sight of the looming, fortress-like walls, and the grim series of sally ports and security gates, the echoing clang of the gates closing behind me. Of course I'm always aware that I can leave, but nevertheless there's a certain unease in the experience.

So why have I returned, and why will I continue to return? Quite simply, because of the men I meet here. Maybe the guys, who turn up to talk with me, and share their thoughts and their writing, aren't typical of the general population. I have no way of knowing. And I don't care. The men I've spent time with here are engaged,

inquisitive, and straightforward as few people I meet these days are. Maybe it has something to do with the nature of life in San Quentin. You can't hide from others, your privacy is always at risk, and in the end you can't really pretend to be anything but what you are – well, I suppose you can pretend, but others will know you for who you are soon enough, and once you realize that, you know there's no use pretending. I spent four years in the army, and though I



Tobias Wolff

wouldn't compare the experiences in any other way, they have this in common – living cheek by jowl with other men, day after day, year after year, strips you down to essentials. If you're honest, and lucky, you'll be accepted for who you are; but you definitely won't be accepted for who you aren't.

The men I've met here seem to have learned this hard lesson. I've come to admire their honesty, their determination to use their brains and their gifts, and their attempts to make themselves free within these walls – to achieve freedom as a state of mind and spirit. I've learned from them. I hope I will continue to learn from them.

## It Starts at Home

By MICHAEL A. ARON SR.

Fathers are the missing links in the lives of many young Americans. In an increasingly dangerous and unpredictable world, absent fathers add tremendously to the insecurity of children. It is common that children function best in an atmosphere where both parents combine and complement their energies and talents in the rearing of children.

Even if pregnancy is an accident, once a decision is made to bring a child to term, the rearing of that child cannot be an accident. Most children are born at the top of their game, genius level. It is the socialization process that turns most creative, talented and normal children into dependent and helpless adults. There are many aspects to child-rearing, but I would like to stress six.

(1) Children need love and need to be provided a safe, secure home that is full of warmth, love and challenges. (2) Teach by example, spending quality time with children providing options. (3) Be conscious of building self-love and self-esteem into your children. (4) Introduce your children to the unlimited possibilities of life. (5) Homes should be non-violent, and parents should be slow to criticize each other in front of children. (6) Most men give very little thought to a lifelong commitment that fathers should make to their children.

To be a parent you have to be there for your kids and not in prison. You have to realize that selling drugs, hanging out on corners, and carrying guns only lead to being in prison or six-feet under. We cannot do anything sitting up here behind bars. Why do youngsters ages 18 and 19 years old come to San Quentin? Because they do not have a role model; either their father is dead or in prison. We need to talk to these youngsters and try to steer them in the right direction, and explain to them that they need to be out there with their own kids. It starts at home!!! Youngsters need someone who is willing to listen and talk to them and try to instill in them that there is a better life out there for them. It starts at home!

## FORGIVE ME. FORGIVE YOURSELF!

Forgive me. Forgive yourself. Forgive that in which I hold myself hostage to. Let it go. Whatever it is... big or small. Don't be alarmed, by the way in which I express myself. Being myself. For I am a reflection of you. As you are a reflection of me. And the way to get free is to release the beast and release the peace. Forgiveness is a large part of that. Camisha stop the combat.

Who are you angry at? What are you? Trying not to be trapped? Mean while, you are trapping yourself, instead of tapping into yourself. Tapping into your talent and gifts you have been given. Just listen... to the wisdom within. No need to reach outside of yourself for whatever you're looking for, you have

Namaste, my brothers. I hope today finds you well and in good spirits. I wanted to write about healing, we must also talk about woundings, for the two go together. How can we transform our wounding so that they can become sources of strength which we can draw on in those moments when we are brought to our knees in grief and despair?

We are all – each one of us – deeply wounded. There is not a single person on this earth who has not sustained numerous woundings over the course of living. The wounds to our psyches are not as visible as those wounds that our bodies sustain. We carry our psychological wounds deep within us and it is much harder to heal those physical wounds.

Our life experiences and the realities that we live in have an impact on our mental and emotional health and well being. The ones that impact us negatively are our woundings. Some of these experiences of wounding we have more control over than others. The reality is that we live in a society in which there are many systems of oppression within which we must exist and which wound us very deeply, that is. things like racism, incarceration, sexism, classism or homophobia. In addition to these systems we also create our own wounding by engaging in behavior or activities that are not good for us (for example substance use, addictive behaviors or violence). Sometimes the very behaviors that are hurting us are the coping skills we have developed to try to deal with our woundings such as using drugs and alcohol.

It is very important to be aware of the difference between those factors and conditions

that society imposes upon us that create wounding and those that we impose upon ourselves. There are many places where the two intersect; and the impact on our mental and emotional health and wellness becomes even more profound as we turn the negative thoughts and beliefs about ourselves inwards and start to act them out. To quote James Baldwin: "You know it's not the world that was my oppressor, because what the world does to you, if it does it to you long enough and effectively enough, you begin to do to yourself."

Take a minute to think about what woundings you have sustained over the course of your life. How are they continuing

our experiences is ever lost – positive or negative. The person I am today is made up of my woundings as much as my successes, perhaps even more so because the woundings have made me stronger.

Some of the things we can do to create healing include not engaging in unhealthy behaviors that cause us to wound ourselves or others (for example substance use, violent behavior). Also, we can start to create community with others who are engaging in healthy behaviors and seeking to make changes to unhealthy lifestyles. In doing this we support our healing and that of others. Spiritual belief and practice is vital to our healing because it gives our lives meaning. Engaging in regular spiritual practice

*"We end up operating from our wounded places and in doing so, wound others and ourselves."*

to impact your life, the choices you make and the behaviors you are engaging in? The reality is that unless we can start to heal our woundings they continue to bleed within us, causing us to stay in a cycle of wounding. We end up operating from our wounded places and in doing so, wound others and ourselves. If we are to heal ourselves and create healing within our communities, we have to break this cycle.

This brings me back to the questions I asked at the beginning of this article. How can I create healing for myself and perhaps for those in my life I have caused to be wounded through some of my actions?

Healing is a process. It will not happen overnight. Some wounds may never heal completely; but we can find a way to integrate them into who we are in a way that allows us to move forward in our lives. In doing so, we stop the bleeding. Nothing that has entered into

grounds us and gives us solace. Finally, engaging in healthy creative pursuits can be a way of transforming our woundings as well (for example writing, art, music, dance, etc...). These are just some of the ways that we can start to create healing.

Our woundings, if left unattended, continue to bleed and motive our behaviors. In creating healing for ourselves we can start to make changes to those behaviors we are engaging in that do not suit us and which are negatively impacting our lives and the lives of others. In starting to heal these woundings, and ourselves, our woundings become transformed into sources of strength we can draw upon in our time of need.

I would love to hear from you about the ways in which you create healing in your own life. Feel free to write to me c/o of the editor. Until next time, blessings...

— Helen Ameeta Singh

## Prodigals Return to San Quentin

The sally port opens to clean grass, trees, birdsong, a raised pond, quadrangle guarded by ancient buildings open to blue evening sky, where water birds hungry for home careen over crenellated walls splash down in waiting pond.

Prodigals, fourteen siblings Once nested here as ducklings, now Return with friends—forty ducks swim In parade welcomed by blue shirted men glad as fathers with hearts flung wide rejoicing in the soft wild center of San Quentin State Prison.

—Judy Richardson

## Raw Meat (2006)

Put your heart into song, You can't help but write the truth; If your heart is loving, you can't go wrong; The words you choose will be your proof. Your truth can be desire That burns like white hot fire

Searing soul with pain to prove Love a hell you pray heaven remove.

Or truth can be the grief When love is proved a lie.

How pain beyond belief Is why all day you die.

The lover's heart is made of flesh, The poet's heart is under geist;

To beat for songs sung to the muse, To feed Her hunger for amuse.

— John O. Neblett

## Memories, Impressions and Gratitude

It Sitting Remote and Picturesque, a Ringed Fortress with Formidable Walls, Inhibiting Gates and Deadly Dark Watchtowers Containing Life-Altering and Lifetime Situations

Them Under Control—Abraham, David, Gary, Fernando, Camal, Ken, Michael, Terrell, James, Jay, John, Randy, Inhabiting Monk-like Cells Coping and Hoping Escaping by Learning and Creating

Them/Us Brilliant Dauntless, Articulate, Handsome, Proud and Powerful Manhood Fielding Questions/Probing Answers Practicing Reverence and Patience Presenting Quality and Value Sharing History, Awareness, Wisdom and Artistry

Me Grateful for the Experience and humbled by it.

—By: Wm H.

(An Outside Visitor to San Quentin)

all that you need and more. Even though your (maja) (Man/woman) or (mama)? may be unsure. You are pure. Even though your heart may be tore. Be an encore of authenticity. (Over & over again) Cause once in a lifetime happens every second. Check it.

Before, you wreck it. Be prepared to reassemble it. Stop trippin off what he did and what she did. Build not your own crib. With patients, hanging, from the chandeliers. Constantly persevere. There is no fear, other than for the one we revere. Be clear.

— Camisha Fatimah

# On the Line



Tom Brobst -San Quentin Librarian

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN SQ MAINLINE LIBRARY

By DAVID MARSH

From chillers to thrillers, mysteries to westerns and fantasy novels to reference books, good reading material recently got a good bit more plentiful at the San Quentin mainline library according to senior librarian Tom Brobst. Both serious and recreational readers will soon be able to enjoy the fruits of the librarian's recent \$11,000 shopping spree at popular bookseller Barnes and Noble. That translates into approximately 1,000 new titles to add to the almost 33,000 volumes that already stock the library's heavily laden shelves.

Brobst, a library veteran with over eight years spent working in the SQ library, estimates that approximately 70 percent of the recent purchases are paperbacks, with the rest being hardbound. Brobst and librarian

John Cornell were accompanied by education Vice-Principal Frank Kellum, who supervises the library, on the trip to Barnes and Noble. The trio used a request list compiled by the library's patrons, as well as suggestions from the various programs run through the education department and just good old fashioned common sense in making their selections.

Library users will see for the first time a relatively new genre of paperbacks, the "Urban Novels," which are written in contemporary street language. In addition, they have added non-fiction books on Black history, Native American history, a variety of texts intended to bolster course work of the classes taught through the education department, and a selection of other nonfiction works to cater to the more serious readers who frequent the library.

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# Inmate Transfers

## What you need to know

*Continued from page 1*

Diane Trumpy is the assistant classification and parole representative at San Quentin. It is her job to identify and screen inmates who meet transfer criteria from a list she receives from the COCF office in Sacramento.

Trumpy cited institutional security in declining to reveal specific numbers of SQ inmates involved in the transfer program, but acknowledged the number is growing. "They are part of a continuing process of which SQ is expected to contribute its share," said Trumpy, who agreed to be interviewed for this story.

Trumpy says that the eligibility criteria for transfers changes with each new round of transfers initiated in Sacramento. For example, the most recent list that Trumpy has received from Sacramento contains the names of inmates who, among other things, received no visits from May 2007 thru May 2008, and whose remaining terms range from a minimum of six months to 30 years.

From that list, Trumpy deletes the names of non-eligible inmates, including Lifers, high security inmates (level 4), minimum custody inmates (level 1), and institutional critical workers. Validated gang members are also ineligible, unlike street gang members, who are subject to transfer.

For those whose names remain on her list, the process begins with a face-to-face notification from a Correctional Counselor I that the inmate has been selected for inclusion in the out-of-state transfer program, and that participation is mandatory. Inmates are then offered an opportunity to meet with a state-supplied attorney,

under contract to the state from the George School of Law, who will advise them of their appeal rights.

Each inmate is screened for both physical and mental health concerns, according to Trumpy, and then endorsed by the CSR for a transfer to an out-of-state facility. After being endorsed, an inmate can choose to make use of the specially expedited 602 appeals process.

At SQ, the three-stage appeals process is handled by CCII R. Brau of the Inmate Appeals Office. Brau, the inmate appeals coordinator, emphasizes that no inmates are actually shipped out prior to completion of the second level of appeal. An incomplete third level process will not prevent transfer of an inmate, although every effort is made to complete the appeals process before the transfer, according to Brau.

Brau states that two inmates have successfully delayed their transfers on appeal due to pending medical procedures. In addition, he has several appeals pending. Although many inmates have consulted an attorney, the number who filed an appeal is quite low, Brau said.

Sensitive Needs inmates, also known as Protective Custody prisoners, can elect to transfer out-of-state, but there currently are no out-of-state Sensitive Needs Yards for inmate segregation. "That also is about to change," says Brau, "and the new contract will include the development of Sensitive Needs Yards at the COCFs." When that happens, sensitive needs inmates will be involuntarily shipped out as well, according to Brau.

Brau noted that the mix of inmates at SQ, with its large number of ineligible Lifers and high security and minimum security inmates, SQ has a rela-

tively low number of inmates available for the transfer program. Those selected for transfer reside in North Block and H Unit.

The ever-shifting criteria for eligibility, says Brau, means that inmates fresh from reception to the mainline are now being diverted to the program as well, increasing the number of inmates at SQ that are eligible for transfer.

Inmates at SQ that are currently involved in various stages of the transfer process and interviewed for this story have expressed misgivings as to what awaits California inmates upon their arrival at one of the COCFs.

An informational video released by the CDCR in 2006 shows state of the art facilities featuring weight training equipment and roomy gymnasiums and air-conditioned facilities. According to the video, California inmates will not be allowed to smoke or use tobacco products, and most CDCR rules and regulations will still apply, including rules for good-time, work-time. Self-help programs such as NA, AA, Anger Management, etc. will be offered to inmates as well.

"California law requires that inmates be housed in a suitable place of confinement that will maintain standards of care and discipline comparable to those of CDCR," the video says.

An inmate transferred to the North Fork Correctional Facility in Oklahoma wrote back praising the 43 channels offered on TV, the fact that inmates can possess Playstations, minimum 30 cents per-hour pay numbers, and a variety of other "perks" offered at the facility.

—David Marsh & Michael R. Harris

## never knew his name...

I guess I never really knew him, though for 2 1/2 weeks I thought I had come to know him well. But I'm very bad with names, always have been, so to me, he was 'Bunkie', 'cause that's what he was - my Bunkie. And he always had a friendly word for me, or anyone else for that matter.

Tonight in H Unit, while coming out of the chow hall, I hit the deck when the Dorm 1 alarm went off. I sat there for awhile and watched the ambulance come and, finally, go. Word came to us that it was a "man down," and that he had stopped breathing. Thinking back, I'm not really sure what I thought about that, and maybe I simply decided not to think about it, then I went about my business.

Only later did someone tell me who had died, that it was my "Bunkie." That he had simply lain down on his bunk to rest...and died. With two months left on a sentence that had inadvertently become a death sentence.

And then it occurred to me that...this man who I had taken a liking to in the brief time that

I knew him, who always said 'hello' in passing, and I didn't even know his name. And as I asked around of others who had known him and had shared greetings with him on a regular basis, I came to realize that none knew his name. He had come and gone in anonymity. Many had known him, however briefly, and many had liked him. But none knew his name.

It's like that in prison, many of us coming and going all the time, with most never leaving anything resembling a permanent impression. And no constants in our lives. And sometimes, not even a name.

It's possible that months from now my Bunkie won't even be a memory for many people. But I liked him, and already I miss him.

Rick. His name was Rick. Richard Simpson, or at least that's what the c/o told me my Bunkie's name was. Rest in peace, Rick. You were a good man, a good Bunkie, and at least I oughta know your name.

Richard Simpson...2-1-58 — 9-23-08

—David Marsh

## MY EXPERIENCE WITH SQTV

I am a Lifer employed at San Quentin Television (SQTV) within San Quentin's Education Department, where I have worked since late-September 2005, a month and a half since I transferred here from Pleasant Valley State Prison. Prior to being incarcerated, I already had musical skills in that I play guitar, keyboards, and bass and I also had strong computer skills. Unfortunately, I didn't

*I work on equipment that video professionals use in the "real world" on a daily basis.*

take advantage of these talents. Currently my title is "Video Production Coordinator", and I work with four other people at SQTV under the supervision of Television Specialist Larry Schneider, as well as five graduates of the Discovery Channel Film School. My capacity is to coordinate and perform camera shoots for the many groups and programs here at San Quentin utilizing high-definition cameras. This enables me to edit the footage on one of the four Apple iMacs the Discovery Channel donated to the Film School. With this I am able to create the finished product for internal broadcast on the SQTV system and media for various educational groups. I also create original music scores for videos we produce here, either solo or in collaboration with one of my co-workers, "Blue" Wilder.

It is an intense job; people come from the inside and the outside with projects. Yet this job supplies me with valuable knowledge as to the ins and outs of media production. Because of the generosity and vision of Radical Media and the Discovery Channel, I work on equipment that video professionals use in the "real world" on a daily basis. For example, Final Cut Pro is the industry staple, and with the many features this software has, I can see why video producers swear by this valuable tool. I would love the opportunity to use the skills I am learning and developing on projects once I am again in the free world.

I believe there are an abundance of opportunities in media production (i.e. movies, music videos, etc.) and especially freelancing, so I want to make my contribution out there. I would like to let the public know what rehabilitation can do for someone formerly incarcerated, but also to help spread the message to young people who live in a disenfranchised reality. To teach them that they too can learn this marketable trade of video production, and remove themselves from the vicious cycle of unemployment that permeates their community.

—E. Phillips

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