

C.O.N.
CONDITION OTHER THAN NORMAL
BY **G.B.T.**

© Garry Brian Tettersington, 2011

Contents

Dedication	ii
C.O.N.	iii
Dark Ride (Introduction)	iv

Chapters

1	Whitehorse – Briefly	1
2	Yellowknife – Basically	9
3	The Mine – Darkness and Despair	17
4	Stanton – The Party	27
5	A – Shaft – The Deed	32
6	Edmonton – A Brief Fear Before Quebec	41
7	Quebec – Quickly	44
8	Yellowknife – Again	53
9	Y.C.I. – The Wait	58
10	D.P. – Big House On The Prairie	74
11	Grierson – Interlude	101
12	D.P. – A Good Little Jail	104
13	Edmonton – Helpless	131
14	D.P. – Imagine	146

15	Annex – C.O.N.	182
16	Coming Home – Reflections	209

Betty Rose

So many times, when I have been frail and helpless, I would drop to my knees and cry out to God above for mercy. Just cut through the devouring fire on high and talk straight with the man Himself. Amen.

All is well

G.B.T.

C.O.N.

I won't keep you on the hook. It's only proper I explain C.O.N. right off the top. C.O.N. was loose and general jailhouse jargon for 'Condition Other than Normal.' Covers a lot of space doesn't it?

There was C.O.N. in other jails. There was C.O.N. in D.P. The entire D.P. experience was C.O.N. And my whole remarkable life and existence on this marvelous planet has been slapstick C.O.N. comedy.

I will tell you of C.O.N. I will tell you of the end of innocence and of survival. I will tell you of failure and of redemption and *this* is what the book is all about. The *message* is faith and hope.

All is well

G.B.T.

Dark Ride

After a lifetime of craziness, I truly hope I'm humbled enough to tell you folks a story. I certainly feel like damaged goods today, broken everywhere and not much for it.

These days I find, more often than not, an objective and silent response is the best defense I can offer, when dealing with stupid people. And I try real hard not to listen to or talk to stupid people. Which means I'm usually to be found doing my own time.

It seems I've run thru all my options and I no longer have need of charge or praise. Today I feel border line isolated and detached and I don't have many cares.

What I *do* have today is a sometimes-deplorable fear of being and a severe passion for anger and I'm going to try and work these issues out with words. Also, deep inside, I have a loneliness and an emptiness, mixed loose with an ache and a dim hope, to say something and these words might be my last chance on this beautiful planet. To say something...

Words *are* important. Writing *is* sacred. I pondered on these great truths and then decided to crank out some quality thoughts and candor of my own. I really do have something to say folks.

Whatever does become of these exalted words will be not less than a much-needed resurrection of spirit and redemption of purpose. A bold and noble statement indeed.

After the burden of this undertaking, I suppose I'll do an inventory and I'll decide which way to jump. And I plan on being around for a long, long time.

As I say...whatever. The significant point is for me to be able to say I tried. At least I tried.

A solemn ditty before I begin to roll. I cherish the truth. Right here and now, with this pen, on this paper. I will not lie. Should I find myself writing less than the basic truth, well, I will have no choice other than to quit. I'll toss this pen out the window, cover and conceal these words and think for a while. I will not begin, endure or end this narrative with deliberate falsehood. I will not lie.

Understand further, when I finally decided, at long last, to bring out the pen and paper, with regards to this singular deed, it was only after quiet deliberation, after careful soul-searching, even after burning out a pair of poor - boy sneakers, roaming and wandering, up and down

the dreary streets and avenues of this forgotten city, that I knew there was no other way. I knew that if I was to tell this story, I would have to be brutally honest but the truth is vital and precious to me today. To this end I swore an oath to do this very thing. To tell the truth, anything less than the truth would diminish me, something I'm not about to accept, not now, not anymore. And I'm not afraid. I'm ready.

Fair warning! On occasion I may feel it necessary to bend and stretch, to make certain allowances but most anyone who reads these illustrious words will recognize exaggeration and distortion. Hell, I *need* to have fun. But, on my honor, mostly I'll give you the straight goods, the truth. And I reckon I can't go wrong. I'll just step to the right now. I do believe it's about time to stand and deliver.

All is well

G.B.T.

Whitehorse – Briefly

Only I can tell this story. I really don't want to because the damn thing appears suspiciously like work but it must be told and it must be as soon as possible. Otherwise, given my chaotic and turbulent lifestyle, I suspect I could find myself bang – dead or quite insane and unable to defend my wayward existence. See, my being on this street is much like walking a tightrope. I never know for certain, which day, which way, I'm going to fall. Also, this book is a necessity, to prevent and avoid this planet from saying about me, 'He left no footsteps.'

All my life I've been running. From the beginning one might say, Running and hiding, always a careless rush and usually a headlong flight into a greater and deeper danger. I can't look over my shoulder and remember a time when I haven't been ducking and dodging unfathomable powers and forces.

From the coppers mainly, curious characters, who, time and again, took strong and sincere objection to my absolute and unalienable right, to ridicule, to oppose, to thwart and frustrate them and their rules. The courts with their restitution orders, banks and other agencies that wanted their monies back, multitudes and organizations that conceivably may have preferred me dead and buried, rather than suffer my candid laughter. There were people who could have done without me and had dim regards for my cheating ways. Crazy ladies and their outraged and offended husbands, little girls and their distraught boyfriends and the occasional irate mother or father, whom I will be no doubt meeting one fine day.

There are people who would say I have forever been running from myself and they would be correct. I hold I have forever been fleeing every man's demons and I too would be correct.

Certain people would label the following tale as being a doomed and hopeless Odyssey. I would refer to it as being a test and a learning experience. Again both views would be correct.

The nut of the matter is these words constitute a statement, which must be read and enjoyed with a cold and calculating smile.

For various reasons, the long road was regularly a defiant freedom or an essential compulsion, a welcome release or a desperate captivity. I have chased many a futile resurrection, if you take my meaning.

This yarn begins in the summer of '76. An extremely high – powered run thru the North Country was called for and imperative. It was a flight of dismay and consternation. Crazed on booze and dope, racing hard and fast, crying and dying all the while, not knowing and not caring why. I was alone. I was afraid. I was angry. I was a mad dog and should have been gunned down.

The only absolutes I had going for me, were a fierce determination not to be taken alive and a primitive instinct for survival, at anyone's expense. A lot of faces and doubles in my life and yet, so far, I've managed to escape reasonably intact and in one piece. I've always known when to run away. Anyway...

There were times when I've appeared so damned suspicious, I've expressed mild astonishment or light amusement at radar or sonar being unable to track and trace me, considering some of the methods I've used to get away quickly. Times were when I should have done the book and the walk that went with it.

Now, I will concede, I happened to be about half-insane back in 1976, unstable for sure and not thinking clearly but I would have had to have been incredibly normal and prescient, to have seen and understood a blind and final confusion and perhaps a terminal judgment I was rushing madly towards.

The original plan had been W.H. The heat was on. Truthfully, I can't recall what I was moving from that time but it must have been serious enough for me to break for the North Country.

I reasoned the way I did and rightly so because of the few occasions when I had held my ground. On these same foolish occasions, all I had ever known for faith and trust in a contrary judicial system were the insides of filthy jail cells.

Logic was, any damn thing could have happened between the time I lit out and the time the law laid me by the heels and dragged me back to face the amends process, dragged me on back, kicking and snapping, to be denounced, scourged and sentenced and forced to do my time. Not good. No. Better to run away.

Listen up. The courthouse could have been struck by a higher power. The police station could have caught fire and burned to the ground. The witnesses could have vanished without clues. Any of these unlikely possibilities I would have accepted and considered divine intervention or proper retribution. But no, it never happened, it never did and they never went away. Instead, those swinish bastards, every one of them, had their days of judgment with me, sometimes after years of frantic and frenzied running on my part. Best to keep moving.

That was yesterday. I don't run so much today. Today I build my own walls. The difference is, tomorrow I'll know exactly why and when to haul ass and run away. I am an outlaw and always will be.

What I knew, back in '76, in Edmonton, was, all I had been doing was fading and failing and becoming smaller. Likely, it would only have been a matter of short time before someone put me down permanently. I was a bum, a peculiar and unique breed of bum. I had no home, no money, no friends and I never cared who I cheated or lied to. I never *cared*.

It was an alarming state of being and a tangible wall of dark alienation had been closing in on me and I had felt it. The uniforms and the steel had to have been real close behind. Right - Time for me to book it for the high country. Time to do my magic act. So...

One clear morning, without so much as a, by your leave and thank – you very much, I winked out and Edmonton was another blue memory.

Now, I had done this disappearing routine, so often and from so many places, it had become a chronic grind and acceptance. Just do it and be nimble about it. Then again, leaving Edmonton, specifically, had never been a hardship or a sadness for me. Leaving Edmonton had frequently been an exoneration, an amnesty and a freedom.

W.H., for inexplicable reasons, had suggested itself as the right place to run to and to hide from a life of constant sorrow. Perfect in fact. A thousand miles north, a boss job, make all the money, buy an expensive set of wheels and return to Edmonton as a hero. Strut into the Strathcona Hotel, dressed in fine raiment, shout a round for the house, stay personally drunk for a month and then retire into a leisurely rest home, sporting a mild liver disorder and as a gentleman. Pure fantasy. Straight fiction. Today I smile at that howler and I know I was some kind of fool in 1976.

Ailments of every description, no cash, hundreds and hundreds of mystery miles in front of me but I wasn't worried. Hell, way back in '76 I was a small – time thief, never one to take more than I needed and there had to be every manner of foodstuffs and groceries between Ed. and W.H.

In a tight situation, I had always counted on thievery as being a necessary talent to survival and in '76 I was being squeezed and would do what I had to do.

The places I slept you wouldn't read about. In ditches, in razed and abandoned shacks, inside rusty and wrecked cars, in fields, under bushes and trees. And I had no sleeping bag. No. Only a moldy old blanket I had scrounged from a pair of University students, good folks I had last known and stayed with back in Edmonton.

The weather was a loyal friend in '76 and I did the right thing and thanked and praised God for a fine and mighty northern Alberta summer. It was sunshine and blue sky, all the way up and over a blasted and twisted mountain road. 'Could be a whole lot worse,' I thought but quietly realized I'd have to think more on this concept.

The rides weren't important and not worth mentioning so I'll pass on describing them and keep passing on ordinary circumstance. I'm not big on frivolous detail. Use your imagination folks.

I must say, only a real strange person would have even thought of giving me a ride. Any driver could see I was down and dirty and didn't give a damn and I had that deep and dangerous look of a drifter. Positively, I rode with idealists and illusionists, maybe people nuts on bad drugs but certainly no one in a square – john frame of mind. No.

I humped that sad and lonely road for a week and longer and it was a tough passage. You would have missed my smilin' face. Except for a brief stop and reprieve in Grande Prairie, it was a dull and dismal journey.

Jim and Grace had a house and home in G.P. and in the relatively short time I was there, as their guest, I quickly went from, “Welcome,” to, “When ya’ all leavin’?”

I may have felt like a low cur at having gobbled Jim’s food and for having swilled Jim’s liquor and at having further abused his hospitality by doing the same to his friends. At the time and mindful of my place and position, I had felt so damned grateful for Jim’s cordiality and compassion, I had fervently contemplated thanking Grace into the bedroom for a bit of cuddle and snuggle.

But no, not a great idea. Jim was a bug in his own unique way. Jim was a connoisseur of high – velocity weaponry and I was fully aware of Jim’s qualified love for his guns and of the indisputable fact that he would not hesitate and was fully prepared to use them, had anyone given him perfect reason. A shining incident such as me screwing his wife would have been one of them. Jim would never have appreciated an item of this description. No and in a perverse type of way, Jim would have welcomed the moment and been indebted to me. Nothing personal. Jim has ever been awaiting a special point in time. Jim is, latently, the most dangerous man I have ever had the good fortune and pleasure to call friend.

Accordingly, I passed on a forbidden liaison with Grace as being harebrained and impetuous. Astuteness of this persuasion has begat the natural consequence of me having remained sound and whole and only somewhat re–arranged over the many years. Self–preservation has always been at the very top of my list of priorities and values.

Still, it may have been embarrassing and uncomfortable for Jim, to have had to explain to his friends in G.P. and to G.P. as a whole, after I had gone away, just what manner of thug – like characters he had known at one time, back down Edmonton way.

Whitehorse! I had made it without getting caught or killed. A big rig let me go and I immediately gravitated towards a 2 A.M. bar – beat I could not ignore. Now...

Whoever had driven me to the outskirts of G.P. and put me on the road had been pleased to shoot me a double – sawbuck to jingle in my jeans. Hell, he got away cheap. After the fuss and commotion I had raised in G.P., he had every right and reason to expect no less than this good ol’ boy asking for his truck and demanding his watch and wallet.

And so I had a few dollars and was prepared to drop it on any cheap thrill but fate stepped in and I fell across an acquaintance from the southern days. And he was buying.

Much later, thru the blur of a smoky alcoholic cloud, just like in the movie, a brown eyed girl across the room and she owned a green metal – flaked Cadillac. Marga was her name and she was a metropolitan and cosmopolitan class of lady. She knew petticoats and palaces. She took me home. To her apartment. Where I spontaneously regressed into a sprawling and spreading lower life – form, right over and across the lovely lady’s bar. I drank everything. I can recollect her bar as having been a well – stocked and custom affair. Until my

arrival and determination to imbibe. At 4 A.M. the damn thing was history. And then, had I wanted or needed another drink badly enough, well, I just might have stripped the paint clean off the girls' living room walls. I was that way, once upon a time.

Thru the fog and mist, I mind the image of me telling that sultry girl a long and detailed story, a desolate and forsaken narrative. She said I should write a book, as I was a strange and distant character. (Here it is pretty lady, like I said I would.)

I got drunk. I passed out. I remember no more. Then morning came and the girl kicked my wicked ass out and onto the streets of W.H.

When blanks like this happen to me, I feel like a prize fool. It was not the first time for sadness of such description to come my way and positively not the last. No.

After that wonderful salutation from W.H., I scurried on downtown and did just 1 pass thru the Edgewater Hotel before managing to tree a total stranger into buying me beer for the remainder of the day. I have a talent for essentials of this sort.

Well now, I hung my hat at the regional hostel for a night or 2 but soon burnt – out that amenity, that sweetness and light, after the staff became cognizant of my fondness for drink and of my wont for reeling in at odd and unusual hours. I was asked to leave. A door closes. And the damned things keep right on closing.

Read this. W.H. depends or did depend, on the existence and efficiency of 2 mines and they directly or indirectly employed the whole remarkable city of W.H. and without those mining enterprises, W.H. had no credible reason for being on this planet.

What could possibly go wrong? After all, I was in the Yukon, Robert Service country, Jack London land, high adventure and a fortune to be won at the snap of a card. It was not this way in 1976 folks.

Both mines were on strike. W.H. was a bust. W.H. was a town of walking and wandering spooks and specters, every one of them with a cheap beer scam. I was not pleased. I was not impressed. At one time or another, I too, had used all the tricks and crafts, in a lot of far off corners on this planet, to keep from having to give up the ghost.

Dismayed and distressed at having found W.H. to be no more than an inhospitable and precarious danger – zone, I knew something had to be done. Something had to change or I would have gone to jail, for reasons I shouldn't have to explain but I will. Quite simply, I would have had to pillage and plunder and maybe have done something worse and possibly have hurt somebody, to have removed myself from my quandary and predicament of the time. Jail seemed a possibility.

All the tourists and trash like myself, hundreds of us, were drifting from one end of W.H. to the other and back again, moving aimlessly, trying to forget the burden of boredom and hoping for deliverance.

Resources were spread thin, practically non-existent, gutter butts were rare and invariably a satisfying delight when found. It was a slim – pickin's and sparin' situation. I had gone past hunger and was preparing to deal with a prodigious case of starvation. It was a grim setting and I felt like a phantom and I knew I was standing awful close to the dark lady and her kiss of death. It was a hardship but I would manage it. I *had* to manage it.

A bleak and bleary summer's evening and I had occasion and opportunity to do a late night reflection on my life in general and of my condition of the moment in particular.

I was laid out high and horizontal, amongst the weeds and rocks, atop the Yukon River. Above me, towering and soaring overhead, the Northern Lights began to shimmer and dance. Rolling and roiling, howling and hollering, from horizon to horizon, frantic and eerie ripples of gold and silver, green and purple haze, blue – black velvet, shockin' pink and blood – red hues and tones, splashing and splattering over my face and body, laughing and pouring down on me. Brilliant lights and flashing fireballs, from star to star, wild and violent shrieking and smashing and crackling noise, over and aloft and out of the mighty northern Canadian sky.

Alone, private and withdrawn, the moon was a gentle, white – hot disc.

Down below, the Yukon River fought its' way thru the canyon, incredible din and clamor, as the river bucked and swayed and charged, swirling and scraping and grinding past the scabrous and scraggy walls of the gorge and chasm. It was a blustery thunder and racket.

It was nature's hauntingly beautiful symphony, challenging for dominance and supremacy, a terrible and tumultuous beauty of such intensity, of such magnitude, that my breath left me and I was awed and humbled to my knees. Then I heard, over the magnificent storm and turmoil, even louder than the uproar and chaos which surrounded me and engulfed me, great tidings, that, even though there was close trespass and quiet villainy in my life, there were still eternal wonders and miracles I had yet to see and experience. Fine words to hear.

Desperately, I reached for my bottle of Colona Royal Red that I had wisely brought along for earthly comfort and was about to go on the damned thing when up popped a vagabond. The tattered old fool seemed determined to purloin my 'baccy and booze so I thrashed him soundly for his impertinence and sent him on his way. Strange wine indeed. Ho! Ho! 'Twas a fine night for feelin' fine.

The closest I may have come to disappearing in the Yukon Territory, had to have been when I decided to stay 2 nights of my life in a friend's cabin.

It was a rustic setting, trees and rocks, fresh and frosty air, a pastoral backdrop, a scene to be found on any North Country postcard. A scene, one in which I was downright terrified to set foot outside the cabin for fear of the wolves my German friend saw fit to keep as pets. The dumb bastard was a tad paranoid concerning his skeptical Nordic heritage you see and so harbored and nurtured those wolves for the fright and dread they instilled and inspired in any stranger or passerby who happened upon his shack in the bush. Those animals were

an amazing deterrent and not many neighbors came a – callin’ while I was there. For sure, those wolves were masterful and powerful protection.

Even though the filthy brutes were heavily entrenched behind a double, chain link fence, I felt and knew it was not enough of a security factor, not for this lily – livered southern boy. At first sight of those shaggy and mangy mutts, I casually suggested giving them a taste of the salt from the ol’ 12–gauge hanging above the fireplace but my square head friend got right hot and upset over that notion.

Big and mean? Well, yes, they were big and mean. With razor claws, dripping fangs, fiery eyes and they had no fear. They were creatures from hell.

The second and last night and not surprisingly, I had successfully stumbled my way back to the stronghold with a skin full of beer I had promoted and took hold of downtown and those evil and unspeakable hounds came at me. Growling and snarling and smashing and slashing at the fence and it was a fearful instant and that fence seemed mighty poor protection at that moment. My heart stopped. Then I recovered, thought for a second and stepped closer to the cage. I was wearing a ruthless grin. “Here doggies, nice doggies, come and get it” and I unzipped and let go and fly an amazing and astounding stream of hot piss, which soaked and shampooed the bastards down. They went crazy. The stupid fuckers were caterwauling and crying with rage and frustration, banging and slamming against that super steel mesh, cowling and howling, rolling and sloshing in the mud and the blood and the beer. My laughter was hollow. I knew I’d be leaving soon. I knew I had to leave the Yukon or perish. Slowly I shook my head and went inside the cabin.

Sleep was hard to find that night. All during the cold and early morning hours, I thought those hounds from hell just might come crashing thru the walls, coming for me, seeing as how I had riled and ruffled them to an extreme fever and pitch and had kindly given them my scent and they knew exactly where to find me. And they wanted me bad. And they would have rendered me dead. It could have happened. Easily.

The night was lit with the sounds of riot and disorder, fierce shrieking, baying and screaming, wails and yips and yowls. And if this peal and uproar wasn’t enough to keep me pissed off and paying attention, those damned dingoes, after they had done with the weak and the wounded, took to indiscriminant rutting and bugging with each other. The yelps and squeals of ripping and tearing flesh, were ghastly and gruesome sounds to hear, at a drunk and dark 4 A.M. It sounded as though the pack, including kith and kin from every part of the Yukon, were readying and preparing a primitive rite, prior to an organized storming of the bunker.

Should Darwin have come across Canada’s Yukon Territory, he would surely have cut and run but not before shouting, “Survival of the fittest!” A sage of the Yukon would nod shrewdly and say, “Call of the wild. Code of the north.” Me? Hell, I knew it was every man for himself. That was wisdom deep and profound enough for me to understand. I also knew it was best to take it on the lam before the North Country went totally insane on me.

So I shot the moon early the same morning but not before stopping in front of the wolves' cage and pointing and leering and laughing at those freaks from hell. The last I saw of those mongrel beasts, was they were purely and positively berserk, turning and spinning cartwheels and back flips, trying to chew thru the steel fence which contained and confined them, trying to get at me, to release me from my mortal coil.

Leaning up against the brick fronting of the Edgewater Hotel and praying for a miracle. Hoping I wasn't too conspicuous and wondering who across this great country Canada owed me a favor or money. Who, within the vast range of my visionary network would be good or foolish enough to lend me jack – cash. No one. When you are down and out, you have no friends. You are alone. It is an axiom. It is also one of those true – life facts which occasionally bothered me yesterday.

One slight and slender prospect and in a fit of panic and desperation, I placed a collect call to my best friend down south. Zowie! Shazam! A radical but wise speculation! The government of Canada had done the right thing and upped with the money they owed me! Two hundred dollars shot north fast! Mercy!

It took me 2 nights to splash and spill that satisfaction on a bar – room floor and about then the full realization of my dilemma came over me. For sure, it was time to do a fast exit from W.H. and the only way out was back down that damned dirt road, to turn around at G.P., to go north again, to Yellowknife.

This brilliant strategy had been determined during my last alcoholic stupor and slumber in W.H. After all, no doubt I would find a lot of really good friends in Y.K. So long ago, way back and during the summer of 1976, I was convinced God was not a kind fellow.

All is well

G.B.T.

Yellowknife – Basically

My reception in G.P. was cold and the good and gracious citizens of G.P. may have let me have a glass of warm water before putting me on the road again.

The long road is a harsh and uncaring bitch and I've walked that white line many times and always alone. The road will steal your pride and make you humble and you become aware of how small you really are. On the road, there were times when I despaired of seeing civilization ever again. Not that I've ever had great need of organized structure in my life but society's mainstays, books and beer and other excitable things have sometimes been necessary. Hell, at times even people hold me with a peculiar fascination. The long road builds character and strength and courage and allows you to think and imagine your mistakes and alternatives. On that journey, back in '76, I did all kinds of things inside my head, only to find hordes and legions of barren and broken questions, no answers, just bitter need and longing.

There I was in '76, charging angrily down the throat of the N.W.T., wholly unprepared for what lay ahead. Had I recognized a climactic ending to a frenzied lifestyle, perhaps I would have fled screaming and screeching in the other direction. But no, that would have been a cheat and the next 100 days had been written and would have come to pass no matter where I ran to. An equal form of adversity would have chased and followed me and nothing I could have done about it. There was no escape. I don't believe in chance or luck today. There is a reason and a purpose for everything.

A man would have to be seriously disorganized, to want to live anywhere suggestive of the N.W.T. From where I was standing, the N.W.T. was not much more than a flat, scrub – rock wasteland. The N.W.T. is no more than a huge and festering gravel pit. The land was asleep and gloomy, devoid of vitality, not like the jolting and stirring landscapes and scenes I had looked upon, in my own small way, in other lands, in other countries and here in Canada.

There was one redeeming feature regarding the N.W.T. Should a man have *wished* to remain obscure and anonymous, well, the N.W.T. was the place to be and I can understand seclusion and solitude. Hell, I enjoy serenity and I delight in being on my own and free but the N.W.T. was a meaningless quiet, dull and insignificant and of no big importance to me. The N.W.T. and I could never blend and flow together. We could never intermingle, contribute to and help each other. In the N.W.T., I could not feel the heartbeat. Of a certainty, I had crossed deserts that had more character and inspiration. Nothing exciting lives in the N.W.T. I could have been watching and listening from beyond the far reaches of outer – space, for all the virtue and rectitude I found

between G.P. and Y.K. and no matter I may have run afoul of the law there. I guard myself against bias and preconception. I will not lie.

The rides were lengthy. Hell, human habitat was scattered widely and randomly across the orange rock and moss of the N.W.T. and I came to believe the only creatures endemic to that part of Canada, were those huge and horrible blow – flies, black and hideous slips of nature, which kept attacking me and trying to drag me off and into the bush, where they would have had their way with me. Once or twice, I honestly wished for a shotgun to ride herd on the evil bastards.

Standing on a remote and desolate corner, high above Alberta and I was exposed and vulnerable and truly grateful for 1 ride that is worth mentioning. The man was moving and transporting 10 lbs. of quality marijuana and it helped take the pain away. Also, the young man had recognized my fierce need and want for the 5% and he took care of this craving from the depths of a large ice – chest, which happened to be firmly anchored between us in the cab of his truck. The man’s name was Rennie and he was a prisoner of the white line.

Rennie and I trucked and flew that hi – way for 100 miles and more and then he dropped me off with best wishes, a six-pack of beer and an amazing bag of robust and rowdy marijuana. A kindred spirit and a rare person. I called and bawled many blessings and benedictions at the man and his rapidly departing cloud of dust and then sat back on the side of the road and watched the world go spinning past my eyes.

At that twisted moment in time, I naturally felt like a saint, kiss – tilted and stone – rocked on believing and I was positively crazy and abnormal. I even took to ignoring the occasional vehicle that chanced and rattled on by and to those drivers who did bounce past, I was a mystery. I mean ... what was this animal, down in the dirt, drinking beer from an un-sterilized can and laughing at a clear and empty sky? A lost link that had accidentally strayed from out of the bush and encountered a vestige of civilization? A savage? Folks, it was all I could do to find my mouth with a smoking joint or a foaming can of beer.

About the only thing I remember of my last ride north to Y.K., was stepping out of a battered old car and dumping the sand out of my pockets. I had arrived in Y.K. I was dizzy and dazed from the booze and the dope and bent badly from the road. It had been a long haul and drag. Journeys end.

Even though I was garbled and off – centered, I wasn’t overly bothered or concerned, as being nuts in the North Country was a man’s private affair. Not for the first time had I been worn and wasted in a friendless and foreign land. No worries.

No money either and not much for it other than to do my hocus – pocus routine and convince someone innocent of the wisdom of buying me a beer.

This I did, by targeting the Gold Range Hotel, a nom de plume I thought entirely auspicious and there, to my great delight, I came upon an even dozen miners, drinking their wages. I may have been a homespun union

representative on that particular occasion. No matter. In return for my having to listen to their gripes and groans, they were, in their own casual and friendly way, willing to buy me drinks all day long. I do have an affinity for caging a brew.

I needed a place to sleep. It became my lot to hook up with an American, a sportsman, a man who had materialized in the north country behind the wheel of a complete R.V., stove and fridge, shower and sauna, guns and rods and a wallet stuffed plumb – full of 100 dollar bills.

The man was prepared to do battle with any bear or moose or fish or fell beast that could be taken safely and without getting his Yankee ass thrown in jail and deported. To further bolster his image as a rough and rugged hunter and in the ever-likely event he met a girl of the high – country, he had rented a suite of rooms in Y.K.’s best hotel.

Therefore, I thought it only right and proper to jump in and stake my claim before a pretty northern girl picked and pinched him clean. ‘A wonderful opportunity,’ thought I, ‘I *belong* at this man’s side.’

It was appropriate I pass myself off as a backwoodsman of the northern lands, a skilled and proficient guide, who reverently guarded and protected and knew of every secret location, where the most dangerous and ferocious and wildest of wildlife could be found waiting for a keen and sharp challenge, one such as my American friend clearly possessed and offered.

Actually, I did look the part, a week’s growth of whiskers, a face set deep with inquiring and intelligent eyes, patched and faded shirt and jeans, a standard hermit appearance, a man who had left his shack in the outback, after a hiatus of several years and returned to civilization to write the Great Canadian Novel. Ho! Ho!

It was a good cover and the man bought it hook, line and sinker and together we became a competent and capable team and nothing moving in the bush was safe for the next 2 weeks.

The man was pleased and thought me a wizard and gave me leave to sleep on his hotel carpet. No way he wanted to be rid of my accomplished services, not for a spell.

Captured all the prizes and told all the stories, did all the sights and drank all the beer, the only safe and sanitary beverage fit for human consumption in those healthy northern climes, so I told the man and was constantly insistent and on about. I cost the man a small fortune before I was discretely cut loose. Hello America!

Owing to my American friend’s generosity, I led an easy and carefree life of affluence for a week but then had no recourse other than to become a gentleman of the streets of Y.K. and had been reduced to the status of beggar before managing to connect with a band of relaxed and at large inhabitants of Old Town. I had plugged into this group of sundowners with my usual flair and the accommodating nature of the Gold Range Hotel. “Hi there. Buy me a beer and I’ll tell you a story. How do you like me so far?” I needed a place to sleep once more.

Now, while these folks couldn't quarter and shelter me themselves, they claimed to know people in O.T. who could, a speculation roundly acclaimed and applauded at the 20 beer mark, a point at which everything was serious and made perfect sense and was sane and even if I thought their batty allusions to knowing people alive and well in O.T. as being so much hokum, I was trapped and desperately needed to believe there was a place for me in Y.K.

Which in itself became a curious item. The people of O.T., Y.K., were naturally cautious and my next 2 nights were done in a glass building, a plantation, surrounded as I was by 50 – 60 mature marijuana plants. This was the resting place my northern friends had found for my spent and weary body. It was a safe place to bed down until my further and soon to be told adventures with alternative living and lifestyles.

Immediately upon viewing my lush and luxuriant shelter from the storm, I was seized by the greenhouse effect and temptation came over me, to tug those bushy pot plants up by their scraggly roots and run away but a power stronger than me declared, "Don't do it! Don't steal from these folks! They're helping you!" While being an admitted scoundrel and even though I was encircled with solutions to my problems, there are certain things a man can't do and robbing a friend is one of them.

I backed off but not before selecting an ounce of choice buds, for personal use and that oz. of sly appropriation may have been a prime and contributing factor in exiling me to a barge, a low - slung craft, adrift and slumbering on the waters of the Great Slave Lake. Which never bothered me much, considering as I had the Northern Lights for dancing and my Mary Jane for dreaming.

After and odder still, I found myself being constantly shunted to stranger and more remote locations. Those northern folk and their keenly – honed senses were aroused and they were carefully suspicious of the hazards and dangers of wandering gypsies like me. I had begun to feel like Carlos.

I am a lazy man. Always was. Always will be. As mentioned at the beginning of 'the book', these very words seem shyly like forced labor. To be correct and factual, the tally of my life's drudge and toil can be measured and recorded and contained within an uncommonly diminutive time – frame.

I have forever had a fixed and rigid aversion against work of any persuasion and labor especially, even the thought of it, I generally consider to be a figment of my imagination or an unreasonable delusion. For me to actually perceive and approve of *my* being an element of the work force is beyond my powers of definition to accept and explain. The image of *me* moiling and toiling and getting dirty makes me giddy and faint. I cannot comprehend the idea of *me* having to work. The concept does not belong and has no significance in my world. Physical labor and the circumstances which would force it upon me, would have to be bizarre indeed.

Many has been the time when I have been in dire straits regarding rent, food, booze and other issues yet I would near die and trust in merciful providence to deliver me, rather than plug away and punch a clock. At certain drastic and catastrophic moments in my life, the work had been there, had been available but I had never

been wise and humbled enough to waste my precious time and talents on such unreasonableness. An example? Fine.

It was the year of '73 and I was living in a hovel, a basement, one room, a door, a bed, a table and 2 chairs, a high window a thin cat might have squeezed thru and a 3 burner open – flame gas stove, a firefighter's worst case scenario. The only sure way out was to die. Wretched burrow though it was, the place reeked character. The residents were as different as the house. The junkies lived on the top floor, the speeders were on the main and us juiceheads controlled the basement. It was a comfortable and congenial arrangement. No one living there had ever been anxious to talk to a lawman or an authority figure of any description. Everyone abided and adhered to a basic policy, a natural order and design which advised each and every individual to keep his mouth shut and do his own time. It was a practical and sensible scheme and approach and it worked well and everyone was content.

Best of all, for me, was the convenience and close proximity of a liquor store. I had only to bump and grind a half block thru the alley, to purchase my daily ration of bargain – counter wine. A good thing.

Rent was \$35 / month and I was 3 mos. down and behind and hadn't eaten a morsel in 5 days and was confined to bed with the early stages of starvation and in walked the Rock. Rocky was the landlord and a serious as a judge sot and drunkard. Rocky had himself a slow look around my room, glanced briefly at my sickly condition and he understood and he knew the answer to my plight. The remedy to my infirmity was a short bottle of vodka which had been discretely hanging from his back pocket. He offered me the bottle. I took a hit. It was the ticket and a vulgar guarantee and amidst curses and cautions, gags and chokes, I shakily dressed myself. "Look at me Rocky! I'm dying!"

"Before you do, you owe me 3 months back rent. Come along."

"Go away Rocky!"

"You'll do fine. Let's go." Rocky needed me. To be his nigger. To work for him. And to convince himself and prove to the Interdenominational Association of Slumlords that his 4 – star tenant wasn't a total dead – beat and no – account bum.

An hour later and I was splashing cheap paint on another of Rocky's claptrap tenement rooms. Somehow, between the squalor of tawdry surroundings and the delirium tremens, I managed to slap a token coat of pink wash on the ceiling and walls of that damned room. It was a struggle and a contest.

Then Rocky fed me, bacon and eggs, toast and coffee and 3 more shots of miserable vodka. After this restorative nostrum, it was the street, a 5-dollar bill tucked neatly and deeply inside my blue – jeans pocket, enough for 2 bottles of rotten wine and a dollar to spare.

"And I'll be seeing you next month. Have money."

"Right." I waved and walked away.

Now, at any time leading up to my having become halt and lame, I could have searched and found the work which had assuredly been mine for the asking and risen above my deformities but chose not to. Gracious providence has always sustained me and come to my rescue whenever the screws of mischance and misfortune have tightened down securely upon my person.

Work is slavery. The wages of work are the same as any slave ever received. Ignoble survival and inglorious existence. Work done solely to survive and exist is a twisted misrepresentation and a deprivation of living your life on your terms and in close harmony with your creator. Your remarkable gift of life, on this beautiful planet is short, too short to waste on empty work and futile labor.

When I think of the important matters in my life today, the necessities, shelter and food, books and booze, laughter and loose women, I have absolutely no need of foolish complications. Such as work. Work would only be a distraction and get in my way and bring me down. I do not *need* work and for the record, here I am, a bit crazy from all the years but here just the same.

I like money. Yes I do. Money is good, to pleasure a man, to please his friends, to help others and to make everyone smile. However, I'm not willing and ready to debase and demean myself to acquire and hold money. Hell, I can't understand finances past or more than a hundred dollar bill. A C – note will get me a bail of 'Drum' tobacco and a packet of 'Zig – Zag' blue rolling papers, be my entrance fee into the Regis Hotel, buy drinks for myself, a round for the boys and hopefully leave me with a few spare dollars scattered loosely on the floor of my bachelor loft the following frightening morning, for me to take and place carefully and gently on a Tight Squeeze beer table, at 7:30 A.M., to relieve the agony and put out the righteous fires inside my head from the night before. I will never be a rich man.

People no longer puzzle me. Square – john, working people, I understand real well. Someone, at sometime and to a ridiculous purpose, told them they *had* to work. From this belief they developed an entire philosophy of having to be responsible and this could only be attained by working hard all their lives. *These* people have the bitter and cheerless excuse of having to work, the fever of having to work. They lead such senseless and superficial lives. Such a waste, of such a gift. But the way it is and the way it has to be. For the squares.

Hell, I'd skedaddle from worthless and contemptible work in a N.Y. minute. I do not believe in being a slave to another man's guilt and greed. I refuse to bow and serve any man. I will not sell myself. Any work I have ever done, for wages, has always been a well – rehearsed act of panic and consternation.

I have never presumed to be responsible with regards to the work ethic and with a credence and conviction like mine, pity on the man daft and balmy and ready to give me a job. The man deserved his reward or punishment.

I have the word, 'notwithstanding', in front of me, not a pretty word but I'll deal with the bastard. Notwithstanding and only as an extreme, there *are* certain considerations which would force me or inspire me to labor and work, here in Canada. Certain mitigating factors could include, a long ways from home with no money in my pocket, lack of a roof over my head and the last hopeless phases before starvation. I had all 3 of these circumstances in great abundance, the summer of '76, in Y.K., N.W.T.

Not much else will be an inducement for me to work hard, not the need or ambition to be someone extra special or superfluously important, not the idea of affluence or materialism.

I try to maintain a line of credit, always, to pull myself out of the low spots. I've ever cultivated a fine balance between what I want and what I need and the wisdom to appreciate the difference and to be satisfied with what I *do* have. I am a simple man.

Down easy with a struggling and stray thought on this sordid and distasteful topic. In Y.K., back in '76, I could have handed any passing itinerant swagman an ax and a pouch of stale tobacco and pointed him in the general direction of the bush and more likely than not, the brave stranger would have put up a cabin and been quite comfortable. Not I. No. I would have chucked the ax into the Great Slave Lake, sat myself down on a log and smoked the tobacco and thought on my next clever and crafty move.

Further and lastly, any man who takes and hires another man into coin is a pimp. Any man who takes coin for his hire is a whore.

The only safe and rational conclusion I can draw upon, is, I was never put on this planet with the intention I do any labor, for any man.

The fear was on me in Y.K., in '76. I had no money and no prospects of getting any soon, from any complimentary direction. Food, beer and cigarettes were becoming urgent and impossible. I was a long mile from home, as I imagined a home to be. I could have been standing at any point on the compass and I still would have been distant and lost. I *had* no home.

I had done in and exhausted the mooch and hustle and life was rapidly becoming a mite intolerable. I was tired and weary of being moved from one ridiculous and absurd sleeping place to another. I was dirty and ragged and I desperately needed a shave and a shower. The greatest fear I had was falling ill and infirm. Dying I could have handled but, 'Please God, don't leave me crippled,' was my ritual prayer, mornings and evenings.

The rarity of my box and fix had come home to me. The awful enormity of a set of nevertheless conditions, a lively blend of unique stimuli, forlorn though they were, had come upon me like sufferance from above and I would have to go to work. Not good. No.

By the time this solemn configuration came along, I had heard tales and talk of Giant Y.K. Gold Mine. A camp! A bunkhouse and a bed! A cookhouse and a kitchen! Get clean! Get healthy! Be as silent as possible when called on to do a stitch of work. Cheat the company. Get even.

To further and finally convince myself that work was a no choice option and no avoiding it and that labor had become a necessity and beyond my control to deny and to ease the burden of unnatural duty and obligation, I charged my head with a glimmer of positive reinforcement. I persuaded myself of the fantastic and industrious idea of a touch of larceny. Perhaps I could somehow appropriate and swing with enough and to spare of the noble metal. Why not? After a dastardly thought of this nature, the cloud and confusion of hard - labor was easier to manage and helped put the issue to rest. Anyhow, what did I know about working in a mine? Not much.

Now, a speculation such as me absconding with the gold was fine, save for the true fact that there was only 1 road out of Y.K. and the town coppers would surely have tripped and fell over each other, hootin' and jeerin', at any man fool enough to be scampering down that gravel road, dragging an illegitimate sack of loot and treasure behind him. The man would be going to jail.

Was in mind of a vicious rumor. Idles' gossip alleged a bright individual, maybe someone much like myself, had made off with 2 bars of gold, many years before. Story was, burnished and buffed, the gold had been sitting in a satchel, on the edge of a runway at Y.K. International, awaiting a plane that would have taken them to the Canadian Mint, when a devious and enterprising person had come along and seized and usurped the damn things and walked away. "Possibly," I thought or fable and folklore, to keep fools like me interested and intrigued. Whatever, it was an intoxicating expectation on my conscious being.

Truthfully though, what attracted me most, was the inkling and inspiration of that pie in the sky camp kitchen. I *know* my stomach was digesting itself at that point in time and I *know* I looked like a wraith and an apparition. I *needed* nourishment.

I stalled some more. I searched for leaks and openings but couldn't find any and the argument was over. End of break and delay. I was determined to grind and plug, to work and survive. So...

One clear evening, after all the reasoning on the subject of struggle and endeavor was in and done, while sitting on a moon and starlit chunk of driftwood and drinking sweet wine on the shore of the Great Slave Lake, I resolved to just do it. For me and my natural inclination towards sloth and shiftlessness, it was something of a staggering bolt and revelation. It was to become a pleasing and promising triumph and victory.

The following early and misty morning saw me standing bare – assed naked in the shallows of the cold, cold, Great Slave Lake, scouring and scraping my squalid and slovenly body. Wet but washed, I pulled on my crusty blue jeans, my threadbare T – shirt, my cracked and blunted boots and set off for the mine.

It was a 2 mile troop and tramp, down a dry and dusty road and while walking that road, Tennessee Ernie Ford's, 'Sixteen Tons', kept playing over and over inside my head and I could be in error but it could have been a fateful and baleful sky, hanging above that road, up in Y.K., N.W.T., back in 1976.

Standing meekly in front of the Giant Y.K. Mine Manager, in his office, chatting and natting so convincingly, so earnestly, as to why Giant needed, yes, needed me. I was able to deliver a performance and stunt like that one effortlessly and smoothly because I was true and genuine. I was also some kind of whore. The man gave me a job.

All is well.

G.B.T.

The Mine – Darkness and Despair.

I crawled on out of the Giant Y.K. Mine personnel office on my belly but as a workingman. Firmly clutched in my left hand was a slip of paper, entitling me to all the amenities and advantages of being Giant's foremost employee of the future.

Somewhere within the floating confines of the camp I was issued sheets, blankets, towels and the hooks to my very own room, in one of those ridiculous but restful brand – name trailers.

Sauntering about on a fresh summer's afternoon and reconnoitering my new surroundings and there was little for it than but to flag down a brother mine worker and insist on directions to the camp kitchen.

The kitchen was a deluxe affair and readily tolerable to a near starved man like myself. It certainly bore no resemblance to some of the low places I had lived out of, for so long a time, all those eateries and hasheries in which I had missed so many meals.

The staff was admirably acceptable and quivering with suitable servility. "More sir? Are you sure you couldn't devour another 12 oz. T – bone steak sir? Perhaps you could do with another dozen jumbo shrimp? Salad sir? We have lashings of the damned stuff. How about another quart of ice cream? Milk sir? We have barrels of it. Never mind you sucked back the better part of a gallon sir. We have more. As much as you need." I belched and gave the girl, Selina, an arrogant and spiteful, "be off with you wench." Vast quantities of consequential and fundamental fruition and pleasures will make a man behave like a big – headed shark. While eating, a subtle and imperceptible change had come over me. Gone was my previous compliant demeanor. Once again I was proud and masterful. I was back. Conflicted me. I was back on top.

After having been wretched and wasted for a long long time, I found myself, quite suddenly, overwhelmed with a deluge of comforts and plenty and mean – street images were fading fast and I was becoming thoroughly relaxed and comfortable. Hell, I had a home and a bright new lifestyle, one which I understood and approved of and was peaceful with and transient though it was, I believed in it all the way.

Sitting in the camp kitchen and I may have been dumb and dopey with fatback stupor and satisfaction. My feet were up on a chair, I had a toothpick dangling loosely from between my teeth and I was thinking about what a clever and talented fellow I was. Contentment was a warm and slow dance all over my body. 'Wonder if I could order me one of those sweet scullery maids. Ask for some take - out. Go back to my new digs and get salty and suggestive.' No. Not a good idea. They were feeding me and there was no sense in being stupid. Hell, they were gracious and kind and they were taking care of me and I was *filled* with gratitude.

About the same time I was struck with a powerful craving for a beer. Should not have been difficult. After all, I was a man of means. At least I had a job...

Having dined and feasted in a most splendid fashion and feeling reasonably high minded and moral, I cast off the final remnants of an extreme frenzy that had been building within me and been part of me and determined to become a civilized man. Y.K. was awaitin'.

First, I approached a stray kitchen worker and shook her down, in a gentle and pleasant sort of way, with a touch of aloofness and haughtiness. I carefully explained I was going on shift and required every manner of provender and victual and the girl gave me what I needed for a long day's labor in the mine. "And help yourself to anything else sir," was in there as well. So I went heavy on the fixin's and was crude with the condiments. I packed up everything vital and edible. See, I was headed into town and I really didn't know if I'd be back. Sometimes it happened like that. Should I have gotten sidetracked along the way, well, at least I'd have had myself a sumptuous and savory scoff and banquet, down on the shores of the Great Slave Lake.

Naturally, before going into Y.K., I had to pass thru the bunkhouse and of course there was a full - tilt party going on, from one end of those trailers to the other. Talked to the men and ran off a few drinks and was told something of the rut and routine of Giant Y.K. Mine.

Three shifts worked the mine. One was on site. One was at rest. One was into a steely and steady alcoholic psychosis. I was pleased. I had found a safe haven and a fine place to hole up and lay back, where a man of my afflictions could hide and be hidden. I was content.

I paused in the bunkhouse long enough to understand that the camp was into the mystic, a continuous circle of dependencies, going round and round. I agreed with this form of madness in 1976.

An unstable person from the deep east thought me interesting and loaned me 20 dollars. Then I was truly fearless and positively *needed* a beer.

At the Strange Range Hotel. Where I once again squared off with the same quaint folks who had arranged for me to kip in a grass - patch greenhouse, a week before. When I laid my booty and bounty down, they became a jolt excited and ecstatic. It was a rather large sack of groceries, choice delicacies from the 4 corners of the Giant Mine kitchen. It was authentic home - cookin', the likes of which those O.T. runabouts had never before experienced. Maybe in their dreams...

The friendship I encouraged between those O.T. people and myself was an equitable one, one I had no wish to end, in any big hurry. I had no way of knowing if and when I might need them again and I was ever aware of the long road that waited silently in the shady regions of my mind. Those kindly O.T. residents might not enter into this tale again but we helped each other. What friends are all about.

I slurped back a large flagon of due and deserved beer. Only one and it was remarkable control because I've been known to partake heavily and disgracefully on just such disconcerting and downcast occasions. But not

then. No. I knew it wouldn't be smart, to get liquored and lit, not for my scheduled tour with the shift – boss, the coming morning. I could see it... The Strange Range and a rampaging blow – out in camp, culminating in my being a bleeding wreck at 6 A.M. and screaming at the boss – man, thru a 2” rickety and low - grade pine door, to go fuck himself, did *not* seem like a fitting aftermath to a well laid scheme. I stayed moderately sober.

At sunrise I was a Stein beck man. Hell, I was bright as a new penny. I was clean and dressed, hale and wholesome, fit and fresh, right and ready to work for Giant Y.K. Mine.

First however, it was the excellent camp kitchen and a hearty breakfast and then it was the latrine, for the meanest and most exciting triple – coiler of my interesting and extravagant life. *Then* I was eager and on the bus and on my way to the mine and now it begins.

Bob, the shift – boss, took me down into the mine, for the walk – about tour. Slickers and rubber boots, splish – splash, up and down ladders, circles and turns, muddling twists, a dim and dismal world where the sun never shined. Total dark, dark, forever dark, penetrated only by our hard – hat beams that stabbed quickly and quietly thru the inky dark. No light. Silence, except for our swoshing and splashing footsteps and far away, the eerie and constant trilling and prilling sounds of dripping and dribbling water. The chill air wrapped itself around me and touched me thru and thru and was part of me. Gaping caverns, yawning open suddenly, left and right and having to plank over enormous and empty pits, into which a man stumbling could fall and plummet, out of control, to the very center of the earth.

Could I take it? Well, yes, assuredly. Darkness is my friend. I was in my element. All my life I had been seeking such a place, a place to hide, a place where no one could see me. A place where I never had to explain myself.

The solitude and silence of that black pit pleased me greatly. At any moment I expected to meet Gimli and a host of dwarves, creeping stealthily and searching for true silver. Imagination is a powerful gift and anyone can get strange and peculiar in a hard – rock miner's world.

Other than to consume 10 sandwiches I had built earlier in the mess hall, mainly the morning was easy and uncomplicated.

I do recall one short-lived moment of truth. I remember some kind of asshole standing me in front of a rock the size of a small house and him handing me a sledgehammer and him telling me to make it smaller. I nodded. I took 2 rounding and resounding swings at the bastard and cried out, “No fucking way!” I threw down the hammer, laughed like a lunatic, dropped to the ground and rolled myself a smoke. I wasn't stupid. Right off, I had recognized that trick for what it was. It was a workingman's idea of a test or trial. A joke even. Give the new man an impossible task. Let the man know what he was in for. Make him quit or show us he had the right stuff. Was he *one* of us?

The men were impressed. I'd handled their challenge with grace and grandeur and nothing was ever again mentioned about that horrible fucking boulder.

A fine day's work. I felt powerful and protected and could only hope that however many days I had left with Giant would be just as rewarding and fulfilling, as gratifying and satisfying. Because, the only question I had, at that specific point in time, was, 'How long? How long could I hold out before going off the deep end and throwing it all away?' My attitude was *not* positive, *not* a good one. No.

The fever. Yes. I was to learn that hard – rock mining for Giant was not much more than guess work and lights and mirrors. Also, I was disturbed and grieved to be told there was no such thing as visible gold in Giant Y.K. Mine. One third of an ounce per ton was all. High – grading was out of the question. There would be no stuffing my pockets with golden dreams, not in that gloomy world where the sun never walked. No.

Decided to become a muck machine operator. It was a simple job, involving a minimum of risk and responsibility, a job of such nature whereby a lax and lazy person, such as myself, could all but vanish as an unimportant cog within the overall system.

Once or twice each shift, the boss – man would pass by my work area, to see I was producing and generating profit for Giant Mine. Other than a stiff and animated nod and smile at each other, the man left me alone. I could have dressed up a chimpanzee and put him on my machine and the boss would never have noticed and that was how markedly important my job really was.

Every shift, me and my machine, a glorified scoop – shovel on wheels, were expected to fill 30 – 40 grubby and grungy ore – cars, each one of them holding 2 cubic yards of broken rock. Then, some other damn – fool would come along and hook onto the string of cars with an electric engine and roll down the rails, a grotesque shambles of a train, spewing loose in every direction, to an ore – chute, where the cars were tipped sideways and the whole sorry mess went banging and crashing down, down to the lower levels, to the bowels of Giant Mine. From there, the depths, the ore was taken away to the mill for processing. Not my story.

Whenever a drift or a stope or any work area began to taper out, to stop producing 1/3 oz. of fine gold / Ton, the big bosses would put their heads together. Nothing lucrative in handling straight rock. No money in it. Up against a wall. All work on that site would cease and desist.

Enter the evaluation and deception. The diamond drillers. Called upon to poke and prod and drill off in different directions, at any barren turn and depleted region of the mine and any one of those mysterious sub terrestrials could have cried, at any time, "Hey! Our samples indicate that you should go this way!" An erratic method of exploration, I would have to say.

Now, I suppose I'm short on detail and technical expertise concerning diamond – drilling but back in '76 and working for Giant Mine, I knew then and for certain and occasionally took to wondering on the million riddles that ran thru that rock where no light began. Hell, any one of those bastards could easily have missed a rich

deposit; a vein of pure, a mother lode and those hard men never gave a rat's ass. Those men knew how to play the game.

It was Giant's way of doing business. The burgher – swine who owned Giant Mine were being put thru properly and likely recognized the gaff for the hoax that it was but had no choice than to go for the game and gimmick and accept the fact they were being duped.

Which did my fibrillating heart good. 'A mind that's weak and a back that's strong,' was about as close and involved as I ever wanted to get to any big business and its corporate concerns. It was all dirt to me.

Met all the men. The Giant Y.K. mine and camp was not much more than an excuse for confusion and clutter and 2 pay cheques. One hundred and fifty miners, tight and strong, a stout and sturdy gathering of true Canadians, from every province and territory and island across this great country and every one of us drank beer and whiskey to terrible excess. It made perfect sense to me in '76 and it met with my countenance completely.

Inside of one week Giant Mine had degenerated into my most intense fear, work or so – called honest labor. A dreaded, black – funk nemesis was on me and I began consuming more than my usual intake of alcohol and other poisons. No one cared. I never cared. I didn't *care*. And as each of you reasonable and intelligent folks know, there are no more terminal words to say to your lover. Last and final words. I don't care...

Any given shift would find me half in the bag and feeling like death. Bloopers and blunders were common and encouraged by ungrateful note worthies like myself. My machine would go down every day and hours were lost and wasted as mechanics searched frantically and desperately to find or fabricate parts for the relic contraptions. I would lose or misplace tools and other items and fritter away time looking for them but inevitably; they would be gone and lost forever.

Often, I'd simply be some foxed and wander away from my work area, find myself a shelter to cover my retreat, click off my light and sit and watch the far off flickers of shapes and shadows and listen to the distant chinks and clinks of steel on rock and wonder at the consummate sadness of the working man in this world. On such occasions, I'd sample the wisdom of being anywhere in the vicinity of Giant Mine or any place near the confines of that cursed and hell – bound mine.

There were other feints and jigs I used, to do less than my share of drudge and duty but you understand. I never cared.

Intuitively, I knew a judgment was close at hand but it was a subtle feeling and it never concerned or caused me alarm. It was an elusive and a building fear, in the dim recesses of my brain, an ominous gloom but I paid it no heed. I didn't care.

It was easy to get crazy. It became bad enough, the menials, my co - workers, knew it wise to refuse to work with me or to keep well away when forced to do so. I had become a risky and chancy character to be associated with on the job. I never blamed my brother niggers any. Hell, they were right to avoid me.

Although I was never consciously aware of it, I was swiftly approaching a hub in my life, an ending and a beginning.

The enormity of my position had taken me to extremes and I wished it were true and I could have blamed the awesome powers of the midnight sun for my bothers and plagues, up in Y.K., N.W.T., in 1976.

There were diversions and places to hide but try and understand, if you can, I could never run far enough or fast enough, to elude and escape my troublesome demons. All my life I've been walking with ghosts.

Alcohol was the flight of choice. In such quantities as would send a sane person reeling and crying obscene. Crash – hot parties and sprees, which the most callused coppers allowed to run their course, and then the yellow dogs would converge and swoop down on and arrest the survivors. Binges and benders in camp and in town and on the lake. The Strange Range Hotel that on most nights served up a river of rot – gut hooch and everyone danced. Fights, sometimes just for the fun of it, no reason in particular, only the fast gun mentality at play. I was in to the nines. Both feet were off the ground and in the air and a great fear of mine was that it couldn't last a long time and that it was all going to come crashing down around me. And on this bold deliberation, I was awfully close to the truth.

There was a barmaid, a gentle girl with exquisite tits. I believe her name was Gitte. One late night and after the Strange Range had shut down, she took me home and nothing happened and likely so because of the 30 or 40 beer I had knocked back in the bar before leaving with her. It may have been a factor, another typical accident of fortune all right.

A fearful lack of passion had been involved, to a tired and unremarkable event. It had been so boringly routine. We had only wanted to submit and subdue each other, to bruise and hurt each other, to make each other bleed and to make each other cry. I don't wonder on her bearing and conduct, when she flitted on into her bedroom, to get pleasingly prepared, as a fine lady will and upon her return and finding me horizontal and cold and limp as a blue jellyfish, on her couch and gripping a near empty bottle of flat whiskey, that she took to mean curse and language. The girl's faith and foundation in the male animal of our species, had to have been shockingly undermined. That dear girl wasn't capable of understanding a perspective like mine, not on that warm and tender evening, in Y.K., back in '76. No.

Truly though, the excitement and the challenge, the chase and the capture, the conquest and the dominion was not there for me. The game was not important and no longer mattered. Love was nowhere to be found and I never cared.

I needed a warm heart. A close heart. I needed forever in love. Instead, I found myself a master cheat. My life is crowded with such blunder and blotch.

After waffling on that event, the cold – hearted bitch refused to serve me beer in the Gold Range Hotel. Which was a fall from a great height. The Strange Range Hotel would serve anyone with a wallet, regardless of

the manner of deviant behavior the bastard was up to. An Olson or a Bernardo could have gotten a drink in the Gold Range Hotel, as long as he had money in his pocket. I could only take comfort in knowing, positively, I had been asked and escorted, with greater impetus, from much finer establishments.

It was August and the midnight sun was dull and drab daylight at 1 A.M. and I can recall being in O.T. and on the shores of the Great Slave Lake and collapsing on a washed up log and being adrift in an existential void, eyes vacant, waiting and watching eyes, crossing slowly over the placid water and thinking about tomorrow and the world I would find here and knowing it would never be as confusing and as lonely as the one I lived in and needed in 1976. Where was I running to and who would I be when I arrived? Hard questions. The answers never came and I never cared. The morning after did *not* look good. No.

For my frustrations, all I could do was, execute and effectuate a malicious and pitiful act of spite and malice and this meant polluting the lake with puke and piss and beer cans.

The law in Y.K. was sensitive against this form of behavior. While Y.K. was a wide – open town in '76, at times protocol had to be observed don't you know.

One fine evening, a small group of us rabble-rousers were weaving our way towards O.T., for fun and frolic and up slid a cop car. Somebody said something. Another downed a full bottle of beer using the cops' flashing lights for cover. 'Could be we're going to jail,' thought I. After observing and considering, I turned off to the side and whizzed in the ditch. Bingo! The whole gang of us was rounded up and taken downtown and socked in the slammer. Charges were varied. Everyone was wanted somewhere else. The bag in Y.K. however, was, simple possession of open liquor, obstruction because someone had given an impossible name, mischief as someone else had yapped off and it seemed Alberta had every other form of bad business on me. Edmonton came back with, "Tough luck men. He's not worth our trouble and expense to transport. You got him, you keep him. The son of a bitch is your problem now."

Such eloquent and perfect usage of the English language and the sublime and beautiful reasoning and enlightenment it allows for, has always impressed me.

But, it was a good deal, in an obvious way. As to the bevy of local charges, well, every one of us was a runner and no one planned on being around for the hanging.

Having done their duty, the Y.K. coppers cut us loose. False promises to appear had been duly recorded and everyone prudently went about his business.

Our business was in O.T., down on the shores of the Great Slave Lake. Our beer had been confiscated for evidence but it was an ordinary setback and not really a problem to obtain more, not even at 3 A.M. In Y.K., back in '76, the coppers had set – tolerance, zero – even, for a ragged collection of barfly miners, deliberately bent on lewd and vulgar behavior. The law must be enforced. Life went round.

There were comedies. Certain incidents became glowingly important and took the lonesome from the sad futility of a man *having* to do time in the North Country. Prime motives for a man going north may have been a lost love and a dream broken and left behind, a helpless frustration or a shameful greed. An array of reasons but always seeking. I'll keep writing.

One splendid evening, I happened to be sitting back, in the Strange Range Hotel, heavily sedated and bumming service, when I entered upon the company of a cute and fresh – cut whore. She told me her name was Nicole and she had impeccable tits. I chatted her up. “Girl. In this town people don’t carry cash. Everyone’s credit is passable. Cheques in Y.K. are legal and binding and good as gold.” The witless tart went for it. I assured her novice pimp that I was the man to handle his girl for the evening and that he should sit back and drink beer and in a short time I would return with his girl and a roll of dirty money. I gave the weasel a ten – spot. I took the pretty young maiden by the hand and we were on our way to the Giant Mine camp, for laughs, cheap tricks and general degradation.

The girl set herself up in an unoccupied unit, in one of the bunkhouses, hung out her shingle and proceeded to defile and debase herself. My, but that girl was a welcome bit of fluff and entertainment.

Now, while she never really did pull the Giant gold train, she did manage to satisfy 6 or 8 gnarly and snarly miners, old – timers too bush – bugged to appreciate the finesse and delicacy of the occasion.

Meanwhile, a mighty throng of us degenerates and perverts had gathered next door, to celebrate and drink beer and sing ribald songs. I was falling out so heartily, at one point I was actually concerned for my life. Hell, my heart was racing and beating hard and fast and death from side – splitting laughter seemed a legitimate possibility. Trauma leading to death from cardiac arrest, as a result of violent and rollicking conduct? I ruminated on it and studied on it and let it go.

Whatever would happen would happen. Those moments were beyond my narrow control. Because, who, on this great and green planet, could possibly crack a fat, while writing a fictitious name, on a worthless scrap of paper, to a whore? Not me.

At 12 P.M., the very next day, she pounced on me. Accosted me, Right On Main Street. She had just come flying thru the doors of the local bank. She had herself a fast look, right and left and there I was, helpless. She was seeing mean and evil. She commenced to scream and shout and jump about. “Motherfucker! Bastard!” She was some hot. “Cocksucker!” She was a rare beauty. “Son of a bitch!” She called me everything but a gentleman. “Asshole!” She was somewhat meaner than a stepped – on snake and all during this screed and denunciation she was waving a fistful of thoroughly good – for – nothing and useless paper in my face. People were stopping to stare and listen. “Animal! You fucking animal!” It was an extremely rude and graphic sight to behold, in Y.K. at high noon, in ’76. I felt unclean.

What I wanted to do, was, smack her a couple of good ones upside her head, rip her clothes off and fuck her righteously, there on main street and in front of all those townspeople.

I should have lit into her with a lengthy discourse on the ignoble wages of sin and how it was her lot in life, to suffer the indignities of being a woman, for being a woman.

What I did, was, hang my head, smile meekly and agree with her at the depths of depravity and beastility some men would sink to and stoop, to hold – up and hi – jack a real sweet girl like her. She walked away.

For a brief moment I felt like a nazi. But only until the cheap and wanton strumpet was around the corner and out of sight. Then I snickered and did a quick 2 – step, at having played a cruel and nasty trick on the deplorable little harlot.

I had no shame. I used that girl. I suppose she could have taken the whole ordeal as an object lesson, truth of a worldly nature, experience being the best teacher and solid reinforcement. Perhaps the empty – headed bimbo and her white - slave master profited in another way. Maybe today, her and her pimp run an exclusive cathouse or 2, somewhere across this great land Canada. Credit cards and cash certainly. No cheques accepted. Who can tell? Not I.

There were no drugs to be had in camp. “No dope – No hope,” said some of the men. I agreed with that stalwart assortment of desperadoes in Y.K. in '76.

A poker game was hastily convened and the marks were invited and after a night of wild stake and wager, destiny decreed I should make the flight to Edmonton. Not only did I have all the hard line cash in my pocket, I had the cook's return ticket as well.

There I was, the same morning, a mite delirious to be sure, standing shakily in front of a female ticket agent by the name of Darci, looking mean and babbling incoherently about how I had to make Edmonton for a conference and pretending to be somebody else. The girl never understood my jabber and gab and it was a damn good thing she never saw my eyes. I was wearing mirrors at the time and only a supreme effort let me see thru the glass and the hot crystal tears that burned so badly.

Had the girl have realized and recognized my near – terminal condition for what it was, the D.T.'s along with a cross – assortment of various neurotic disorders, well, she would have alerted security, which would have advised the coppers and if *they* would have let me on the plane, an emergency would have been created en route, the plane would have been diverted to an unassuming and unimportant airport and I would have been dragged off, scratchin' and bitin', to be dealt with, in some backwoods community that still believed in the rope.

Honestly though, the young girl had only wanted to be rid of me. I was an embarrassment and I was upsetting the respectable passengers. Hell, I needn't have uttered a word, just that an uncontrollable rapture had come over me, to say something in relation to her normalcy and at having to deal with normal people, a circumstance which will never be part of my inner world and which I will only ever humorously be part of.

Y.K. Airlines let me board the plane but I was branded and the stewardess, Alex, refused to serve me alcohol of any persuasion. She wouldn't even talk to me. I endured that flight south to Edmonton.

From my many years of prowling the streets of Edmonton, I had come to know an array and assembly of unsavory characters, many of whom would have been considered outlaws, as most of them had lived their lives in close covenant with the laws of Canada. Therefore, it was a simple matter to do a hare footed scramble thru back streets and byways, score and after 2 beer in the Royal Hotel, I was set and back on that same steel bird and going north, 4 hrs. later. My flight bag was crammed and jammed with a kaleidoscope of colorful hops and hopes and my sudden appearance back at camp was cause for much delight and jubilation and I was a magic man in 1976. I'll roll some more.

How long did this madness go on? How long did I work that tomb and coffin? Maybe 2 mos. It has never taken me long to revert to my true calling, of being a heretic dissident or a maverick extremist.

One startling morning, deep in the mine, I had the good fortune to injure myself, in a non-life threatening kind of way. The shift – boss had sent me down a lonely drift, to dispose of a box of old and sweating powder and you folks know how flighty and fickle that item can be. Inadvertently, I stroked a wee bit of nitro into my right eye. Instant manic pain! I gave out an animal screech and fell over backward! The boss came a – runnin'! And escorted me out of the mine and back to surface.

At first telling, the big boss man refused to believe my story but I tell you true, the pain was excruciating and overriding any booze and drugs I may have had in my system at the time. It was a sorely distressful experience and occurrence. I was sent home.

The top of the following day and braced by a pint of low – cost whiskey, I told the man, in bold and fearless tones, that I would *not* be going underground that gloomy morning. For strange and unspoken reasons, he was still not convinced I wasn't a treacherous and lying dog. The bastard. But the boss men brought their heads together and came up with the brilliant idea of giving me a broom to work with and that plan and purpose went over real well with me.

I was to keep the dry clean. The dry was the area on surface where the miners went to shower and change before and after each shift.

Puttered and muttered for an hour. Then I yelled out, "fuck it!" flung the broom into an open corner and went reeling off in the direction of the camp and the cook and the bottle of excellent vodka he owed me.

As I was leaving the cookhouse, stinko and shot, the safety man came along in his ranger – scout and tried to persuade me of the prudence of catching a ride into town with him, to see a doctor. I refused. I said no.

As it was, a searing ailment and misery was smashing and crashing and tearing thru my head and I would have shouted solemn testimony, of how a large and homicidal black rat was inside my head, chewing its way past the convolutions of the cerebral cortex, into the cerebral hemisphere, thru the thalamus, on its merry and

merciless way via the cerebellum, towards the midbrain and there to establish residency, the result of which would have made me a vegetable for the rest of my harrowing life. I felt it easily possible for my right eye to explode, ‘blam!’ red and purple and blue veins and blood, ‘splat!’ directly onto the safetyman’s white shirt.

I was having trouble maintaining. I was teetering and teetering and having difficulty balancing and I nearly fell on my face. I waved my ½ empty bottle of vodka back and forth and up and down and gurgled and gagged and explained about having my own doctor, right then and there, in that bottle. “Not to worry about this freewheelin’, good – timin’ young man, thank – you very much.”

All is well.

G.B.T.

Stanton – The Party.

So much for bad foolishness. The morning after found me in Stanton Y.K. Hospital. There I was, perched high atop one of those stainless and sterile tables, like a prize and curious bird, while the good doctor was on the move, frantic and fraught and quite possibly wired. The man was fast enough to have passed as a strange mixture of speed and steroids. Not my problem.

Somehow, the man was able and managed to dispense a fair sized dollop of fiery anesthetic into my right eye. Immediate relief! I could breathe again and *that* confrontation was over. Then the silly bugger took to ranting and raving on about how 5 yrs. ago it was common for people suffering the same affliction to go blind and I should be more careful down in the mine and I was a fool for drinking so much and I had best change my ways. ‘Wonderful advice,’ thought I

See, I may have appeared a bit coarse, for wearing shiny blue jeans and having a 3-day beard and reeking of stale booze. Still half – lit as a matter of fact and looking like the ace of spades. So, the boorish little fellow hadn’t much use for me but that also was not my problem.

Anyway, I nodded indifferently. Hell, I believed but for the most part I largely ignored his tirade and instead could only wonder why the people in control of potions, the magical kinds which take the pain away, didn’t stock and sell them in large bottles, in the government liquor store, directly next to the rye whiskey. Those specific and special remedies and restorations sure would come in handy, those mornings I’d come awake beetle – eyed and bleary. Five days convalescence.

Hospitals are places of reverence to me and stations of respect. Even back in ’76, I had been thru enough of them to regard them with thoughtful appreciation. Broken bones and stitches mainly, a brief and hostile spell or 2 brought on by alcohol poisoning, once or twice a trumped – up case of pure loneliness, now and then an unpleasant vehicular accident, which had necessitated an uncomfortable operation, every 5 yrs. or so, all in all, a spectacular and sensational list of injuries. Today my face bears an uncanny resemblance to a baseball that has been whacked over the wall too many times. Today my mug will put a big man off or at least give him reason to pause and think before trying and testing me.

When you are down and out and walking the streets of a deserted city, a sojourn in a hospital isn’t such a bad notion. I would suggest and endorse and recommend the concept. As long as a man isn’t truly sick, an intermittent stay in a hospital is usually therapeutic and curative. To release the fears... to collect yourself. Hospitals care and take care of you. The idea of a pleasant intermission, during an angry flight and safari is

always welcome. A hospital won't intentionally harm you, you have no worldly cares, if you lay back and let them go, watch T.V., cut - up with the other patients and get stoned every 4 hrs. on good dope.

Also, when I have been gravely ill and knackered, the law couldn't touch me, as I have always known and appreciated full well. Times were, when I was laid – up and ailing and it was all I could do to raise a weak and delectable smile at a lawman and maybe give the chump a feeble wave, as he was leaving my semi - private room. Which is a frustrating and bitter pill for any copper to have to swallow. An opportune sanctuary, such as a hospital has to offer, is hard to come by and other than the indisposed people who often inhabit such places and tended to bother me some, I am always prepared to do a short stay in a hospital. When I need to think and find my place on this pretty planet once more. To release my demons...

Stanton nurses were ladies so fine. Special. Unique. Closer to God. Yes.

Except for Dietrich. Dietrich was the head nurse in '76, in Stanton Y.K. Hospital. She was the boss. She had a head on her like a bastard pig and she was hard to look at. No comedy in her world. Dietrich had a homely face and deep and timeless eyes and I easily pictured her in '42, in charge of one of those special camps, chief of experimentation and comfortable in her chosen profession.

Dietrich had brass balls in '76. Her shift was a well – oiled machine, with every move called and calculated and no faults or slips. Her nurses were on strings and she was the master puppeteer. On her tour of duty, no one dared die without her permission. Dietrich was some kind of horrible authority and absolutely necessary to Stanton Y.K. Hospital, in 1976.

Dietrich hated me. Which was largely due to the fact, as mentioned, when I did check into her hospital, I was real close to being an authentic cracker and crazy person. Because of my rough and unrefined condition and introduction into her methodical world, she seemed to be forever casting a suspicious eye in my direction.

When I was admitted to Stanton, half – smashed, I could tell, straight off, Dietrich had wished for nothing finer, than for her to have been allowed to run a full – scale research examination over my entire body and in my own amoral way, I too would have enjoyed an odd and unusual session with her. Like...

Strip her down, naked, except for her white cap, her white nylons and her white shoes. Bind her securely and facedown on a white sheet, on a white bed, in a white room. Then, go at her with a length of studded white leather belt and administer a sound and solid drubbing about her ribs and shoulders. Lambaste and pummel her into submission. She could have taken it. She may have enjoyed it. She may have enjoyed it too much. The humiliation and degradation may have been a welcome and satisfying diversion and she may have wanted more...

Hell, after a performance like that, Dietrich would have flushed with gratitude and satisfaction, at having found a man, a real man who knew and understood her needs. It would have been damned difficult to dump a dog like Dietrich after an operation like that and she would have followed me to the ends of the earth.

Anyway, 3 days go by and I'm positively laid back on my bed, arms above my head and sporting a white bandage over my right eye, when in breezed one of my nurses, Laurie, pushing the wanderer. I pulled myself into a sitting position and even with my one good eye, I could see in a trice, the man was not of this world. He appeared to be loaded on something outlandish and not in control. The young lady parked and placed him on the bed facing me and beat a hasty retreat. For a short while we stared at each other, both of us with arms crossed and legs dangling and moving slowly. The stranger was clearly confused and plainly puzzled. He was disorientated and in turmoil. What could I say? Perhaps the man was dangerous. A duteous nurse Dietrich's portent and admonition that I behave myself. How was I to know?

The man spoke. "Where am I?"

"In Y.K."

"Bullshit."

"Straight goods."

"I'm in Frobisher Bay."

"Sorry pal. You got it wrong this time."

"Truth?"

"Truth." A pause...

"Well then, we must have a drink."

Now, this was a conundrum worth considering. I was temporarily baffled. I mean, fine, let's have a drink. But where, in our exciting and antiseptic environment, were we going to find one? That was the question. And another thing...

Dietrich was at an exceptional peak of doubt and suspicion that day since 3 of my rigorous and ruffian friends had almost caused a free – for – all on the ward earlier the same afternoon. Another tale but suffice to say, Dietrich was eyeballing me with extreme contempt and diligence, on the off chance those uncouth acquaintances of mine should return and slip me a fix and a rig. I would have to be careful.

Because... my water head roommate provided the answer to the question. The first clue was when I noticed a large steamer trunk, the kind people who mattered, quality people, used years ago, when embarking on a ship, to travel around the world. Amongst the curiosity and caution of the man's arrival, I had missed this piece of luggage.

The man inaugurated a deep exploration thru that big old chest, sniggling and giggling and all the while tossing clothing and other possessions across the room and onto the floor. At one point, he was down so low; all I could see of him were the soles of his feet.

“Ripper!” was my response, as the man, now my man, came up with a large bottle of booze. Down he went again and 2 dives later, that ol’ salt buddy of mine had brought up the sum amount of 3 bottles of fine vodka. The rush was on and our room craved O.J. I felt like I was sailing. I felt like Jaques Cousteau.

Typically, we hadn’t put back the 1st flask before we began walking the hallways and passing out and distributing a liberal touch of that damned vodka, here and there, to anyone who wanted or needed it. Word spread quickly. The T.V. room was expeditiously converted and became a bee – bop, Mardi – Gras saloon. Twenty or thirty people, each and every one with a different and debilitating illness, were showing full appreciation and were tanked to the tits and having fun. Good times.

The fevered and frenzied were swaying and swearing. The spastics were throwing off their crutches and striving to walk. The sightless could see. The mutes were making animal noises and trying to talk. The deaf were paying attention. It was certainly a diversion from mundane and commonplace tedium and it was a scene to behold.

I was somewhat shickered myself, crouched down at the back of the room, observing Stanton Y.K. Hospital loose and liberated and thinking, ‘Damn! This circus is *not* going to last long.’

I knew that fantastic array of stunts was doomed by the way one nurse, Carrie, was leaning stiffly against a far wall, her eyes white and wide with shock and I knew what she was thinking. ‘Incredible! Outrageous! On my shift!’

For sure it was done when my favorite nurse, Pearline, walked over to where I was hunched down and nervously inquired if there was anything she could get for me, “like more O.J. to go with your vodka?” Ouch!

Things happened fast. Everyone was dispensed and dispersed to their rooms and strapped and buckled to their beds. A speedy search conducted by nurse Dietrich turned up our last bottle of vodka. The little hummer had been tucked neatly and elusively beneath my pillow, while its companion bottles had found their ways safely aboard the low – slung roof of Stanton Y.K. Hospital. Dietrich was highly adept at finding contraband. It was part of her job description and a condition of her employ. I could as well have had that last and lonely bottle stashed up my ass and inevitably, she would have found it.

The comedy of the situation was correct and positively inspired. I have always had a knack for well - expressed insubordination and I’ve usually managed to jink and juke, to circumvent and avoid *serious* retribution. Evidence and attest, this pen is still moving intelligently, after all the years, flowing with the flotsam and jetsam of all the years.

The aftermath and mortification of the party was worthwhile. Dietrich, the good ol’ gal, was all for castrating me. She climbed on my case something awful. My head was ready to explode and I had to listen to, “Alcohol...! On my ward...!” she spit and sputtered. “You... you... irresponsible person! With everyone on

medication! You...! You...!” Her rare and precious nurses were feigning not to tehee and titter or hiding it well. I thought the whole affair a merry prank and jest.

The doctor was called in at 4 A.M. and he did not even pretend to find the matter amusing. After he was done flailing and frothing, he had the audacity to ask me if I was an alcoholic. I replied that I preferred to be considered a drunk in search of the truth.

The doctor then asked me intently, just what did I think my sidekick was doing in his hospital? Here I had to remind the man that he was the doctor and I had no way of understanding my partner’s complaint. On hearing my judicious rationale, the man went on edge and was ready to eat raw meat. He was a disturbed dog in August. A facial tic was making him an excitable fellow. His arms were lashing on short – circuit speed and I dearly hoped the scalpels were locked away and under chain and key. The doctor was special pissed – off because that lush colleague of mine had been admitted to Stanton Y.K. Hospital for alcohol poisoning.

“Do you realize that just 1 drink could kill that man?” I wisely chose not to comment or to tell the doctor that his patient was comatose, the result of his having guzzled and put away the better part of 20 oz. of vodka by his own self and that he had long since gone into a deep alcoholic delirium and was horizontal on the floor of our communal room at that very moment. No. Best to remain silent. An observation of such substance would not have done much for my position. No.

Instead, I sat back, soundless and silent and wondered if it would be cattle prods or hair shirts or whatever means the good doctor used to control pest problems and irrational creatures like myself. I was ready for and expecting any lunatic cure and I felt like Jack Nicholson in the best movie of his excessive and extravagant life.

But no, it was not to be this way. Rather, the charade was over and even if I was an incomparable rascal, I had to give my solemn word of honor that there would be no more shenanigans or I could, “get the fuck out of my hospital and walk to Edmonton, for further care and treatment!” Cold, I would have to say. But an easy choice.

Two days later I was discharged from Stanton Y.K. Hospital and released onto the streets of Y.K. once more. Amazingly, nurse Dietrich herself returned and presented me with that closing bottle of vodka, still containing a goodly portion of drink. That bottle was mine, by virtue of having my name stenciled boldly across its silky smooth label. ‘Sensational,’ thought I.

With a thank – you very much and a neat click of my heels, I was gone. I was off and running down main street, pulling on that ugly and evil bottle, delving and dealing with demons and headed for Giant Y.K. Mine.

All is well.

G.B.T.

A – Shaft -The Deed.

Anxiously, I raced the last 100 yds. to the camp, needing to be part of the mayhem and music I could hear and feel, even at that distance. I was craving an uneasy dependency I knew so well and had felt so often, amongst other fools and failures.

Handshakes and backslaps all around. The liquor and the laughter tasted natural and true but a tone of disquiet was in the air and a hostile and threatening power was drawing closer around me and that bunkhouse celebration could have been the dance of the red death.

Only an hour had gone by and in walked the boss – man and it was a rude jolt and stagger, to be told I no longer had a job. I had been let go, fired, for not being at work the previous 5 days.

Stand by me here folks. Since I was a bit crazy at that point in time, all I can do is scribble and scratch out how I felt and reasoned back then. I may think differently today.

Bastards! I had been in the hospital! Because of an injury I had gotten in their fucking mine! And the bastards knew it! Not right! Not fucking right!

Anger, mean anger, get even anger, was my 1st and immediate reaction. It came upon me with great force and would not let me go. I was possessed with anger. I was over the line with anger. Easy...

Now, I had been canned and banished from so many jobs, one would think I would have had little difficulty in dealing with yet another dismissal. But... something went snap. Something basic and vital and I had been aware of it but unable to define it, to reason it out and to ward it away. I was helpless.

The party and the pandemonium and the sheer craziness sent me shuffling back to my room, for solitary drink and reflection. Alone in my room I was E.A. Poe, buried deep in a dark and desperate nightmare. I was frightened. And I was so weary.

I pondered on my wordless rage and what I knew would surely be my most outrageous act of dismay and defiance. I had been bushwhacked and I *knew* I was going to do *something*.

Torn and gone was a frail and fragile thread I had grasped and seized onto, a lifeline I had abused and battered until it had finally parted and I was falling. My faith and credit had been severed and I did *not* believe I would be walking away peaceably, not that time. No.

I was a long way from home, wherever that may have been and I was busted. No coin. I had nothing. Nothing!

Well, whose fault was that? Who was responsible for such error and indiscretion? Well... I was... of course. I know it now. But back in Y.K., in '76, I was mixed up and confused. Perhaps I had been deceived by an evil influence. Intelligence and my heart say yes. It was exactly this way.

What was I to do? Where was I going to run to next? What would I be doing when I got there? And the big one, who would I be when I did get there? Troublesome questions and cause for much alarm and distress.

The delusive fact that I had been wrongfully dismissed by Giant Mine had pushed me over a thin red line and a lifetime of self – inflicted grievance and injustice had compressed itself into a tick of time and I was not going to run away. Not that time. No.

Suddenly it came to me! Inspiration and awakening born of despair and madness! Kill the beast and be done with it! Yes! Yes! Yes! Giant Mine, low – swine corporation that it was, would have to answer to my defeats and anguishes. It was a flash scenario, brought on by a rogue star I had never seen before and quick as lightening, a sweet vengeance was mine.

Giant Mine and so many other ravages and raiders had been harassing and complicating my life on this leisurely planet and it was time to rid myself of their evils.

Blow it away. Waste the worthless pit. Chase the demon. I was going to do it. I had the means. I was the man. I was the one.

The image grew rapidly and became a swift certainty and it was totally correct. Consequences never bothered me or entered my head. It was urgent and imperative I do the deed. It was the only way out because my whole life to that point was one enormous and abysmal foil and rout. It was the only way to break free of a washout existence or I was going to die. No doubt about it. There were no alternatives. It was an awesome revelation and a perfect understanding.

The very idea of bombing Giant Y.K. Mine was an atonement and a redemption for past deceptions and shortcomings. The act itself would be a salvation and set me free.

An icy calm and a low – point acceptance offset the fury I had felt. No emotion. No motion. The world stopped turning. I was comin' home. There comes a time.

Come 2 A.M. and guided by strange gifts, whiskey and white magic mostly and being drawn by the spectral mysteries and music of the Northern Lights, I set off for A – Shaft.

Listen up now. Along the way and in the way, happened to be the main powder magazine. It was a monster of a container, a glistening and glaring steel edifice holding vast and limitless tons of explosives and it supplied the whole damn mine with fire and lightening. I walked around it. Shook my head and kept walkin' because had I gained access, well, the entire camp and everyone in it would have vanished and died. The trailers and the men in them, would have been sent spread and sprawling, all across the northern tundra. And I *would*

have touched off the bastard. Why not? I felt that right, that night. To the point where I was sore tempted, to pick up a large rock and beat the weathered old lock to pieces and slide on in and do some extreme damage. Something stopped me. A higher power? As I say, I kept walkin'.

Can any one of you praiseworthy and passionate people understand of how I really did feel a sense of purpose that night in Y.K., in '76? Can you understand further, of how I was doing the right thing? That, at the time, expression of some sort was necessary and correct? And that I'm not trying to *justify*?

I'm not talking right or wrong. There were no lofty principles or high ideals involved. No. I had been motivated by cheap and simple anger and resentment and driven by a reckless need for vengeance, for so many frustrations and annoyances which had plagued me for so many years. In '76, way up north, they had all come together and peaked and Giant Y.K. Mine was a convenient recipient, to vent and unleash my madness upon, to pay for a lifetime of magnificent failure.

I know I wasn't completely off my rocker because, although the tears and laughter were real and maybe signs of an unbalanced mind, I knew and was absolutely and unequivocally certain, I could not possibly have hurt anyone by eliminating A – Shaft from the face of this stout and sturdy planet. Not at 2 A.M. A – Shaft was a one-shift shaft, 8AM – 5PM. Hell, breaking rock is one thing, mass murder quite another, thank – you very much.

The sky was ablaze with lights and flames and beneath it a man could do no wrong and it may have been an intelligent conception, as to why the barred doors to the A – Shaft head frame weren't secured but that 5 lb. 'Master' padlock was sprung and I was inside and at that point I knew I had solemn backing.

Today I know and can say truthfully, nothing gives a man, a politician, a preacher, a soldier, a man in love, such inner strength and courage and conviction, than to have faith and hope on his side. 'Right,' on one's side, sustaining an objective, no matter how noble or misguided the cause, is an all – powerful weapon. A true fact folks.

With my hardhat and light and no thought of caution, I scrambled down a greasy ladder, to the 150' level. It was personal then. It was my work area.

I hopped on a motor and went gliding and tracking towards the powder room and the somber and black pitch was broken only by my light and the clicking and ticking of the motor.

Once at and in the powder room, I set to loading 200 lbs. of high – speed nitro onto the motor. I paused and thought, 'what the hell', and loaded on another 100 lbs. of 'AMEX'. Amex was an additive, used as a booster, for synergy, added effect, to make for a massive and powerful blast, to do the job right. I've always been a bit of an extremist...

That special night, I was reasoning the way I was because I knew I was going to piss the bastards off in a big way and so it seemed a fit and proper reckoning they remember me for a long, long time. Afterwards and

if I lived, the swine who owned Giant Mine would likely think little of tying a whopping chunk of ore around my leg and disappearing me into the depths of the Great Slave Lake. It would save every manner of explanation and embarrassment, trace and trial for them and I'd have said my piece.

Off in the direction of a target, nothing specific, merely something suitable for the total destructive effect, the twisting and turning of rock and steel, the intensity of pure statement. It had to be.

About then I was manic and mad as a hatter, so let me run down a few items concerning that magic moment, in 1976, down in the mine. Let me get back.

All those miles of track and direction, drifts and branch – drifts, stopes and levels and services areas, dead ends, equipment and tools, piping and electric that reached and ran endlessly and brightly forever and all for one enduring purpose. A greedy and insane purpose. It was man's obsession for wealth and power. It was a natural consequence of a little rape, a reflection of artificial foundation and for the genius and wonder of it, it was lunatic and unsound. Greed and gain *are* worthy and delicate purposes but they made no sense at all to me, not on that night, deep in the mine. A necessary rape is still a rape. It was so totally correct but so very wrong.

People were bowing down and serving a lesser God. Show me a miner, a man who has worked underground his whole life long and I'll show you the same man, if he's a thinking man, a bitter man with every reason for regrets. I will show you a man looking to escape because if there was any way out of the booby – hatch which is a miner's lot, a reasonable and intelligent man would go for it quickly and expeditiously.

Giant Y.K. Mine was no more than a goofy game, a maze with no escape, put together by restless and ruthless hoodlums, in a far off and far away land of stockholders and boardrooms. No root or primary factor was involved. People were no longer working for people. They were working for the system, the machine and it is wrong because even accepting man's colossal greed; people must be part of any process, of any integral decision concerning this fragile planet.

I have tasted the poison water. I have breathed the lethal air. I have seen the derricks, the sisters. I have been the deforestation. I have witnessed the spent and wasted rock and dirt. I have felt and heard the planet cry.

Once I was frightened and angered by the evolution of progress. Not anymore. No. Never again. Today I know everything is unfolding to a definite purpose and right on schedule.

The commitments and hungerings of the industrial complex will come before the needs of man for a while yet. Once I may have said it was wrong and shouldn't be allowed and should be corrected and those responsible should be taken out and shot and pissed on but I won't. Man is such a silent coward.

Let me take you further. Today I don't believe in wars or famine or disease or disaster or technology or pollution or population, nothing as being catastrophic enough to end my role and duty on this glorious and

resplendent planet. I will never believe this planet will be in ultimate danger from anything paltry and pitiful man can do to it.

Whenever man has expressed an intense and insane need to self – destruct, a supreme and sovereign power has always stepped in. And always will. This planet does not belong to you. It belongs to God.

There is no time left for worrying or brooding or agonizing over trifles, over the trivia inspired by man. Because... we are living in the days of fire. Believe it folks. It will all come down to one dramatic and cataclysmic fire – fight in the end, the end of days. And we are close. Real close. I'll keep walkin'.

That doomed and desperate night in Y.K., in '76, the entire network and structure which was Giant Mine, was defenseless and unprotected against my defiance and my dominance. It would be the last time an employer would toss me a bone and expect me to be grateful and beholden. I did *not* feel like eating shit anymore. It no longer worked that way. It was payback time.

To the task at hand. Had located a fresh and high – grade work area. Deftly I placed the powder and the amex. I set and fired up the tape – fuse with my trusty 'Zippo' lighter. On point. Careful.

I had 7 min. to get clear. Any unforeseen hitch or miscalculation and I could have gotten jammed – up and have relieved myself of my earthly burden. My light could have blown out and I would have been in a worse dilemma than young Tom. Lost beneath the surface of the earth with no candles. Those damn ladders to surface were mighty slick and slippery from the mud and moisture of the years and I could have slipped. Now, *that* would have made for an interesting spectacle. I would have been instantly converted into a crushed and squashed dab of red jelly by the forthcoming blast or if I fouled up closer to the actual impact of the blast, bits and pieces of my rent and mangled remains may have been found, along with a hank of hair splattered on a rock. Had my motor refused to go, past the point of no return, well, that electric track would surely have been a suicide stroll. And *it* was likely enough, seeing as how I had transformed and worked over so many of the bastards, in fits of malice and ill - will.

That long and lonely night, back in '76, in Y.K., I was pushing the buttons. No other man – made force or person had control over me. No. Not that night. And I did *not* have a death wish. No. I wanted to be around to see the results and backlash of my handiwork and talent. Life on this marvelous planet can be a cold and cruel misery if you stop caring. I wanted to start over. I wanted to start by caring. I needed to care. I needed to cheat death one more time. And...

As you discerning folks are able to tell, most everything went according to plan. Well... I've thought a great deal on this point... interesting and unusual... and I'm satisfied. I'm content. What happened was this...

One last and fast double – check, to see everything was fixed and planted properly. Powder positioned correctly. Yes. Sure – fire connections and the fuse sputtering nicely. Yes. I surveyed the situation. It was a crude set – up. But all was well. It was a go. A done deal.

Then I was working on that 7 – min. time – frame and I was aboard that motor and beatin’ down those steel rails, sparks from the wheels flyin’ in every direction and it was hurried and hasty departure indeed.

With mercy and grace, I made it back to the lift area and lunchroom, where the emergency ladder to surface was located. I vaulted off my machine and reached for that ladder and with dispatch; I clawed and climbed my way to the top. I ripped out thru the head frame doors and I was delirious and deranged with hysteria and laughter. “Fire in the hole!” I shouted to the blazing northern sky, as I dashed and flashed across the road, my shirttail flapping in the early morning breeze and my eyes aglow with indignation and integrity. I dived into a deep ditch for cover and crawled and collapsed behind a large boulder, for safety and protection. It was the best seat in the house. I waited... waited... listen close...

Suddenly, the night sky was cracked and shattered by an awful thunder and a blinding and dazzling roar and smash. The explosion traveled from the soles of my boots, to the top of my head. It deafened me and made my teeth clatter. The air vibrated and tingled and the world trembled. The sky shrieked and divided into chaos, as the blast impacted and the ground shook and the earth fractured and heaved and erupted. Pieces of the head frame, black timbers the size of small trees, were floating and moving thru the night sky and it sounded like an incredible but brief artillery barrage and A – Shaft ceased to exist and I was glory and greatness and the creator of a deed terrible and immensely beautiful and I was in a special place and no man had ever been exactly there before. Silence...

Strange and ominous silence. It was over. It was over so quickly it could have been an illusion. Only a dusty haze, drifting softly and gently thru the spidery streaks of moonlight, remained as evidence that something had happened. The silence was supreme and was requital and a requiem for my hard – livin’ days.

I felt good. I remember feeling real good. About all I can remember, for certain and worth recalling, after the deed, was a white light inside my head and feeling good. Then I came back.

According to society’s virtues and values, I had done wrong and I knew I had to get away. I knew I had done a wrong thing and though feeling like a proud and noble, blue – blooded patrician, I was coherent and rational enough to know that possibly some manner of authority may not have seen things my way and might not have understood my stately account and explanation of the scheme of the inner – most workings of the Universe. No. Not on that rare and remarkable evening in Y.K., in 1976. No.

It was a furtive and cautious creep on back to the bunkhouse, where I fell into a deep and almighty sleep. Which seems odd, considering the deed should have made for much psychological trauma and consternation. Perhaps an amnesiac period of time? No. I remember. Everything. And I remember I was crazy but I was not insane.

The morning after and thinking over the deed and I could only conclude I would be going down hard. If I was stupid and didn't bolt. The only fitting denouement *to* the deed, was for me to keep my head down and run like a rabbit. This subtle proposition I figured before breakfast.

Getting breakfast the morning after my bold stroke of the night before was a sly and sobering endeavor. Already in the mess hall were a number of unfamiliar men, men with curious and questioning eyes. They were not miner's eyes. They were eyes which lacked a special kindness, a look of innocent betrayal. The bodies were squat and paunchy, the hands were soft and clean and the faces were much too calculating. They were men much too obvious. They were coppers.

The real men of Giant Y.K. Mine were *not* comfortable. There was very little eye contact. No one wanted to be centered out.

I grinned bravely and ordered steak and eggs. I *needed* a decent spot of cheer and chow, after my long and grim labors of the previous night.

Moving about on Giant property that same morning was an eerie proposition and undertaking. Even at such an early point in the comic proceedings, which were soon to follow, classical questions were being asked and looked over. "What happened?" "Where is the head frame to A – Shaft?" "What was that loaded boom and crash that had shook and rattled the world in the middle of the night?" No one knew anything for certain.

Wild speculation and ridiculous conjecture abounded. "A freak air blast?" "A stray spark?" "Atmospheric phenomena?" "A minor earthquake?" Detailed hypothesis and no easy matter to pin down.

However, there was no mistaking the small army of uniforms and suits that had converged on the site where A – Shaft had once stood and existed. About 50 keen – nosed and qualified trackers and spotters were busy sniffing and sorting thru the rubble and wreckage, which had once been A – Shaft, and I knew revealing and legitimate answers would not be far behind. I had to fly or die. Yes. Right smartly. Yes. A real good idea. Yes.

John was one of several Newfoundlanders working Giant Y.K. Mine in '76. John and I had become close strangers after a drunken brawl, when we had gone at it hammer and tongs and had thereby inflicted heavy damage on one of the local booze joints in Y.K.

Thru John, I came to understand that N.F.L.D. exported men to all parts of the world, for whom mining was one way of life. Mining was survival to one class of Newfoundlander. Being victims of a mismanaged economy and a vilifying misuse of natural resources, had made it necessary for many N.F.L.D.ers to leave home and family, to seek livelihoods in other parts of Canada. John claimed his town and province had been the butt of exploitation and deceit from corrupt and contemptible politicians trailing as far back as Confederation.

Which came as no shock or surprise to me. I've always known or suspected that thieves and swindlers, in the guise of pure and plain politicians, have infested this great country and have flourished and prospered here

since time began for Canada. Truth of this type, as spoken or expressed by any Canadian has never astonished or astounded me. No.

The only exception to the following accusation was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Trudeau knew how to talk the talk and walk the walk. Any other Canadian politician...

Any Canadian politician is and always has been a deplorable and despicable parasite. Simple enough for you? The only sure way to fathom or comprehend a Canadian politician is to realize that he is one of the lowest of the low. Then you can't go wrong.

I have never known of or had knowledge of a Canadian politician who was not a lying and thieving scum – sucking leech, who will fuck you in the ass in a second and while you're not looking, precisely the type of man you wouldn't stop to spit on.

The comfort and consolation I have these days, concerning every Canadian, is, every one of us, in the desperate and despondent end, will answer to our violations and masquerades.

Perhaps it might be premature of me to suggest hauling out the piano wire and go looking for tall timber? Maybe not. Any Canadian politician, at the end of his tenure, should have a gluey and goeey maple stake driven thru his fraudulent chest and heart, for the sake of ceremony. And I've often advocated a man should take his last pogeey cheque for a walk and buy a weapon.

It *is* only a matter of opportune time before a Canadian politician gets shot dead. It will happen. Some brave hearted fool will say enough and will go for his gun and will do it. The one question I have regarding this justifiable scenario is, "What is the name of the man who will pull the trigger?" It *will* happen.

John declared, if a man lived in N.F.L.D., he mined, he fished or he existed on welfare. Any other form of income was a bonus. As in other parts of the world, it was a meager subsistence. In Detroit, a man built cars. In B.C., a man cut trees. In Alberta, a man knew oil. In Africa, a man starved slowly and solely for the state.

John was proud of his labor and thought it right and honorable. John was innocent and needed an education concerning the real world. I thoughtfully decided to rechannel and redirect his misguided delusions.

What we both agreed on, was, Y.K. was a burnout of blind drifts and bad news. We knew it befitting and better to take wing and leave that doomed and damned town. I knew it was correct to leave Y.K. in a *big* hurry.

To this end and by means known to John alone, he arranged for us to have jobs waiting in Quebec, in another Falconbridge mine. I was dismayed but unresisting.

But first came the coppers and their star – chamber inquiry. Giant Mine figured, at an early point, that there just may have been a screwball on the loose. A junior office employee of the company must have thought up this undue speculation because the boardroom brass would never have reasoned it out themselves. See...

It was a theory those Giant Y.K. Mine executives could have lived without and would have found difficult to accept and believe in any case. That someone lived, an outrageous and ungrateful fiend, someone impossible to their plastic world, a person they could never relate to, a person unheard of and unknown to their corporate world, was a concept far beyond their little minds and not easy to support and swallow. Such flagrant abuse of their goodwill and generosity was not possible. Falconbridge was a benevolent employer.

Falconbridge was also a ruthless and relentless adversary and I would have put all my money down on the absolute fact, that when they did run the perpetrator to ground, they would use all their clout and might to beat him senseless in the courts before expelling him into a heinous and horrible dungeon forevermore.

While most everyone working for Giant Mine in 1976 was traveling solo and alone, myself and 10 others were deemed as being temperate enough to have done the deed. We were asked downtown.

The drill. "Did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Set the blast that expelled and expunged A – Shaft from the face of this planet."

"Wrong man officer."

"We think you did and if you don't 'fess up, you're in maximum trouble."

"No chance officer."

"Would you be willing to take a polygraph?"

"Why not?"

"We'll be in touch."

"Right." It was a sad and sorry confabulation and I'm glad you folks missed it.

The copper I had dealt with happened to be a dolt and he had had no choice than but to doubt the naked truth. Surely he had seen my guilt and transparency? But, him and his chums would get straight soon enough. And for me there was only one answer to it and it was to flee, to vamoose, to run like hell.

John and I left amid a flurry of drunken disorder and lunacy of the highest degree. After all, prior to leaving, we had to have 15 rounds of beer with our brother workers, in the Gold Range Hotel, to celebrate and praise the good and the bad times. We had been comrades in dubious battle that way. As the plane ran roaring down the black ribbon runway and up and away, about all Y.K. could see of either of us fools were assholes and elbows. The date was close on September 28, 1976.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Edmonton – A Brief Fear Before Quebec.

John and I dropped into Ed. with 3 hrs. to spare and we really had no choice other than to make for the Strathcona Hotel. It made perfect sense to funnel back a few beer before heading east, to take the edge off what was shaping up to be a strange and terrible journey.

We hadn't been in that infernal tavern for more than an hour and in walked the law. 'Damn!' I thought, 'The bastards couldn't be on to me so soon!' It didn't seem possible. I *knew* I was moving way faster than their computers back then. No. Not the reason.

Due to a slight memory lapse and loss, I had forgotten of how I had been largely responsible for a couple of abrasive and abusive incidents in the Old Strathcona and of how Walter, a former owner of the hotel, had usually been the recipient and beneficiary of my anger and outrage.

Walter had a cruel and nasty streak and disposition about him and he revealed it whenever he thought he could bring it off with relative safety and security. His favorite routine was to serve drunks to the point where they were thoroughly rumbustious and deserving and then go after them physically. Not a nice man. No. A categorical no here. Being an accomplished drunkard myself, I have never been compliant with predator conduct and ceremony. No.

One time, Walter did his tough – guy interpretation on a boozehound friend of mine and I heard about it from one of my sources. Bright and early, the very next morning, I charged right thru the doors of the tavern and in a typical fury, I went straight over the bar and smoked Walter square between the eyes, causing him to see double for the rest of his ignorant life. Which is a serious handicap and a severe disadvantage for any street fighter to have to live with. Walter never fought a defenseless man again and this was just fine with everyone who drank beer in the Strathcona Hotel, back in the early 70's.

Another time and for no apparent or special reason, I cornered the dirty little rat in a cul – de – sac, a blind spot in the bar and beat him stupid, which was another good thing. In addition to my having brought Walter around to my way of thinking, *this* glowing incident did nothing but get me free drinks for a year. There were times when I had been known to do a fair imitation of rage and anger. Anyway...

A memorable and lasting occasion and the best one, transpired late upon a summer evening in 1974. I happened to be wired to the nuts and drunk as a skunk, wandering and wavering down the alley, back of the Strath and I espied Walter's car, sitting alone and unprotected. An indiscretion on Walter's part, I would have to say. Leaning up against a wall was a convenient 2 x 4, 3' long and left there by a co - conspirator, for my own special needs and purposes no doubt. 'Excellent,' thought I.

Now, I may have been intoxicated and inebriated but I wasn't able or expert enough to pass on such an opening. It was pure and simple Karma endorsing the evening.

With a grin and a holler, I snatched up that length of wood and set about destroying and demolishing Walter's car. There was much to do but when I was done and spent, the glass was gone, the headlights and taillights were finished and there must have been a thousand boot marks, put there by me, as I ran howling and growling, from the roof to the tires and from bumper to bumper. I bent absolute hell out of Walter's lemon yellow V.W. beetle.

Chance was a favorite coincidence of mine in '74 and a fitting ending to such an exploit and achievement. The morning after the event and I was motoring the southside of Ed. and while waiting for a stoplight, along came Walter, in what was left of his car and straight at me.

The stupid bugger was navigating with his bald head stretched out the left side of that rolling piece of garbage because of the spider – shattered windshield in front of him. The car was a wreck. It was junk. I started to laugh. And I laughed so painfully, I nearly ran over a tree.

Walter glared and glanced edgily in my direction, got wise and went red and began shrieking like only a crazy person can do. He knew. But he also realized immediately, as towards any retaliation against me, well, basically he was fucked.

Walter was an asshole. A real son of a bitch. He died. From a bad heart. So it is said.

Vague rumor was I had been a separate and specific clause written precisely and prominently into his will. 'Under no circumstances must the man who murdered my V.W. and beat up on me in my bar, ever be allowed to enter and remain on Strathcona Hotel property. No! Never!'

So, on a rash and desperate night in late Sept., 1976, it should have come as no big surprise to me, that Walter's partner in life, on seeing my happy face, bent back and drinking beer excessively, had panicked and called in the law. All the man had wanted was for me to vacate the premises peacefully. E.C.P.D. radio – control had another plan. I was conducted downtown. Where I became urgently furious over a veritable deluge of outstanding warrants and with a hayseed copper, who just would not listen to reason, not even when I attempted to bribe the bastard. Time was of the essence.

It was best to parley with the man. Being on night – shift and still somewhat primitive back then, the bluecoat never had full access as to who I was and who I was about to become. The officer on duty had no way to grasp, no data available, no information, with respects to the reputable and infamous deed I had left behind in the North Country.

I fast – rapped that slow – shift copper with a mean – paced yarn. The nut of the story was that I was in solid. With covert and clandestine amigos of his on the force. I even hinted at names, officers he readily would have recognized as being his superiors. Actually, the names did belong to credible and prudent gumshoes,

coppers who had put the iron on me a time or 2 but the big dummy had no way of knowing about those juicy items.

We compromised on \$185 and a promise to appear. Afterwards, I had just enough money, with the double I had stashed in my boot, to pay for the hack to the airport.

John and I scarce made our Montreal connection. As the plane took off and arced eastward, I couldn't resist one last look back at Edmonton, a town full of rubes and I knew and could appreciate greatly, that, somewhere down below, was yet another lawman, no longer upwardly mobile because of me. I felt like Houdini.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Quebec – Quickly.

John and I skipped on into Quebec feeling and looking like bums. For all the usual reasons. Neither of us had shaved or showered for a week and our clothes were no better than Salvation Army castoffs. We were derelicts.

During the flight east, we had taken financial inventory and our funds totaled not much more than humble desperation. Which of course was due to my past indiscretions and recent confrontation with the E.C.P.D. As such, we had fled Edmonton with only plane tickets and pocket change. Not as it had been a matter of choice.

After setting aside enough for the bus to Chibugameu, 300 mi. north of Montreal, we lacked cash for even routine alcohol and drugs. Three hundred miles of dry dust and rickety bus. Not pleasant to think about. No.

The other passengers on the plane had bothered me, in a slight way. They were regular people, suits and ties, families, mortgages and responsibilities, people with jobs, people who must have loathed and mentally snarled at our unkempt presence. Like having the black death traveling with them, for the same price.

Ordinarily, in my usual primal state, I could have handled it but not at that point. No. Being a fugitive and on the hop, I had no urge to draw even minor attention to myself. I *knew* I was being hunted. Of this I was certain. I talked to no one on that plane.

To run away is almost always an admission of guilt and waves of blue paranoia were rippling over me. Every computer in Canada had to have been focused in on me by then, my wino description, my peculiar habits, my considerable police record, the deed naturally and of how I should be handled on the day they snared and trapped me. This last item was cause for anxiety all on its own and I wondered if I would *be* permitted to stand in front of an honest magistrate. When they ran me down and captured me...

I may have been detoxifying, what with the adrenaline rushes and the Sunday morning sweats and my heart was tripping along at 2 x its normal rate. Death at 30,000' seemed a likelihood. 'Has it come to this?' I asked myself. And I was a prisoner on an airplane and not a thing I could do about it. Mercy. 'Well,' I thought, 'If I have my way on this escapade, the law won't catch me for slippin' and slidin' on the warm shit I leave behind.' I was thoroughly afraid.

Montreal was done on foot and near empty wallets. Montreal might have been a grand and stately lady but as with any quality lady, money was the only coin of estimable communication. Money? We had none. Not us. No. Rather, we were gadabouts or wide – eyed Okies, pariahs who had mistakenly taken a wrong turn

somewhere and instead of being on our own choppy turf, had found ourselves staring at and surrounded by a gazillion dollars worth of chrome and glass and those same damned plane people.

Again we had no choice in the matter and were obliged to walk and wander aimlessly around and around old Montreal. John and I put in the hours, waiting on our bus until we wisely broke and turned into a saloon, where we cleverly squandered our last 10 dollars. Which worked out well. It took the fear away. It was exactly what I needed. A typical high – class move and why change the design and direction of a grim and reckless flight into the unknown?

Bitch of a bus ride. There is only 1 way to endure a lengthy trek on a bus and that is with a large bag of booze and a headful of smooth dope. We had none of these features. We had nothing but brutal memories of yesterday and unkind visions of tomorrow to sustain us. It was an uncomfortable journey.

During the ride, John was good enough to explain roughly how he had secured our jobs in Quebec. All I could think of, as I stared blankly out the windows of the rattletrap bus and watched the miles jar past, was, not even migrant wetbacks would have chosen to work the desolation we were rolling thru and headed for. Stunted bush, sickly scrub pine, low and gray winter cloud and everything was deathly still. It could have been Mordor. It was an apt description. No escape. As I was mulling it over...

John hit me with the big story, just to draw my attention and the electrifying news was, he had fed the wires a total line of fiction, from coast to coast, that he was a drift miner and he was bringing along his partner, an experienced man, a man who could do the job, a man much sought after. I was stunned and agog. I was stupefied.

Other than not a lot, all I knew of drift mining was that it was hot and heavy labor and drift miners were huge and hulking men of brute muscle. Hard and hardened men. And I had no craving or desire to be one. No.

No way was our tall and lanky story going to hold water. I thought the big boss – man would likely bump hip after our 1st shift and the both of us would be singin' the blues and packin' it down a long and lonely road.

John read my apprehension and understood an intense briefing was called for and required. After earnest and exact explanation concerning purpose, tools, technique and style, I was satisfied and half – convinced we could pull it off, that there was a slim chance we could make it past the main – man and hornswoggle the poor bastard into believing we weren't *that* improbable. The only thing for my hole and predicament, at that point in my dash and go, was a titanic and colossal fake and fraud anyway. I was committed and would have to ride it out.

John and I rode into the city of Chibougamou in the early hours and nothing was astir. Made for the Falconbridge Mine. Easy enough. Once there, we roused the boss and reasoned and persuaded the man, told him, the right thing for him to do was to wake the cook and make us feel welcome. This he did.

The greasy bugger of a cook dragged his raven ass out of bed, groaning and grumbling and he fed us and we praised highly everything he put in front of us. "Real fine Cookie." "Good chow." The man gave us a toothless grin. We gave him back simple smiles. Truthfully though, it was a ghastly and gruesome encounter with despondent and woebegone camp cookin'.

But, after the many camps I had suffered thru, I knew well, it is never wise to anger or annoy the cook. Once I had done a short stint in a kitchen overseas and I had witnessed a cook with a hard – on for an employee and it was appalling and shocking, what he did to that man's food. And he did it with such flair and finesse, smiling and fawning, forelock close to the floor, as he served up his sweet revenge. A camp cook is always the unacknowledged but undisputed master of your harmony, while you are in his camp.

Found our bunks and caught 4 hrs. sleep.

Came the morning and we knew the village of Chibugameu. A general store, a few shacks and a hotel. The hotel was a proud and pretty affair and a comfort to my weary spirit.

Glancing about and around the sleepy town of Chibugameu, I guessed that a forest fire would have starved and expired, trying to feed off the bleak and barren countryside. The town was secluded and withdrawn. Amazing. And I approved of the geographics. These reasons, that Chibugameu *was* so isolated and remote, so unbelievable, just may have kept the men in blue uniforms at bay and guessing for a while. So I reasoned.

Our shift, as explained by the big boss – man, was the graveyard, midnight till 8 A.M. or whenever we finished drilling off and blasting the consolidated copper face that awaited us at the center of the earth.

Miners are generally a close lot and usually content to be silent with their own. There is no easy way for a miner to relate his cold black labor underground, to a person who walks the surface of the planet. It is a limited concept. A man who works and toils underground knows, in strange and confused thoughts, that mining is a punishment. He also knows, if he doesn't get away fast, it is sometimes a slow and ignoble death sentence. Mining is a lifetime retribution for past or possible indiscretions and not necessarily a miner's own. A miner's lot is a test. And God tests every man. Only a rare and chosen man will ever work his way to grace. More often than not, mining is an indeterminate castigation and penance for many a miner. Miners never cry. A miner is a mighty man.

One good soul recognized our poverty and need and sent 20 bucks quietly in our direction and it was a fine thing and a gentle mercy which allowed for John and me to be pulling on the tavern door of the hotel at the same time Miss Shirley was inside trying to slip the early morning bolt to open the place. A fine thing indeed.

John and I sat back and drank beer the better part of our first day in Chibugameu, Quebec and we managed to convey a friendly message to our fellow mine workers. That... we were crack – hot and first rate drillers, come east to see for ourselves, the strapping and stalwart men who could push steel with us. And John and I stayed reasonably and chronically drunk for 30 days.

Our 1st shift and surprisingly, to me, John knew the essentials of hard – rock drilling and drifting. After rounding up the required tools, jacklegs and drill bits, wrenches and widgets and other forms of mechanics and machinery, we set to drilling off the glistening and glittering copper face below ground.

As in every occupation, mining has its own mysteries and secrets and if a man doesn't learn them quickly and use them cleverly, well, that man ought to stay home.

A jackleg weighs in at about 80 lbs. The rod – shaped drills which attached to them were anywhere from 2' to 12' lengths, the shorter ones to start a round, an elongated hole into the rock face, the longer ones to go deeper.

Other than packing that heartless jackleg and stumbling blind in the dark with the damned thing, the job may not have been as bad as I feared. Certainly, I might have labored at trades more strenuous and arduous but I really couldn't remember when. Should my miner's struggle have been or become formidable enough for 2 – 3 vertebra to have come a – poppin' out my arsehole, no hesitation, I would have been gone, cussin' and cursin' and kickin' horse – turds and frozen rocks on down a lonely winter road.

A jackleg, a sort of horizontal jack – hammer, the same thing in fact, is an air fed contraption and when positioned and aligned properly and digging and sounding like a large – bore howitzer on rapid fire, would just naturally eat its own way into the rock face. All on its lonesome and except for an occasional corrective push now and again, the damned and dirty gizmo was nearly a precision device. Even changing drills and bits was no big deal, once I ran out of language. But...

Yes, I cursed and I wept and I swore never again and those inaugural shifts into the inscrutable world of hard – rock mining almost finished me and I knew it would have been right to surrender, to give up, to lay down and die. For all I cared, those early shifts, the owners of Falconbridge could have come underground, formed a line and took turns kissing my rosy – red ass and done their own foul and dirty business, the no good pieces of shit.

It was a mean and exhausting job, no matter how it was cut up and put together again. Punishing. Grueling. And...

Back in '76, I knew several miners were killed or maimed each year, across this mighty land Canada. Doing the same nigger work. A previous and fresh blast site isn't scaled properly and a piece of loose falls on, crushes and buries a poor fool of a miner. A man drills into a live round which failed to fire and blows himself past the other side of kingdom come. A pressure hose bursts and wounds a man. A pipe ruptures and cripples a man. What of when the earth closes in and covers a man forever? So many hazards...

Underground, a man never really knows what day he is going to die and Rita and her men tell a true true story.

Not many people, city people, are aware of or hear of these calamities and tragedies. With all the sorry justification. The miners never advertise their sad misfortune and have no voice that can be heard anyway. The mine owners aren't talking. The men are expendable. Fodder. Always have been. Miners are well paid, in genuine coin of the realm money, to work and sweat, to hurt and die, in the evil black darkness of their masters' minds. It's not right and I'll never accept, why it is necessary for a man to be degraded into having to create another man's contemptible obsession. Mining? It's no life.

Actually, back in '76, in Quebec, I never gave a hoot for either gathering of men. I was selfish and I never cared. It's just that, at the time, it was demeaning and demoralizing and personally abusive, for *me* to have had to toil and tug, suffer and maybe die in a lonely region of the mine, without having seen the sun, that dark dark day.

Rather than scorn and ridicule, the main – man was pleased with those 32 powder filled holes and even smiled when the damn things all fired in proper sequence. So much for being railed out of town for impersonating miners. It had been a little fear. It appeared it would *not* be necessary to honey and bootlick the bosses' shoes. No.

John and I returned to surface, heads held high and struttin' like peacocks and partook of more grub, slept 6 hrs. made for the beer parlor, drank, returned underground and did it all over again. A circle game and it was a pattern we lived for 30 days. We could take anything Falconbridge could hand out. We had stamina for all things bright and beautiful. We had been accepted as hard – rock miners.

I put all my faith and credence on a 30-day stall from the law and a large 30-day paycheck from the mine. It was a desperate anticipation. When this welcome scenario *did* happen, at breakneck speed, I would sky on out of the bush of Chibugameu and make my escape. Right.

Three days went by before the Y.K. – R.C.M.P. came a – callin'. I was dragged directly out of my bunk and escorted into town. For a coffee and a chat.

The gentlemen took me in their car, to a beat – up and run – down area of the fair municipality of Chibugameu, stopped in front of a 2nd rate building on main street and we tramped and stamped up a dim and creaky flight of stairs. At the top was the Mayor's office or so the hand lettering on the frosted glass of its door window said. Inside, I was seated on a squeaky wooden chair, in front of a scratched and scraped oak table. In the room were 4 other chairs, a file cabinet and a long and impressive mirror on one wall. It was a bare room. Cold.

Introductions were delivered, discreetly and judiciously. My rights were read. I was accused gently and threatened lightly but not charged. At this early stage of the R.C.M.P. investigation into the Giant Y.K. Mine blast of 1976, it was too soon for them to have had the ample goods on me. Not yet.

It was a smart trio, myself and 2 detectives and they were determined to work me over good and properly. I fielded and denied everything, with the right amount of fiction and innuendo stirred in, to keep those restive and enthusiastic lawmen confused and off balance.

“Yes, I was in Y.K., September 26, 1976. Yes, I worked for Giant Mine. Yes, I heard about the blast. Yes, a lot of men had a lot of reasons for wanting to sting and spike Giant Y.K. Mine. No! Hell no! I positively know no names! No one cogent and incredible enough to have done the deed! No!” That was my story and I was stickin’ to it. But... they knew and I knew they knew and they knew I knew they knew. The game must go on don’t you know.

At one point during the interrogation, I admit to being impressed. For a short spell, those true – blue coppers left me alone in that room. For me to ponder my story and decide if I might want to embellish on it or just plain tell the fucking truth.

Before leaving, one of those clever men unstrapped and placed his gun and rig atop the filing cabinet, turned to me, broke into a smile and did his 1 – 2 – 3 exit.

The input of these gestures was clear to me.

I grimaced and turned away. From that innocuous handgun and away from the 1 way glass and fastened instead on the mid – morning snowflakes floating down from a dazy and hazy sky. ‘They’re real serious this time,’ was a repeating thought.

Between the low – density meditation and a half oz. of raw tobacco, I managed to compose and calm myself and my fast – tracking anxieties.

When the detectives did return, after a spell, I knew no fear. The intensity within was gone and had been replaced by a relaxed tranquility. I knew they were going to let me go. Not to panic. Stand tall. Be a man.

Once more in Mr. Mayor’s office. “Hey now! Let’s get real! What do you think the ‘man’ upstairs would figure about your actions back in Y.K.?”

“I did nothing wrong in Y.K.”

“Liar! What do you think the ‘man’ upstairs, would say about you being a liar? Look into my eyes!” I looked deep into those bluebottle eyes, then looked up for to hear what the ‘man’ upstairs had to say and the ‘man’ upstairs said nothing so I looked back at the copper and denied everything all over again.

The coppers drove me back to camp. Slowly. Before arriving, one of the horsemen turned to me and with his best toothpaste smile, he gave me a card. “In case you feel like talking to someone... about anything.”

‘Yes!’ I wanted to blurt, ‘I would honestly appreciate talking to anyone who would be willing to front me 2 grand, no strings, so I can launch on out of this most exceptional hamlet of Chibugameu, spring briskly and agilely north, while you guys looked the other way.’ I said nothing. I took the card.

These days, at times, late at night, I get to wondering about what form of searing and calculated retaliation might have been unleashed against me, in that clear mirror room, had I been fool enough to do a sudden move on that lawman's gun. Could be the bastards may have blasted me clean on into Ontario. My boots may have stayed behind.

Irony here folks. It's possible I could not have chosen a more serious, no-nonsense country in which to hide from the law. At the time, in '76, Quebec was the undisputed flagship of insurrection in Canada. Quebec was the land of terrorists and banks and bandits in 1976. And there I was, bearing a heavy burden of indictables and being a suspected blast – artist as well. I was a man with the exact qualifications to actually have *belonged* in Quebec. Ho! Ho! I was a fool.

Afterwards, after the authorized investigation, I would have been found, fully and in all respects, guilty of being an outlaw. The inquest may have sounded...

“Well sir, it happened this way. During our session with the suspect, the man was domineering and overpowering, in a physical and mental sense, full – mouthed and quiet at the same time, if you take my meaning. The man was excited and electric and he shook me and my partner badly.

“Somehow, I don't know exactly how but I fucked up and put my gun off to the side, at an early point during our inquiry with the suspect, when he had first exhibited signs of rage. As a safety precaution sir, so that in one of the suspect's furies, he couldn't grab the damn thing. Anyway... it happened sir. The man jumped up and collared Barney and myself and proceeded to bounce us off the walls. The man was berserk. The man was ballistic. And you know how rough and rugged these miners can be sir. All fists and fact and feet.

“Well sir, the suspect went thru us, reached out and suddenly he had my weapon. It was a life or death situation sir.

“All those rounds fired sir? Well sir, this is the way it happened. By happy coincidence, 6 of the brothers were returning from the range and were passing this very office, in which we were gently reasoning with the alleged suspect and luckily for us, they heard and recognized the beginnings of a disturbance, noises coming from this same cozy and comfortable room. Yes and thankfully, those telling and true officers responded and acted with perfect regard to the laws of this great land Canada and in the highest traditions of the force sir.

“Because we were in a closed room, our fellow officers, sensing an altercation in progress, lucky for Barney and myself, decided to have themselves a look inside. Well sir, my partner and I were both down, on our knees, on the floor and the suspect was over us and he had my gun. There were no options at that point sir.

“We managed to subdue the suspect but only because of overwhelming superiority as to firepower. It was necessary sir. Otherwise and had we not done our duty, the incident would have turned ugly and unfortunate.

“The suspect would have broken out and set to ripping and rending the fair town of Chibugameu before going on an orgy and rampage and leaving a malodorous trail of beer and vomit clear across Quebec. Makes my blood run cold to think about it sir.

“Still, the suspect ruin several good men. Seems a few of our city’s finest may be doing a couple of weeks south, in I.C.U., in Montreal.

“Exonerated sir? Thank – you sir.” ... something like this.

Back in camp and to the bar and off to work and there were few smiles for the next 27 days and *they* were hard to come by.

The skirmish had shaken me. No doubt about it. The R.C.M.P. were onto a strong and powerful scent and I was likely going down.

Police in Canada are *not* stupid. A person who thinks they are is a fool. At times the police forces of Canada can be careless and bungling and capable of being bluffed and tricked but never stupid. There are quite simply too many loyal officers of the law, that make up for the rare retard one sometimes encounters. Of any 3 policemen, between them, they readily have enough legalities and leverage to nail your high and haughty ass to the ground. Think on it.

The police forces across this nation have solidarity, in the forms of agencies and apparatus, tools and technology, at their disposal, all of which is determined and dedicated to track and spot, accommodate and eradicate bad – case culprits like you and me. You *will* be caught. In Canada, a policeman stops being your friend when you turn 16 or 18.

Forget about violence and crazy – crime, about being an average and ordinary thick – headed criminal today. It don’t work that way. Not anymore.

The only successful criminals walking the streets of Canada today, at this very moment, are wearing ties and thousand dollar suits. Welcome to the 21st century.

Chibugameu was a ridiculous roller coaster and I had no way of stopping it and stepping off and I had to ride the bastard. Up and around and back down again. I was in a prison of my own design and making, a box with no doors, no windows and with little hope of escape. I had delivered myself into a fantastic set of components and constituents and I was helpless and defenseless because of them. I needed to think...

Now, I was *not* going to go down easy. No. Not if I could help it. I was *not* facing a lightweight charge and there was no way I was going to submit and surrender. I would use every means, of all my powers, to at least *try* to confuse and evade the laws of this land. An epic and heroic story it would be too. On the beaches... to the ends of time...

John knew I was in the middle of a jackpot but he had nothing to say and this was right because there isn’t much one man can say to another man doing an ardent and sedulous getaway from the law.

John and I drilled and drank and each passing day brought me closer to my day of reckoning. All the while I was silent and feeling and thinking like Raskalnikov, trusting no one, finding no one worthy or superior to confide in and not willing to do so had such a person existed in my world. No such person *had* ever existed in my world. It was a mighty lonely world.

About the only hope I had was if the R.C.M.P. got sloppy just long enough for me to lay my hands on my exorbitant paycheque. I needed time. Time is what I needed. Time.

Had a plan. On payday, another miner was turning his back on Falconbridge and saying goodbye, to return home, to Montreal. A quick and rapid burst and run south seemed awfully good reasoning to me. The man had no objections to giving me a ride past Montreal. Then I was going to do my incredible act and like a sure – speed piece of Canadiana, I would scud on across the American border in the dead of night. That was the plan.

But I had to have cash. Hard cash and lots of it. Otherwise, without the big bucks to insulate me and put off those American streets and strangers, I would certainly have come up wounded or buried alive. It was sound and sensible thinking. Still...

After my brush and tussle with the back – room blues, in the Mayors' office, in beautiful downtown Chibugameu, I strongly suspected, more so than ever, that I would be going to jail.

For every manner of flagrant abuse towards the laws of this great land Canada. Desecration of Giant Y.K. Mine was only one of my mischiefs. At the time, *I* never really knew for sure what I owed and on *general principles*, I felt like beatin' the feet one way down a cold and rocky winter road to Montreal.

In Chibugameu, in '76, word was out. No secrets in a shantytown. Sitting in the bar, 8 beer in front of me, bought with other people's money and I was convinced hell would have froze over before Falconbridge thought it wise to give me an advance on my wages. For certain, the Chibugameu police had been tipped off by the R.C.M.P. and they in turn had elected to advise the mine against such folly. Which was why I was drinking beer on other peoples money. You know and they knew and I knew, I would have taken any mile – high legal tender and ran away like a yeller dog.

While sittin' and sippin', in the Chibugameu Hotel tavern, I chanced to fall into deep conversation with a band of Indians from across the lake and they offered to paddle me over to their village, "where none of these white bastards will ever find you." Hide me. No questions. Which was interesting. They knew I had hooked onto a serious beef but then again, the whole damn burg and county of Chibugameu knew I had a problem. Everyone was talkin'. I declined their kindly offer. Since...

It had immediately occurred to me, upon hearing their creed and philosophy, that I just may have been the only, 'white bastard,' on their side of the water. Also, I could *not* picture myself in the bush for the remainder of my days, hunting squirrels and snipes and practicing primitive magic and spiritual deportment. No. Not yet.

Came off shift the 30th day and on arriving at surface, I 'bout half – expected to be a – meeting' 3 bullet Billy and his brother Bob, the Chibugameu swat – team. But no. The dry was deserted. I was uneasy. What the hell... the cheques would be ready at noon. Time enough for a beer and a snooze.

A steady thump and cadence of heavy boots woke me. Then, still half – horizontal, leaning on my elbows and I was staring into the bloodshot eyes of officers Schmidt and McMann. “Y.K.?” “Right. Let’s go.” My body sagged. My heart fell. I nearly cried. I was so tired. So suddenly.

Only 2 items remained for me in Chibugameu. First, my 2 bogies and I lock – stepped over to the dry and picked up my paycheque. I shook hands with the big boss man and he wished me well, at the same time sending a cross and ornery look in the direction of the lawmen. I moved faster.

Back to the bunkhouse, where I gave away all non-essentials, almost everything I owned, including a 6” hunting knife, which visibly upset my captors. Shook hands with John. Was gone.

Off and rolling, myself and my duffle bag and 2 troopers, wailing merrily on down a wintery country road, looking for the nearest jail.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Yellowknife – Again.

I was traveling fast and today it would be an effort recalling and telling you the names of the towns and cities that held me or passed me by.

The first night of the journey back to Y.K. was done in a cozy, clean sheet cell. It was a peaceful night. The word I need here is resignation. Resignation comin' down, at having run and rushed so long, packin' a tension – racked high, for so many years.

After breakfast and racing again. Close to Montreal and another one – night stand, this one in the remand section of a mystery jail. There I talked to an interesting fellow. The man was working on building his 3rd Eiffel Tower, built entirely out of popsicle sticks. Six feet tall and thousands and thousands of popsicle sticks. 'My – o – my,' I thought, 'a bug for sure.' But no. The man offered me solid and sound advice. "Talk to no one. Trust no one. Say nothing." That sage counsel should have been an everlasting load and weight for me to carry, for all of my days on this informative planet.

Never did figure out his argument with the law but I was impressed by the fact he had been on remand 18 mos. without cracking. Possibly another tower or 2 had saved his cagey ass. I don't know.

It was a medieval cell. Not comfortable. I had to jump and grab the high steel and pull myself up to look out and could see only water on 3 sides of that rock pile jail. The cell stank like a root cellar or dead bodies. It was a dark and decaying place. I was chilled by the gray stonewalls, heavy and great blocks of granite, cut and set closely in 100 yr. old mortar. Sweating and dithering mildew covered those walls and maybe Papillon might have been able to think his way past them and out and into the sunlight and the free air. Not me. Not then. No.

Early again and a quick, "good luck," to a man and his tower and I was shot thru to Montreal and one of her better airports. There, I was handed over to a lone R.C.M.P. with a briefcase and plain and simple orders to deliver me west and north to Y.K. "Don't lose the bastard or we'll have you writing parking tickets in Tuktoyaktuk. Watch him closely. He's hung a number of dodges on us before. He's done us once or twice."

It was becoming an experience in unnatural safety and protection and of power even, knowing I could have wiggled – out and started a brawl and my escort was ethically bound to stand by me and shield me. I was tempted. An opportunity like that would never come around again, a once in a lifetime shot. I let it go. The shit was deep enough.

My escort, before boarding each plane, Montreal, T.O., Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton, was required to go thru a special ceremony. In every airport, the man had to present his I.D., explain his mission, open his briefcase and let security peek inside for a look – see at his 9mm 'G lock' pistol. Which made a few eyes round and bright. The adventure and entertainment of this performance allowed us to get by the metal detectors and we were confirmed on every flight with no doubts or difficulties whatsoever.

On the next leg of the journey, my escort began to make sniveling and whining noises about having to draw the duty, when he could have been at home and warm with his woman. “Want to trade places?” Silence. The man was trying to relax and put me at ease, a standard police trick but as you shall see, I needed no savant – adept to do an act of discomfiture on me. There was a time when I was talented at irresponsible suicide of my spirit and freedom and I never needed outside assistance to accomplish it. I was a fool, once upon a time.

At Winnipeg I nearly caused us to miss our Calgary connection, not as I gave a red Russian fuck but I had stood firm and resolute and insisted on cashing my paycheque at the airport bank. And I was dead – set on it. “Look here officer. I *know* you have a schedule and I *know* the plane leaves in 15 min. But unless we hit the bank and cash this fucking cheque, I’m going to jump up and down and shout, ‘He’s got a gun! Down! Everybody down!’ Now, what would your masters think about that?”

“O.K. O.K. Let’s do this fast.”

I will never be certain or not, if that copper had been amused, embarrassed or pissed – off because my I.D. was useless and not worth a rap and the man had to use his position and pull to explain to the bank officials that, yes, “this man and this cheque belong together.”

Same procedure. A copper’s story, his credentials, his assignment, his gun. It was startling play and sport. I was amazed alarms weren’t clanging, bells ringing and lights flashing. The entire enterprise smacked and reeked of conspiracy to commit robbery. Sirens and whistles would *not* have surprised me. No.

It worked out well though and after the comic drama in the bank, I could breathe easier. Not by choice was I about to move into hostile and enemy territory, not without shades of the almighty dollar in my pocket. No. Best to be solvent in a contrary situation. A poor man is always desperate for a deal.

I trusted that copper could never have endured a heavy and fiery scene, not in a crowded airport terminal. Definitely, the man would never have shot me. Hell, he was at an early point in his career. He was much too young and not hard enough to hurt anyone. A few more seasons and then perhaps.

Alcohol became a factor at 30,000’ out of Winnipeg. With my escort’s permission of course. “Only a few. I don’t want to get my ass in trouble.”

“Right.”

Six beer later and I had to piss, which turned out to be a double – good thing. See... it could be the flight crew was in on the fleeting tragedy being played out high over Canada, in *their* flying machine. Possibly they had been informed and they knew of my dilemma even if I wasn’t wearing chains and I like to think people who ride the skies would take strong objection to *working* to promote law – enforcement and that people who fly in airplanes would understand not being free. So... in their own colorful way, they did a swipe at the R.C.M.P., satisfaction which took the form of presenting me with a couple of dreadful bottles of miniature whiskey, each time I passed the galley, on the way to the head. And I passed by often.

Today, for sentimental reasons, I sometimes wonder who all *had* been given leave to be part of that mid – air extravaganza. The officer accompanying me, obviously. His superiors, definitely. The pilots? The flight crew? I can't say in every way. The coppers for sure...

See, the detectives knew from my profile I was a drunk. And they knew further, there is no easier way to bring out a drunkard's words than to wind him up with a few stiff drinks. S.O.P., when dealing with old 5 and dimers like me.

Over Edmonton and pointed north and I was full – fledged capernoited and at the same time, I reasoned it never really mattered much. Each mile poundin' me closer to Y.K. seemed to reinforce a terrible certainty, which had been building inside me. That I was basically doomed. After so many years of abusing and flaunting the great Canadian theme, I realized I had built up a karma – debt and it would have to be paid. In 1976, I figured on going to jail, to clear my tab.

At this point in this narrative, I will *not* write on a deep – seated need / desire to be disciplined and punished. That could be shit.

The main item to understand here, is, I felt a serious dry spell was at hand and was certain even, that my next bottle of rare whiskey would be a long time a – comin'.

So I pushed my hospitality privileges to the limit. It began in Winnipeg, continued over Calgary and past Edmonton and blasted me on thru to Y.K., up in the N.W.T.

Upon arrival in Y.K., I was a genuine, full – fledged, crazy man. I was blind and boxed, corked and canned and thoroughly gooned. As a matter of fact, I felt about right. I felt wonderful.

On arriving in Y.K., I was also a babbling fool and in the Y.K., R.C.M.P. lock – up no less.

Any arrest and search is a humiliating and degrading experience. It is meant to be this way. It is designed to humble and render a man impotent. A man with his nuts and pecker exposed, soft and shriveled and for all the world to see, finds it extremely difficult to be proud and arrogant.

In the R.C.M.P. lock – up, I was stripped fat – assed naked and inspected and explored, with strict attention given to every orifice. I was grinning but it was a bloodless and hollow grin and I was helpless with fear.

After the skin – search for weapons and such, I was allowed to dress before being rudely pushed into an unpolished and unpleasant cell.

My body was in flames by then and I was almost paralyzed and not much for it than to do my lean against the cell door, arms extended limply out past the bars, my head hung low and my mind in turmoil.

What happened next, happened so damn fast; I really need damn few words to tell of it.

I had been celled – up with a scruffy character and he had immediately began to jabber and blab on about the vast and voluminous quantities and amounts of dope he had been bringing into Y.K. before getting popped at Y.K. International.

Now, I should have known or at least suspected something was amiss and had I been anywhere close to sober, I'm sure I would have twigged and tumbled easily, as the sum aggregate of illegal drug that cocksucker was railing and bragging about, would have crippled and killed every living creature in northern Canada.

Instead of clamming – up, like any red blooded and ready witted young man would have done, I began to talk and cut – up with that fucker. Error! About Y.K. and the Y.K. coppers and the troubles and times I had put them thru. Error! About the deed in general. Error!

I admit it. On paper. With this pen. I set myself up. I was a fool.

I must say, my cell – mate was certainly an alert and attentive audience and then he was gone, whisked away. Ten minutes went by before I was led out of my cell and maneuvered into a special room. One of those rooms with no heat and severe insulation.

In that room I was informed that my companion was an R.C.M.P. officer in good standing and credit and the bastard was prepared to take the stand and tell any court in Canada that I was the preposterous individual behind the Giant Y.K. Mine blast in 1976.

Son of a bitch! Snookered by a rat cop! 'When would the madness end?' was a thought.

No excuses folks. Not from this heroic young man. Never mind the booze. Demon booze... I have *never* needed a salient excuse to drink. If I came awake, most any exceptional morning, breathing free air and was greeted by the dawn's early light, it was excuse enough for me to drink. And when a man drinks, he is weak and powerless to reason and defend himself properly. A man who drinks *excessively* is a helpless man.

Nonetheless, at the time of that screaming fault and blunder, I was choked and irritated with myself and the swarm of coppers surrounding me and I honestly wanted to go for someone's throat. Which would *not* have been a good move. No. Those coppers would positively have mobbed and bludgeoned me senseless before hitting me with a silver bullet. I steeled and restrained myself instead.

I was taken back to my cell, with great speed and damn few courtesies.

There, I chain – smoked cigarettes and flipped the butts out thru the bars and onto the concrete floor.

Which brought on a limited confrontation with deputy do – right and his copper plated mentality.

The weak – hearted trainee asked if I was responsible for the unsightly and ungainly pile of ashes and cigarette ends on the floor outside my cell. "Assuredly," said I.

"Well then, I'll just go fetch a broom and you can sweep 'em up. Right?"

“Wrong!” I snarled, “Stick your broom up your ass!” Could be I was a mite touchy. His eyes bugged out but what could he do? Hell, I was about to be labeled as one of Canada’s top 10 desperadoes and I was not about to be trifled with.

A down and dirty rat of a cop had finally gotten to me. The bastard had truly laid me low. All I could do was hang my head in defeat and frustration and realize and understand, sadly, that, I alone was responsible for that mistake and miscalculation. Another failure...

Never, across this fair and impartial land, have I been given a slap by the forces of law and order that I didn’t richly deserve. It was a truth that kept playing on my mind, in a cold and forbidding jail cell, way up in Y.K., N.W.T., in 1976.

Once, during the long autumn night, I was asked to sign a confession. I wasn’t going for it. “But we have your ass solid.”

“Then you don’t need my name on that paper.”

“Make it easy on yourself.”

“You gotta earn it copper.”

Was read my rights. “You stand charged... illegal use of explosives.”

It seemed an indisputable safe bet, on that black night in Oct. ’76, that I was going down for the long count, that I would be going to jail for stepping on my own dick.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Y.C.I. – The Wait.

The following morning I was being transferred to Yellowknife Correctional Institution. It was dark and early and my head was on fire. I was a hurtin' unit. I was big – time sick.

Upon my arrival at Y.C.I., I was again stripped and searched and given another vulgar look – see up my hoop, in case I happened to be bringing in any serious toys or hardware.

Then it was the hole. *KA –CHANG!!* Nothing personal. An object lesson. *KA –CHANG!!* A sliding and shattering crash and slam and it was to become a fearful and frightening memory. The hole...

A mattress on the floor, a mesh – enclosed and eternal light, a crapper and a bent nail. Barren and bleak.

Reflection and deliberation would have to wait. That bent and rusty nail had me smiling and curious. I'd heard of such tricks. Pig's tricks. Interesting and disquieting. Also stupid, because, surely the penal system of Canada never expected me to slash – up for being a tiny bit crazy? Hell, I planned on being around for a long, long time.

That cheater turned out to be a handy little plaything though. With it I was able to draw neat pictures and scratch clever words on the walls of my concrete cell. It allowed for me to fantasize on the more severe and dangerous prisons and dungeons of my tormented and harrowed imagination. That bent nail was not compatible with reality either. It was romantic. It was a little thing and little things mean a lot when your options are limited.

Once each day a nurse, Janet, would smile at me thru a narrow slot of a window and ask if I was well. "I'm fine lady. No problems here." I would *not* show fear. And I wasn't afraid, a mite skittish and jittery but this was a natural and normal reaction for me, when dealing with the shadowy and unknown, when treating with the enemy. I was going thru rapid changes, fright and fortitude, sadness and exhilaration, anger and tranquility. In 1976, I was a sensitive man. Anyhow, outwardly, I was calm and composed and it was good because the great Canadian penal system breaks and destroys the weak and the innocent. Only courage counts.

Then there was the guard, the screw and he poked and put his beady eye on me every hour, thru the same slot window, to assure himself I hadn't drowned in the crapper or decided to use that curved and corroded nail. The mere anticipation of that startlingly pink and frozen eye at my window gave me the willies and filled me with revulsion. It disturbed me and brought me close to screaming.

There was a stupid and ignorant mind behind that eye, a rare combination and later in the book I'll reveal that eye and the creature behind it and others just like it. Don't go away. Be around for it. It *will* be an event.

Let me explain something. In my world there is a subtle difference between stupidity and ignorance.

Listen up now.

Ignorance is when a person has critical lack of facts and draws a wrong conclusion and thereby makes a wrong decision and then makes a wrong move in life. This is a sad thing but it is excusable.

Stupidity is when a person has been given *all* the facts and *still* draws a wrong conclusion and makes a wrong decision and makes a wrong move in life. This is deplorable. There is no excuse for stupidity.

I had been aware of all the facts, of the cause and effect. In my heart I knew. I had known all right. I had been stupid. And stupidity is the only true crime.

On remand and at an early point, I decided to accept the consequences of my actions and to take responsibility for any retribution Canada, in her wisdom, saw fit to accord and bestow on me.

It was a fine line of reasoning and it was jam-packed with integrity and maturity and it had a genuineness and a ring to it and it was a high form of honor and truth and I was comfortable with it.

To have set myself up as some kind of hero would have been a lie. No more lies. I will not lie.

Three days passed before I was brought out of the hole and marched off to maximum security, a large enclosure, no openings, opaque and yellow air and light and it felt banefully like being underground. Silent and somber.

There was no ticking clock in 'max', no time and only the lazy and deliberate routine of meals and shift changes kept me aware and prevented me from entering into a state of sensory deprivation.

I was a week in that dim and dingy pit before I was called out to meet my hired gun, my lawyer. I was brought out squinting and blinking at the true light and the cool air and it was a pleasant substitute for the still and heavy haze that had suffused and permeated maximum security.

Peter was feisty and cavalier and he assured me he was, 'the best'. Which was fine with me. I *needed* a hot – shot lawyer who knew magic and was clever with gambits and maneuvers of every description. Peter did radiate an aura of confidence and authority. There are people on this planet who can make another person feel that he is not alone and that all is not lost. Peter was one of these special people.

Peter and I did have a brief meeting and while we had no time to work out definitives, he did get me in front of a magistrate. "Not guilty." "Right." And I was let and approved to go to regular remand.

Another large cell, a divided dormitory, windows and clear light, books and cards, tables and chairs, showers and real beds. Big. And my home for the next 3 mos.

On first arriving at Y.C.I., I thought I might be treated like a leper and be forced to wear a bell around my neck and be shunned by my brother misfits. Not so. Rather than an imposed exile, I was heartily accepted by the other residents of Y.C.I. Also, town people, pub people, people I had never met, began sending me in books and smokes and money. Small items but presents all the same.

See, already the Y.K. monograph had made a case against me. To wit, that, ‘The Giant Y.K. Mine bomber has been found harbored and hiding and has been captured in the northern wilds of Quebec and he’s guilty, guilty, guilty.’ No doubt the Giant Mine brass wanted nothing less than a speedy trial and a tight rope. Whatever.

Meanwhile, some citizens of Y.K. may have felt a peculiar compassion for my predicament, in their hearts of hearts and the gifts they sent me were their voices, echoes from the Clockwork People, the little people of this great land Canada.

Years later, during a routine hospital visit of mine, I bumped into a knocked and knobby old man, a miner who had been in Y.K., in 1976. “Well son,” he confided fondly and warmly, “any one of us workhorses thought it was right. I wished I’d had the balls to do it. Rotten fucking mine.” Well old friend, you just weren’t ready. A true story.

After a month on remand, my mind had begun to function once more. The neurons were poppin’ and the synapses were comin’ free and clear of the awful junk and poison that had clogged my brain for so many years. I was seeing and thinking lucidly and on remand and doing dead time, I was able to piece everything together.

In Y.C.I., in ’76, I asked myself, ‘where had this madness come from? And when had it begun?’ Many years ago, back in ’65, when I first commenced to get a mite crazy. It was true. All those years of craziness... years of loneliness and fear and frustration and they had at last brought me to Y.C.I. and a substantial and an extensive marshaling of affliction.

The responsibility was mine alone. I *had* to accept this phenomenal truth. Today, I feel pure craziness and simple fears and anger, were the prime considerations behind the deed, arguments which moved and motivated me and my life back in the seventies. They were visions of a desperate need to be recognized. I was crying to the world, “See me! Hear me! I’m important! Don’t leave me alone! Please...”

Then I asked myself, ‘where had *this* strange caper gone wrong?’ and here I go...

My sudden exodus from Y.K. most certainly would have aroused suspicious minds and raised blue eyebrows. I had *not* been quiet about it. No. And, as mentioned earlier, to run away is almost always an admission of a guilty mind.

Prior to fleeing east, I had partied hard and I had fairly shouted my departure to Quebec and *no one* has a mouth like mine, when I go on the booze wire. At one point I had led a scathing and frothing verbal attack and assault against Giant Mine and condemned the fucker for every manner of inequity and trespass towards the human spirit. This homily and colloquy had been delivered to a blood – thirsty mob of drunken miners. Not good. Because...

Peter informed me that the Crown had found a miner who had heard me sounding off on that inebrious occasion and he was willing to give perfect testimony against me, to bring me down.

Next, the process of elimination, owing largely to my checkered and recorded past would have damned me as answerable and suspect #1.

Lastly, I would be facing – off with a Judas – copper and that fucker was a heavy load all by his own self.

Now, maybe 1 or 2 of these factors and I may have stood an outlying chance of beating the charges against me but bring them all together and I was looking at utmost misery and despair. A concise and compact case around me, I would have to say. Truly, it appeared as though the state had a sure and secure lock on my future. Yes indeed, in 1976, I had *not* been organized.

Any crime, any *successful* crime has 3 stages and each stage must merge and flow with each other or else you go to jail.

First there is the plan itself. This is the first part of the crime. To do the deed and do it just so. Fine. Do it. Doing the deed just so and exactly as planned and on your own terms is the second part of the crime. All right so far. Now to follow thru with ‘the escape’, the fancy part of any crime. If the performance of the other 2 stages of the crime, the plan and the deed, came off soundly, an unsighted escape will cover and enhance the crime. An insightful escape is the third part of the crime.

Me? Ho! Ho! I had fucked up badly. For me there was no escape. When confronted with the realities of my restless deed, the oddness of the deed, of my stepping out to perform the deed, from the middle of an informed and enlightened crowd of busybodies, of my uproarious and clamorous exit and egress to a valley of fear and no return, of how I bravely and drunkenly blabbered of the deed to an undercover policeman, I nearly fell down laughing. Ho! Ho! I was going to jail.

I had made all the wrong moves and would have to roll with my elections and ride it down easy. No damn way was my audacious deed of daring – do going to go into the books as the perfect crime. No. As near as I could resolve and determine, I was about to be pelted and pummeled fiercely, in a Canadian court of law and be sent to jail forever.

Once again, it occurs to me that I have the pen and could easily alter the facts and these words and make myself out as having been a fanatic advocate of the common people or an intrepid and brave hearted hero against the state and in the first degree. But it would be wrong. I’m at a stubborn and inflexible point in this narrative, where, to not tell the whole truth, except for the spontaneous stretcher now and again, would lessen my moral character and I would forever have to look and walk back on these grand and turbulent words and only I would know the real truth. It would hurt and sadden me. Inaccuracy and deceitfulness would make me sad. I will write the truth and no matter it makes me out a fool. I will not lie. I’ll move on now, to check and stave off some of you more clever and astute folks from saying about me, “methinks he doth protest too much.”

Stupidity really is the only true crime. And not just in terms of getting caught, although it is certainly a consideration. No. When a man has the ability to control the outcome of his slight of hand or feint towards the state and fails to take advantage, by letting his words or actions play position on him, well, therein lies the stupidity and the man merits every manner of retribution and trial.

I had been responsible for a fine assortment and medley of stupidity against myself, an eclectic mix really. I had fucked up and I would be incurring some kind of horrible and hair-raising consequences and wrath.

Y.C.I. was not the first lock – up I had been in. Hell no. Since 1965, I had been doing 1 or 2 or 3 night stands in detestable and deplorable jails, in every corner of this planet and each time I was imprisoned, I was aware of and convinced that I was the only fallen and fated young man in the jail. Because, no one, when first coming to jail and on remand, is ever guilty. Everyone is lyin' and denyin'. Which is right.

It was always, 'A mistake officer' or 'Wrong man officer' or 'The true perp sure must have looked a lot like me officer.' Which is also right.

Y.C.I. was no different a jail, except then, I too was a sympathetic and angelic resident of that real fine accommodation. Innocent. Not guilty. No.

No matter the police knew they had their man either. I never copped – out. And no matter how lame and faulty my refuge. The deeper I dug myself in, the harder the system would have to work, to harness me and put me away.

Listen up. Never rat on your friends or yourself. Say nothing, if possible. Lie when you have to. Deny everything crooked and all wrongs against you. Disavow and retract previous harmful statements, in front of the good judge, if you can work it. Grovel when necessary. Try not to have to do a deal. Try not to surrender. Words to consider. To dwell upon. To live by.

Laid back in Y.C.I. and only the faces changed. Faces that came and went, for a day, a week, a month, faces which were all the same. Tried hard not to pay attention to those faces. Low treachery had made me belatedly cautious and wary and I only wanted to be left alone.

Sometimes a man will go to jail and a day might come and on that day he finds himself *too* involved and *too* familiar with the jail. Then an alienation can come over him and he can feel born to the special treatment a jail has to offer. Then the dismal horrors of jail come home to him and he begins to feel natural and normal and then he can become forever lost in the jail.

In Y.C.I., in '76, I never let anyone get close enough for casual friendship. And *never* for real and true friendship. There *is* no such thing as friendship in the jail. Everyone wants to do a deal. Everyone stands to gain or lose; depending on what he has or hasn't got to offer the man. Information is legal tender in the jail. Offers abound in the jail and deals are made on the basis of what information a man possesses and is willing to bid or barter.

Treachery had made me cautious and careful and I was quickly becoming wise to the duplicities inherent to the Canadian penal system. In Y.C.I., in 1976, there were a few occupants with more than an informal interest as to how and why I had come to that place and I wasn't taking any more chances. I'd been foolish enough. These types were generally given a quiet, "fuck off" and once had to back an inquiring mind to the wall, give him one of these and advise him to do his own time. In Y.C.I., in '76, there were eyes and assholes all right.

Rather than bother and panic, I began to know the bliss and satisfaction of silent contemplation. It was a new experience. My immediate situation and the possible consequences of my actions never troubled me. I could sit back for extended periods of time and drift, look past the bars on the windows of the jail and smile at the snow and cold and the ptarmigans frolicking at the winter and know, positively, not for money or gain would I willingly trade places with any man on this proud and noble planet. No. Not for a circus. No. To even have considered such a notion would have made me a damn – fool. Even at any low point in my illustrious lifetime, I have never shined on such a move. Absolutely not.

Humor is a rare and black commodity in the jail. Like the time this asshole flipped – out and freaked and smashed and bashed the few pleasures and treasures we had on the dorm. Chairs and tables ran down and broken, cards and garbage strewn and scattered across the floor, books ripped and torn. Which got my attention. Such callow and coarse, such burning behavior towards books and the splendid and sublime words and wisdom they contain, will always put me on alert. "Asshole! Stop! Now!" And the man became a dove, a gentle sort of guy. I have always known how to deliver a gruff and grainy message.

We paid for the damage done. The screws took away our T.V., thus depriving us of a great deal of our daily entertainment. They turned off the heat, which rewarded us with a whole lot of shiver. Mean stuff. It was coming Christmas and the mercury was hovering at -50° and we losers had to sit bundled and huddled like cocoons for 3 days. Every blanket was on a body. Curses and laughter and no in – between.

There was more. I recall the low bastard screws rolling up the meal cart and parking it on the threshold of the dormitory. Then the fuckers would go away for ½ hr. or so and when they did return to feed us, a thin layer of ice had formed and surfaced the soup de jour and the veal cutlets. Dirty moves.

There must have been a reason for burying myself on remand for 3 mos. Positive reinforcement? Could be. Perhaps I believed it wise to acclimatize myself to the almost inevitable fact that I would shortly be doing big time. I resigned myself to be ready for a 5 – yr. stay in the big house, a median and medial stretch, if I was humble in court and the fair judge had scored lucky the night before my trial. Peter, my shooter and I both knew my case was nigh – hopeless and that I was basically and fundamentally screwed. Maybe I was a miserable and mean streak of stubbornness, based on my iron – clad conviction that *anything* could have happened to change my status before my day in court. Could be I was looking for a home.

I was comfortable. I had everything I needed, money in my account, smokes and special sent – in books, anything I wanted in the way of canteen and if it was to be said properly, I would have to say I was favored and blessed with being content. I was at ease and at rest for the first time in my life.

Christmas 1976 came upon me and it was the most perfect peace I could remember seeing and serving, during my amazingly enlightened existence as an idler and a wastrel. Had ever known or experienced. Christmas '76 and I wasn't zanked and zonked on the booze and over mysterious drugs and chemicals I had been involved with in every other memory of Christmas past. No craziness and I understood many things. My demeanor was positive. Yes.

I had a Bible. A few of Y.C.I.'s other pitiful miscreants and malefactors drifted over and demanded to know what *it* was about.

Every man, in every jail, is, unwittingly or otherwise, searching for reasons and answers. Rightly and understandably so.

In my own poor way, I tried to explain God and to interpret His words and failed miserably of course. I was crushed and crestfallen not to have had the words to make men understand, back in 1976.

Somehow though, thru a strange *lack* of words, us transgressors and trespassers managed to recognize and discern and distinguish amongst ourselves. We were mellow and we contrived to accept and appreciate that we were real people; important people and part of a Cosmic plan and vitally needed in the grand scheme of the Universe. We got by, simply and sociably, thank – you very much.

My best friend had sent me in a care package, stuffed with chocolates and candies, cookies and cakes, cigars and cigarettes, magazines and books, to help glow on the season. To know someone cared was a powerful inspiration.

And no matter a few of the sons of Y.C.I. had no one outside to do for them. It was fitting and right for me to slice up and share my spoils with the boys. There was a pleasant sadness in the air, a feeling special to a man in a jail, to a man who knew he couldn't go home and how was the family and how was his lady, Marilyn, his one true love. A sadness... Christmas '76, in Y.C.I., was a rare and fine occasion and I remember it well.

Days were a relentless routine and one gray morning I came awake and it was my day in court. The date was Feb. 2 - 1977.

How well I remember Feb 2 - 1977. In the early hours of that dull and dismal day, I was removed from the mock safety and security of Y.C.I. and shuttled downtown to the Y.K. courthouse.

Was led into the courtroom and seated astride a large chair, facing and staring up and at the judge's throne, upon which the man who had the power, the man who held my fate and future in his head and hands, would soon be presiding.

I remember turning to the gallery in back of me and regarding the spectators, the press and the Giant Y.K. Mine bosses with their straight and wooden faces. I laid eyes on that rogue miner. I scrutinized that rat cop. I cringed. I felt like a Burgess character, ready to be purged and fashioned.

I remember being dressed in rags, jailhouse attire, jeans, T – shirt and running shoes. I looked like a bum. Meanwhile...

Peter was decked – out and dressed like a well – heeled pimp, about 1000 bucks worth of thread on his frame. Oh well...

A brilliant and clever defense was in place and at hand.

I remember on Feb 2 – 77, in the Y.K. courthouse, at an early point in my trial, my brain being oppressed by an overweight of righteous confusion and blind indignation. I reasoned it was I, that day, who was there to show justification and cause and impunity with regards to the deed done Giant Mine. I was flooded and filled with a rationale as to why I should walk away from the charges. I was so pumped up, I thought I could make the Crown Prosecutor eat shit and make him pretend to like it. Another fantasy...

Thinking of this nature is common when facing a judge. We outlaws all grasp at white knights, straws and dim hopes before going to jail. True.

Truth was, naturally, I was about to receive lumps and deserts from the authoritative and avenging justice system of Canada and no one in that courtroom was about to do me any favors that day.

It was a panorama. I was impressed with the grandeur and elegance, the pomp and ceremony, the black robes and somber faces and the dignity and propriety and ritual which is a Canadian court of law and the effect was a heady mixture of awe and admiration.

It was also a sham as far as my case was concerned and once I realized this, I could only glance at my watch now and again and wonder what the boys back in Y.C.I. were having for lunch and guess who was winning the poker game and know how badly I needed a smoke and a coffee.

“All rise.” I stood up. The judge entered the courtroom, applied a stern and disparaging look in my direction, walked behind the bench, pulled back his chair and sat down. “Be seated.” I sat down.

The Crown called its first witness. It was that low – down rat of a cop. “He did it! He was the one! He told me so!” Well now... the man knew his lines and with his riel and spiel, the fucker had railed and raided me good. Real good. The case was over.

That wallpaper stooge of a copper was definitely and decidedly, the ultimate factor against me because, no judge, across this august and venerable country, will ever disbelieve, doubt or mistrust, the thoroughly credible and conclusive word and cry of a policeman. Barring all but damning evidence to the contrary. Contrary evidence? Ho! Ho! There was none. And that day, there seemed no chance of that cop breaking down and developing a devitalizing case of brain – fever, in the exact middle of his testimony against me. No, the man

wanted me badly and he had done an alarmingly fine job on me. He had torpedoed me good. When the rat – bastard had finished his song and dance, there was no person in that courtroom who doubted my guilt. I was a hellion and a scoundrel and I would be going to jail. Yes, it appeared as though I might not be doing much deep – sea fishing for an untold number of years. It was a suspicion.

I conjured up a vision. What I wanted to do... was rise dramatically and defiantly, point directly at that rat R.C.M.P. and in a commanding and wrathful voice proclaim, “The mark of Cain upon you!” I pictured bright and colored lights flashing, then dimming slowly, except for 1 brilliant white spot, pinning me in an ethereal stand and pillar, erect, proud and terrible to behold. Out of the silent hush, which had fallen across the courtroom, came an icy blue flame, a fiery bolt from the dark sky above, suddenly and mysteriously zapping the poor fucker straight between his eyes and leaving a smoking and searing black “T”, hissing sharply and deeply across his forehead. A collective gasp from the gallery... A final peel of thunder and a golden choir... bursting forth with silver trumpets and great praise. The Crown prosecutor and company groveled to their knees and prostrating themselves, imploring and beseeching me for mercy and forgiveness, supplicating each other at my domineering stance, the honorable judge trembling and begging absolution for his conduct and grievous conjecture and vindictiveness towards me. Ho! Ho! Good stuff.

But no, it never happened that way. No. I was garbage. I was dirt. What really happened was this...

I had to sit back and take all manner of devastating abuse. I had to eat shit and pretend to like it. Not fun.

About then, during my trial and tribulation, I began to strongly suspect Peter of knowing a good chemist. He seemed like a man cranked – up on all the worthwhile drugs he would ever need in his lifetime. Peter took to wild jabber and ramble, chat and chatter and on and on. A flimsy pretext and argument. What else could he do? Only a morose and mournful harangue and discourse as to my lesser and lower character. Hell, after *that* pitch and patter, we *both* looked guilty. Absolutely, everyone in that courtroom knew *I* was guilty and should have been hanged. It gets better.

The Crown presented its 2nd witness. It was a distinguished looking and wizened old gentleman. The man had feathery and fluffy, snow-white hair and was wearing a powder blue suit. Natty and neat.

I can only say, the man was some kind of lunatic virtuoso in the field of seismics and tremors. The man was a scholar.

Now, as you folks may know, Y.K. rests on a huge rock. Well, apparently the government of Canada, in her careful wisdom, had planted and installed one of those ultra – modern warning devices, deep in the bedrock and to the right of the city of Y.K., to measure and record vibrations from every part of the planet. The device was so fragile and delicate concerning shivers and shakes in the earth’s crust, it could have picked up and told you about a Chinese fart on the other side of the world.

The essence and substance of the crazy old coot's testimony was this... "Yes, without a shred of a doubt, in the early hours of Sept. 27 – 1976, at 2 A.M., to be specific and precise, my machine registered, at such and such a quadrant, an abnormal disturbance and I can say further and for sure, according to the buttons and dials and scales and knobs on my machine, the said and aforementioned disturbance was, positively and definitely, an explosion and not anything else."

'Indeed,' I thought, 'not good.'

The old boy then became lost in his own world of gibberish and gobbledygook and the entire courtroom was grinning openly because no one understood a word he was saying. The man may as well have been giving a substantial and significant lecture to alter ego physicists. No one heard a word. I however...

I wondered how often the man's genius was called on to give expert testimony in a Canadian court of law and under such bizarre circumstances. Not often I guessed.

Possibly, the man was one of a celebrated few, in the whole wide world, who could elucidate on thorny matters, such as the turning of this planet and the groans and aches and pains of her children. The little nut had fun.

The man was a comic relief and I urgently needed a smile at that instant in my trial and anguish because even Clarence Darrow at my side would have paled and hung his head that day.

The man had made his point and done me damage and I knew I had been double – fucked, this time by a technocrat.

Stop! Time out! I preferred the court hear no more lamentable tales of heresy and harassment against Giant Y.K. Mine and its establishment. So, before consenting and letting other adversaries and attackers give evidence and let me concede here, any further speech from the stand would only have nailed a tighter case around me and I would only have been looked upon as a worse monster yet, I decided to reverse my plea.

"Damn Peter! This has to stop! It's a fucking joke! I'll be lucky not to swing! I'll take the count! I'm beat! Plead guilty!"

Proud Peter, "Your honor. We surrender. Show mercy." The silence was electric. Time stood still. And I needed a few lenient moments...

The good judge pondered my switch and reversal and then in his rippling and flowing black gown, he turned in my direction. As our eyes met I thought, 'a mighty fine day for a hangin'.'

"Well my good man," from the wise old judge, "you just know you merit and rate 3 yrs. in the penitentiary." Which was sweet. It was a hug from a pretty girl.

It seemed my crude and abrasive lifestyle was to be held in abeyance for a 3 yr. period. Three years? Fine by me. Hell, I had been getting much too crazy and cockamamie and had only been looking for a good day to die on anyway. I accepted the sentence of 3 yrs. as being fair and just.

I recall wanting to approach the bench and ask the kindly old judge where his Cadillac was parked and did he want a total wax, to go with the custom, hand – wash job I was gladly prepared to offer and do for him. It was that big a deal.

However, I was somewhat disturbed when a clerk of the court rose lithely and nimbly to his feet and stated, on behalf of the Crown, “Your honor, we feel the defendant, being an able and intelligent young man, should not find it unrealistic or unreasonable to reimburse and compensate Giant Y.K. Mine for damages, to the tune of 65 large ones.” The judge agreed and slapped me with a \$65,000 restitution order. I said nothing. Anything I might have said would have been candidly creative and a man has to know when and where to draw the line and be silent. ‘The very idea of me having to pay Giant Y.K. Mine for intended damages is a ridiculous notion and concept,’ was a fleeting thought. I sat quietly and remained silent.

See, at an early point of the trial, the judge had been presented with a complete scrapbook of before and after, 8 x 10 glossy pictures of A – Shaft and they were the calm and the furious conclusions of a lively and lusty hurricane, having danced and delivered its hurdy-burdy wrath thru – out the depths of Giant Mine. Not good visual material for the benefit of my defense. No. I *had* to be silent. And besides, I had a plan.

‘An understanding and genial man,’ was a final thought as I was leaving the courtroom, ‘Maybe I should rush the bench and shake his hand and thank the man,’ was another.

Peter, my paladin, had eased the case against me. I know this today. After all, he was a well respected member of the law society of the N.W.T. and his word carried weight and pacts and agreements regarding Canadian law are made in back rooms and over drinks and he doubtlessly influenced an illusory 5 yr. jail sentence down to a 3 yr. snarl and annoyance. Hell, I wasn’t a bad man and the court knew it.

Another memory remains and it is of Peter assuring me, before the pigs conducted me back to Y.C.I., that, had I done such a reprehensible deed anywhere in Canada but Y.K., N.W.T., sure enough and on the nose, I would have shook 10 hard and long years in a stern and serious, invincible and unbreakable cage, in a place that wouldn’t be inclined to invite me to brunch on weekends.

Psychologists, social workers and educated people in general, concur and agree and will acknowledge, there comes a time when the felon is overwhelmed with a mad desire and a burning need to unburden himself and to tell someone of his gallant crusade against the machine. Considerations can be fear and guilt, shame and remorse, elation and exhilaration. A sense of inadequacy and a need for recognition and acceptance? A deep – seated desire / need to be punished and disciplined? Yes. I felt exactly these ways. No shit.

Upon my return to Y.C.I. I was fairly bursting and bristling to tell everybody about the deed and the steel hadn’t crashed shut behind me before I was reduced to hysterical burble and babble. “I did it!”

“I was the one!”

“And it felt good!”

“And I’m not sorry!” It was a relief and release.

Folks...I owed a debt and it had to be paid and to clear it, I knew I had to serve someone. As it turned out, I was to serve the federal government of Canada for a 3 yr. period of time.

A burden had been lifted. I felt clean and whole. The grand tally of my life, up to and including Feb 2 – 1977 and the outcome of the sum total seemed about right. *Everything* had evolved and unfolded exactly the way it should have. On Feb 2 – 1977, a rare penance and peace had been achieved. It was a balance.

However, the next time I find myself involved with some kind of annoyance against the laws of this great land Canada, I will be a silent man on that occasion. I will be as wise as Solomon. I will not run to jail.

As an odd ditty and a final ramble, I believe there should be special laws and rules and a special ledger for special people like me. I *am* special. I am the most superior and the most excellent and the most important person in my world. Any man who doesn’t understand himself as being rare and unique is a fool.

That same day I was moved from the dorm I had inhabited for 3 mos., to a similar situation across the range. I was officially doing federal time. I was doing my first 30 days for the state, prior to my flight south, to Drumheller Penitentiary.

The 30 day lag and interval was a legal item, to allow the Crown or the Defense to appeal, should either side have felt or contended they had been hoodwinked or hoodooed by the other side. I was a bit upset over the judge’s sixty five thousand dollar spank and smack and would be doing just that and thank – you very much.

I was to remain 3 days in my new quarters, while administration checked far and wide for a viable reason to move me into regular population and there I was to witness a smattering of native justice.

The lad was an Eskimo of the high arctic. He was also a sordid and despicable sexual deviant, responsible for the gross attacks on 2 young girls. Younger girls. Not legally or biologically correct.

Now, I had played cards and made conversation with the man and I thought him a thief or a burglar, someone honorable. I never guessed him for a diddler. Casual misjudgments of character and intentions are common in the jail.

Well, the wretch had hit the Y.K. courthouse 1 day after my stellar appearance and conviction and it was no sort of a good day for him. No. The Y.K. rag was quick at reporting sensational news and even before he was returned to Y.C.I., everyone knew of his abomination. The deck was *not* stacked in his favor that day. No.

There were 8 or 10 of us bad bastards in one large cell and I was the only white boy. I happened to be horizontal, with a book, when one of the other men ambled on over and told me there was going to be a reckoning. “Since you have to go south and do pen time, we just thought we’d tell you not to go around the shithouse for a spell.” “Right.”

Minutes went by and suspense dragged on and suddenly I heard the awful thumps and crashes, curses and screams and the savage sounds of disarray which usually indicated a mean and ugly beating. Silence...

An hour went by and the screws began moving us out, one by one. It was my turn to visit the warden's office, for questions and answers. "Tell me what happened," spoke the warden. Confused wonder from me. Hell, did the yokel really expect me to start a 3 yr. pen bit with a rat – jacket? I said nothing. The fat swine snorted and scowled back at me, "Yeah, I guess I understand."

Celled – up once more and I just had to throw a long shadow over that sorry skin hound and he did *not* look healthy. No. Bruises and cuts, scuffs and scrapes and those one – of – a – kind raffle patterns, clear and clean across his face, marks which could only have been made by jail – house sneakers. 'Boot – fucked well and true,' thought I. He was not about to win a beauty contest. No. All in all though, nothing that wouldn't heal. A cheap comeuppance. In a physical sense, the kid had been let off easy, by white standards. Had he surfaced in a hard – rock slam, there was a day when he might not have survived.

The northern people of this great land have their own code, their own sense of solid and their own interpretation of white law. After the kid had done his time, he'd be outcast from his people and be forced into a nether world, to wander and fend for himself. Which seems right to me, a harmonic justice.

Are you ready? For informative fact and truth? To qualify myself, I tell you that many years have passed since my hectic and rip – snortin' jailhouse days and I have jawed and exchanged views and opinions with several ex – cons on this subject and here is the consensus.

That prisons in Canada should be notoriously unsafe places for unpopular types of people. Such as skimmers and rats. Hell, there was a time when an informer or a sex – offender was a walking dead man in a Canadian jail. Times change. People change. I changed.

That Canada's prisons, at the tail – end of the 2nd millennium, are no more than nests and havens for the weak and the sick. Like rats and skimmers. There are no solid men left. Today, everyone is a dealer. So, be real careful, the next time you plan a trip to jail. Remember, you are alone behind those walls. And no matter I write these venerable words from the relative safety and obscurity of passing years. I'm not afraid and I will tell the truth on such matters. I will not lie.

Whatever happened to honor in the jail? It once existed. Yes. Absolutely. Once upon a time. Whatever happened to men keeping quiet, when in a mix with the law? Men are such cowards. Give me shelter.

My 3rd day in the dorm and I was on the move again, this time to regular population, 50 men, 4 of us white and it was a welcome move. It was good for more room and space and expansive consideration.

I mention there were 4 of us white boys in Y.C.I., in the winter of 1977. Yes and it strikes me as interesting, during the 4 mos. I had the felicity and fortune to be a resident of Y.C.I. back then, there never chanced to be any manner of racial dispute. Which was rare and unusual. In any other jail I have ever been in,

there has always existed a minority / majority assemblage and the majority always ruled and made the minority to feel and prevail as lesser people.

Anyway, there were no obvious racial incidents in Y.C.I., in '76 – '77 and it was a good thing because we white boys wouldn't have fared well at all, never mind I was wholly prepared to scrape and bow in the event of a confrontation, had it become necessary. It never became necessary.

Which brings pride and prejudice to mind this contemplative evening. For you folks:

Q – What do you call an Indian on a 10 – speed bicycle?

A – A thief.

Q – What do you call an Indian wearing a 3 – piece suit?

A – The defendant.

Bright and witty conversation of this nature may not have gone over well, back in Y.C.I., in 1977. No. We left such inanity behind and instead we had fun and we got by and thank – you very much.

I was curious about what was awaiting me at the other end of my upcoming southern pilgrimage, 27 days hence. I needed to know what to expect, how to act, how to communicate and how to survive in a Federal Penitentiary. So, while doing my initial 30 days in Y.C.I., I took to quizzing a cranky old vet called Clint, who had been there, years before. I was hungry for information and I craved guidance. The man gave me prudent advice and council and the entire litany came down to 6 basic rules:

1. Never call a man a rat.
2. Never call a man a goof.
3. Do your own time.
4. Keep your mouth shut.
5. Be patient and move slow.
6. People, your people, will seek you out.

In a condensed way, it was the exact and uncut convict code. It was wisdom to live by and see me safely thru the forthcoming 3 yrs.

Now is the time to wax analytical and philosophical. Why was my life the way it was? It was a difficult question to be asking myself back in 1977. Never had I had to accept and assume responsibilities. And to go hand – in – hand with irresponsibility and to ease the burden of it, I wore 1000 faces, each one different from the one before, each face with a different truth to it. Hell, misrepresentation and deceitfulness were primary and fundamental to my capricious and contrary lifestyle before going to D.P. Who was I really?

It was strange but even while going thru so many years of change, I had always been searching for something to believe in, a truth, even a desperately small one. And I always knew I was close. I have always had an unshakeable faith which most men feel, that one wonderful day I would find it and it would come to me and revive me and stand by me. Anyway...

All I could do, in Y.C.I., in 1977, was decide to bide my time and try real hard to discover myself during my 3 yr. sentence for illegal use of explosives. I had some 23 mos. to find out who I was.

Now is the time to digress. I want you canny and capable folks to realize and understand, I could have become stark insane and raving mad, hard and incorrigible, during my early days of incarceration. Some men do. It never happened to me. Some men see their first days in the jail as an ending. I never did. I went in a different direction. I saw my early days in the jail as a foundation, a point at which I could start over and start building a persona based on truth and strength. I had 23 mos. to tear down the structures of my foes and fears before starting a worthy life back in the real world.

At an early stage, during my 3 yr. confinement, I determined and concluded I had options and I used them every day I was in the jail. I never wanted to become a rebel insurgent when I returned to the world. Rather, I wanted to make a positive mark and change on this beautiful planet. I want to do my share.

In Y.C.I., in the winter of '76 – '77 and by the time I was ready to decamp and go south to D.P., I had hooked onto a handle called responsibility. I quickly realized I was responsible for my deeds and for being in jail because of them. Totally accountable and liable. Responsible. Next...

I saw the 3 yr. time – factor as being realistic and not an insurmountable barrier and obstacle. Hell, I was young. The restitution order I would deal with on my own terms and in my own way and I immediately put it into a compartment of my mind, to be dealt with later. I surely had all the inconvenience and exasperation I could handle without *that* bastard. One problem at a time and keep it simple. It was a beginning.

Whenever I've been alone and on my own, usually most everything I needed could be found in a book. A good book will sooth and relax me when I'm down and deserted by life's other pleasures. A book will take me away and make me feel special. A book...

However, back in 1977, in Y.C.I. and after my trial, I simply had too much excitement – stimuli in my head and it was impossible for me to unwind and take it easy. I was positively enthusiastic over the thought of an exotic southern prison. I felt like Christopher Columbus. So many bugbears and so much bugaboo was driving crazily thru my head at the idea of moving on, powerful forces with an inside track and I couldn't be still. I *needed* to move.

I volunteered to work. And I won't even try to defend my lazy and listless disposition. Maybe I will.

See, when serving any fair whack of time in a jail, a man *has* to do something. A man can't just cross his arms and put his feet up. Idleness can lead to complacency in the jail. A man has to do *something*.

Just in passing, I refer here to those men who thought they could do their time best by sleeping all day. Well now, when a man sleeps all day, he has to stay awake all night. Have you ever stayed awake all night? In the jail, nights are forever.

I volunteered to work. The gymnasium floor was in bad shape. It looked as though it had been partied on by big men with real guns. I spoke to the warden. I claimed I was the one who could take care of it and restore it to its pristine splendor. The warden gave his approval but it was given with caution, as us double – dealing miscreants were notorious for villainy and treachery and ulterior motives. Usually, a man in jail won't do a lot of work, unless there is something to be gained. Knowing this, the warden no doubt suspected infamy in the form of an attempted breakout from his most esteemed resident on *that* occasion.

But, when the ever-vigilant warden started to see the positive results of my labors, he began to get fired up and carried away with his approbation towards the project. Special tools and cleaning supplies were brought in, along with machines capable of doing the job properly. Strange contrivances, mops and pails and 3 strapping young bucks to do the nigger work mysteriously appeared on the scene and it was a good thing and there was no equal division of labor on any adventure and enterprise of mine. Hell no. Those men had to do the unreasonable business, like getting grimy and gritty, sweating and using foul language. And believe it when I say, some of those strippers and detergents were powerful enough to take the bark clean off a man. Ho! Ho! The men had fun. It was easy to get a kick and a rush out of me. We had a jake and jolly time. We watched the warden and his lackeys, running hither and yon, from pillar to post with enormous hard – ons, doing favors for us and trying to please us and it was a sight to see and witness.

In a week we were done and our work was an admirable piece of perfection. A man could have shaved by the mirror sheen and luster of that damned floor and I'd get a touch pissed just seeing anyone walk across it. I suggested to the warden he decree 'no sports' allowed in the gym but he thought my proposal a tad far – fetched and wouldn't go for it.

Anyway, the warden was ecstatic and he brought in the cameras, hoping to get himself a full – page spread in the Y.K. newspaper. The evil little bastard could show his superiors and the good people of Y.K. how he cracked a mean whip and took no guff and cuff from no – account jailbirds.

I humored management. Hell, I got what I needed. While the men cursed and shoved around brutish machines, I had freedom to go anywhere in the jail. Which was important to me, as I had to ask a few men, for a couple of favors. I had a plan.

While my subordinates toiled over that marred and damaged gymnasium floor, I explored Y.C.I. and did some liberating for uses of my own. I became sociable with a hunter of the white plains, a man who had a fondness and affection for shooting people who hired his services as a guide. The man was also an artist of repute and reputation and using his access to the hobby – shop tools, I was able to cut down and drill out a bic

pen barrel. I flogged my watch to an outside worker for 40 dollars. When those 2 twenties were rolled up tight and together, they fit snugly into the bic – barrel. I plugged both ends and as we say in the trade, my bags were packed. Even as a tenderfoot on his way to the big house, I knew it was wise to take along any spare change.

Furthermore, as a result of my performance in Y.C.I., in 1977, the patch was in and I had earned myself a medium security rating, a classification highly desirable in the jail. The lower a man's security rating, the more the system trusts a man. Which was just fine with me.

My 30th day doing federal time and I was off the wall elated to be leaving Y.C.I. I was put aboard a twin otter airplane, in chains, to be jinked and janked south to Drumheller Penitentiary.

I recall looking over my shoulder, as the plane nosed up and took off and I thought, 'I ain't never gonna' forget you Y.K.' The date was March 2 – 1977.

I was gone. I was rolling stock. I was going to jail for having too much fun.

All is well.

G.B.T.

D.P. – Big House on the Prairie.

Drumheller Penitentiary was a learning experience and an education. D.P. saved my frightened and lonely life and I'll be dealing with these curious and crepuscular words at further length, later on in the book. Be around folks.

When I first came to the unique world which was D.P. in the late '70s, I was confused and scattered but D.P. would put me thru some intriguing changes and set me right and I would gain a humble and modest degree of maturity and it would be a positive turn and direction to my bothered and beleaguered existence.

Unceremoniously hustled from D.P.'s private airstrip, in irons, to the jail and directly to the hole. Not exactly normal procedure but as I had arrived on a weekend, it appeared as though there was no suitable authority figure available to meet me and greet me in my usual and accustomed spit and polish manner.

Blarney and bunkum on the convict telephone, thru the floor vents of the cells, back and forth dialogue and trialogue but only harmless banter and badinage, since I had no way of knowing who I was talking to on the other end of the line. Could have been a dozen evil and ugly pigs next door, hopped – up on cheap booze and eagerly panting and anticipating a naïve and innocent young man like me, to wind up and work out on, in a repulsive sort of way.

Ate well and slept the natural sleep of the pure at heart and I even had one of those pulp western novels indigenous to every Canadian jail to keep me company. It was a lapse and a diversion.

Monday came quietly and I was jerked out of my commodious accommodation and given the short hop to R+D. Reception and Discharge. R+D was the area and situation within the prison where a man first became sucked into the murky and rushing torrent and deluge which is the Canadian Penal System and later, after his time was done and he was deemed fit and acceptable to be released onto a trusting and unsuspecting society, he would travel in the opposite direction, to be leaving the jail forever. Ho! Ho! It was supposed to work this way. I could only hope and expect to be doing this very thing, moving away from D.P. forevermore, in 23 mos.

R+D was where every fresh fish was celled – up when first coming to D.P. and I was an authentic candidate for renewal and reestablishment, don't you know. During the next 4 days, I was given an intense and thorough run – down on negative reinforcement, covering all manner of distress and discomfort I could expect and find myself a part of, had I decided to be dumb enough to fuck over the authorities of D.P. I basically ignored the routine. While I wasn't entertaining the idea of villainous conduct and rebellion in the jail, I neither was about to become a drooling and fawning sycophant of the state. I would be patient. I would endure. I would survive.

Well now, I had just scampered out of the frozen arctic in March of 1977 and -30° had been the temperature and the southern Alberta contrast was immediate and deep. Inside the D.P. fence the weather was a balmy +10° or thereabouts, spring sunshine, green grass and gophers and if not for the constant grooming by the convicts on the grounds maintenance crew, I could have pictured myself in Yuma Territorial Prison. Easily. Because, beyond the fence was desert, wild and rolling sand and dusty brown sagebrush. A jailbird would go crazy and blind being chased over those badland dunes. It was tough country for 2 handed people.

After the drill in R+D, every afternoon I was free to wonder within certain perimeters and proximity to my hearth and home, the library, the sports field, the gym and the cafeteria, where I quietly assumed a solitary chair, away from the close – knit convict population.

R+D was not about to turn me loose on the yard with the established cons, not until I was surmised to be exhaustively programmed to associate with those shifty and shady rascals. Not yet.

Give me leave. Something necessary here. To begin the heart and beat of this adventure with a correct perspective. I had trouble dealing with the words, ‘Iron bars and stone walls, do not a prison make,’ or words quite similar. The author of these ancient words was referring to the irrepressible and triumphant spirit of man. The glorious and fiery spirit of the soul, which can never be contained. Well... I’ll go along with these words. They are so true. Yes.

I was going to justify the falseness of those words. I was going to write that those words were deceptive and delusory and no longer held true, that they were rot and drivel and boring but I would be wrong. How can you capture and hold a soul? Not possible. I agree with those lofty and defiant words and I will write of the captivity of my body and of my mind and I’ll *not* involve the soul, as in God. I won’t wax celestial and Elysian. No. Not now. Later.

These days, jails in Canada have evolved to a point where a man’s mind, as well as his body, becomes vacant and neutral and a prisoner of the state. It’s a subtle and insidious process and a man’s disposition will change at some nib of his sentence and he will go off in certain direction. A Canadian jail *will* play a sneaky and underhanded game with a man, for better or for worse.

In D.P., in ’77 and all thru – out the D.P. experience, I was never to know freedom or liberty and when I write of freedom in the jail, it will be a controlled freedom, a semblance of freedom, an allowed freedom, a sop. Today, the insides of all jails belong to Orwell. Believe it.

I was doing a kiss. Three years, by pen standards, was short time. Nonetheless, I resolved not to keep a calendar to follow the days and as I had no watch, I thought I might as well dispense with the hours and minutes also. Time would take care of its own self. The next item I dealt with and perhaps the most important, was to *do* my own time and to keep my big mouth shut and not bother anyone. My final and last concern, was to ignore,

to the best of my ability, the rough and redneck guards of D.P. and I'll be tending to them later on in the book, for your enjoyment and entertainment folks. Be there.

All I really knew for certain, back in '77, was I had been sandbagged in D.P. for 3 yrs., less 1 year for good behavior and if I never slipped and fell too badly, I would be returning to the real world on Feb 2 – 1979 and only then would I be shot and rid of D.P. and its cargo of lost and lonely lives.

When going to jail, it's wise and important to be as organized and as in charge as possible. A man needs to be on top and to have a margin, whenever he can get it.

After a week in R+D, I was ready to move to population and I prepared for the event by scoring big from someone I had once known from somewhere else and nothing came cheap in the jail. It was 20 dollars for 2 dimes, enough marijuana for 6 thin joints. High times made for high prices. Any street product that entered D.P. was a steady 5 – 1 rate, as fierce as any pawnshop but worth it, when a man needed to take the sting out of a bad day. I had a few.

I was assigned to Unit 10, E – range, Cell 10 and I became number 3279. Years have passed and that number will *not* go away. No. Each day I walk free on this marvelous and magnificent planet, I carry that number with me, etched and burned into my memory. Some things are not forgotten. No. Some things should *not* be forgotten. No.

Settling into to my new abode took no time. A baseball glove, 3 books I had borrowed from Y.C.I., spare clothes and that was about all. My stately furnishings included a bed, a desk, a chair, a closet and a toilet with no lid. The cell was plain and bare and not much else.

I remember my 1st experience and encounter in population in D.P., in 1977. I was leaning against my cell door and scoping the range and the other denizens of my new world and there was Sam. The man appeared to be a bedraggled and dog – eared type of fellow and I thought I should raise the flag. I sauntered on over to where he was slouched against a wall and invited him outside for a smoke. The man accepted.

A warm evening and the constellations blazed across the black and burgeoning Alberta sky and Sam informed me that no one smoked rolled dope in the jail. Which was a perplexing article to spring on me. Sam explained that a joint was wasteful and impractical considering the risk and expense of bringing it into the jail. A pipe was the practical and proper utensil. A wee pinch of pot in the bowl, a one – hit toke and the evidence was gone, with no sweepings to worry a man. I also came to realize that, usually, any drug brought into the jail was quality, which was right, on seeing and understanding the hazards of bringing it back for the boys. It made sense to me. Even when I've been a pauper and penniless, I've always *tried* to go first class.

Amusingly, the jail happened to be quite dry of drugs in March of 1977. 'No hope – no dope,' as is said in the jail. I was labeled a mystery man. Because, how could a fish like me have rung the bell and scored large, when the whole damned jail was on the make? No one could figure it.

I became ‘Sarge’ and the puzzle of this title was sorted out and explained only several months later. A friendly night and the gang and I were sittin’ around and cuttin’ up, “Well Sarge... it’s a good little jail... right?”

“Right. Say, what about this ‘Sarge’?”

“Well, when your sorry ass first hit the jail, some of us solid cons made you for a copper, lookin’ for friends.”

“I’ve been inside this hoosegow 6 months!”

“Yeah, well, we all think you might be of the dedicated persuasion, if you see our meaning.” The tag, ‘Sarge’, continued for the duration of my stay in D.P. and was never meant to be derisive or negative. Not really. No. It was only ever a jailhouse jest and frivolity. In D.P., in the late seventies, we made our own humor. We had to. Hell, our laughter and humor against the great Canadian Penal System was our best defense and revenge and I needed all the comedy I could get way back then. There was a fair amount of drollery in the Drum, from 1977 – 1979.

One annoying quirk about me, which may have contributed to the ‘Sarge’ factor, was that it was never at all exceptional for me to drop out in the middle of a hot session with the gang and dash off and fly into my cell, ‘to write something down.’ Well now...

D.P. was another world. D.P. was a different language and lingo and linguistics were distinct from the vernacular of the other world beyond its fences and borders. I was fascinated. “Yeah... well... I got the goods on all you bastards and you guys ain’t never leavin’ the jail.”

The boys were caustically suspicious. “Right... here... have another toke... Sarge.” Those brave men ragged on me as ‘Sarge’ until it was my time to go and leave D.P.

That 1st night in population in D.P. and I picked up a lot of the straight skinny from Sam, enough fact and information to get me off to a safe start in the jail. Which was a good thing. Hell, I thirsted for whatever help and aid I could glean, from whatever source I could find. Being a fresh – fish in D.P. was a powerfully uncomfortable feeling and I did *not* need to affect an act of indiscretion if I could step wisely and avoid it.

Sam wandered away and I was returning to my cell, a touch C.O.N., moving slowly down the range and whistling #83 softly under my breath, when I heard, “Yo! Convict! Yeah you!” from a grizzled old ace named Griff.

“What?”

“Why you whistlin’ convict?”

“Feel good. Why?”

“Never whistle in the jail. Means you’re happy. And you *never* want to be happy in the jail. See?”

“I see.”

“Ask questions. Always ask questions.”

“Right.” Seems I had not been told of rule number 7 but there it was and I lived each and every one of those rules, from morning to nightfall, every day I did in D.P.

To my cell and I was satisfied at having made hard contact, on my very first day of my bit in D.P. population. To me, it was an important and a secure form of anchor and to a degree, it made me feel as though I belonged in D.P. That contented evening and horizontal and reading a book and my last and final thought of the day was, ‘printing and blank paper, pencils and pens, gloves and coveralls and locked doors are mankind’s greatest innovations and inventions and my favorite things.’

I’ve mentioned I never wanted to misplay any of the social graces peculiar to a Canadian Penitentiary; therefore, my early days and months were done with caution, while I became aware of and came to understand the etiquette and mannerisms distinct and specific to the jail.

Had a week of doing nothing much of any consequence, to get used to the idea of being away from the real world for a spell and to decide what I might want to do with the following 23 mos. of my life. I put my feet up and thought out my options. I was a young man with no natural enemies.

Those first days and the other crackers on the range suckered me with the coffee pot detail and posting. Each range was allotted a fixed amount of coffee every week and if the range ran dry, well, too bad. Coffee is a precious commodity in the jail and to prevent outsiders from appearing on your range and helping themselves, had the pot been left in the open and unguarded, someone and usually a fresh – fish like myself, was delegated to keep the pot and makin’s safe in his cell and allow only those men from his range to draw off a steaming cup of mocha whenever they needed it. I was glad to help or something equally dumb and stupid.

I never figured on convicts tramping thru my house, a steady stream of the bastards, as a matter of true fact, every minute of the day. Could do without such nonsense. It was 24 hrs. into my coffee pot duty and obligation before I realized I had been set up as a slow – hand pigeon by those scofflaws on my range and so, with haste and ceremony, I packed up that pot of private – stock and expeditiously abandoned the fucker to the far end of the cellblock. No one cracked. No one said a word. I took the silence of my brother convicts as approval and acceptance and no goofy favors were ever again asked of me.

Did a jailhouse inventory and not much was lacking in the way of necessities and essentials. First off and rightly, I searched out the library and found it to be adequately stocked with a multitude of fearless and gallant books, every one of them containing a host of strength and courage. The incredible luxury of a book...

Which was all very well indeed, however, stuck in D.P., in ’77, I would rather not have done my next 23 mos. pursuing the wonders of the written word. Hell, I would have had the knowledge of the world in a head the size of a Texas watermelon. I needed more. I needed to learn more of the raw and untrodden world that is a Canadian Penitentiary.

The joint was slow and slack and several choices were open to me. The shops and the trades, the jailhouse school and its higher education, were my preferences and electives. Why not? Never stop learning...

Certain positions in D.P. were *not* options. The sports field and its athletic connections, grounds maintenance and management of the unit canteens were boss and boneroo positions and *not* open to competition and speculation by the average and ordinary convict. Such offices were held and locked – up by the hard – liners, by cons doing big time or at least by fairly serious individuals. A man had to have a King – Rat disposition and character to swing and hold any of these rackets and I had already decided, nothing in the jail was worth dying for.

I could have refused to work but a challenge of this nature would have put me on lock – up for the whole workday. I could have become a range – cleaner and put in my hour each morning. I could have gone to work in the kitchen but kitchen work in the jail really is work and not meant for me and thank – you very much.

As mentioned earlier, amongst this virile and courageous collection of words, a man has to do something worthy in the jail. Otherwise, a restless and plucky body and mind will wither and waste away. At an early point of my 3 yr. bit, I determined the good warden was not about to let me go into town and drink beer anytime soon, so I had to come up with something commendable. I felt I had a talent...

Back to my jailhouse search and scrutiny. Accommodations were 4 units, box – like buildings of reinforced concrete, each unit holding 100 convicts and laid out in a square, 1 to each side, across from and facing each other and separated by an unyielding slab of black asphalt, the yard.

There was a hospital, staffed with doctors and nurses, all of whom I assumed were capable and competent observers and practitioners.

There was R+D, V+C, the hole, administration, the kitchen and the cafeteria, a gymnasium, an athletic grounds complete with track and field, baseball diamonds, tennis and handball courts. Every comfort and amenity could be found in D.P. back in the late seventies. In 1978, D.P. was a congenial and comfortable place to be.

There was a Chapel, flexible and sufficient to subsidize most religious needs. I would *not* be attending services. Today, I try real hard not to confuse organized religion with my belief in God. Churches and the discord and mischief found inside them might be hateful and terrible lies. So I suspect. Churches are convenient and necessary means and ways of keeping the common and everyday man in line. So I believe. Churches were never intended for men like me. So I know.

The whole of D.P. proper, the whole hotchpotch, was surrounded and ensconced within a double 20' chain – link fence, topped with 3' ringlets of razor – wire, bad stuff to play with.

Guard towers sat outside the fence and those cold and quiet sentinels were a mystery. Each one of those damned towers sat at each end of the D.P. enclosure, each one commanding an excellent view of 2 lengths of wire wall. Real good fields of fire, I would have to say.

In my 23 mos. in D.P., I never once saw movement in any one of those towers. Because those bastard towers were wrapped with impenetrable 1- way glass, they were, in effect, invisible and I could never tell if they were only empty structures and simply evidence of icy, imminent, power, whispering softly to, ‘take a chance boy...’ or maybe they really were alive with monsters and machine – guns. Those silent towers were menacing objects of fear, on certain uneasy and uncertain days in D.P. but as I say, a mystery.

Swung by the jailhouse kitchen and it would be an extreme affair while I was in the jail. The palatability of the food served in the cafeteria varied in direct proportion as to the pressure applied by the convicts on the convict kitchen workers. It was like a law of nature. It was inevitable. There were times when a man thought he was feasting elegantly in a fine restaurant back in the real world and days when the swill was something awful and we all stayed home and went hungry.

Except on Fridays. On Fridays, it was convict heaven in the jail. Fridays in the jail were clam – chowder days, clam – chowder like I’ve never tasted before or since D.P.

A huge and mighty pot of steaming and bubbling claws and tentacles and foreign spices and other ingredients formed a thick and lusty cloud around me and it assailed and assaulted my senses and made me dizzy and weak, as I picked my way carefully thru the food line every Friday afternoon. And that chowder was ladled out to us convicts in devastating portions and we noshed it down with glee and gladness and we were free and on the high seas and in rum and distant lands. Convicts lined up real close to the Washington state border for the celebrious and renowned clam – chowder event and experience in D.P. and D.P. was a good little jail on Fridays, in 1977.

Friday afternoons in D.P., contented and idle convicts could be seen strolling lazily about the jail, hands in pockets, euphoric smiles on faces, toothpicks balanced delicately and deliciously between greasy and oily lips and teeth.

Today, here on the street, I might stumble over an old rounder from back in the days of the great D.P. experiment and project and if the sad bastard can’t remember much else of those halcyon days in the jail, he will always remember the decent and decadent clam – chowder repast held there every Friday afternoon in the late seventies.

On Fridays in D.P., in the seventies, a kitchen worker was a hero and then blue Monday would come along and the lackadaisical little bugger would have to be spoken to and put back on track again. Anyway...

Those first days in the D.P. cafeteria could have been grim and anxious ones. The jailhouse cafeteria could have been a dicey problem all by its own self. A fresh – fish just sitting his ass down anywhere he pleased in the cafeteria would have made for an interesting scenario and perhaps even a dangerous one. The new kid had to be invited you see. See...

Every convict had his own chair, in a place with his friends and if a man wasn't dining, on an erratic sort of day, well, that chair was still his and his friends would see it remained his until he returned.

The new man was watched and if he seemed right and he acted right, he would get the nod and be asked to sit and as time went by, his chair would become his private affair and closed to anyone else.

A man needs genuine and imaginary roots in the jail. In jail a man strives and struggles to build a private and personal world.

Protocol had to be observed and a jailhouse kitchen is the best model of deliberate organization in a jail and I'll be telling you more about this complex structure and framework later on in the book and you kind folks should just keep on reading.

One last ditty concerning the jailhouse kitchen in D.P., in the late seventies and I'll move on to other and more fertile words. A killer acquaintance of mine from the North Country called me over to his table and his invitation was a load off. I had pictured myself as the fall guy in a bad movie, standing alone, with full tray in hand and surrounded by nothing but base and mean snickers and twitters while waiting for a rotten convict to get up and leave before I could sit down and enjoy a meal. It could have happened. It didn't. I got lucky and I got by.

Incredibly and as a supplement to reading, I decided to become a hot – shot welder and further damage my reputation and claim to pure laziness. After all, hadn't all welders been to jail? Weren't all welders drunks? And a little bit crazy?

Another example of unrealistic thinking, back in the late seventies, was, with a trade I thought I might be able to turn an honest dollar, somewhere on this zany and preposterous planet and perhaps stop running, when I returned to the real world on Feb. 2 – 1979.

Thick and stolid reasoning back in '77 but how was I to know, I was destined and doomed to be a prisoner in my remarkable and distinctive world all of my days on this notable planet.

Welding. Up early in the morning and dressed in dry green flash – shirts, faded and baggy pants, lil' Abner work boots and I'd be off to the shop area, to learn the esoteric mysteries of welding.

Every weekday morning, a sea of pale green servitude and bondage would move calmly and serenely from the units to the industrial shops and it was a modest example of conditioning, a gentle loss of identity and a natural consequence of coming to D.P.

John was my welding instructor and I write these words because they're true and thus important and also because I want to and need to. Back off. The truth will be told. I will not lie.

John was a hard – headed, narrow – minded, bigot of a man. He may as well have had a large sign posted outside his shop that read, 'No colored people allowed!' John was a man of simple integrity yet for all his

faults and flaws of character, he was a genius with a machine or a tool of any description and naturally, he was a master welder.

Whenever I had need of a coffee and a smile, I would get John going on his favorite spiel and belief and the man was alarmingly sincere and forthright.

“Niggers are inferior human beings. A white man will always be superior to a nigger, intellectually and ideologically at least. The way it is. Listen to me...

“You have to understand, hundreds and thousands of years ago, niggers were still grovelin’ in the mud and swingin’ thru the trees and not havin’ a happy time no matter which way they behaved. Whitey was doin’ all right...

“Well now, one fine day in the jungle, Thaddeus or Wishbone or Snowball... I forget who, discovered coconuts but he had no way of opening the damn things. Being an enterprising nigger, Snowball or Wishbone or Thaddeus... I forget who, found, to his great astonishment and delight, that, a smashing, sharp and staccato blow against his wooly head, with one of those coconuts, would crack and split open the bastard and he could get at the good stuff inside. Quickly the word spread. Soon, niggers everywhere took to beatin’ and battin’ each other’s heads with coconuts and it was indeed a glad time to be a nigger. Well, those niggers never did figure those violent whacks and wallops were doin’ them damage.

“I’ll tell you, see, those terrible knocks and bashes destroyed their sensory and auditory receptors and their capacity to hear properly. And when a man can’t hear, he can’t learn things and if he doesn’t learn things, he stays stupid. Are you listening?

“Niggers can’t hear! From since time began for niggers, back in their salad and coconut days, niggers have only ever been able to hear high – decibel noise and pandemonium, which will drive even their monkey cousins, howling and screaming from the bushes.

“This story of mine explains the evolutionary process. Niggers needed coconuts, to bring them out of the trees and get civilized. These were available. Niggers needed a way of opening the damn things. This was provided. Their black skulls became abnormally thick and impervious to anything but a high – caliber bullet. Nature compensates. As a tradeoff and return for being chuckleheaded and dumb, niggers were given great speed, the ability to dance and large cocks.” At this point in his narrative John would get red in the face and lean forward and steam ahead quite solemnly...

“They’re all alike. Never trust a nigger around your woman. Never leave your woman alone. A nigger will do you wrong.” John would take a deep breath and continue...

“Niggers are great entertainers. A white man can’t touch ’em that way. And no white man will ever beat a nigger in any sporting competition you can name. No white man will ever again be boxing champion of the world. A nigger will never lose a boxing match. A nigger can’t be hurt. A nigger feels no pain.

“Niggers can’t hear! Which is why a nigger will never be a welder or succeed at any trade or employment in which he has to take orders from a white man. A nigger can’t hear. Would I lie to you...”
 Mercy.

John was a good ol’ boy and I enjoyed and I suppose encouraged the silly old fart... I carefully agreed with most of his ravings, except on one point, when he suggested we stamp and label all the tools and machines with, ‘White people only!’ markings. I thought it might be pushing the prejudicial issue into the extreme and told John so. “Damn John! The warden will toss *my* fortunate ass into the hole forever and heave – ho *your* white ass out and onto the street. Would you like that?”

After thinking on such a bright and colorful spectacle for 2 days, John came back with, “Yeah... I guess you’re right. Ottawa and administration might get a bit pissed. We’ll put that plan on hold... I’m retiring in a year. Maybe just before the bastards give me the Golden Handshake.”

John was a shocking son of a bitch when it came to delicate matters but he was his own man and he was staked long and deep, in his own mind, of doing things his own way and had he been given latitude, I believe John would have executed a bold move in favor of apartheid and touched off a small riot in D.P., in 1977.

Reckon I’ll lay down a candy – striped sentence, this golden and mellow Christmas of 1998, to support and qualify the words I have just written and others I might have written and words I may write. Jails in Canada have *always* been noisy and rampant robbers’ nests of ignorance and stupidity, from the men caught inside and the screws and right on up to management and beyond. Straight goods folks.

I cherish silence. When the night is black and dark, I only want to hear the song and story of the Universe. Unnatural night sounds bother and disturb me.

During my brief stay in D.P., I occasionally came awake to eerie and uncanny mufflings and scufflings in the middle of the night and they troubled me and scared me and I would wonder and think on them until I came to understand them as being the acoustics of the Drum, transmitting low and heartfelt renderings of young men. Young men crying...

Noises in the jail... Another item of similar ilk, came by way of the pigs who worked the night shift. Those scum of the earth swine liked nothing better than to run up and down the center of the range, late at night and in the early hours, in their hob – nailed boots, after having gotten into the party favors with their brothers and sisters. It was a particular which bothered everyone so we underdogs called in the convict – committee and staunch men that they were, they met with the warden and insisted those night – time pigs wear soft – soled shoes, ‘to promote harmony between the convicts and the staff.’ The good warden agreed and issued a proclamation to the effect that all pigs on the night shift had to wear special, still as death footwear. The pigs growled and snorted over this revolting and unprecedented turn of events and us convicts laughed like hell and nights were quiet and friendly for a long while in the jail.

Nighttime is meant to be a silent time, for a man's thoughts to wander and collect in. I *need* the nighttime. Detachment and withdrawal are necessary to me and in the long night I can feel and hurt for this melancholy planet, in my own odd and irregular way. I *beg* the nighttime. Then I can go away and be alone and retrench and regroup and return in the morning.

Wayne was the top - dog jailbird on my range. Wayne was doing a 9 yr. sentence for appreciating his heroin a mite too much. Wayne was the grand old man of the jail and the other cons respected his quiet ways. Wayne was a gentleman. All jails used to have a man like Wayne, for the smart young studs to look up to and learn from. Wayne swore up and down, his contracting cancer and having his sentence cut short, 'for humanitarian reasons,' was the most extraordinary and wonderful experience of his entire life. Wayne was one of the boys.

In D.P., in my younger years and after the initial settling in process, I noticed and sensed a strange change of pace. Time passed, a continual flow yet sometimes the days stood still. A curious paradox. The world outside the D.P. walls kept on turning, a hectic and intense momentum, so much faster than my world inside the jail and it was a quaint and queer phenomenon. Back in the real world, people were involved with the usual vexations, wars and riots, famine and disease and other assorted calamities but they were conditions and situations read about and heard about and talked about in the jail and not taken all that seriously. Beyond the D.P. fence, millions and millions of people were struggling and endeavoring to survive and carry on but none of their miseries touched me or my world and its character. Not directly. I was on a dissimilar plane and not affected by the anger and wretchedness of the real world. I was isolated and protected and it was a soft and comforting feeling and I was a child inside D.P. in 1977.

A man hit the jail apprehensively and on pins and needles and quick on the trigger but fast found there was no need for indignation and vehemence. Mingle and blend and go to ground until his time was done. Running was a game he played yesterday. Today, the big stick for non-compliance towards society's customs and conventions had backed – off and he needed a rest and a lengthy spell of contemplation and assessment. In this way D.P. was a welcome and inviting shelter to a certain type of man in 1977.

When I first came to the Drum, I soon noted I had no good reason to hurry and rush. I never ran when I could walk, I never walked when I could stand, I never stood when I could sit, I never sat when I could lay back horizontal. All us convicts were tuned and adjusted to the unique time and tempo on our side of the D.P. walls and it was a moderate and slow – mo rut and grind.

Some days I suspected the whole damned jail was on one long and extended break from reality and today I know it was. A different plane... In the Drum, in the late seventies, a delicate insurrection was discretely obvious and D.P. was truly a special place to be.

One explanation and rationalization for the sphere of affairs and disposition in D.P., in '77 – '79, was, there was no pressure on us convicts to do much of anything pertaining to accomplishment and achievement. Very little of the work we did in the jail was necessary to improving the planet or creating a better world. We were never *pushed*. Any product or enterprise we were involved with was cited by the government of Canada as being, 'rehabilitation', a fancy and mysterious word used loosely and often by management and administration.

As long as we convicts conformed to the status – quo of doing our own time, we got by, as quickly or as slowly as we needed or wanted to. I allow as I approved of D.P.'s demeanor and disposition and everything basic and vital got done. In '77 – '79, D.P. was a collective and a co – operative and us convicts were units and we were in concert and D.P. was a good little jail.

Now, I'm not saying I never had my own idiosyncratic and weighty problems to deal with. No sir. Questions such as, what was on the menu and would I be taking dinner and where was I to find a relatively sane player for the big game on Sunday and how much could I afford to put down on our team or the other team if I thought I could get away with it. What were the screws up to and was a search comin' down and should I stash my goods in a safe place. These were tough decisions and important ones and heavy choices for a cast – out and displaced young man such as I. I had problems and even if they were simple and silly ones, I resolved to live with them and work them out over the next 2 yrs. and not ask for more. And as it turned out, I successfully winnowed thru a cataclysm of queries and questions during my days in D.P. and I was given mild and tender truth to think about, as my reward for being an inquisitive and investigative type of man.

Donny was a rascal and a trickster and had been going to jail for donkey's years, for many a brave and mischievous adventure and he was whimsically philosophical about it, "Someone has to go to jail... Am I right?" "Wake me at the crack of noon," Donny was a tenacious rebel with a rakish smile and an encouraging word to a young man doing his 1st rip and snort in a federal penitentiary, "This ain't your home. You're just passin' thru. Leave your guns at home." A line like this always gave heart and strength to a young man in the jail.

Donny was a favorite politician and of the old school and most days he could be found throwing curves and complications in the general direction of the screws. Donny could talk the ultimate story around a screw. Donny would do his, 'Please don't throw me in the briar patch,' impersonation and make good his escape and walk away with the payroll and the blue ribbon for valor. Donny put the blinders on and double – crossed so many of those screw bastards, so many times, they should have lynched him and we convicts should have elected him Mayor of the jail. Some of Donny's stories and antics would have brought tears to a glass eye. Ho! Ho!

Donny most definitely had a well – developed, cool hand Luke complexion and composition about him, one of many facets he used when needed. A bull – simple act and portrayal was a plight easy enough to come by and develop in the jail and often a wise face and disguise to wear and us convicts used it regularly. See, as a convict, a man tries real hard not to show fear towards the system or let it know, in any way, that there are times

inside when he is *so* afraid and he has a precarious panic and paranoia and concern deep within himself, of just exactly what the state *could* do to him and this thought will terrify a man on some days. So, he becomes a mime and plays dumb and thick when the man *does* find him and he *makes* the man believe he is a blockhead and a fool who made a mistake and went to jail. It was a game and ruse, which caused many a man no pain and kept him humble. I know because I was there and I was a player.

Donny was a dedicated thief and a whole lot of fun to do time with and he has become scarce and something of a rare bird today. As I wrote earlier, Donny was of the old school of honor and fervently and ardently wished for nonviolent and passive crime to go free and he could never rationalize *his* crimes as being wrong. Crime could be a respectable occupation and prison an occupational hazard and therefore an acceptable risk.

Donny taught me how to fly. One clear and bright spring day and Donny approached me on the yard and carefully informed me, in his best courtroom whisper, that a rough and tumble lady was visiting the jail and would I like to meet her. “What *are* you talking about Donny?” Cautiously and satisfied there were no other ears about, he told me, along with, “This will be interesting.” Cocaine... A fine and fickle lady indeed.

A friend of Dons had come to the jail and as he owed him a favor, he had pieced Don off with a touch of the white magic powder. ‘Capital,’ thought I.

Donny and I chased down a rusty old rig, no easy task in the jail, then backed into a friendly cell. There were 3 of us at that point and we took turns keeping ‘six’ and proceeded to shoot each other.

Poke! Poke! Poke! Blood! Blood! We must have blood! Push gently and rush... the stars fell and the sky went black. I climbed higher and higher. I was powerful and vital. I was important. Confusion left me and everything in the Universe was unfolding nicely and was flawless and made perfect sense. My hair curled and my body burned. I saw an awesome reality and a ravishing beauty and I was overwhelmed by scarlet and ruby rainbows and the air was pink cotton candy. The D.P. fence was a glimmering and shimmering web of silver and gossamer steel. I was a blaze of greatness and glory and I was invincible. I wanted to go visit the punk of a warden and give him a slap and on bended knees ask him to forgive the offences and felonies I had so far been responsible for while in his jail and at the same time ask him for the keys to the front gate.

Cocaine is a truth drug and a smart drug and the drug I put into my arm in D.P. in '77, was categorically true cocaine and not the crude and rude imposter and unreal funny – business that is running rampant and roughshod over the streets of Calgary today. Today it is madness to drive a loaded rig into your arm. Believe it folks.

Needles and narcotics were to become a problem for me in the eighties but it would be my problem and I would handle it with my usual ferocity and merciless outrage. Life on the needle is a terrifying, spinning wheel and a life I never want to return to. No. No more lies. No. I never again want to be in the lamentable position

of having to choose between life on the needle and life on this grand and majestic planet. No. And today I sometimes wonder just how many Cadillacs I've shot into my arms...

Anyway, I became a straight – shooter, in a cold and clammy jail cell, back in '77, in D.P., when Donny gave me wings. Donny was one of the boys.

We lived with a high volume buzzer and its piercing clash and clamor told us who we were, where we were, where we should go and who we should be when we got there. It was an unpleasant anticipation and always on my mind and fully 3 mos. passed before I could ignore its ear – splitting racket which never failed to wrangle and jangle every nerve in my body and only then could I pretend it was gone. After *that* nuisance went away, everything was done by rote.

Up at 6 A.M., clean up, brush my teeth and comb my hair, dress, shave and make the bed. Roll a smoke, lay back and read a book and be on count and wait for the steel to crash open at 7 A.M. Then it was breakfast with the boys, go to work, coffee, work, return to unit, count, lunch, return to unit, count, back to work, coffee, work, return to unit, get clean, count, supper, free time for leisure until 11 P.M., lock – up, count, read and sleep and counts every 2 hrs. thru-out the night.

A basic routine and a governed control, which became a drab monotony of habit, a system of such simple twists and turns and so allocated, I was convinced that lower primates could have been trained to follow the same unremarkable grind in less than a week. It takes no great talent to be a candidate for classical conditioning and I'm not writing about genius masterminds here. Hell, most convicts are children who forgot to grow up.

Paul was a noble and lordly freethinker and he self – taught himself a clever and cryptic art form, while in the jail, which was to see him free and past the gates of D.P.

Paul and I swapped books and talk and together we stumbled into Zen. Zen... not a religion, not a philosophy. Zen... a way of living in concord with the Universe and here I write of Karma. Karma... whatever you think, say or do... will come back at you... in equal measure... The Golden Rule expanded, if you please and if you will. A fundamental truth I had been aware of but never known, if you take my meaning. A truth I never realized and used, until that point in time. Paul was one of the boys.

I moved slow yet the days ran fast. Days flew by and some natural mornings I'd come awake and find, to my utter amazement, I had another month in my pocket and it was a good thing, in an open and shut sort of way.

On the surface, I was an ideal aspirant for 'rehabilitation.' I played the game of, 'get out of jail quick' and it was the right approach and reach and any man who didn't want out from behind the D.P. walls was a chump and a sad victim of the Canadian Penal System.

Towards the masters of D.P., I was still and silent because to be a disruptive dot of trouble and influence and become labeled as, 'disturbed and distempered,' was stupid and a ticket to real bad time in the jail. I never

wanted obstacles and interference from the screws or from administration. An artful and ever calculating approach and attitude was the only safe way to travel in the jail, to never let the system know exactly how much you despised and detested and feared it. Us convicts had no control, no authority, no muscle, no power, no rights and those convicts that thought otherwise were damn – fools.

Some men *needed* D.P., in an ironic sort of way. Inside the jail, there are men who will rise above the others and it's a natural and necessary process and no big secret. The identical progression of the fittest takes place within any organized society and jail is a distinct society in every way and manner. In jail, some men aspire to greater heights than others because jail gives purpose and meaning to their lives and therefore jail is vital and important to them. Outside and back in the real world, these men's lives had often been chaotic and disordered. In the jail, these same men's lives took on shades of substance and ambition and these men became leaders. Finally, after a hopeless and hapless lifestyle of disarray and confusion on the street, a certain man had found a true and worthy calling and a home in the jail. Inside the jail, some men could handle and deal with their lives.

In D.P., in '77 – '79, a special persuasion of man *had* a home and everything was simple and provided. A man had employment and wages, food, clothing and shelter, medical, recreation, friends and respect. A sense of family and of belonging and of being needed and a very real appreciation of goals and direction was obvious to a certain type of young man. Success and achievement can exist and flourish in the most dubious and improbable of places and jail is one of them.

Al was a cheerful fellow. Al understood a misconstrued meaning of the phrase, 'take – out', real well and a 3 yr. stretch in D.P. eating spaghetti with a spoon was the stern and rigid determination from the judge. The main hi – light concerning Al, was that he had a capable and clever temperament and he was always building toys, the likes of which drove the screws wild with frustration. Before a cell search, Al could be seen dashin' and dartin' frantically, left, right and center and all around the jail, hiding things and stuff.

Al, you roly – polly little fucker, keep a firm grip and grasp on your class – 1 carriage and posture. Stay fat and fearless, ya' hear. Ho! Ho! Al was one of the boys.

And that about does it. I've run past the men in the jail, in my own left – handed way, the men I ran with in the jail, the men who stood by me and helped me do my time. I understood these men best and I remember them well and with nothing less than respect and appreciation, I will not forget them.

Wayne – Donny – Paul – Al – I praise and salute you men, *as* men.

In *any* jail, the maximum amount of some men's time is wasted. It comforts me to believe that not *all* of *my* time in D.P. was squandered, that *something* was salvaged, however, here on the *street*, fantastic and incredible portions and parcels of my eminent lifeline and existence on this remarkable planet *have* blundered carelessly and heedlessly past me and I have no time to spare today and these days I *must* be stingy and selfish with words. I must use the *proper* words. So, I'm not big on detail. I think it shabby and cheap to annoy you

with cumbersome fact and design, as I'm doing now. Hell, I'm dealing with the main event and I wish only to express the cold and overall picture and I have no time to document and record inconsequential occurrences and episodes.

But... a few words concerning my nefarious colleagues, back in the Drum, back in '77 – '79, are in order.

Individually, well, each of the boys was honorable, no crumbs or slackards or wrongness in the lot. Collectively, well, we ran our end of the jail, which was the way we wanted it and the way it was. No other convict ever crossed our persons or property and there were a few heavy – duty men hung out to dry in the Drum, back in the late seventies.

Now, I don't believe we would have laid down our lives for each other. Hell, we weren't *that* close. No, although we would have gone a long way to help each other, which is all a man can ask of another man in jail.

We never stepped out looking for trouble. No. On occasion, a certain amount of pig – pen diplomacy was necessary and called for, in the odd and shaky circumstance but an item of such description helped everyone, without hurting anyone. We were a low – profiled act when it came down to hard – core and head – on rebellion because we knew, any satisfaction we might have achieved from baiting and bullying the man, would never have been worth the candle, what we could have lost. Any contest between the man and ourselves, would have left us losers. We knew this and instead, we sat back and shared our wily ways. See...

I wouldn't be far out of line to suggest that any one of the crackerjack lawyers in our gang was way smarter than the average convict and never mind each one of us had sidestepped and crossed boundaries deemed unacceptable to society's standards and were consequently doing the retribution shuffle. We *knew* things. A man could *talk* to us. A man could see and maybe understand his contrary and wayward status when he talked with us. We *knew* things. We knew the way things worked in the *real* world and we gladly and willingly shared and explained our savoir-faire and experiences with the other men in the jail. We *knew* things.

Dexterity and adroitness such as we processed, was our way of cheating the proud Canadian Penal System out of a few young years. If one young man never returned to the Drum because of our words, we happily took that pound of flesh as being our right and due and we were satisfied. This art and craft, of sharing knowledge, was a time – honored tradition in a Canadian jail, once upon a time.

There were a few mean men in D.P., in '77 – '79. There were a few tough men also. Do you know the difference between these men? I'll tell you.

A mean guy will punch a tough guy. The tough guy will go down. The tough guy will get up. The mean guy will punch the tough guy again. The tough guy will go down again. And get up again. The mean guy will punch a tough guy again and kick him while he's down. The tough guy will get up again...

There were a number of lunatics in the jail, the odd and uncommon man who would stomp someone, just to watch him hurt and suffer. There are in any jail. There were a number of treacherous burn – outs in the Drum, back in the late seventies. They were the products and prolongation of the Canadian Penal System.

Curiously though, the sociopaths, the intelligent ones, the ones who had been thru and past the gates of all the jails across this fair land Canada and had fought all the battles with the law, from ocean to ocean, knew a great and powerful secret. Everyone bleeds...

Our gang was solid. None of us were mean. None of us were particularly tough either. Still, had a hellish and furious battle have come down on any one of us, take it to the bank, every one of us would have been there and this high off the ground, to beat an ugly blood puddle directly into some goof's chest, prior to kicking his nuts up past his ears and then drilling his stupid ass bang – thru the blacktop, in the dead – center of the yard.

See, when you wing with men who aren't afraid to push life to the limit and for each other and to unleash serious fury on an intruder, not many people are going to want to fuck with you. This is why it's important to have friends because that's what friends are for.

A convincing challenge to our gang's safety and well – being never happened. It never had to happen. D.P. was a good little jail, back in the late seventies.

Surrounded as I was, by so many illustrious years, I was almost shy about doing a cheap and easy 3 banger in D.P. but I was proud then and still am today, to have been associated with those stout – hearted men and if I can lend and add a touch of glamour and class to their offense – ridden and villainous lives, well, I'll do what I can. I praise and salute every *man* in the jail.

I pause here to reveal and reflect on an absurdity, a typical and regular occurrence on any one of my days, on this enigmatic and mysterious planet.

I am scrawling out the 12th rewrite of this, 'The Great Canadian Novel,' in as many years and this morning I cannot find pg. 52 of the previous rewrite. The damn thing has gone missing and I've searched everywhere. I've looked hi and lo but can't find it anywhere and now I'm stuck on the last words, 'every *man* in the jail.' Well... I'll just write on it some...

Some nights past, I had done the alcoholic thing and went out and had myself 20 – 30 beer, meaning to have only 1 of course. I was struttin' downtown, late and as a gentleman and behind me and in my wake, little girls were screaming and wetting their pants. Big girls were weeping and pulling their hair and I was in the process of putting the street to sleep and somewhere down the length of Calgary's scandalous, 'Steven Avenue,' I tied up with one of its bored and jaded ladies of the evening and just naturally brought her on home and begged her to love me. She told me her name was Mel. Maybe for her own twisted reasons, she decided to beat me for pg. 52? Or trash the damn thing? I could certainly understand, considering the abhorrence and degradation I may have put her thru. A real mean reciprocation perhaps? Measure for measure?

Could be I'm paranoid because of the detoxification factor I'm experiencing this morning.

However, theft is a definite suspicion because also gone is a favorite coffee –coaster of mine, the hand – carved job which depicts and illustrates a man and a woman fucking in a most unusual position. The bimbo was attracted by that fine feature I know. But, I don't remember much else of the disgraceful evening, of what low and dirty moves I was a party to, if any...

Blackouts. Classical big – time affairs. See, I don't just modestly have a specific series of beers and black – out from that point on. Hell no. I black – out as many as 2 days before the event, before I even start to drink. Every time and every turning of the moon. Retroactive blackouts. Scary concerns.

Anyway, I assume I had the despicable slut in a few assorted and unnatural positions before showing her the door, after *I* was satisfied. I do get right carnal these days, whenever I partake of the drink. Bad enough that some day, one of those crazy as a loon whores I drag home, from time to time, is going to make it thru the night and wake up in the morning and remember everything, every one of the wicked and evil legerdemains we committed upon each other and the wild and craven atrocities *I* performed upon her virtuous and perfect body. Then the silly and simple tramp is going to go home and string – up. That or have me arrested. “And then your Honor, he slipped me a Mickey Finn. I don't remember much after that your Honor.” Which will make for interesting and fascinating conversation with the men on the yard, when the authorities return me to D.P. for being sick and decidedly depraved.

But no, I doubt the damned trollop did the deed. The ridiculous truth must be that I ripped and tossed pg. 52 in the garbage. I've done it before. There are bleary and boozy moments when these words and pages all run together and look the same. Only one thing for it.

Parked beside the historic and infamous ‘Crown Building’, in which I live, is a dirty and smelly dumpster and I *am* familiar and acquainted with it all right. I *have* been inside the bastard once or twice. Climb on in and dig and grub around and it must be a ghastly vision and an unsettling sight, to see me clawing and scratching and flipping and tossing crusts of bread and orange peels and rotten vegetables and other dead things, up and out and onto the alleyway. I suspect it could be a disturbing specter and apparition to some people. People like...

The rich swine in the swanky restaurant across the street from the ‘Crown Building’, who *have* seen me in performance and *are* conversant with my rituals and habits.

One would think a wealthy spinster or a real old faggot would come tottering out the front door of that affluent beanery and offer me a fillet of prime – rib or a shrimp – cocktail and a drink and a place to stay. No, I'm building mansions in the sky and dreaming again. Rich and well – fixed people don't much like to help out prodigal wastrels like myself, not unless the haughty and high – ended upholders of society's decency and decorum stand to gain and can appease their consciences by way of a cheque – book charity scenario, a scene such as my fumbling in the dust and the dirt and cringing and fawning for a handout and them giving it to me but

only because Uncle Bob, luckily, has brought along his ‘Touristomatic,’ (with flash) and could show and tell, clearly and conclusively, to the guys and dolls back home and at, ‘The Petroleum Club,’ that absolutely, eccentrics and bohemians like me have *need* of generous and considerate people like Uncle Bob and Aunt Polly. The assholes.

I see I’ve been off on a tangent again. I’m back now and I suppose I’ll have to continue and concoct a fabrication, a 600 or so word, good ’nuff reason to stay away from the beer and the vintage ladies along, ‘Stephen Avenue.’ Ho! Ho! Not likely.

I claim to be doing my 12th rewrite in 12 years, on these skeptical and sophisticated words. Well... yes... this is true. “Twelve years!” you may well exclaim. Well... yes... but if you only knew how many blurred and blotted states of C.O.N. I’ve gone thru, you wouldn’t inquire or be surprised. Three remarkable decades worth, as a matter of candor and true fact.

Today, after pottering and dottering along in a rather haphazard manner, for so many years, I feel a burning and neurotic need to finish, ‘the book.’ I have an angry obsession and a fierce determination to be rid of *these* words. So I can move on.

To this end I try diligently not to be *too* fucking C.O.N., so I *can* finish ‘the book’ and be done with it.

Then, come what may, these could be the last words I ever write for you folks. See, I do *not* enjoy being a scribe and this book is *not* a labor of love. A labor of pain maybe, which could be the same thing. Anyway, after *these* words are down on paper, then I keep it simple. Whiskey and marijuana come to mind this morning...

Unless... unless I decide to tell you of taverns I have known and the dead people in them and of streets and avenues which crawl and run crazily and endlessly thru my mind. I’ll see. I’ll think on it.

As it is today, each word of this stunning and classic narrative I put to paper is a burden laid down and not much fun to execute. However, I *do* get a rare and precious thrill and satisfaction, when I pick up and set down a group of words which form a significant and weighty sentence and when 2 or 3 sentences run into a clever and intelligent thought or idea and when several suppositions become a true and honest statement. It is then that I understand writing as being a unique and sacred quest and undertaking. It is then that I believe in the power of the word and of how it is a gift from God to be able to write fine and true stories. It is then that I know, next to God and true love, there is no other beauty approaching reading and writing and free speech. (Being a gentleman and dressing well, fishing and playing snooker are close and in there somewhere folks.) The gift of words...

This story of mine is a bitter and glorious affair and I *have* to see it thru. I know that when it is over and finished and as complete as my humble self can make it, that triumphant day will assume the prestige of a colossal and behemoth weight having been lifted from my head and heart. The pleasure and delight of that marvelous day eludes me and it is mainly a desperate resolution which keeps this pen moving, so I *can* finish ‘the

book,' this one enterprise in my life with propriety and decorum and *then* I will be able to say I've done something. 'The book' will give meaning and purpose to my life. I *need* the immortality 'the book' will give to me.

It was the summer of '77 and every young man's thoughts and sensibilities turned to passes and parole, brews and baseball, all incredibly serious ventures in the jail. Baseball is always the nerve – center of the sports – program in any prison and it was a large – scale, no – nonsense enterprise in the Drum, in the late seventies and no convict took it lightly.

Except for us jesters and jokers. Our team was a ragged and ridiculous mixture of misfits, clowns and fools, junkies and faggots, has – beens and bums, a regular collection of losers. Not exactly a determined and dedicated gathering of ballplayers. No. And right off the top I mention, we played slow – pitch and as you might suspect, any poor sap with 2 arms, 2 legs and a heartbeat could be a hero. We had no heroes on our team. Our team was the laughingstock of the whole damned jail.

On a sunny afternoon, our team would materialize on the ball field but only because our other vices and distractions may not have been available in the jail at the time. And then most everyone would be C.O.N.

A 3 way smash – up in the outfield was common. Players sometimes had to be shouted around the bases, if the damn fools had been lucky enough to have seen and hit the ball in the first place. Fights were unusual but *did* happen. Seems I recall contraband Al in a quarrel with one of our more surly and aggressive opponents. The rest of our team laid down its gloves and cheered and gave sound and useless advice, concerning the manly art of fisticuffs, to whomsoever seemed to be winning. Al won *that* fight. When these altercations *did* happen, no one got hurt and it was sensational entertainment and it was clean fun, on a hot and blistering afternoon in D.P.

No team was better than ours and no team had delusions of attending the provincial finals in Fort Assiniboine. Amongst *ourselves*, every team was competitively adept and polished. Our team won a few but so did every other team. Some days *everyone* was C.O.N. on the sports field, authentic and absolute evidence of the general madness and hysteria that gripped D.P. in the late seventies.

The screws took perverse pleasure and enjoyment from the antics and escapades of silly and preposterous convicts playing baseball. Those scum – bag screws would sit back in the bleachers, smoke cigarettes and giggle and guffaw their ugly bloodsucker heads off and the bastards had us right where they wanted us. There we were. Highly visible and not off elsewhere in the jail, conniving and scheming against them and they would have been dead – on about *that* spark and speculation all right.

The only positive feature of baseball in the Drum, I came away with, was when I met an ingenious old jailbird we called Tim and he advised me on how best to do my time. The man was in for the crime of counterfeiting and I thought this feat a fine and clever breech of the public trust.

Longtime lag that he was, the man claimed to have been single – handedly responsible for the govt. of Canada having to switch from the stale and dry tones, to the flash and fruity colors on the paper money of today. Furthermore, he insisted the Feds had come into a windfall and everyone had gotten raised and promoted because tucked down deep in his basement, the narcos had found 20 million dollars in brand – new and bogus bills, packed, bundled and ready for the street. Skilled and proficient artist that he was, he wasn't saying and I never asked, how much phony swag he *had* put out and introduced into the Canadian economy. Twenty years.

The good ol' boy told me to, 'get a schedule' and 'stick to it.' Which made perfect sense to me. A fixed routine *was* a good idea and I could see at a glance, *he* was relaxed and smiling. "Keep your life in the jail as simple as you can make it."

D.P. was like a circus back in the late seventies. There were *so* many activities and entertainments and amusements a man could have participated in and joined in but for a man to scatter himself freely and to try and take them all in would have led to a form of confusion and then a man could get tense and angry. Not good. No. Best to move slow. A slow and steady groove and a measured gait was the best way to do time. Then a man was able to see and do everything necessary and get everything done, in an amused and easygoing fashion. My schedule from that day on commenced to be just this way, right on thru to the end of the 3 yr. sentence the gracious and wise Canadian Government had awarded me to thrive and prosper on in D.P.

Baseball in D.P. was too ambitious and demanding and I was much too critical. Over a 4 month slot, I may have dropped 80 long balls over the fence and quit. I was *not* a team player.

After 3 mos. in John's shop, I had enough time in to write and whip – off my 1st yr. welding certificate and to gain and acquire practical experience, I traveled to the main industrial area, where about all us welders did was crank out govt. contracts and drink coffee.

As a distinction of being guests of the govt. of Canada, we convicts weren't recognized or remotely considered as being part of the labor force or rated as even *being* employed. Therefore, usually only commissions for dreck and drivel ever came our way, for us convicts to play and practice on and release onto an unsuspecting public. The prime objective of disregarding and dismissing us convicts as any grade of competitive and hostile work – force, was so as not to worry and dismay the straight stiffes, the ones with real jobs, with real companies, back in the real world.

D.P. in the late seventies, had some excellent programs, for those men who wanted to use them. A few convicts are simply men who need to do their time and go home. These men are always willing to atone for past indiscretions and make amends by means of honest and dignified work, any type of work which encourages self – worth and respect.

To this end, there was frequently some kind of champion of a social – worker, running free in administration, who would do his best to have meaningful labor and intelligent work brought into the jail. Ho! Ho!

You should have heard those hound dogs howl! The people back in the world, the ones whose livelihoods depended on sensible and realistic moil and toil. Which was understandable. Still, there were a few men who used the facilities and resources of D.P. and did do well and did go home.

Mostly though, back in the late seventies, in the Drum, the grifters and the gaffers in control of the Canadian Federal System of Penitentiaries, let us put together unlikely and not too serious stuff and nonsense, tables and chairs, gates and fences and other institutional claims and demands, over which the unions and the independents had no control and never necessarily wanted in the first place. We convicts turned out an awful lot of creation that was uniform, inane and monotonous and weird and likely would never have made sense to a real welder. Not much of our handiwork was top of the line and awe inspiring. No.

Since we welders worked for poor man's wages, maybe ½ buck / hr. and together with the consequences of tedium, due largely to a lack of respect towards our given labors in the jail, we jailhouse welders could never have been distantly accused of being enthusiastic and eager to do wonderful work. A welder, a street welder, could have done our day's work in 2 hrs. or less. Coffee and contraband were about the only things us welders really cared about. These 2 true and fine items and playing games.

See, because of the drudgery and flatness of the work expected of us, we welders quite naturally built our own obsolescence and weaknesses into any apparatus and devices we were asked to manufacture and never minded that a playground contraption, a slide or a swing – set, which had been built in the Drum, might slash a kid or rip his stupid finger off. We convicts could be mean and inconsiderate.

Even in my short stay in the jail I saw return product, objects so simple they never should have had to come back but it was a game, the only one in town and we played it often and substituted our own rules. It was a petty defiance and indulgence. Further...

No damned way would I take responsibility and sign for an outgoing order unless on some days when I felt like using the warden's good name. That was easy. No problem there. So that...

When anything did come back, we welders would shrug and shake our heads and bitch about how D.P. had allowed inferior workmanship, due to poor training techniques, to pass into the public sector, to break – down and be jeered at and to be returned to the jail.

Any junk contrivance, which was returned, promptly reflected back on the street – staff, our instructors and it was the way we wanted it and thought was right. I don't suppose many people would credit most convicts as being kind and considerate...

It was while in the industrial area and at an early point in my term there and for reasons not entirely clear, that an instructor took an intense dislike to my maverick ways and got on my case in a most sincere fashion and it became a fair – to – middlin' problem.

The industrial welding shop in D.P., in '77 – '79, had *all* the equipment and the setting itself was amazingly ideal for a renegade and illegal mind to get lost in. Set smack – dab in the center of a large building was every cut and class of tool and machine known to modern man. Maybe 30 – 40 convicts worked there and any con that knew how to properly handle those complex and confounded machines, could have manufactured any damned novelty or notion you can name. Airplanes and guns come to mind today...

The screws and the staff could never have watched our every move and even check – points and metal – detectors were easy to go around. We convicts had the ways and means to bring nearly any forbidden article or knickknack back to our units and cells.

Almost every weapon ever found in D.P., had to have come from the industrial shop area...

Now, I never did turn out *too* much felonious enterprise, merely routine and harmless trinkets and gadgets, which could make a man's life in the jail a bit easier and me flush with cash and canteen. Effortless affluence has never bothered me in a big way and easy money, with a touch of jeopardy, is always interesting. And so...

It wasn't a long time before this sneaky fuck of an instructor took to looking over my shoulder and watching every move I made. It was becoming extreme. Hell, I could hardly go for a piss in private and on a heedless and reckless day, I decided to take the bastard down.

A considerate and big – hearted government agency had come thru with an order for us convicts to build 60 goofy tables. I cleverly deduced and assumed 1 extra table wouldn't likely be noticed and truthfully, it was my due and merit because I *needed* a table, for us welders to put our coffee and cards and smokes and smut magazines on.

I set about doing the deed. I *did* build 1 extra table and I *did* cut it down to floor level for us welders to put our feet up on and it was a beaut and boneroo affair.

Well now, when that pig of an instructor came by my work station and took a readin', as to what manner of criminal activity I may have been embroiled with at the time, the poor fucker all but went crazy. He as good as had a heart attack. His eyes were going click – click – click up against his snout and his whiskers stood straight up to the ceiling. "Government Property...! On Charge!" he gasped.

So it was I came to be charged with, 'Damage and misuse of govt. property' and was graciously requested to appear in warden's court the following morning.

Now, I had never had the pleasure of a meeting and concourse with the warden of D.P. but I knew, from talking it over with the gang, any defense I could muster would be as useless and probably as ridiculous as the charge itself. Still and all, I prepared a lengthy and meticulous dissertation; concerning my innocence and to let the warden know I was not afraid of him and did not think it timely to fall on my sword quite yet.

Early the next morning I was put in the hole and an hour spun lazily on by before I was dragged out and stood up in front of the big man of D.P. The man was seated behind a desk, girded and flanked by 4 large goons, for his security and safety's sake, in case I attempted, at some tantalizing point during the investigation, to come screamin' and flyin' across that desk to throttle the sheep headed little apple – knocker.

The man who had put me on charge was there and he had an erection. I could tell, he wanted me to get the rack and a 30 day diversion in the digger, to compliment and facilitate the disciplinary process. He was wearing an evil grin. I wanted to spit in his face. But I never did. I smiled humbly instead.

Now, being a desperado, I could understand the court not letting me have my say. Hell, I had been charged. I was in warden's court. I must have been guilty. "Convict 3279! Did you really build a table for yourself, while in the industrial welding shop, using govt. materials?"

"Yes sir but..."

"Guilty! This here court fines you the honest sum of 1 ½ dollars, for damage and misuse of govt. property, said money to cover the cost of misappropriated materials. Don't let it happen again!"

"No sir." A smile from the warden. The harlequin screws grinned ear – to – ear. The swine of an instructor lost his hard. I beamed modestly.

The feckless laughter began in the breezeway, between administration and the units and the asshole who had charged me had to walk behind me and take it. As he was following me thru the breezeways, muttering and mumbling to himself about how he was going to fix me better next time, I wanted to turn to him and tell him to, 'Lick me where I shit!' but I didn't. The man would *not* have needed a witness. I kept on walking.

Smiling the whole way back to my unit and greatly appreciating that perhaps the warden and his lickspittle employees had no use for that turd of an instructor either. But, the miserable prick would be looking for an opening and rather than let him play position on me, I made up my mind to go for a quiet transfer out of the industrial area. It was a sensible and sound idea, as in any further confrontation with that instructor, I would only have lost large.

Back to John's shop, as lead hand, where my talents were plenty valued and prized. John would become my main – man in the jail and in the course of our association, he was to bail me out of a few nasty conflicts with the authorities of D.P. As time went by, the mentor / protégé accord and union John and I shared would be hilarious and I could do no wrong while under his wing.

In John's shop, day in, day out, I did a lot of time sitting back with my feet up, drinking tea and thinking. Minor duties were delegated and each man achieved as much or as little as he pleased. I was the boss, the benevolent dictator, never pushy or high – handed and I promoted a tranquil environment and every man was encouraged to dig in and relax. Careful rumor went out to all parts of the jail that John's welding shop was an easy endeavor and exertion and the shop began to bait and beckon to every nut and head case and nobody but

strange convicts began signing up to learn the mysterious art and craft of welding. Crackpots and screwballs, kooks and ding – a – lings, convicts who never fit anywhere else in the jail and needed a safe place to do their time became curious about the ineffable question of welding. Everyone crazy was there in John’s shop in 1978.

I’ve always been a dreamer and I’ve always drawn down and collected the wild – cards, losers and heroes, drifters and bums, beggars and tramps, rovers and rambles, the masterless ones and I welcomed each and every one of them to John’s shop and everybody had a knee – slappin’ good time.

John trusted me. He credited me to keep his shop clean and standing and in good order and repair. John depended on me to teach rookie convicts how to weld and not many of the motley bastards had the talent or desire to undertake this charge. Even so, I respected and was indebted to John, for his faith and recognition in my abilities and capabilities.

One item about being lead – hand in the welding shop could have become a problem and predicament. In D.P., in the late seventies, it had long been a tradition and an established practice, to allow the street – staff and screws to bring in their cars and trucks for free servicing and repairs by the convicts in the shop areas.

As lead – hand in John’s shop and supposedly able and expert, I was the one called upon, to weld a cracked frame, to spot – weld a split bumper, to tack together a leaky manifold, to film – weld a cankered – out and potentially lethal exhaust system on some pig’s car. And *any* of the clunkers and junkers the *pigs* drove could have done with a total overhaul and for a fact, a well – placed weld would never have been amiss or astray on any one of those deathtraps.

The very first time I was asked to inspect and assess a bothersome pig’s car, I nonchalantly turned to him and asked, “So?”

“So fix my car convict.”

“Well now, I’m not at all sure, being a lowly convict, as I’m supposed to be doing work on street vehicles.”

“Well, we just won’t say anything to anyone, will we?” and the pig winked at me.

“Well, we won’t say anything to anyone if the price is right, will we?”

“What?”

“Yes, I do believe this here car of yours needs and could use one of my custom welds. The price is 2 packs of smokes.”

“What!”

“Yes, 2 packages of cigarettes and you got it.”

“Shit!”

“Life’s a bitch.”

What could he do? Hell, he was getting a deal. That pest of a pig would have had to lay out a 50 dollar bill or more, to get his beater fixed good and proper, at one of downtown Drumheller's finer gas and service stations, likely more than the car was worth standing on its own four tires.

In John's shop and having commissioned out most of my work and as I was usually sitting on my ass and since my welds were the best and cigarettes were valuable traffic in the jail, once everyone was used to my rates and reasoning, eventually everybody was happy with my all – around and recognized method of trade and barter.

At one point in my illustrious orbit in John's welding shop, I had seriously considered asking those asshole screws for booze, in exchange for my favors but I decided an innovation like that might have been pushing my extortion racket and routine a bit too far.

Mercy on the rare bastard of a screw who stood on his authority and insisted I work for free. In such cases and there were a few, one of my welds could run anywhere from slipshod and hazardous to downright dangerous, if I wanted to be careless and unfriendly. And I would *not* have been annoyed or ruffled to have heard that one of those cheap swine bastards had been run down by a large semi – trailer, after his car's suspension had mysteriously failed and given out and popped him into oncoming traffic, right after he had made the turn from the jailhouse gravel road onto the main hi – way into town. Hell, I would have been tickled and thrilled to have learned that the weld I had put on his A – frame, 15 minutes before his date with death, had done its job. No one rides for free, pig.

When part of this colorful sketch *did* happen, a screw refusing and denying my graft and juice subterfuge, I could only wonder at the mentality of the man who would drive his car out the gates of D.P. and into Drumheller, knowing a genuinely crazy convict and maybe an unhappy one, had just put a fuck – weld on his automobile. The moss – backed asshole...

But... conceit and arrogance generally made for good work. So long as I was paid. And I certainly never felt any burden of guilt or remorse about shaking down those bone – head screws. They had money. The govt. of Canada gave the goofs who worked as guards in D.P., in the late seventies, big money, to watch over scoundrels and bad news like me.

During my early days and months in the industrial area, I had conceived of an absurd and ridiculous belief. I had supposed and assumed welding to be a coffee drinking trade, a relaxed calling and handicraft. Ho! Ho! Another fantasy.

Only after I hit the streets of Edmonton, many months later was *expected* to work, would I fully understand the foolishness of that gag and joke.

I *did* do a brief and abrupt exploratory into the inscrutable tarnation of welding on the street and I *did* experience flames and burnt nuts and evil chemicals and blindness and a raging hunger to be free.

A welder can get hurt. It's not a good life being a welder. It's not a pretty or a healthy life. As in most any other form of stress and struggle, it's a bitter medicine to have to live by. Stay away from welding. Far away.

What did I know back in '77 – '79, in D.P.? I hung on in John's shop and listened to his stories and he trained me and taught me and I paid close attention to his teachings and I came to know the fine art of welding and I came to appreciate how to use tools and machines, to avoid and dodge severe labor and tasks or at least whittle them down some.

John was unwavering and stiff – necked on one point, "See here. You got 5 years. If you ain't got 2 trucks and 4 men working for you in 5 years, you ain't gonna' make it. Five years."

Right John. I could as easily have become an electrician or a plumber or a mechanic. Someone important.

A hot as hell summer day in the jail and we welders refused to sweat and swelter and instead removed ourselves to the quiet and shade of the loading dock.

Drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and along came one of Canada's top – guns, a lone fly – boy from a rumored nearby airbase and he had nothing better to do than to entertain and amuse us convicts in the early afternoon sunshine. Rolls and spins, loops and dips and dives and purely for our pleasure alone. It was a heady display and exhibition, high over D.P.'s flawless and designated dead – air sky. To finish off his performance, the daring and dashing birdman gave us 3 extremely low passes, a whirl and a wave and he was gone swift as lightning. Everyone cheered and wagged him into the sunset. We were dazzled and delighted. And we all may have shared a common thought. That the man and his plane were so natural and free.

From my perspective was a suspicion that soon I would be flying on my own and cutting my own fresh air.

Time was a perpetual flow and it was Nov. 1977 and I had 10 mos. on my bit and the National Parole Board had done its best and had wisely and correctly gathered to turn me loose and send me away. This is how it happened...

It was another remarkable day in D.P. and it had found me in my most natural state, sitting back, with my feet up, drinking tea and mooching smokes from a guileless and simple – minded young welder. John plodded on over to where I was seated, slack and comfortable and told me I should move my lazy bones on back to my unit.

Walking slow and wondering where I had messed up, what sort of authority had I irked and ired and which type of man had I aroused and angered but when I walked thru the front door of unit 10, a classification officer set me right and pointed me towards administration.

Approaching administration and my head was pell-mell with doubts and recriminations, as to why I should be given parole, which was a natural enough bearing and disposition. *Every* man, when he stands before the

National Parole Board, is frightened and has a valid argument, dancing spiritously inside his head, as to *exactly* why he should be denied release from jail. True fact.

I knew I had enough time in and I knew I was eligible for a parole of some description. I knew that the board sat every 2 mos. or so and reflected and deliberated on impunity and immorality, iniquity and misconduct, vice and virtue, as related to a select young man like myself. Does he understand yet? Is he ready to go back to the world yet?

Those right – minded and sterling citizens who sat on Parole Boards, back in the late seventies, also pondered on just how deep a man's outlaw character was gripped and enmeshed in the web that is the Canadian Penal System and if not overcome and overwhelmed, should he be released, like a pure and perfect sunrise and surprise, onto a childlike and white handed public.

I also knew, nearly every convict in Canada, did get a parole of some nature, at some fascinating point during his sentence. A parole is a type of control, you see.

If while on the street and on parole and under the monitors and probes of the National Parole Board, a man fucked – up and for nearly any reason, well, then the board breached him and removed his ungrateful ass from the streets and back to the jail, for him to do his time naturally.

Luckily enough, in a strange and magic moment, I had done some welding that particular morning and I was a mess. My hair was askew and my hands were dirty and my face was smudged and smeared. I looked like a workingman and maybe it was a good thing. I don't know.

The graven images who sat on parole boards in '77, each and every one of them proper and responsible members of society, might have been pleased to see such conduct and demeanor in a young man. Maybe those stolid and staunch citizens took me to be a sincere young man making an effort and the total best of my internment, by means of honest and earnest toil and spadework and was unequivocally prepared to renounce a life of crime and bad behavior. I'm not sure.

Gentle speculations, as I ambled thru the breezeways, searching for the building that would deliver me. A polestar of a building and once inside I was led into a large room, a room of apprehension and doubt and uncertainty. Seated behind a long and narrow table were 3 grim and impartial citizens. Their eyes were keen and honest, set and fixed in noble faces. It was as erect and decorous a body politic as I had ever seen and they had the power to emancipate my person and I may have been thinking, 'Surely these people will do the right thing and let me go.' But...

When I gazed deep into those surgical eyes, I might have thought, 'I don't know if this is going to work...' Never had I felt comfortable in the presence of open and upright authority. I felt like handing them each a pill and telling them to relax and take their coats off and tell some jokes. But I didn't.

Instead, I went from mirth to daredevil abandonment, to contained amusement. I had never been able to master myself in the face of inquisitive rationalization and power. A weakness... I worked on it...

From their side of the table. "Would you do it again? Are you ready for the real world? Why are you laughing?" and the best one of all, "Why should we parole you?" That question and challenge stopped me cold. It was a good question. Why indeed? I had no direct answer to that damned question nor could I explain why I was in line and ready for a parole.

Did my rug – cuttin' routine for the people, neat and plain.

"Listen to me. I will never again stupidly use explosives. I'm a different man today. When I leave this jail, I will be the man who never returned. I won't be coming back."

A flared rap and I declare it was a moving and enlightening statement and presentation. I was asked to leave the room, "while we mull it over." I was called back 10 minutes later.

Smiling faces and good news. I was in. It was a bonanza.

There had been a sort of communication between us and we had recognized each other's levels and those wonderful people granted me the honor of a day – parole to Grierson Center, up Edmonton way. I'd be leaving D.P. in the morning.

All is well.

G.B.T..

Grierson – Interlude.

At one time, Grierson Center had been the R.C.M.P. barracks and lock – up, a stone fortress nestled high on a hill and overlooking the scenic valley and the vile and filthy waters of the North Saskatchewan River. It was a gothic and foreboding structure and in 1977 it looked more like a jail than a jail had a right to look.

In fact, I had been behind those cold stone walls, on a few memorable occasions, back when Grierson was still the old R.C.M.P. stockade and administration. Bad recollections of drunk and disorderly. I can remember, as a J.D. and an aspiring young dude, how the keepers of Grierson would beat me regular as a drum and enjoy doing it and I never did appreciate their attempts to curb and discourage my rowdy and insurgent ways. I can recall Grierson as having had no modern cells, just open and exposed cages. Everything about Grierson Center had been primitive and unusual, many years ago. Since then...

A genius or a bureaucratic blunder had tossed the coppers and their gimmicks and gadgets out and onto the street and in a brief moment of revelation, someone had declared, “Hey! We now have a half – way house! Aren’t we clever...”

When I arrived at Grierson, at the end of ’77, right off, I was wise to and aware of its fashionably new character. See, when I first walked thru the front doors of that awful institution, forthwith, I had noticed everyone, the staff as well as the residents, were wearing knee – pads. ‘This isn’t going to be easy,’ I thought.

At short notice I was invited into the head councilor’s office for a parley and a chat. She was a pig. They were all pigs, you understand. In Grierson Center, back in 1977, they were all pigs. Keep reading.

The sum total of gracious guidance I was given was, I should forgive and forget the past, be happy and ‘get involved.’ The screws wanted me to be their friend and the chief councilor wanted me to settle down, get a job, get married and raise a family and run for high political office. Advice and good will was spread and lathered on me from every direction and I wanted to holler N.Y. on the deep – pile office carpet. ‘This is *not* going to work,’ thought I.

The kitchen area, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes, sitting and surrounded by nobody but snitches and they all wanted to kiss my ass and be my partner. ‘I’m real close to the end of this story,’ was a thought.

There was no privacy. I quickly figured I was going to be observed like a specimen under a glass and I knew I wouldn’t enjoy it much. I have never been happy about being on display for meddlesome people. No.

I knew I’d never make it, not in the congenial and hospitable environment which was Grierson Center, back in 1977.

The first afternoon, I was given a ‘chore’. I was asked to load and unload the dishwasher and it was to be my task and duty for as long as I resided in that fucking jail.

The first night, I was told I was to be ‘confined’, a house rule. I was upset. About not being allowed to hit and explode on Edmonton’s strip and drag which was only down the street and around the corner, as a matter of felicitous fact. No drinking, no drugs, no dollies, no gambling, no fighting, were further rules of Grierson Center. It gets worse.

About all I had wanted to do was go downtown, get interesting and get laid by a broken – down and drunken old whore. Give the lucky lady a blinding and vicious mercy fuck. Just like that.

Considering the circumstances imposed upon me during the previous 14 mos., the sons of bitches who ran and directed Grierson back in ’77 should even have encouraged and advanced my longings and hungerings.

That 1st night I dropped and smashed 3 plates. No comment or response but the next day I was restricted and confined again. Three more plates hit the floor. No one said a fucking word. Assholes. All of them. Assholes.

The 3rd day and I was taken aside and told I had to get a job. Stop! No! Enough! It was winter and it was cold, a condition which usually found me drinking beer in a warm country or somewhere equally comfortable.

A seething and distraught phone call to the street and 2 pints of orey – eyed and indignant vodka were delivered to the very doors of Grierson Center. It was a bold and fearless move.

Later, the same evening, I was jacked – up and held by the Grierson Gestapo and I had to seriously explain and defend myself.

That strange and fantastic state of affairs had come to pass in the T.V. room, some hours before, when I had braced one of the house finks, for tinkering and fidgeting with the sports channel. Carefully and in plain English, I assured the little rat he was going to have utmost difficulty shoveling his sidewalks in the morning, after I broke his fingers and squeezed his head to make him squeak. The pigeon flew to the man and stooled me out and the troopers attacked and arrested me for being beyond drunk. I *was* foully drenched and oiled as an owl. Hopelessly and helplessly C.O.N.

“Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I’m 64,” I sang, as I was escorted, reeling and rolling, down the hallway and upstairs to my room and bed.

The next morning I was purely and positively the sickest man in the whole world. Ailing and unwell and I had to drag my ramshackle ass into the lead councilor’s office and try and bedazzle her with charm and soft – soap. But, before I could get started on my effectuation, I had to sit meekly and listen to Lilith’s spurtling hysterics. “You’re a drunk! A damned drunk! How dare you! In this place!” I felt like a condemned man. “You’re nothing but a drunk!”

An acute observation was, ‘there will never be any great degree of love transference between this sinister bitch and myself.’ Of this I was certain.

“You will never, ever, be let back in Grierson Center! Do you hear me? Never! Change your ways and do some thinking! Stop your disgusting excesses! The world is *not* your plaything!” I was too old a cat to be fucked by a kitten...

I wanted to reply, ‘Girl, from where I’m standing on this remarkable and radiant planet, the entire world *is* my plaything. I’m special and important and put here for a purpose, the reason which is far beyond either of us.’ But I didn’t. I said not a word to provoke or anger the lady.

See, I was terribly afraid and did *not* need any further trials or visitations upon me. I was painfully fragile and did *not* want the girl to know it. It was as though I was standing beside the cracks of doom and I did *not* need a push.

Rightly, I should have barfed on and across that lady councilor’s desk. Hell, it would have been easy enough. It would have correctly expressed my regard and respect for her position. Perhaps a well – modulated fart may have attracted her fancy attention. But, a fart, at that exceptional point in my life, might have been a careless and risky business, if you see my meaning.

What I did come out with was, ‘Lady, you’re only using those hi – falutin’ words because you believe they’re true.’ No reply.

The girl wanted no part of me after our session. And I only wanted to go home. To D.P. I was a gangster and a raconteur and I would never belong in a frightful and forbidding place like Grierson Center.

My parting words may have shook her. “Thank – you for a wonderful experience girl. You’ve been kind. A real friend.” A silent glare and the end of this tale.

Before leaving Grierson Center forever, 1 solid convict pressed 100 downers on me, good medicine for the boys back in the jail. Carefully, I packed my bags for the long journey home and it was the 1 worthwhile thing Grierson had done for me.

All the way back to D.P., I could hear the executioner’s song ringing inside my head and about then I was feeling lonesome, ugly and mean.

So, stick and shove your entire structured system of control, up your hairy and wrinkled ass, you scum – sucking pig of a councilor.

My day parole to Edmonton had stretched and straddled almost 4 hot days. Eat shit and die hard Grierson Center.

All is well.

G.B.T.

D.P. – A Good Little Jail.

Drumheller Penitentiary really was a good little jail, back in the late seventies and one fine morning I came awake and did a slow turn around and realized I had become much too comfortable. Alarming so and I'll be coming back to these feature words in a while. First though...

After only 24 hrs. in R+D, I was scuttled on back to good ol' Unit 10, where I was greeted with easy banter and low comedy from the boys. "Missed your sweet home 'eh convict." "Couldn't handle doing time on the street 'eh convict." "Welcome back convict," was by far the best and most comforting rag and homily. They knew. They understood. So many men returned to the jail, with all the same familiar and desolate stories.

Laid my spent and weary body down and waited for the confusion to pass me over. Wrap – around headphones and hellish loud Hendricks and Morrison, an explosion of angry and ominous sound and it was appropriate to my bitter and frustrated being and station on this confusing and balled – up world. It was another loss and failure and it had left me broken and crippled inside. I was feeling sorry for myself. After a week I was feeling real humble.

So I was a drunk? So what? I had been drinking since 1965, back when I was a young gun and had first fled to the North Country and then I had to drink, to prove I was a man. It was an excuse.

From the early oilfields, to the logging camps, to the construction sites, bad alcohol had always been a staunch and faithful companion, a steady and solid cross of trial and tradition I had carried everywhere on this merciful and mighty planet.

Even the time back in '71, when I had left Canada for Australia, when I had felt as though every law – man in the country was pointed in my direction, I had packed that malevolent and infernal cross of affliction and testing.

Alcohol is a conflict and condition I have bucked and fought everywhere I've traveled in this world, every desperate and disastrous step of the way.

The torment of alcohol was always a necessary and reliable place to run to and to hide from the fears and the demons which once gripped and possessed me.

Even today, as I sit here trying to focus on these words and compel and command this pen to move squarely and evenly across the page, I am filled with distress and trepidation and suspect I may be basically damned and done for. Likely as not, I may be running with a bottle for the rest of my life and it will be the longest and loneliest road I'll ever travel on this poised and miraculous planet. But, it's my problem and I'll handle the insanity of it or go down trying.

Fully a week *did* go by before I was able to return to a semblance of normalcy and accept the curious fate, which is my penance and existence. I was back.

Back to John's shop that is, whereupon John instantly dismissed my proxied replacement and made way for me and my ability to thrive on non-work and 14 more months of tea and goodwill.

Along about early '78, I began to look closer and see deeper and to understand more of the aggregate and the inner workings of D.P. and of how they directly or indirectly related to each other. It was an intricate mesh and network.

D.P. was well – nigh a city in its own right, with every standard frill and amenity. Population and housing, food and medical, employment and entertainment, law and order or at least a code a man was expected to abide by and a crude judicial system to correct him, should he be caught breaking the canons and statues peculiar to the jail. Punishments and rewards, luxuries and pleasures, pursuits and recreations, all necessary items to a distinct society. Choices...

Almost all the jail needed, back in '78, to be self – sustaining, would have been a horse and plow, to chew up one of the baseball diamonds so we convicts could plant potatoes and cabbages, carrots and onions and marijuana. Add a small herd of cattle, a few sheep and maybe 1000 chickens and it would have worked. Hell, the concept was a wonder. It boggled my mind. It was a righteous notion.

Inside the jail, money was plastic, every denomination up to a 20 dollar piece and of course there was always a never – ending trade in street cash, real money, which always found a way into the jail.

A man's pay depended on his job placement. A man could earn from nothing to 5 dollars a day. A man could live well, lavishly even, on 5 dollars a day in the jail.

D.P. had its own bank and it regularly held back a set portion of a man's pay and pony, so when he did his last walk across the long black yard and thru D.P.'s steely gates, he had some kind of coin to ringle in his jeans, for the streets he would soon be walking.

Further evidence of economics in the jail were the unit canteens and those marvels of innovation carried the standard grocery store selection and inventory. Tobacco, tea and coffee, candy and chocolate bars, dry goods and on a fortunate day and if a man had the cash, he might even purchase a touch of home – brew, depending on who was minding the store.

Again, if a man's account was fat, he could order in all manner of boneroo, shirts and sneakers, sports equipment and magazines of every stripe and character and most any other damn thing he desired.

Jails are huge and serious concerns in Canada. Having been inside D.P. for a year and more, I was bewildered and confounded, to understand myself as being no more than a wheel within a wheel, a very small wheel. I was in no way immensely significant. Now, I was necessary, certainly, to make up the whole of the complex, the gestalt, which is the great Canadian Penal System, but, based on my honest and unflinching insight into

only being a paltry cog in the system, once or twice, I was near to considering asking the warden to let me go free.

Prisons are big business in Canada. Drumheller town *needed* D.P. Hell, I could easily imagine the spin off and the rush fever request and demand for product and services created by D.P. The outgrowth and offshoot was fantastic and incredible. D.P. generated a terrifically healthy economy in every direction it faced and would snap – up and grab almost any item or object to keep it this way. Anyone, any fucking asshole for miles around, could flog and sell nearly any stupid and ridiculous privilege or indulgence to D.P. Truly. Interdependence is a fit and proper word. So is symbiosis. Two organisms feeding off each other, existing back to back, like two bloated and enormous leeches. And the inhabitants of Drumheller, ludicrous and beyond belief swine that they were, just naturally worked directly for the jail. Hell, without D.P., the low and uneducated town of Drumheller would have died and blown off across the prairie. Down in southern Alberta, *everyone* worked for the be – all and the end – all, which was the great Canadian Penal System, back in the late seventies. Absolutely true fact folks.

The nut of the circumstance was that Canada was not necessarily concerned with *keeping* people in jail but rather with *putting* people in jail, on a turnover basis. The more people who *did* get caught up in the system, the stronger and more wholesome the economy all around, a desirable form and configuration. I greeted that admirable perception and presumption with grim dismay and condemnation.

Certain excellent days in D.P. were days of vision and veracity, days when it would come to me as crack and dandy if *every* young man went to jail for a couple of years.

Hell, every young man gets lost at some timely point in his life. Every now and again, a man gets angry and needs a place to go and be alone, an intimate and a private place, where he can chill out and think things over, a personal station where he can rid himself of his demons. Jail can be a rough but honorable merit and dignity for a hostile young man.

Jail and not having to ruminate on who might give you six square feet of floor for the night. Jail and not having to decide if you should open and eat that last can of beans yet because you won't be receiving a welfare cheque for 19 days. Jail and not having to try and grind an impossible dollar from an improbable friend. You *have* no friends. Jail and not having to be concerned that your phone won't ring because no one cares. Jail and not having to leave your toasty warm, paid for the next 18 days, slum – garret – room, at 6 minutes to eight in the morning, to pick enough tobacco off the early city sidewalks, to last for 24 hours. Sorrowful but obligatory and responsible resolves and determinations for any unwelcome young man.

Any young man should be inspired to approach the front gates of any prison in Canada and declare himself. “Hi there. I'm homeless and helpless. Give me 4 walls and a roof, feed me, clean me up, dry me out, dress me in green and I won't go out and hurt people. I won't go out and be a criminal.”

Then that person and administration could sit down and hammer out a contract. “O.K. We’ll go for it. Thirty days? Six months? A year? Five years? What would you prefer? There are a few conditions however, some fine print you should be aware of. Listen up. No booze, no dope, no girls and you have to consume or at the very least, accept and dispose of the many goods and services we’re going to push and force on you. All the products and creation spawned by the vast array of towns and villages that surround our jail. Oh yes, you may be asked to do a lick or 2 of work. Would you agree to these terms and this understanding? Fine. Sign on the dotted line.” Why not?

Why not offer up the range and opportunity to be had in a Canadian Penitentiary, to the thousands of men across this great country who have lost their ways and directions? In D.P., in ’77 – ’79, the practicality of the idea was all around me. Why not? Get a man straight and in line before he breaks and goes insane, say at 10 or 12 yrs. of age. Ho! Ho! Hell yes. A good plan.

It always amazed me, the ingenuity of some convicts and of how comfortable they could make themselves, given notably little, only the rudiments to work with, at the beginnings of their federal sentences.

Over the years D.P. quite naturally and maybe inadvertently, had become a well-stocked warehouse, crammed full of yesterday’s toys, curios and gewgaws left behind by other convicts from the dark past. To think on it, there wasn’t much a man would want to take along with him, when he had done his time. A man knew, positively, when he hit the street, he would be moving fast and light, with no need of extra baggage, if any at all, to slow him down. As such, a man would ordinarily leave his possessions and accumulations behind, to his pals and best friends, the ones who had stood by him and helped him do his time. Time went by... and...

As a result of this dumping process, eventually a certain man arrived at a fixed point regarding effects and belongings, a point at which he could go no higher. Everyone was a scrounger and everyone traded up.

I could walk into a convict’s house and it in no way resembled a mental or physical picture of what defines a jail cell. No. It was indeed a house and a federal prisoner took great pride in making it a home, even if he was just passin’ thru.

Exotic paint jobs, erotic posters and pin –ups, framed pictures of family and loved ones, special lighting to calm a man, carpeting and curtains, real furniture and thousands of dollars worth of sound equipment plain and truthful people back in the real world would have paid the big bucks for. Most of us jailbirds refused to live simple and boring lives in the jail, if we could arrange and manage it otherwise.

My best friend from back in the world had sent me in a decent stereo unit and some choice tapes. Also, a number of defiant and seditious books not available in the D.P. library, books not officially allowed in the jail, as insurgency and rebellion were not subjects normally encouraged or applauded by our fearless warden. However, I strongly suspected the screws responsible for letting in the mail and such priceless articles like books, as being not able to read and therefore they just slid these treasures on thru to us convicts.

In the welding shop I had made myself a custom bed, extra long and solid as a rock. No back problems for this young man. I worked at staying reasonably healthy and fit and as I had figured on doing 1/3 of my bit in a horizontal position, like a flea – bitten dog, I thought this was a welcome ground – plan.

I paid the boys from industrial maintenance cold cash, to lay on a soft and subdued coat of paint on my cell ceiling and walls, colors soothing to the eyes and head. I had the furniture. I was comfortable.

D.P. was a rigidly structured society back in the late seventies. It was a caste- system and a well – defined social – strata existed and it was usually closely observed. Every convict and criminal description had his station in the grand design which was a Canadian Penitentiary in '77 – '79. Colors and shades. Layers and levels.

Rats and diddlers and random degenerates were at the extreme bottom of the heap. Airheads, the crazies and the violent ones were generally left to their own fears and demons, respected and not bothered but shirked and burked instead. Cons and thieves, the hustlers and the dopers were the base and mainstay of the prison population. From this group came the political code of the jail which allowed the jail to turn round and round, as angry or as peaceful as was decided by common, non-verbal communion and consent from this rather large group of men. These men dictated and doled out policy as to the degree of homage and tribute that was due to the warden and his office and administration. These men were the rightful leaders I have mentioned some place earlier in 'the book'. They were diplomats and persuaders and they knew how to talk and fortunately, while I was there, this moderately vocal band and bevy chose to let D.P. be a good little jail.

There were men doing indefinite sentences in D.P., in '77 – '79. They were the lifers, the elite and these gents were mainly men who passed thru the shadows of D.P. without much fuss or bother. They were men who, for odd and private reasons, had stumbled and tripped over a shift and rift in their life's trial and terrain. Maybe it happened like this...

A man finds his true love, his woman. They marry, raise kids and do fine. All is well. Until a hot and dusty day comes along and the man blows in from the fields and walks into his house and his bedroom and finds his lady in the sack with his best friend. Forget about this man contemplating and reflecting on C.P. and the death penalty. No case. On that fateful day that man goes straight for the closet and hauls out the pump – action shotgun inside, loads and levels it at his best friend, now his ex – best friend and crashes and showers the early evening air with chopped meat and fine blood. Then he turns slowly and lovingly to his lady, smiles and says goodbye and blasts her cheatin' heart thru the bedsprings. Sometimes life's this way... or a situation similar.

The lifers were the upper crust, the aristocrats of the jail, though I doubt these royal labels were solicited or wanted. Hell, these men never had criminal minds. No. They knew they had fucked up and only wanted to

be left alone, to sort out and unravel their heads and lives. After their time was done, these men would go their indicated ways and they knew they would never be frequent visitors to the jail. The killer's club.

Here in this tour de force and classic compendium of words seems about right to drop a few lines down and reflect some on Capital Punishment, state sanctioned death, the death penalty. Are you experienced? Because, like any thoughtful confusion facing any country on this planet today, the answer is so damn simple. Capital Punishment? I'll make this public domain.

There are people in this country today who will tell you C.P. is no more than murder by the state. Wrong. Think semantics here. C.P. is necessary retribution. In certain cold and calculating cases. I'll come back on this one.

There are people across this great land who will tell you C.P. is vengeance and it can never be a deterrent and is not a preventative measure. That C.P. is brutal, savage and barbaric and not nice at all.

These people are correct in their postulations. As far as they go. C.P. *is* vengeance by the state. C.P. *will* never be a deterrent. C.P. *is* not a preventative measure. C.P. *is* brutal, savage and barbaric and not decorous or befitting these civilized and modern days. It is also not the point at all.

The real point is there are 1st degree broken people on this planet who should not be permitted to breathe my oxygen.

C.P. and the Death Penalty that goes with it, is correct for 1 unique individual. The conscious killer. This person will sit back and plot and plan a killing. This singular person will knowingly, with perception and understanding, conceive and consider, design and do this crime and trespass. Cold and calculating. He *will* imagine the consequences. He *will* grasp the significance. This of course is pre – meditated murder. This is the one. For this one a special individual should have his ticket taken by the state. No matter the mental capacity of this person either. Sane or insane. It doesn't signify or amount to clemency or compassion because he is defective and deserves death. Death is fit and due this individual. There is no other killer breed meritable enough to be executed by the state. Every other killer goes free.

God will test a man. God will test a nation.

When Canada is called upon, on that splendid day and when God points His long and bony finger and gravely and gravelly asks, "Who gave you the right?" Canada can stand tall and proudly answer, "You did Boss."

The screws did good time in D.P., in '77 – '79. Hillbilly mentality is easy to please, don't you know. Those redneck screws mostly sat back, drank coffee and smoked cigarettes, ate doughnuts and let the convicts run the jail. Which was fine with us convicts. Some jails did operate this way, back in the late seventies. Because you see, without the cons doing the menial assignments, the housekeeping and the maintenance, the kitchen duty, the yard work and the paperwork, well, the jail would have ceased to function. Hell, it would have stopped and fell apart.

Try and picture a clown or a total fool on the business end of a broom or mopping a floor or typing a letter or peeling a potato or planting a flower. Not possible. These undertakings took skills and talents far beyond those asshole screws' abilities and they could never have learned or understood them had the gracious government of Canada sent them all off to University for 100 years.

As I say, it was fine with us men. The arrangement we had with administration left us with a lot of holes and openings. Convicts have shrewd and crafty ears and eyes and the ones working in the offices and playing with the typewriters and fiddling with the files, consistently, could tell us who a man was and if he was who he said he was. We convicts generally knew who was solid in the jail.

Convicts were often in positions of trust and occasionally privy to intentionally whispered confidentiality and could sometimes tell us when a search was impending and then we could stash our goods and behave like angels. Now and again, a man could be told in advance he was about to be transferred to another prison and as this bad-ass procedure was customarily done via Midnight Express, the forewarning gave a man enough time to prepare himself accordingly. Some of the outside staff, people such as teachers and instructors, who came into the jail to train and educate us convicts, were optimal and outstanding this way and would, on occasion, bring a man in a drink like this and it was greatly appreciated every time.

No doubt many of the screws thought us convicts no better than offal and bobtails and this conjecture may have had a ring of truth to it but then, our feelings towards our keepers ran basically the same, which also may have been partially true. Ambivalence on this point yet most of us knew who wielded the real power in D.P., in the late seventies and this glowing bit of faith and veracity came down once, fast and furious and in a somewhat suggestive way and I'll be writing and explaining this interesting humor and comedy mighty soon. Don't go away.

I've told part of the story. There was more to it. For now though, you folks only have to know and realize, there was always a fierce lack of trust and communication between us convicts and the screws, in D.P., back in '77 – '79. It was the best way to be in a jail. So, let the men have their toys and playthings, 'Just don't cause me no trouble on my shift convict!'

Right. 'Let me do my time pig!'

Let me cruise and float a bit and allow me to dispel or establish a few jailhouse myths and misconceptions, right here and now.

Square – john citizens seem to think and believe men in jail are strung – out and stoned most of their days inside and any spare time is spent buggering young boys, each other or jerking off. Mainly this isn't true. To an extent, some of it happens. No argument here. But... nearly every man is a willing participant, in whatever wickedness and immoral activity he chooses to become involved with in a jail.

When any flavor dope reached and hit the Drum it was an event. I can recall, clearly, days and weeks of dry spells, when drugs were a memory and not many of us convicts were excited or concerned about it being that way. We may have wanted but we never needed, if you follow me here. Hell, we were much too healthy, natural and whole, too vital and relaxed, to be distracted about having no dope to see us over and past the doldrums and down days. Usually...

There were the determined ones, men with a regular and systematic pipeline to the world of drugs but they were quiet about it and never drew the heat. A good thing in a jail is hard to come by and worth keeping secret and undercover. We were all quiet with our choices.

True also, to a limited extent, some young men turned to older, more experienced men, for identification and status, security and protection. To a degree this reasoning was sound, to a certain young man. A confirmed convict would *sometimes* step in, to keep his kid out of trouble and would *maybe* intervene, when the bugger stepped out of bounds.

As to forcible violation or rape, well, I doubt an item of this nature would have been looked upon with approval by the run – of – the – mill population, even if the types to promote such blasphemy were to be found in D.P., in '77 – '79. Rape is a foul thing under any circumstance. Had it happened in the Drum, it may have been tolerated because of a disturbingly weak character and conscience, common and inherent to some men in the jail but never condoned. Perhaps in another jail, maybe in a rock – tough eastern jail or a south of the border iron – strong jail but not in D.P., '77 – '79.

In D.P., back in the late seventies, every man had a given amount of free will and was content and able to go off in his own directions. D.P. was a good little jail back in '77 – '79. And we all jerked – off. Laughter was often our best defense.

Queers? I suppose there were a few. Must have been, I dare say. It was generally agreed in the jail and easily sanctioned, going native or queer was an acceptable practice, if a man was doing a 5 spot or more years. I was doing 3. Bear and keep it in mind folks.

I reckon it's about time to take a stiff judgment upon myself. This one is severe but I'm going for it. Look out. This is a test. Most convicts are really only big children who never grew up. Mostly they are men who are afraid and angry and lonely and confused. Most convicts do not think or reason or act like adults of the real world. I know I was still a child inside.

An education of a certain nature was lacking and missing from my life. It began at an early age. It began at home. With negligent and permissive parents, who were too busy to care and too innocent to be bothered and too blind to realize and appreciate that a child needs love and affection, not only during his tender years but as a young man as well.

Schools and travel were wonderful and fine institutions but they merely taught me the basics and laid a healthy foundation. Which was good and right. It's what they were supposed to do. However, sometimes I would brood and wonder on the status of my having come away from school as no more than an educated entity and not as a concerned and caring human being.

At an early age I determined I had no love for my fellow man. I was hard and hollow and I never cared.

I can only surmise that my failure to care for other people, my inability to love others, was passed on and ingrained from my parents because of the sweet and gentle upbringing I experienced at their hearth and hands. Nothing physically disturbing or distressing, just that they weren't wise enough to care either. So I retreated into confusion and loneliness and anger and fear.

Books and writing saved my life. Without books and the written word, I would have gone insane and perished before I was 10 yrs. old. I was saved. It was a miracle folks.

People today no longer read books. Which is sad because the man who doesn't read is so damn *limited*. Who will tell a young man of the beauties and mysteries of this planet and the Universe? Who will tell a young man of the perils and dangers of making the wrong choices? Who will tell young people they should respect and love each other? Books...

Our jailers were not perfect or without flaw. One embarrassing miscue by administration took place and occurred during the bright and lazy summer of 1978. It was a typical July afternoon in the jail, 30°C or so and us convicts had said positively no to work of any sort and instead had taken to lolling around the sprawling and sparkling green lawns of D.P.

We had huge and high – volume speakers, playing music from excellent sound systems, blankets of many colors, swimsuits and tanning lotion, shades and long cool drinks and it was a pleasurable and satisfying indulgence and we were enjoying the experience immensely. (We had seriously tried for an Olympic – sized pool that year but the warden had scratched and scratched and thought this idea a bit *too* wild and *too* comfortable.) Anyway, a man could sit back and listen to rock and roll, move to the other side of the yard and catch folk music, move again and hear country swing or maybe jazz or maybe the blues. I know the blues...

Jazz is when you own a house worth a natural ¼ million, you have 2 cars and 2 kids who hear your words, a beautiful wife who adores you and smiles with you, a secure position with a large corporation and a boss who respects you. You and your wife share and enjoy a blossoming and blooming bank balance. You employ a servant. You sit in your cozy den and you stare into your real wood fire. You are surrounded by new books and old brandy and you smoke a pipe. You live a shallow and empty life and you *should* listen to jazz. You *deserve* jazz. "Jazz is *so* fucking white," says Ruth. And Ruth does not lie.

The blues is when you've lost your job and your boss, now your ex-boss, thinks you are no better than crawling shit, your faithless wife took out every bent nickel from the faithful joint bank account and ran off

with the hired hand, taking the kids and 1 of the cars, the bank stepped in and took the other along with the house and tossed your fizzled ass out and onto the street. On the street you have no friends, nowhere to go, you got holes in both your shoes, you have no money, no tobacco but you *have* begun to develop a sizable drinking problem and you *know* you're going to jail. Then you begin to understand the blues. I understand the blues real well. More about that day...

Big Brother *wanted* us to be happy and content. The administrators of D.P. generously *allowed* us to have fun.

No one expected or was prepared for that surprise visit from the harbingers in charge of Corrections Canada. Absolute, supreme and imperious penal authority, mean and fresh and straight out of Ottawa.

Those bureaucratic bastards were outraged. They were shocked and scandalized over our desecration of guidelines predominantly deemed common to a Federal Penitentiary.

The warden was dragged, weeping and whimpering, onto the carpet and stood up in front of those ugly bastards. There and then he took to pitiful grovel and cringe but to no avail. It never helped him much. The poor fucker was given a stern and brutal tongue lashing and soundly and roundly lectured and chastised for being a groupie and a suck and for surrendering to us roughnecks and hoods.

Word came down quickly. No more rest – home – like privileges. No more flagrant abuse of prescribed jailhouse policy and protocol was the inflexible word which came down from Ottawa.

It was not easy to contemplate and comprehend, that, as convicted criminals, we were to be considered and treated with harshly and exactingly.

We behaved ourselves for a week.

Then we exhibited and demonstrated a tenacious and stubborn resiliency, by ignoring the whole damned chain of command and fearlessly restoring and resuming the status quo. The warden stared up at the clear blue sky and said and did nothing.

It was about as close as we convicts ever came to being important and in control, back in D.P., in the late seventies. It was a small thing. It was a narrow victory but it made us feel big. Little moments in the jail. Every smart man has them.

I never did encourage communication with the outside world. Letters from my best friend and a young girl on fire were wonderful but a visit from the street was always awkward and confusing.

Don came down from Edmonton twice, once to bring me money from my street depository and again to run me in some drugs but I'll come back to this perilous occasion further on in 'the book'. It takes a special type of courage to deliver up bootleg and foreign merchandise to a jail. Thanks Don. You done good.

Starry – eyed Susan, my sister, dropped in on me, to check up on my spiritual condition and she never brought me in a single material item. No testers or treats. I was a tad upset with the flighty little bubble – head.

At the time. Later, I came to understand Susan's true gifts to me. Hope and faith, courage and inspiration, were her gifts. Sue, you did right. Love you truly.

The bluest visit I ever had, was the one from a ravishing and exquisite young girl I was cherishing and anticipating as my, 'comin' home', requital and reward. Sally was her name. We both ran out of words too soon and the experience was upsetting and uncomfortable. To look into her big brown eyes and see her doubt and hurt and filled with impossible questions was a bitter and woeful feeling inside me. The girl could only sit back and smile sorrowfully and stare at me and my misfortune and it was a raw and piercing effort, to tell her about the jail and of how I came to be there and how I survived in an environment she would never understand. To tell her I needed to be alone for a while and that loneliness was a hurtin' feeling and of how I had gone beyond loneliness and that I was alone but never lonely. That the jail was my problem and I would deal with it and of how sometimes I never needed to be reminded of the real world and there were days in D.P. when I could never think past the fence and though I was rich in both worlds, times were when a stranger could ask me what day it was and I would have difficulty remembering the month. To tell her I could not go home with you and pretty girl you ever will be, please remember to remember to stay beautiful for this melancholy and mournful planet.

There were those men in the jail who were inclined to sniff and inhale paint thinners or glue or other toxic substances to get high and it was a dismal and dramatic event and entertainment to view and witness.

Well now, this one particular evening, there may have been dark and heavy clouds of gray smoke, rolling and billowing forth from my cell, in which the gang and I had gathered and were situated. Ordinarily, a distinction such as this would have been a center – shot and drawn the heat but on that remarkable evening, the musky and musty fragrance of marijuana was exceedingly and mightily overpowered by the stench of plastic or wood – filler or cellulose or mucilage fumes, emanating from my neighbor's house across the range. A really rotten smell, not civilized and there is no way on earth to cover up and disguise the awful and revolting odor of this insanity. A scene and setting like this one *always* brought down the goon squad. As it did on this occasion.

Six burly louts came charging mindlessly down the range, did a quick and rapid reconnoiter, snorted 12 times, crashed into my neighbor's cell and cast a net over the entire noxious group within. Then the goons stood up and sorted out those poor men and proceeded to drag them off, one by one, wailin' and howlin', to solitary confinement. The charge was a natural C.O.N. and the consequence was 30 days in the hole.

It was on exactly such a foggy evening that Bill blew in, like a large and wrathful northern misery. Bill had come to D.P. with the vain and modest intention of showing our happy little gang how to properly run the jail you see. A crude and rude fellow, Bill had walked right into my house, no knock or warning and caught the lot of us, the whole damned gang, smoking marijuana. It was a cold – nuts surprise and not necessarily jailhouse propriety but then, Bill had never been known for his gentle ways. It was an awkward moment.

Now, I had known Bill from back in the real world but the gang had no way of realizing this nor could they possibly have understood Bill's 6'6" – 250 lb. gigantic frame, most especially not with heads full of dope and bright and clever hallucinations. No. Only 1 thing for it and that was to haul Bill's renegade ass outside, get some air, do the walk and grill him for his story.

First off, however, Bill needed to know everything about jail – house brews, who, how, when and where could he find a drink at that precise moment. Bill wanted to do his time as stewed and stoned as was humanly possible. He was a bit of a bug and a lug this way. The man had only been in the jail 24 hrs. and already he had put together and consumed a fast – action tomato brew and concoction in R+D. Bill was a madman. Hell, he wasn't even in population and not supposed to be on the yard, a digger offense but when I made reference and referral to this salty piece of acumen, Bill's dull and blunt response was, "Fuck the warden." This was Bill.

Bill was doing a 3 yr. penalty for extreme violence and duress and possession of a narcotic for the purpose of trafficking. Someone who knew the rules, had been late and ornery over a drug deal and after Bill and his partner Phil had finished beating the man to within an inch of his life and collected what coin and cash they could, further and as an object lesson, they had blown out the fool's picture window with a 12 gauge shotgun. Bill took the fall and Phil took the money and ran away. Now...

I had known Phil also. We had met some years past, in B.C., where I had escaped to on another one of my desperation runs. The law had been chasing me of course, the reason long forgotten and I had somehow gyrated and whirligigged towards the center of that damned province. Because of one of those unique circumstances peculiar to my world, a loneliness I suppose, I had been given just cause to go working for the C.N.R., as a machine operator. That awful misery had come over me like a big freight – train and I had had no choice at all in the matter.

Anyway, there must have been 20 of us crooks and miscreants and the law couldn't touch us in this odd and unusual part of B.C. This confounded detail was because we were marooned high and dry on a lonely and fiery railroad siding, smack in the middle of The Great Divide. We hardly knew where we were. We lived in box – cars. We were hobos and bindle – stiffs.

Everyone was crazy. Drink and do dope, pick up a paycheque and go skinning and sliding on down the track, looking and hoping for another sanctuary, was what everyone was doing that summer in B.C.

No problem with the boss man either. The C.N.R. work master was plumb afraid and terrified of the whole damn crew. The old bohunk was so frightened, he would let me flag down and hitch a lift into Kamloops, on any west coaster, whenever we ran short of booze and other medications or whenever our essentials began to dwindle and flounder and to become scarce as hens' teeth. About all I ever had to tell the old bastard was my machine was down and I needed a part from the shop in town. My machine went down an average of 2 x every week, regular as a clock.

That machine of mine was designed to traipse and travel the mainline and clear slides, rocks and mud and snow and debris as might decide to come rumbling down the side of a mountain and threaten to hazard and wreck a train. The ridiculous contraption could even pick and replace those worn and treacherous rails that are strewn and scattered carelessly and dangerously thru – out the interior of B.C. It was quite a remarkable machine all right.

Whenever necessity or requirement arose, the men, Phil included, would be called on and have to crack and bang in those merciless spikes, on that guilty as hell rail line, with hot and heavy hammers, while I sat back on my machine, occasionally pulled on a supervising lever or 2, drank beer and watched their labors with wry amusement. Every so often I would climb down from my rig, step onto the track and do a slow stroll down the middle of those ribbons of flickering steel and remark casually, “Hey! I don’t hear those hammers ringing!” The men *liked* working with me. “Not much I can do for you. I would if I could. Someone has to be superior and in charge and that someone is me. Someone has to toil and suffer, to keep those trains a – movin’ and a – rollin’ along. That must be you poor bastards. Ho! Ho! Everybody back to work!” The men could get excited over any one of my witty comments and clever observations. “Damn! Sure is hot today eh Phil? Bet you could go for a cold beer? Am I right?” and I’d burp and unhurriedly and laggardly return to my machine, spotless and immaculate in clean blue jeans. Behind me would be the harsh and guttural sounds of disgruntled oaths and curses from Phil and the men, a genuine profane streak in my retreating direction.

Without question, it was a hellishly hot section and segment of B.C. and one fine morning we all quit. Just shamefacedly shut down the entire crack-brained operation. I parked my machine safely on a spare siding and walked away. Phil and the men tossed their tools into the purling and gurgling waters of the Fraser River. Then we organized a raid and trespass on Kamloops and went insane on cheap booze, bad drugs and trashy women. That junket and expedition lasted 2 weeks and we all may have come real close to getting arrested and locked up with a chocolate key. I had felt a desperate and reckless fear towards the end of that adventure and so had alertly and wisely rebounded in the specific direction of Edmonton and into the lovin’ arms of the mortifical witch who awaited me there. Her name was Colleen. However, before departing Kamloops, I had innocently given Phil my numbers, “in case B.C. gets too hot to hold you.”

Well now, Phil did indeed come to Edmonton. Smartly and in short order. The very next Christmas. With a 15 yr. old hooker in tow named Linda. The kid was wearing braces on her teeth. She was too young to have tits. Ho! Ho! My shack – up and room mate was horrified. “She’s only a child! A baby!” She was aghast and agape, “You monster! You and your friend! You’re monsters!” and she refused to let Phil and his woman sleep on the carpet.

It was Christmas and even if the old girl *was* paying the rent, her perspectives were wrong and unwholesome. What I should have done was give her a couple of loud and solid shots alongside her head. What

I did was call on Emergency Social Services and give them a fabricated but absolutely plausible yarn and story and it turned out to be a good thing for Phil and his moppet and they were in and together for the long run.

During a not so levelheaded moment in time, I had somehow and somewhere inducted and introduced Phil to Bill. I had sensed they were men both mean enough and crazy enough to be comfortable with each other. Hell, they were both adequately depraved and degenerate enough to get on *famously* with one another.

See, Phil was a dedicated west – coast junkie and Bill knew for a fact what that item was all about. Anyway...

I sort of stepped back and to the side and watched with keen interest, as they proceeded to sack and loot Edmonton and its funereal population of afraid and frightened inhabitants.

Today, I suspect Phil is likely dead. The man was a mover, very fast and very mean and given his perilous and precarious lifestyle, almost assuredly, Phil must have met with a bad ending and come to an early grave. I haven't seen the man for a while and I don't know of many junkies strong and brave and courageous enough, to put in enough time, to get their gold watches and pension cheques from the government of Canada. No.

So, there was Bill, locked harmlessly in the Drum, along with a burning and seething attitude. Bill wanted nothing more or less than to get out of D.P., restored and robust and then murder his ex – partner Phil, for screwing him on their last dope deal.

To this end, Bill was determined to get big and strong and in the jail that meant pumping iron, for the maximum and most consequential effect and result as pertaining to his next and presumably last encounter with Phil.

Now, while I would never have dared to lay hands or claim upon the steel, thank you very much, it was a pleasure to watch and witness, as Bill metamorphosized his street beaten body into a towering rock of muscle and meanness. Every time, on the iron, pushing up and grunting, "Phil!" and down it was a forced and strangled, "Rat!" It was a powerful and menacing performance.

To further abuse his person and to distress and torture mine, Bill took to coming over to my house in the morning. Early. Somehow he was able to convince the pig in the control bubble of the prudence and sapience of opening my cell door. Then Bill would quietly slide inside and commence to holler and shout. "Rise and shine!"

"Leave me alone!"

"Ya' gotta get healthy!"

"Fuck off!"

"Sleep is for weaklings!" and we would be on our way, Bill cajoling me along and me yawning and complaining, out to the handball courts.

Handball folks. I had decided, since the defeat and debacle of baseball, that, should I ever again become involved with another sport in the jail, it would have to be a sport at which I could win or lose on my own merit. A one – on – one affair, a sport at which I could walk the edge and not just take up space. No blaming anyone else. I wanted to be responsible. I wanted to be a winner. So...

It had to be handball. D.P. style. Gloves were sissy. Pain was a biting and stinging intimate. Skill, coordination and conditioning came dearly but instantly, I knew and understood the game. Handball is a game I feel an affinity for and am attracted to and partial to, even today.

Handball took me, every morning and after work, out to the courts, where I absorbed and exhausted myself with racking and terrible punishment from the game and the burning and blistering D.P. sun. And that sun was a wild thing each day; blasting and shrieking down on me and the torment of it would become my most vivid and enduring memory of D.P. Even now, on a hot summer's day, I can still recall an angry red ball of fire and flame over me while playing handball, a fond reminiscence of my D.P. days.

Bill was too clumsy and too slow to be serious competition and I was too arbitrary and I soon left him behind but Bill was my patch to the daring and dynamic game of handball and he was always a lot of fun on the court. "Whine! Whine!"

"Prick!"

"Snivel! Snivel!"

"Asshole!"

"Ya' got no guts!" Cough and gag. Choke and puke. Good times like these I remember so well.

Only after the sun had broiled and blinded us and the blood had coated and caked our hands and fingers, would we collapse with riotous laughter, on the shady side of the handball court and drink a quart of home – made 4 day brew. Then, if it happened to be a weekend, it was brunch. Yes indeed. Brunch. The convict committee, those bright and brainy fellows, had reasoned, with a clear and peculiar logic only a convict or someone who works closely with him can follow, in this case our wise warden, that, the jail should sleep late on weekends. "See here boss. Let the men saw wood on weekends. They'll be beholden to ya' boss. The street staff won't have to come in early on weekends either. Save ya' some bucks. Ottawa might like that, especially in view of your last performance, when they came a – callin' 2 weeks ago. You really made a hash of it. We were disappointed and ashamed of your monkeyshines and burlesque. We were humiliated and embarrassed by your cowardly ways. You let us down. Here's a chance to redeem yourself. You'll be a trendy sort of guy. Might even start a fashion. Trust us on this one boss."

The warden, obliging fellow that he was, may have shrugged and thought, 'Perhaps the men have a point. Could be those fucking convicts are right for once. Maybe I'll get a mention and my picture in the, 'Wardens Weekly'. Maybe I won't get hurt this time.'

Maybe so boss but us convicts had only a slack and easy reason for pressing and petitioning brunch, nothing ulterior, just that we were loose and lazy and tended to relax and lay back whenever we could find the time and rising early on weekends we could do without.

Brunch was an extreme entertainment and occurrence, in D.P., in the late seventies, every Saturday and Sunday, from 9 A.M. till 2 P.M. and it was steak and eggs any style, bacon, ham, sausage, potatoes, toast and jams, milk, juice, tea and coffee plus whatever might normally have been lunch, the entrée, complete with salads and dressings and six kinds of pie. It was a superb and distinguished scoff and gorge and the only thing missing from the menu may have been our hospitable warden handing out high quality Cuban cigars, to each one of us convicts, as we were leaving the cafeteria.

Bill had hit population with a fury and a vengeance and any fresh fish and his cell was a target for him to hang and hide one of his ghastly and beastly brews in. When Bill *did* hook one of these gullible young boots, he would take to flapping and clucking all around the kid's cell, like a big ol' red rooster, while planting and installing one of his unusual and unpleasant brews and at the same time assuring and promising the simple lad of the wisdom and significance of such a gimmick and gambit. "Not to worry! I *am* security! If you *do* get popped, send the pig over to my house! I'll bend the goof over the closest bench and take his cherry for my own self! Son, when this brew hits the range, you'll have *lots* of friends. Believe me on this one son." Bill was a very persuasive man.

And those vile and vicious jailhouse brews could be pure hell. On a finicky and ferocious day, Bill and his cronies would go out foraging and gathering all the fruit they could lay their thieving hands upon, along with an empty 3 gallon plastic milk container borrowed from the kitchen, a pound of sugar and a pinch of yeast, add water and wait and if you and your confederates had the patience to wait 5 days, well, that mix and blend would just naturally make you all kinds of drunk or awful sick and unhealthy. A man took his chances. And we all agreed, the raisin brews were always the best, the most potent and the most powerful on the planet.

I don't believe we ever did build a 5-day brew in the jail. Usually the 4th day was all the stress and strain we could handle and then the sampling could begin. With bright and eager eyes, "only just a taste..." Right. Three gallons of venal and perfidious brew would do an ugly and unrefined number on every one of us sad and scurvy jailbirds.

The fermentation process and the waiting for a brew to ripen and mature was a curious and comical procedure. See, the rank smell of a jailhouse brew was truly terrible and went on forever. To get around and bypass the illicit tang and aroma which inevitably came burbling off any one of our noble creations, we would make and manufacture sleeper brews, sham and simulated brews, which would be placed deliberately so as the screws could find them. When the swine *did* find the phony sock and stash, they would, by nature, take to whoopin' and tootin' with ecstasy, at having frustrated and stymied our Saturday night party and debauch.

We convicts would stare at the silly fuckers and give them our best poker faces and sightseer smiles.

By the time the sleeper stench had cleared from the unit, our fair and square home brew would be ready and cooked proper and then us convicts would dance and lay foundation. We became staggering and reeling misfits and could readily have been mistaken for F – troop. Some weekends the entire joint was rocked and lurched on whole – hearted and down – home booze and spirits and the screws could only stand back and watch with mystified horror and wonder and shake their heads in bewilderment and perplexement before legging it on back to the safety and false protection and security of their glass bubbles.

Bill was an unpredictable and troublesome combination of laughter and treachery, all his days in D.P. before getting his cantankerous bulk and mass transferred to a family jail in B.C., after our mini – riot. Bill was, without doubt, the most comical, the most outrageous and the most dangerous man I ever met in D.P. Bill would make another man aware and continually remind him that he was hugely important and that he was just passin' thru the jail. Bill was a good man to do time with.

Handball became a mind – blowing obsession. I was fixated by handball and every day I played I was beset and besieged by the relentless and merciless D.P. sun and I was a flash and no man could catch me. Each slash and swat of the ball was a blow for freedom and truth and I was simply the best. I won everything I needed in the jail, smokes, plastic, canteen and crafts and all the boneroo. I was so damned healthy I was suspicious. I was wired to the fine – line and I enjoyed and thrilled to every moment on the court and never let anyone tell you different, it's *never* lonely at the top.

In D.P., back in the late seventies, I became a complete and consummate person. I had all that I needed. I had my books. I had handball. I had friends when I wanted them. I had drugs and other recreations when I required them. For practical and realistic purposes I had my welding. My days were full.

The screws let in enough dope, just enough, to keep the joint mellow and loose and this was good and right. Home made alcoholic beverages regularly transformed me and the gang into a besotted and bedeviled gaggle of repeat offenders on weekends and we made the jailhouse rock. Also right and good. Read the library, hundreds, thousands of books, 4 – 6 at a time and I *prospered* and I was detached and disinterested about the world past and beyond the gates of D.P. *because* I had all that I needed in the jail. In D.P., in '77 – '79, it seemed as though I had gained and been given most everything people back in the real world looked for and worked for and battled for all of their lives. I had it all. Hell, I had *value* in D.P. I *belonged* in D.P. At some point during my 3 yr. sentence for illegal use of explosives, I recognized that I had lost all motivation to strive and struggle for more. I had become institutionalized.

Now, I had never craved or coveted much back in the real world anyway. Hell no. About the only comforts I ever hankered for were simple ones, 4 walls and a roof to cover me, the clothes I slept in, a book, a dozen beer and someone to talk to were my basic needs. The only other things I had evenly on the outside were

pain, sorrow and grief, loneliness, anger and fear. I saw days I was so poor I had to look up to see down on the street. These were unlooked for conditions to be sure but every one of them were part and parcel of the package that was my stock and trade for so many years.

The awesome and staggering revelation that come home to me, one wonderful day in the jail, was the astonishing and surprising notion of realizing that I never really *did* care if I *did* get topped and died back on the streets of the free world before I came to the friendly environs of D.P. A true and honest statement folks.

Inside and behind the walls of D.P., I resolved it correct and fitting that I be around and go around this marvelous and majestic planet for a long, long time. I decided and was certain I was worthy of this planet. At some late point in my 3 yr. sentence, I met with a change and underwent a redemption.

All thru my life I've experienced spiritual awakenings.

I changed. But first...

Amazingly, I knew or thought I knew, with all my heart and head, that when I *did* hit civy – street, it would only be a matter of short time before I found trouble and hardship again. It seemed an unalterable fact of the misguided and unclear lifestyle I was ensnared and settled into and called my own back on the street. So why even bother? Why *fucking* bother? Why not accept my puzzled and disputed existence and keep returning to the jail, sans guilt and remorse and not concern myself with the positives and negatives about it? Why not surrender? Why not bars and stripes forever?

Every convict suspected these same thoughts, even if he couldn't or wouldn't admit it out loud, even if he never had the words.

The good warden of D.P., back in '77 – '79, could have had his flunkys put in forty palm trees, placed a strip of sand alongside and inside the fence, sunk a regulation – sized swimming pool plunk in the dead-center of the complex and I could easily have imagined myself retired on an elegant and inspiring island resort, my 3 – massed china –clipper a – flyin' the skull and crossbones and anchored lazily in the blue lagoon outside the fence. Easily. There were times in the jail when I felt so damn comfortable I never wanted to leave. Times when the warden could have laid open the gates of the jail and I would have hesitated and halted, shook my head dreamily and gone back to my cell and locked up. Times were when I knew that if I ever left the jail, it would be like leaving and missing an old friend. Absolutely true fact. In the late seventies, I had no valid reason to be afraid of D.P. D.P. was my home.

Escape? Ho! Ho! In Canada, in the late '70s, there was no other jail in which a convict would rather have been and no other jail he would have wished less to escape from.

I'm giving you folks some of the mystery and allure of a Canadian prison. I have my own questions and answers and you may have yours. It's always a tough call folks.

Are you ready? For several more sophisticated yet humble words of wisdom? Here they come and now I'll be telling you of the trap that is a Canadian jail, of why some men keep going back. I feel qualified to write these words so you had best give me room.

I'll cut to the fundamentals. I've mentioned, in a small way, some pages past, an elemental truth. I'll name it again. Most convicts are children who forgot to grow up. Now, here I have a statement, which *should* come back on and haunt me some day. A strong and stately allegation. But I doubt it. It's the truth and I don't recall as the truth has ever hurt or hindered me, on such occasions as I've seen it favorable to employ and practice it.

A man in jail has reacted to society's structure, the rules, the reasons, the mores and the ordinance of it like a child would. That is, with a spirit of rude and uneducated rebellion. Actions with no regard to consequences. As such, a young man will make those blind and backward choices and mistakes considered unlawful and criminal and he will be paid in retributive currency. A young man will go to jail.

A responsible adult will make rational and mature choices. A lucid and well – adjusted adult will think and ask questions and proceed in an accountable manner. A sensible and reasonable adult has grown *both* in mind and body and being thus developed, will become a creator, a necessary one, one who establishes order and method, one who codifies and regulates, one who brings about a routine of acceptable disposition and prevents chaos on this excitable planet.

A certain young man can not and will never fathom and can never appreciate or accept concepts and ideas like law and order, right and wrong, justice and being fair and free. He has not grown mentally this way and will go to jail in lieu of understanding of society's nature.

How and why does such monumental sadness and tragedy happen and occur? In such a rich and abundant and educated and prosperous and advanced country which Canada conspicuously is? Where does it begin? Is any one to blame?

Well now, obviously, at some point, everyone must assume and accept and be accountable for his actions. Right. But, on the long journey thru the night and on and into an awakening, other factors will prove a distraction. There are always diversions.

Parents and peers, environment, education or lack of it, hidden and unknown and unseen forces which control us all? Big business? The government?

I suspect them, every one of them. But...

I'll lean on the parents because, ultimately, they are the ones responsible for a young man's descent into crime. The beginnings. Parents are liable for casting and molding a young man. Yes. I'll step you thru the paces.

The formative process lies with the parents. The beginning begins at home and at an early age. On the home front there is poverty or riches, drugs, neglect, abuse, rejection or whatever else will influence a young man. Apathy will always hold a young man. When a man is left *alone* during his formative years he will go astray and it is the irresponsible parent who is at fault. Who else? The parents are the guilty ones and must own up. They are the ones. Parents are basis of family and...

When a family is deprived of 1 component only, a distinctive spiritual foundation and the morality that comes with it, then the family is in big trouble. Then it becomes 'breakdown of the family unit'. Then it unravels. A young man comes apart. He goes to jail.

And when a young man goes to jail, he can become lost in despair and darkness forever. Once he learns too much about an objectionable and deplorable way of living and being free in the jail, he can stray far beyond the powers of the parent or the state to ever bring back to the fold.

The aftermath of bad decisions, moves and actions in the real world will no longer bother a young man. He can become a person who no longer needs to hide from his conscience because the pain and shame of it has gone away. He mysteriously feels elevated and aloft. Redemption is rarely possible or even desirable *because* he feels special in the jail.

Enter the jailhouse mentality. Pride and self – esteem? Certainly. As an extremist and a radical. No longer as a free person though...

Once a man is *implicated* in the jail, the jail will become a dependency and an acceptance, that he is a failure and deserves every anger and retribution society can heap on him. *Then*, he has no problem coming back to the jail, returning to the only empathy and accord he has ever known. A man will die a bit and become a lesser man, by society's measure, each time he does return to the jail and until he becomes one with the jail.

When a young man becomes established inside, acclimatized, conditioned and desensitized towards the *idea* of jail, his nature to rebel against the *same* jail, to hate it and to fight it, to understand the absurdity and the stupidity of it becomes repressed and eroded and decayed. An attrition of character. A man's insurgent resolve and resolution will be replaced with applause and approval from the other men inside and by the jail itself. In jail, a man will feel the wonderfulness and the exciting freedom which comes with an almost total lack of responsibility. He will see the truthfulness of a world social order that no longer has use or requirement of him and he will view this circumstance with grave countenance. He will accept his condition and situation. Desires will be lost, drive and ambition will not be important, once a young man becomes integrated and one of an organized array of integers, a needful piece of a complex embodiment and it can seem just and right to a certain young man.

The jail is a living entity. The jail can become a rushing and ravishing addiction. When compliance has been achieved and solemnly accepted by a certain young man, when a young man has become assimilated, the

jail will tell him all is well and everything is unfolding the way it should. A man can fall in love in the jail. Life is good in the jail.

A jail can become a parent surrogate saying, “Sit back. Stay longer. I need you to stay. Take it easy. Put your feet up. You’ve come home at last son.” As bad and strong as any needle...

A man really can get too damn comfortable in the jail and only a select few will ever break away and become common and free men, ever again. And like all tragedies of the young and foolish, neither I nor anyone else has the solutions. Questions and answers. No solutions.

One downcast and desolate morning found me cutting pipe in the welding shop. John gave me the high – sign and I was off to my unit, expecting the worst and hoping for the best, as we so wisely say in the jail.

Once back at Unit 10, I was politely ushered into a councilor’s office and asked to sit, again with much deference. Then it was that nightmare every man in jail lives with. “Now, we want you to relax. Stay calm. Your Mother died this morning.” A flash of bright light and a moment of stilled thunder... My world rocked and my heart missed a beat. I knew a confused shock and fear and for 3 seconds I looked past the lady councilor. A kind of hush...

Then I came back. With Donna were 2 rather large goons, bred special and for her security, had I decided to snap and go flying across her desk, at some dark point during the preceding formality.

But no. I was collected and steady and I knew an insight and a vision, at that very moment. Of the perfect truth of this planet and of how I can’t find fault or flaw with it and of how I wasn’t there when God laid the foundations of the Universe and of how I wasn’t there when God set the pillars of the world and therefore I should remain silent and in awe over and concerning those mysteries and enigmas I don’t understand and can’t explain. Powerful thoughts and words and they humbled me then and still do today.

Something happened. Something twisted deep inside my head and heart. It was an ending and a beginning. A part of me had died and another was reborn. It was a spiritual awakening. Something, a door or a book, had closed and another had opened for me. I was clear and lucent.

I was also slightly chafed and annoyed with the presence of those 2 pigs. For no acceptable reason. I suppose another man may have took to gnashing his teeth and pulling his hair and exhibiting other startling symptoms of aberration and acrimonious behavior, which would have necessitated their burly talents and endowments. But no. Visibly I was in no way disturbed. Instead of distress and anguish, I stood, thanked the lady, turned away and quietly and quickly left her office. I went walking. Around the jail, the sports field, the track and then I retreated to the stillness of the bleachers and sat and pieced it all together.

There is a God. One God. God.

Otherwise, my life and existence on this rare and precious planet is a cruel and heinous misery or a really bad joke, either of which I’ll never be prepared to accept and believe.

The very idea of my being here by coincidence or dumb luck is a silly and stupid notion. I am *not* ruled by chance or hazard. There is a reason for everybody and everything.

My purpose on this amazing and astonishing planet is to practice ‘yirat shamayim’, to fear God and to obey God. Straight goods. Not much else. Every other ambition and aspiration is secondary and incidental. Working and making money, having fun, lovin’ and losin’, are just subsequent pleasures. I do *not* have a blind faith in God. Call it an absolute faith folks.

All *beliefs* in God are correct. Everyone is praying to the same God. One God. God. God doesn’t mind how a man exalts Him and praises Him, in whatever tongue or language, in whatever color, in whatever name. It is really only words crossing over each other, on this titillating and topsy – turvy planet. The righteous will be found in every nation of the world. Yes.

Sitting back, on an enamored and enchanted evening in D.P., in 1978 and I was serene and stationary and part of a glorious and spectacular sunset and I could only conclude God had need of my Mother for his own mysterious and incomprehensible reasons and I was *not* about to ask Him for an explanation.

For many years before my D.P. days and since, I have known God has a plan. Could be He works with an unfathomable system of weights and measures and back in ’78, His ledger may have been tilting into the red and He decided to pick up my Mother as an adjustment.

People are forever asking why. Why are the blameless taken away? Why do the good die young? The answer to these questions is, they are the very ones God needs. The innocent ones are His people, His players in the big game.

See, when a chosen and guiltless person dies, that person’s *substance* goes to a reward, a requital of rest and peace, to a place without pain or fear. That person’s *essence* is taken out of harm’s way and no longer has to deal with or respond to the miseries and misfortunes of this world today or the mayhem and outrageous ruination which is tomorrow.

I see this neat ray of logical reasoning explains and eases my Mother’s death and also the ostensibly untimely demise of many others as well. I’ll move on.

Everything is God’s plan. He has His reasons. I dare these momentous and miraculous words for *any* situation concerning this sublime and eccentric planet. I will *not* go further. It would be impossible today and I shouldn’t be so curious and inquisitive today.

Good and evil do exist. Man has been given a degree of free will and as such, there is the evil that men do, evil that God allows a man to do, as a furtherment to His ultimate plan and design. There is the *justice* that God sends, to chasen and chastise a man, also for His impenetrable reasons. I’m telling you the truth folks. If you believe in God, there is no devil.

Everyone on this planet, except for the peerless few, is a wretched sinner and a wrong doer and the only variable, from man to man, is the degree of fault and blame he is responsible for against God and by this he will be measured. Everyone will answer to his free will deeds. There *will* be a judgment.

Good is more powerful than evil. Now and again, the evil concept or representation which is man's sin in this world, will get a touch more swing and sway than the goodness and greatness man has sowed. Then God, like an almighty general, will conscript more innocents, the pristine ones, to jump onto His side of the scales of design and fortune. The balance – beam equalizes. Up and down. Back and forth. In and out. Round and round.

God and goodness has managed to stay on top and ahead of evil or at least still in the game and this pleases me greatly. Today this doesn't surprise me. No. Everything is as it should be today. God is just.

Though, in D.P., back in 1978, I was filled with amazement and admiration and thought it a phenomenon that God remained a player in the great and magnificent game, of the infinite wonder and destiny of man, considering the shameful and shoddy resources available to Him. I thought of the evil man reveled and gloried in as being able to buy the whole damned pot, at any damned time but then rationalized that a dramatic move and bluff such as this world spoil the flavor of the dare and challenge. I suspected God cheated or was a flimflam type of guy. It seemed entirely possible to me. I may have thought God and goodness and man and his evils, as being a bunch of jokers, running wild and having fun, in 1978.

Good and evil are worthy opponents and they go back to the beginning of men's rule and reign. Every so often, one gets pissed with the other, calls for the deck and the deal, shuffles the cards and looks to kick some ass, as commendable adversaries sometimes do.

Now, evil holds most of the trumps, the mainly bad people on this planet and could stand pat or call in its messy and massy legions at will. But it won't happen. God won't let it happen. Not yet. Everything would overbalance and upset His plan. The final show and curtain is not yet. Soon but not quite yet.

God and goodness *must* come before man and his evil ways. Which explains why moderately naughty people like myself have to wait such a lengthy interval to expire and quit this lofty and forgiving planet. It's a long, long line.

Man creates his own demons. God allow them to be. God is a shake – down kind of associate and abettor. He likes to test a man, to weigh and assess his faith, every now and again. It's the truth folks.

Everywhere I go on this magical planet, every place I see, every man I talk to, every book I read, every word I write, brings me closer to God.

Today, I see a pink sunrise or a sapphire blue sky or a fiery red and blazing sunset and in between, a sassy and saucy golden moon and I know God walks with me.

Today I know that God's gift to me has been my life. Today I know that what I do with the rest and remainder of my life is my gift to God.

The ultimate question comes to me once again. Why are we here? And the humble and proud hearted answer comes to me once more. To endure. To persevere. To serve God. To obey God. To fear God.

God must love this planet and its mixed up and rowdy inhabitants desperately and dearly. A lesser God would have let it go.

I had seen death. It was 1967, Canada's Centennial year, the summer of indecision and heartache and us young guns were flying high and fast, down highway 2, south of Edmonton. It was, 'the highway of doom', so named and called because of the many accidents, injuries and deaths which had occurred along its fell and fearful length and seemed regular and even traditional on holiday weekends. We plainly were punks, off to the lake, for 2 days of girls and drugs and unauthorized alcohol. Three of us damn fools and several cases of underage beer, myself at the wheel of an incredibly fast and dangerous machine, a bottle of warm pilsner between my legs, when suddenly we were witness to a horrific and catastrophic mishap and disaster. Cars ahead of us, traveling at equally perilous and treacherous speeds, started slamming and crashing and bouncing off each other and from lane to lane. Bumpers and fenders, doors and windows were exploding and littering the air and it was a genuine din and hullabaloo but luckily, we had been far enough back and behind for safe and careful consideration.

Everything had stopped rolling and moving by the time we arrived on the scene and macabre and morbidly curious, we had to survey the aftermath of the fury and storm. I pulled it on over, stepped out of the car and into the ditch, to check out the closest wreck. And it was a bent and banged – up phaeton of an automobile, laying deathlike on its back. Looking inside, I could see a tangle of bodies and blood, a lot of blood, twisted arms and legs and various other parts out of place, not where they belonged at all, strange angles of carnage and gore everywhere. Most interesting was one body with its head split wide – open, eyes staring vacantly at nothing at all. Very red and very dead. I saw brain matter, broken and crushed pulp and it appeared like a squished tomato and it was a distressing and disturbing sight to decry and discern. No way was any physician and his expertise ever going to sew and stitch that noggin back together again. I walked away.

To the center line, where a truck and a car, both of which had been traveling in opposite directions, had come together and formed a remarkable fuse and bond. Inside the truck sat the mortal remains of the driver and he looked normal and well – adjusted. He was gazing straight ahead, a confused and addled expression on his face. He was smiling incredulously over the steering wheel of his truck. So far he didn't seem much different from any other driver in Alberta. I had me a closer look. And noted and noticed the man's entire bottom half, from his stampede belt buckle on down, had been severed and was somewhat askew. The 2 people in the adjoining car weren't moving much either. There were more cars involved and scattered here and there in the background and rising and emanating from them with one voice were sounds, low moans and groans and

agonized pleas for help and mercy. The smell of blood and death was in the air and it was becoming an awful trial and test.

By then dozens of motorists were milling and meandering from car to car, figuring it out and assisting and proceeding in a mature and responsible manner. I was weak and I was helpless and I in no way wanted to be held accountable. I finished my beer, flipped the empty off to the side of the road, walked over to my car, climbed behind the black wheel of that red – hot Lincoln, ordered up another can of suds, cracked and pushed the speedometer past 80 – 100 mph and never looked back. Never slowed down. And behind me 5 people lay dead or dying that day.

Back in 1968, my kid sister, Sherrill, had been run over and killed by a drunk driver and it was a peculiar sadness and a blue melancholy and my sister had been 16 in '68.

Pat had come west, from Stratford Ontario, in 1970. Pat was a jolly and jovial fellow, searching for adventure and mysteriously, he had attached himself to me and prevailed upon my resourcefulness to find him a job in the North Country.

Pat was free and easy with his humor and wit and it was readily available whenever a poor boy like me needed it. The man had a custom comeback and explanation for everything and everyone stupid and lumbering. Pat was a natural clown and could make me chuckle and smile and this became his fine and wonderful gift to me because you see, back in 1970, there happened to be a critical lack of comedy in my world and I've always enjoyed and appreciated a person who could make me grin and beam. Pat was such a person. And...

At that particular point in my life, the Northern Lands were beginning to look inviting and summoning again anyway, since I was broke and busted and naturally the coppers were after me. Also, I thought it expeditiously wise to be movin' lickety – split from the path of a sweet girl who was much too joyful to go to jail for.

So, I dragged and drove Pat and his bodacious laughter north, to Swan Hills, quite possibly the murkiest and muddiest town on this whole diverse and remarkable planet. At the very *least*, S.H. was considered to be the asshole of Alberta. There I found him a challenging position aboard a filthy oil rig and left him to his mirth and merriment and other maneuvers.

About the only reason I can think of today, as to why I wasn't involved with that thoroughly suspicious roll – over and wreck which took Pat's life, was I had been too damned beat – out and weary from laboring at my own dose of strap oil job, to go out chasing sexy and sensual country girls, around and around those pure and simple northern towns. Whitecourt and Barrhead are fond and tender memories this evening, towns of unlimited passions and endearments.

It was a dark and bitter day when that truck rolled and claimed Pat and it was incredulously desolate and disquieting to have lost another good friend. As I reflect and ponder this last sentence, I realize, all my heroes

have gone away and from a certain perspective, I *am* alone these days. I'll keep writing. It eases the sadness and the solitude.

As I had known Pat best, thru – out the cumulative and completely miserable Swan Hills experience, I was the one canvassed, to travel to the tank – town of Westlock, to I.D. the body.

There I saw Pat for the last time and not looking too bad, considering as he was dead and stretched out cold and blue, on a long black slab of marble, in the basement of the town morgue. Pat was smiling. Which was fitting somehow. Pat may have met his end beguiled and amused by death. Which was in character for him. All he stood for. And doubtless, his gentle smile had shocked and startled the dark powers and their persistent and eternal controls and connivances.

Slowly I circled Pat's naked body. Now and again I would stop and give the corpse a rude poke with my index finger, ever the while listening to the coroner and his runaway commentary concerning various cuts and contusions, scrapes and bruises and a thin red hole, clean thru the crown of Pat's bushy brown head, the direct and primary cause of his expiration and departure.

The undertaker was a professional and sensing my interest and objectivity regarding death, surely as not, the man might have taken me on as his apprentice, right there on the spot but pain and loneliness and big rigs were in my blood and I had to give such speculation a hit and a miss. Hell, the man knew I had no more than a healthy curiosity in regards to death. Whatever...

Pat could cause a riot all by himself and I could go on about him and his antics for a while but it would not be what 'the book' is really and truly about... so... Pat... rest easy. Smile and laugh for me, whenever my world is down and mournful. Friends.

How about the bodies I had stepped over in the deep south, in 1971? What of the time I was running and dodging the peelers and came to light in New Orleans, Louisiana, to stop and cool my burdened heels and to hide from Canadian justice?

Late and a stormy night in the Vous Carré, the old French Quarter and I happened to be escorting an upscale and up market whore home and she offered me a gun, "in case a nigger jumps out of the evening and tries to rape me," a sentiment which directly set me to recallin' Bob Dylan's famous last words, from his timeless classic, 'It ain't me babe.' 'Well now,' thought I, 'if a black gentleman *does* come flying out of the shadows, with carnal intentions in your direction girl, if he's big enough and if he looks mean enough, he won't be getting much interference from me.' Hell, I wouldn't have shot the bastard immediately, not unless *my* person was threatened. Then, for sure, I would have popped off a few rounds into his sphere and locale, just to discourage the asshole. If he *still* kept coming, that crazy a man, I absolutely would have shot his black ass full of holes. But, it would never have been for you girl. No.

And in those parts, N.O., Louisiana, back in the early '70s, most probably I would never have been charged to any serious degree. Maybe littering and leaving the scene. Not much more. Nothing big. I pocketed the gun.

Understand before I go any further, the main item concerning me in old N.O. was, I had been trying to avoid confrontation of any description and I certainly never needed to be talking to a southern born and raised policeman. The *last* thing I wanted to do was become involved with the American forces of law and order, hit a Louisiana bastille and have to explain myself.

And that night my lady and I did indeed step over and around 2 bodies. "Keep walkin'" and I was easily persuaded and needed no further encouragement or convincing because I was in love, don't you know.

Having made deep and desperate love to my lady, 3 or 4 times and having been told by Carol, more than once, that, I was the best she'd ever had, I returned to the old Quarter and a friendly bistro which treated me right and liked to serve me cheap drinks. I was bellied up to the bar, sippin' on a mint julep, when the disturbance cut – loose and erupted. The first bullet took out the fancy mirror I had been staring into and a bottle of 'Crown Royal' I had been thinking about. The next slug doffed and dispatched the piano player, a black toady of a man, who had been on a break and was standing beside me, hustling me for drinks. Which was no big score off me at the time. Hell, I had a whole pocketful of cash I had been trying to spend before the Canadian authorities found me and made me give it back and forced me to build a road up to the North Country.

The live piano player had been a competent entertainer and had wanted me to believe it was he who had actually written, 'Stagger Lee', until some other sharpshooter had come along and purloined *his* song, made a million dollars and had run away, leaving *him* sad and lonely, in a cut – rate Dixie honky – tonk, jobbin' the gentry for drinks and making music for the tourists. It may have been the truth. I don't know. Not me.

Anyway, after the brief but fascinating fusillade, we were ordered against the wall, me with my drink I had astutely and automatically grasped onto, at the first unnatural sounds of the night. "All the bills gentlemen."

'Damn!' I thought, 'this is *not* the way I want to waste and be rid of my money.' I fumbled and grabbed and brought up and presented my passport and various other credentials and was diggin' deep for my cash.

"Canada?"

"Right."

"Now you just be movin' along white boy."

"Right" and I said nothing more.

Instead, I slinked and slid on out the front door of that gilt – edged establishment and away from the fracas inside, drink still in hand and made my way down the street, to yet another speakeasy, on a near corner, where I reasoned I was well enough known to hope no one would want to lay me low and finish me off there either.

Thru – out the remains of the evening I kept ruminating and reasoning, ‘ Well old son, I must have a good friend, in a high place, a powerful acquaintance on a golden throne, lookin’ out for me.’ And the ever – mighty creator of my breakneck and double-time lifestyle, has no need of me. Not yet. I thanked God for my bounty and tersely wondered if I might be destined to go looking for Him on my own time.

Which obviously and naturally brings me to the essence and abstraction of suicide. Now, I’ve watched people drink themselves dead. I’ve heard of people who drove themselves dead. I’ve known people who shot themselves dead. People with seemingly right reasons to seek release and leave this proud and pretty planet.

A case could be made for suicide, should you choose to hold life as being nature’s cheapest commodity, as many world leaders would have you believe. A leader should only ever be listened to with wry and prudent caution. A leader can lead you wrong.

I’ve seen grotesque caricatures of humanity everywhere I’ve roamed and tramped on this planet and I once wondered why they didn’t all just quit and go home, to a better place. Well folks, today I no longer speculate on the awesome legacy of life.

Life on this venerable planet is a gift from God. Living on this stately planet is a gift from God. God put you on this planet for a purpose. His purpose. Whatever a man’s station on this bewildering planet, he must honor that capacity and reason.

Every man’s life is a test. His or another man’s test. *Often* another man’s test.

In my head and heart, I know it to be true, your life is not your own and you have no right to be infinitely reckless with it. Suicide is a transgression of your mission in life and an abomination against God. Suicide is wrong.

I *have* wanted to leave this radiant and resplendent planet. I *have* had a few bad moments and I *have* seen and felt and tasted pain and hard times and misery. There was a time or 2 in my life when I asked, “What’s the use? Why bother? Let me go. Set me free.” A force held me back. Then I understood. Suicide is a blasphemy against God. It is a cheat against God and I effortlessly envisioned a wrathful God as becoming displeased and exasperated with me, had I chosen to suicide and I correctly imagined His commanding voice, from high out of the heavens above, thundering down on me, “You fool! You damned fool!”

Then God would have shown me a reserved and unspeakable pit, with dim and dark corners, built special for villains and blackguards like me. I respect and revere death. Death is the supreme venture and challenge. I await death, on God’s time and terms, as being the most obvious and ultimate quest and adventure. And I am a curious man and I want answers and I will be asking questions on that wonderful day. These are emergency words. Suicide is wrong.

I have seen death. Dead is dead. A body is a body. A soul will never fail and die.

There I sat behind the walls of D.P., in 1978, on a rare and rhapsodic evening and the beauty of the night reminded me of my Mother and of so much of her which had mattered in my life. I had lost my best friend.

When I returned to Unit 10 and my cell, for lock – up that night, Wayne drifted past and gave me a Valium and at that precise moment in time, I knew drugs were good for me. I locked up.

A day- pass had been delivered to me, an escorted permit to my Mother's funeral. I would be leaving for Edmonton in the morning.

I praise the living. I honor the dead. I celebrate.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Edmonton – Helpless.

The greatest problem I would have with my excursion to Edmonton and vicinity was, who from, how and how much dope and cash I was going to score. Quite simply, a journey north was an opportune stroke of fate and fortune and a matter of necessary logistics. My first priority, on this profuse and beautiful planet, will always be to the truth of my own self and I will always be a selfish man, whenever the responsibility of need and requirement is upon me.

After a deep blue sleep in D.P., an early morning sunrise saw me gliding gently and smoothly up a bright and hidden road to Edmonton. It was the scenic route, hi – way 2 – A and I found myself attentive to the oddest of detail and trivia. A semi – truck, loaded and angry, huffin’ and puffin’ black smoke, around and past our staid and steady 55 mph, the rolling brown sand which slowly gave way to flat and flowing golden wheat fields, a lone prairie dog doing a panic – dash across the road and before our wheels, a prize herd of beefsteak grazing contentedly in the warm Alberta sun, wondrous sights for a young man in bondage to witness and behold.

Accompanying and annoying me on the journey were 2 screws from the jail. Their names were Ralph and Klein and they were freaks of the highest degree and dimension. “Look! A gopher! Quick! Swerve!” Squish...“Got the bastard!”

“All right!”

“Har! Har!”

Nothing however, could sway and distract me from the grim and solemn challenge I was rushing to find and confront in Edmonton. Edmonton is *not* a pretty city. In no **way or** shape or form. No. Edmonton and its inhabitants can be cruel and calculating, to a weary young man down on his heels and fresh out of luck. For me, Edmonton had been the setting and backdrop for many bleak confrontations, with the people to be found there, against the law and towards myself.

Traveling to my Mother’s funeral and on a closer and more abstruse level, was the confusion and uncertainty of the many years I had been away from my people, not that I had ever been tight with my immediate family and certainly never close to my relatives. No doubt every one of them had read the papers and followed and were familiar with my deeds and exploits and had heard the stories and rumors, the good and the bad ones, that magnify and multiply of their own accord and no stopping the damn things. There *were* a lot of years of negative backlash, entertainments and incidents and amusements. Hell, I was the only outlaw in the entire clan.

So, would my family hold solid for my shady past and the most unsettling question of all, would my family blame a small part of my Mother’s death on my failure to do her proud? I *had* let her down. So many times.

According to my Mother's values and traditions, I *had* been a considerable loss and disappointment in her life. On several occasions I had made my Mother cry. I had always been too busy and running too fast to care. I had always been helpless to please my Mother and to make her happy. I had no time to keep her from crying and I never cared. I never cared.

Here, I could be selfish and disdainful and write that it was my Mother's problem, for her to have imaginably and conceivably have let my mistakes and errors bring her down. That she should have let me go and walked away. But... mothers aren't made this way. No. No mother likes to see her son go wrong yet a mother will love her son more for it. Because of it and in spite of it. Rare and remarkable indeed. Still, I know today and I'll live forever with a positive spark and suspicion, that my Mother loved me dearly and regardless of her love, I hurt her badly. My Mother's love caused me meanness and malice and I was powerless and helpless because of it. I never cared.

Doleful and downcast thoughts on a long ride to Edmonton but, as it turned out, I needn't have concerned or worried myself over acceptance from my family. When I finally did arrive at the Chapel, there were maybe 500 people in attendance and except for a few rag – tag friends of mine and the old man's, they were exclusively my Mother's blood and dynasty. From the first and onward and till the end of the ceremonies and formalities, I was never greeted with anything less than, "Hey! Good to see you!"

"How you makin' out?"

"Is there something we can do for you?" Those fine folks took a weight off and I had no explaining to do to anyone.

Also, short notice was no hindrance concerning my earthly needs and requirements because James, my truest and most casual friend in the whole wide world was there and he was ready and prepared to do for me. Also present were a few stray dollies from my past and copping a cheap feel was a wonderful pleasure and delight and it just keeps on getting better folks.

Mother's family, successful, prosperous and of proud German descent, hearty souls from all across the province of Alberta. And being of authentic and actual European stock and as ol' Granddad had homesteaded south of Edmonton, at the turn of the century, having fled the continent for vague and obscure reasons, they may have understood oppression and persecution. Likely the old boy had escaped Germany and crossed the dark Atlantic to avoid these very pressures and perils. So...

So, though my life's garlands and rewards were justly and sublimely deserved, a bit of compassion and understanding from my relatives accounted for their absence of ill – tidings and intent concerning me and my nefarious lifestyle.

I proudly eulogized my Mother. I stood straight and tall and in front of everyone and it was from the heart and it was the bravest and most worthwhile deed I had ever done. Looking out and over those shining

academy faces, the men with thick manes of frosty and feathery white hair, the women dignified and prominent and I was awfully tempted to run down a crooked avenue and rattle off a few raw and raunchy jailhouse jokes. But I didn't. Respect and homage was their due instead. I had thoughtfully decided and considered it best to wait until the family was back at the old man's house and lodgings and seated around his dining room table before becoming racy and risqué. The relatives were usually more vulnerable and assailable when they were well into the sauerkraut, schnitzel and schnapps. While none of them could properly have been labeled as being judgmental or biased, I suspect, given the fix and bind I was in, had I said or done anything to offend their memories of my late and beloved Mother, they would probably and promptly have marked me a brute and a beast for the rest of my days.

Earlier, I had viewed my Mother's body and it was the body of a sad and lonely lady who had seen considerable pain and heartache during her short stay on this finite and temporal planet. I leaned over the casket and gave my Mother a soft kiss on her forehead. Shed a solitary tear. And I quietly acknowledged the most inspiring and courageous words ever given me by any lady of this world. "Son, no matter your troubles, no matter your problems, never become bitter or angry. If you allow yourself to become heated and hostile, you lose control. You no longer stand alone and lofty. You are no longer your own master. Grief and despair will rule and command you. Madness will be your guide. Be wise. Be kind to your friends. Be ruthless to your enemies. Have a beer now and again. Avoid strong drink. Trust in God."

These honest and undeniable words *had* slowed me down at certain angry junctures, times when I could have overcharged and found myself in a world of hurt and pain. So... thank – you Mother. God bless you.

After the service, the family gathered up its woes and miseries and traversed the south side of Edmonton and headed east, past Sherwood Park, to the old man's country estate and castle, a manor house worth 240 grand and sitting on a ranging and spreading 4 acres of property.

It was a strung – out and steadfast line of cars and it was a carnival cavalcade, bent on abundant and opulent quantities of traditional and conventional food and drink, stories and laughter and whatever illicit and taboos I could lay my hands on and get away with safely.

Whenever anyone in my illustrious family was taken by death, the event was more than an obligatory gathering and function. It was a celebration of life. Death was a portent, an admonition to the living that a person should exalt and enjoy the benefactions and benedictions given by God, while living on His planet. Living is ever more important than dying and death only served to remind my relatives of this remarkable and astonishing fact. Death called my family to attention, to the intriguing and fascinating glory and beauty of having been given life on this majestic and magnificent planet. A death in my family was always a wise conclave and assemblage. A festival of life.

Are you gallant and fearless folks ready for this I wonder? Because, now I bully and browbeat the Old Man. Ho! Ho! This *will* be fun.

By way of introducing my father, I must say, at times he was either a courageous son of a bitch or a full – fledged fool. Often a black – hearted knave and scoundrel and needing of certain basic principles. For sure, the O.M. was proof positive that lack of morals and conscience, honor and scruples, need be no obstacles to success in this great and bountiful land we call Canada.

One of my depictive and typical memories of the O.M. is from out of the sixties. On that unforgettable and distinct occasion, the family had packed and piled into the ‘Rambler’ station wagon and high – tailed it up from California and raced madly for the safety and sanctity of the Canadian border. Behind us we were towing a ‘U – Haul’ trailer, stuffed full and overflowing with ill – gotten gain and merchandise, expensive and exclusive power tools and miscellaneous equipment representative of the building trades, goodies the O.M. had purchased on credit from L.A. crooks and gangsters.

Further behind and following close on our heels were various hatchet – men and hoods, skip – tracers, bad debts and several dissatisfied customers the O.M. had managed to waylay and launder on *that* particular sojourn south into the heartland of America. It seemed every entrepreneurial species in the U.S.A. had wanted to play catch – up with the O.M., at some point, during and after his many excursions and expeditions there and usually it was because he was often guilty of whatever he was being accused of... eminently so... For years we were the Joads, harassed and hounded, chased and pursued by everyone, not wanted or welcome anywhere, traveling 60, 70, 80 mph, whatever the road would allow and all during those long and monotonous miles the O.M. would be muttering and mumbling a constant monologue to himself and delivering a stern and exacting lecture to me. “Listen to me son. A man’s a fool to live in America, if he doesn’t have to. Remember it son...”

The O.M.’s past was a mystery. This was generally attributed to his early years, before Canada, as being a riddle no one cared enough about to want to solve. The O.M.’s past was a dark and difficult cloud of innuendo and shrouded in back – door gossip. Quiet rumor had his origins from Blackpool to Liverpool to Manchester, always somewhere in England. The delicate truth accepted and agreed upon was, in the late ‘20s, the O.M. had good reason to be uncommonly fleet of foot, which had made for a swift and sudden departure from England to Canada.

One or two of the O.M.’s cronies, men who might or should have known of his roots couldn’t tell me the truth of the matter either. Not even at the crossroads where I ran into them, places like dusty and dingy, smoke-filled taverns, drinking cheap, watered – down whiskey and beer. At such infrequent but opportune times, I’d buy them drinks regular as rain but no one knew a damn thing concerning the O.M.’s source and inception. And there was no conspiracy. Hell, his pals liked my outlaw ways and of how I was forever costing the O.M. big money. Those crackpot intimates of the O.M., nutcases from the ‘30s, ‘40s, ‘50s, 60s, ‘70s, had no good reason

to hide anything from me anyway. Certainly none of them had cause to be loyal to the O.M. Over the space of 50 years or more, the O.M. had routinely beat and bilked each and every one of them, as he was wont to do, from time to time. Before Canada, the O.M.'s early life was a dead end, a closed chapter, a mystery...

Now, there is not much an erect and upstanding gentleman like myself can find wrong with being one foot in front of the law and I will ever attest to the wisdom of escape and evasiveness. Had the O.M.'s former lifestyle been somewhat of a dark issue, well, I can understand the situation all right. I *know* the delineation and outline of circumvention and avoidance and I *have* faced and paced this very test for a lot of years. Ordinarily, I *like* to see the crime – rate way up high in the sky. Steady now... I must guard myself... I will not throw stones. I will not judge my father. I am the storyteller. I will tell the truth.

However... I *am* convinced of low and dastardly deeds in the O.M.'s buried and hidden past, perhaps reprehensible and detestable achievements and accomplishments. All the guesses and conjecture seemed to indicate the likelihood. Rotten tricks and being mean were sometimes his forte and signature but resolutely, the O.M. was just the way he was.

The most charitable and the kindest truth I can mention about my father is, he did it his way and on his own time. The O.M. was dauntless and determined and he did what he had to do, to survive the best and only way he knew how, for himself and for his family. The O.M. *does* merit some acclaim and admiration. Hell, there were times when the O.M. showed true grit but what I want to do is write something of the mischief the O.M. was in touch with and involved in, while here in Canada. The O.M.'s story *is* worth recalling and recording.

In the mid – '60s, the O.M. decided his being a plasterer by trade was no longer worthy and deserving of a man of his talents and gifts so, he exchanged his hawk and towel for a suit and tie, a pen and a mighty gift of gab. "As you go thru life son, tread softly, carry a walking stick and wear a gray hat."

It was the home – repair racket and the O.M. was *very* good at it. "This job calls for cost plus 10%. The lady of the house can afford to give us her government support payments this month. We need the business... so does she." It was whatever the customer could bring forth and bear and in addition to his talk and spiel, the O.M.'s formula for success also included 4 men, a pick, a sledgehammer, 2 shovels and 2 pails, 3 bags of cement, a half – yard of clean sand and in 8 hrs. the sly and crafty old boy would walk away with 3000 honest and easy dollars. The phrase, 'Cavat Empter', should have been boldly emblazoned in neon letters around the O.M.'s silk hat band.

Almost every time and there were hundreds, maybe thousands of times, the home owner would be left standing, tickled pink and pleased, on his front lawn and wearing nothing but a smile, as the crew was backing out of his driveway, in Donald's beat – up and belabored ½ ton pickup truck and he might have been thinking his newly installed, 'inside weeping tile', would keep his basement warm and waterproof for the balance of his

laughable life. Ho! Ho! Sometimes only until the O.M. had cashed the cheque for final payment at the nearest bank.

People want to trust people and need to trust people and this was a truth the O.M. understood real well. The O.M. exploited this truth but he was never one to discriminate. He'd fleece anyone who had a bank account and a chequebook, young, intelligent and important people, widows and pensioners and old people in general. Everyone was a quack and a sitting duck for any one of his fantastic schemes. Hell, he took 'em all to the cleaners.

The stories I could tell. "Lady... I'm glad you called on me. It was the right thing to do. I may have caught your problem in the nick of time." When dealing with a potential customer, the O.M. could tell a whopper or two. He knew how to buffalo a person into believing. "Lady...you have mortar mice. Yes indeed. I'll have to put in, 'weeping tile', to flush out the critters. And a new retaining wall. Otherwise, I'll give your house a month. No more. Then, without my services, this house of yours will sink clean out of sight and most likely in the early morning hours, when you and your husband are sleeping. I've seen it happen. It's when the furry little varmints like to do their business. Do you have \$3000? I must be paid. I have the best men in the trade working for me and they have to be paid as well."

I'll tell you about the O.M.'s men. They were the vagrants and tramps of Edmonton's skid row and drag, 96th and 97th streets, between Jasper and 107th avenues. Could those bastards work! Whenever they showed up at the 'Corner Lunch', on any given morning and this was never for certain, well, after 3 cups of scalding black coffee, those brave and defiant characters would just naturally be ready to join and emerge themselves into every one of the O.M.'s simple and foolish enterprises. The whole daylong they would labor and toil and all the while, cascades of beer and wine would be like small streams and rivers, endlessly and continuously flowing from their tortured bodies. "I don't want my men to work hard. I want them to work fast." The O.M.'s men followed orders. They knew how to keep their mouths shut. And why not?

Those good ol' boys had been given another chance by the O.M. No other employer, no one else would have considered their vicissitudes and rigors and given them jobs. Mostly they were damaged and dismal shadows of men, broken and busted by the hard and brutal life on the streets, failures and fools who had seen their dreams shattered and existed only because they believed those same wonderful dreams would return again one fine day. From some of these men the fight and anger had left and gone away and I recognized this lamentable quality in *my* close at hand future. Some of them though, in some of those men a spark still burned and they were, with faith and hope, going to pull themselves to the top again and in these same men I saw a passion to survive and a reflection to carry on and I made up my mind that when it was my turn to hit the streets, I would always remember that spark and flame and here I am today, telling you folks tall tales and true stories. Ho! Ho! Those men's hearts were nearly broke and they were almost helpless but they never quit and they

would keep on working and drinking and searching to find and hold their fantasies and illusions another glorious day. They were curious and remarkable men. They were beautiful men.

The O.M.'s men were grateful for his benevolence and no matter they hated his guts and blamed and cursed him frequently and repeatedly, whenever chance and fortune offered and arose and were wise to his tricks and knew they were helping to perpetrate a fraud and were accessories in fact, verily, the O.M. paid them faithfully, in cold hard cash, every Friday afternoon. As an added dash and for good measure, at the end of the working day, any one of the men could ask for and receive a 10 or 20-dollar draw on his wages. This fringe benefit was hung up every night in their favorite saloons, places where they could jump and shout and relive their glory days. And so what if they never arrived at the pickup café the following morning? The O.M. was tolerant of their foibles and failings because there was never a shortage of willing and eager hands to take their places. Days and nights might pass before, sick and suffering, those true and steady men would be back for more of their chosen and selected share of pain and penance. Some of those daring and dangerous men had worked for my father 20 yrs. and some of them were men of courage and heroism.

The O.M.'s customary and standard pep talk and pitch to the men, on a particularly shady job, involving a decidedly skeptical customer, may have been. "Keep your mouths closed. Don't ask questions. *Never* talk to the customer. If the ditch caves in, before it does, throw out the shovels."

The O.M. taught me to be crafty and cunning, wary and wise and from 1965 on and in the worlds and streets I found myself walking and running, those talents were greatly appreciated, whenever I had need of them. I came thru fire and survived *because* I knew and understood duplicity and defense.

I suppose I was on 100 of the O.M.'s jobs and it was an amazing and astounding education. All of it centered on the folly and incredible absurdity of people, people from every walk of life, teachers and students, doctors and lawyers, professionals, people who should have been keener and more alert, than to have been taken in by the O.M.'s pretense and pose. The O.M. suckered 'em all.

Other than to laugh uproariously and ride and badger the O.M. and buy the men drinks whenever I could afford it, I would contribute virtually nothing at all to the job. Hell, I refused to touch a shovel or a pick or any other tool, if I could steer away and avoid such stupidity.

Mercy on the fool of a customer who had a bar in his basement. Me and the men would take care of that shining star right smartly. Times were, when the O.M. would arrive on the jobsite, say at noon, only to find the lot of us stinko and drunk. Then he would look around and see me sitting in a corner, blind as a bat and smiling vigilantly. Sorely vexed, he would then stomp and stomp on over and fire me. Which was in no way unusual. As a culmination to nearly every confrontation I ever had with my O.M., I had hitch – hiked home from practically every part of Alberta, at one time or another. It was S.O.P. for the O.M. to fire me on Thursday, pay me on Friday and hire me again on Monday.

I suspect this end practice was largely my Mother's doing. Her maternal instincts towards my wayward character may have been aroused and concerned to see me thru a safe passage and into a calm refuge. Certainly, had it not been for the collective money I was able to raise while performing on the O.M.'s jobs, there were occasions when I would have been lying in doorways and living in dumpsters and even more unreasonable beds and breakfasts I could name and mention. I could usually coax and wheedle a buck out of the old boy. I usually had 4 walls and a roof over my head.

Whereas the O.M. and the authority he represented earnestly yearned for the release of my presence and might have paid a fee and remittance, to have had me removed to the far side of the planet and to never have darkened his world again, my Mother understood me and my contrary life and took care of and protected me. Mothers are miraculously this way folks.

Then again, Mother may have been responsible for a delicious spite and vindictiveness against my father. Mother was no fool. After so many years of the O.M.'s schemes and plots, she may have caught on and put the whole shebang together and came up with the realization that the O.M. was sometimes a scamp and a scalawag. Mother's virtuous and admirable moral nature may have become charged and excited and her unloading me and my immoderations on the O.M. may have been her appropriate reckoning and retribution on the old bastard.

Nothing was sacred or safe on any of the O.M.'s jobs. Everyone was a thief and everything was fair game, booze, money, food, clothing, anything shiny, any damn thing at all, to the point where sometimes the O.M. was kept hustling and having to reimburse some sore as hell customer for things filched and on the missing list. Mostly it was small change...

One time the O.M. went too far. There were a few inanities and inadvertencies during the O.M.'s career as a home repairman but this one bears mentioning. This one was the quintessential O.M. Because of this one distinct and decisive indiscretion, the O.M. was ill – famed and infamous for a week in Edmonton.

With not much more than 4 men, 8 concrete blocks, a sledgehammer, sheer bravado and an absolute confidence in his own infallibility, the O.M. proceeded to swindle and screw yet another green and gullible citizen of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

The silly old fool had 1 man carrying in the concrete blocks, 2 at a time, downstairs to the basement, the 2nd man passing the same blocks up thru a window and out to the 3rd man, to be brought around again by the 1st man and on and on thru the same endless and fantastic circuit. The 4th man was down below, in the basement and out of sight, raising enough noise and pandemonium with the sledgehammer and his own pictorial and descriptive speech and language, to convince anyone that, indeed, there was an extravagant and generous run and body of constructive progress, occurring and ensuing on the project. It was a convincing act and performance.

Well now, I arrived on the jobsite, somewhat C.O.N., had me a quick look around the scene of the crime, at once picked – up on the deception and began to laugh hysterically. And I couldn't stop. And I couldn't prevent the anger and rejoicing I felt inside.

The home – owner had a bar. So I helped myself to an inviting bottle of fine whiskey, sat down on a hard – backed chair and drank and laughed some more. Much more and loudly. The customer was curious and decided to have himself a peek – a – boo down in his basement. Now, the man was not gifted in any big way but when he eyeballed the charade and imposture being staged on his house, in his basement, he immediately bumped – wise to the humbug and skullduggery and fired the O.M. on the spot.

After the crew had finished loading the truck, the O.M., terribly offended and affronted, stamped on over to where I was standing and fired me, “and don't come back, ya' bloody little bastard!”

“Fuck yourself, ya' old prick!” Those were the days folks.

This escapade was to cause the O.M. a fair amount of notoriety. What happened was this...

Before leaving the jobsite, the O.M. threatened to sue the homeowner for breach of contract, put a lien on his house, see him in the courts or in the alley behind his house, everything but asked him if his fire insurance was paid up. The O.M. had never been subtle when aggrieved and outraged.

The homeowner wasn't impressed or intimidated. Hell, his eyes were wide open by this time and he went straight for his lawyer and *this* man was a clever and resourceful practitioner of the just laws of Canada and he was fully aware of the many home improvement scams and tricks available on the black – market in Edmonton, back in the early seventies. Furthermore, he knew of the O.M. and of how the O.M. was the smoking gun and his outrageous guilt was the key to bringing down every one of those underhanded and dishonest buncoes that were running extreme and epidemic in Edmonton back then. That lawyer knew, if he could rail and raid the O.M., he could topple and tumble the complete wildcat scheme of things crooked, right down to the seat of the Canadian establishment. The O.M. was the kingpin pivot between truth and justice versus gumption and greed, as evidenced by the unshakable fact that the old villain had gypped and rooked, so many people, out of so much money, for so many years, without harming or hurting anyone physically.

It was not the first time a disgruntled and distressed homeowner had tried to hit on the O.M. for damages but somehow the old fox had always managed to put off or pay off an injured party or at least promise to do so. The very last thing in the world the O.M. needed was to go to court and do battle with an elderly and helpless, blue – faced widow lady. The O.M. knew his limitations. He knew, if he had dared step foot in an Edmonton courtroom, under such base and bare circumstances, why, his Honor would have had grave and guaranteed cause to have erected a made – to – order gallows, dead – center in the middle of Sir Winston Churchill Square.

This one time was unique however. The O.M. found himself dealing with an entirely different situation, in that the good people of Edmonton had had enough of being victimized by hucksters and promoters and they

were ready to interpret and lay down the law. It was something of a gang – swarm really. No one could be influenced. No one could be bought. No one could be found or approached.

The homeowner came together with his lawyer and the Crown Prosecutor and an amazingly tenacious fraud – squad, which had, incredibly enough, rounded – up 9 other wronged and plucked pigeons, people who had also experienced the O.M.'s style and dispensations and they *all* had remarkable and magnificent hard – ons for the old bastard. These people were determined to kick the O.M.'s ass and they were willing and set to pursue the matter to their utmost abilities. The case against the O.M. did *not* look good from the beginning.

The Crown imported a fair and impartial magistrate from Calgary, to assess and to consider and maybe to condemn the O.M. Fair enough.

Thru – out the trial there were positives and negatives. Obviously, from the outset, the O.M.'s worst enemy was himself on general principles and his lawyer was plainly no ball of fire. Hell, the O.M.'s lawyer could have passed for one of the O.M.'s bum employees. The man was old, he wore rags, he smelled bad and he needed a shave and a haircut. The man looked like a corpse, brought back from the paths of the dead, to champion the O.M.'s cause and pursuance. Considering the spirit and the bizarre comedy surrounding the O.M. and his being tried for 10 counts of fraud, I reckoned he seemed about right for the challenge.

Now, I have broke and fought the law on a number of occasions, here in Canada and the more times I was involved with criminal or civil action, the more times I came to respect the strength and veracity of the laws of Canada. From my *very* narrow perspective and experience with regards to Canadian law, I quickly and with little hesitation, realized the O.M.'s trial was going to be a travesty and a mockery of justice. The O.M. was a four – flusher. His lawyer was a charlatan. Not a good combination. Not one to instill and install confidence and courage in a man, not when the man is guilty as an egg – sucking dog. No.

I was right. I was to see my early evaluation of the O.M.'s plight and predicament proved true. Often during the course of the O.M.'s trial, even in its early stages, I picked up on points of law which the O.M.'s lawyer only became aware of far too late to be of service to the O.M.'s defense. At one point I found myself wondering if his lawyer papers had been issued within the last 30 years or if they were valid in the first place or if he even *had* a ticket to practice law here in Alberta.

The lawyer was after the O.M.'s money naturally. Which was a joke and made me smile, since the O.M. was going to stiff the goofy fucker for his fee. Burn the dummy down, no matter what way the verdict went. The O.M. and his lawyer? They were both stone crazy and they deserved each other.

Equally glaring, was the naked fact that Dave, the village idiot or a nitwit fresh off the street, could have entered the courtroom, at any point during the trial and have stood in the rear of the gallery and after 5 minutes, he would have been convinced there was a mighty bending of the truth taking place.

I'm sure of times, during the trial of my father on 10 fraud charges, when only the majesty and the sanctity of a Canadian high court in full swing, kept me from rising to my feet and crying bullshit. The same humility and reverence for the Canadian judicial system may also have kept the curious spectators and onlookers from rolling in the aisles, fractured and shattered by derisive and scornful laughter. The O.M.'s trial was grotesque but it had its moments of stunning veracity and truth regarding factual Canadian law.

Day after day I sat in the courtroom, bagged and booted, a wry grin across my face, nodding my head slowly and thinking, 'Canada? I love this country.'

In a poetic way, the O.M.'s mouth came to his aid as his greatest asset, in his moment of want and need. The O.M.'s speech and elocution had always been his strongest quality and specialty and it had delivered the wretch from many a valorous skirmish and contention. The O.M. needed this exceptional dexterity one more time. The O.M. needed *every* bit of help he could get at that point in his life because the Crown and the court, if they survived a million years, would never have been ready for his astounding collection of fabrications and distortions, falsehoods and fancy stories. The O.M. *had* to convince the judge of penitence and contriteness on his part. The O.M. *had* to bring off an act of resolution and explanation. The O.M. *desperately* required a special and unique story.

When the tedium of reluctantly behaving myself began to take its toll and the O.M. recognized I was about ready to bolt and run off to the nearest bar, he shrewdly slid up next to me and passed me a stack of new 20 dollar bills. "For the men. They must be paid. Tell them the money is from me."

"Right."

I stationed myself strategically outside the courtroom, armed and ready with that pocketful of cash and whenever one of the O.M.'s employees, having been subpoenaed and shanghaied by the Crown to give evidence and testimony against the old man, shambled on over to where I was positioned and with sorrowful tears in his eyes, asked me what he should say, when called upon to give fair witness against the O.M., I would casually reach into my pocket, pull out my roll, generously peel off a double – sawbuck, hand it to the man and tell him to go find himself a tavern and have a beer. I would tell him not to worry, that I would fix everything and he would *not* get his knuckles rapped.

They were sad and lonely men and they were terrified of an authority they wanted no part of or dealings with. It was a fear bedded deep and from the years of having lived the hard life of survival and one of the first and fast rules on the streets is that a man tries *never* to draw the heat. A man *never*, willingly, involves himself with the police. A man *rarely* talks to the coppers. On the street a man wants to fade and blend. A street – fightin' man *never* voluntarily enters a courthouse to give documentation and substantiation in any sort of legal confrontation. The O.M.'s men were afraid and a heavy threat from the Crown had *not* been necessary, to get them to roll over and sing out the O.M. No.

But it never came down to this sad and sorry state of debasement and defilement. What happened was this instead...

Those good ol' boys were so damned grateful to me and my wisdom and mainly for the 20 bucks, words weren't enough. They shook my hand. They hugged me. I was moved. At the beauty and frailty of the human condition. I felt humble. I felt like a Holy man.

Then those artful dodgers would shuffle on out of the courthouse and go looking for a watering – hole, where the tears and fears would go away and be forgotten after a dozen beer or so, where they knew they would be safe, where they knew all would be well. Which was strange but true logic. I had given my word and I was good for my bond. I had assured them the law wouldn't be looking for them. Which *wasn't* going to happen, as every level of the legal community, by this time, was beginning to realize they'd been sold a bogus bill of lading. Their rock – solid file and case against the O.M. was starting to develop cracks and fissures. “The Crown witness is not answering his call to duty, your Honor.” A rustling of paper...

“No your Honor, the witness is unavailable and he has no fixed address.”

“I believe there may be a conspiracy unfolding in *my* courtroom,” observed the honorable magistrate.

There were a few irregularities during the trial of my old man and combined and in a small way, they served to upset the people's case against him. The missing witness angle deprived the Crown of 3 or 4 men who would have turned to jelly at the 1st attack by the mean and mealy – mouthed Crown prosecutor. Those employees of the O.M. would have told everything. And any one of those men could have given a rough but critical and detailed sketch and exposé, as to the absurd and preposterous methods and techniques used by the O.M., in some of his intrigues and machinations.

It was a week of city – section newspaper headlines in Edmonton. At times it may have been embarrassing and I might have wanted to change my name and skip and ship out of Alberta for a year but everything developed neatly and nicely. Because...

The Crown at last resolved to put the O.M. on the stand, so he might give *his* evidence. Well now, the O.M. came forward all right, in his one thousand dollar tailored suit, exuding confidence and respectability. He never batted an eye. He was courteous and serious. He was solemn and he reverently kissed the Bible which had been placed in his right hand. Then he began by telling the court 2 or 3 stories about family and responsibility and the work ethic and the judge was considerably impressed. The judge was sympathetic and responsive towards the O.M.'s port and presence, to the point where I thought he was going to break down and sob and shed bitter tears for the O.M.

The Crown could not touch the O.M.'s righteous bamboozle. They tried. But met with only foil and frustration. And then it happened. Then the O.M. delivered his most profound and scholarly allocution of all

time, “I never intended to defraud anyone. I never intended to cheat anyone. I performed on every job,” in a firm and commanding voice and everyone heard those words and the courtroom went still and silent.

The Crown Prosecutor was the first to break. The man began to blubber and weep and he collapsed and folded to his chair. Then everyone was murmuring and whispering at once and I promptly squiggled on a piece of paper, ‘No intention to defraud’ and passed it forward to the O.M.’s lawyer. The O.M.’s lawyer rose aching to his feet and proclaimed to the good judge, “No intention to defraud.”

It was an item which threw a nasty glitch into the case for the Crown because, technically, in a civil action such as the O.M.’s was, a decision, the outcome, guilty or not guilty, sometimes hinges on this one lone factor. Often, a judge can do no better and be no wiser than to ask himself, ‘Was there any intent?’ And rightfully, the O.M.’s presentation and declaration was bang on the money. The old boy really *had* done whatever he had written into any one of his fascinating contacts. What he *said* he would do. No matter he failed to mention his approach and manner involved in overhauling and reforming a person’s house and no matter those methods were contrary to seemliness and decorum and might leave a person’s dwelling scarred and dysfunctional until eternity. That was the homeowner’s problem. It was shit and nonsense to the law.

The old reprobate performed on every one of his undertakings. And the upright and conscientious magistrate agreed. “No intention to defraud. Not guilty.” And 10 dispirited and dejected citizens of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, filed meekly out of the courtroom, thoughtfully wagging their heads and wondering and marveling at the subtleties and intricacies of Canadian law and justice.

It was the O.M.’s swan song. It was as though the citizens of Edmonton had called upon the O.M. and asked him to explain fair play, right and wrong, virtue and a square deal for everyone. This he did and it was a command performance and worthy of my old man.

After the trial, the O.M. flew to England to be with his girlfriend. When he returned, it was business as usual, “people forget.” Such enduring and unwavering conceit is a rare and powerful gift.

The O.M. had never been popular with my Mother’s family. At best, they had been forced to tolerate the old bastard, on certain occasions and when they had to. Mother happened to have been the O.M.’s 3rd or 4th wife and the fates of his previous wives remain unclear and open to speculation. Casual rumor had the randy old goat as having sired 27 children. Maybe so. The O.M. had *always* had a bag full of suspicious turns and twists to amaze and astonish everyone with.

So it wasn’t surprising to me, on the day of my Mother’s funeral, that the relatives weren’t buying the O.M.’s attempt at grief or any of his damp – eyed stories. The O.M. was a pretender and those Germans knew it. They’d been lied to before, as you folks know well. Hell, that same afternoon I caught the O.M. in his backyard, swapping Canterbury tales and talking homing pigeons and hunting dogs with 2 of his buddies. The

relatives never could and never would find it in their hearts to trust or credit the O.M. or anything he stood for in this world.

A cold and ominous story had begun to circulate the same afternoon as my Mother's funeral. Her death was being cautiously labeled as being an accidental overdose, that most lethal combination of alcohol and prescription drugs.

I could picture it. I can understand it. Mother had a drink. Mother became glassy eyed and distracted concerning the real world and she paid a visit to her doctor. Bring on the dolls. Pills became a problem. I doubt Mother could have understood the dangers. In any case ...

I had never seen my Mother pop a pill and a drink was an insupposable event, astonishment enough to lift eyebrows in the family. Mother had been a down – home, squeaky clean Alberta farm girl, a peaceful and faithful grassroots fundamentalist. She never wanted to hurt anyone. My Mother only wished for everyone to be happy and free and to hold hands. Mother wanted to live a long time and she cultivated a healthy lifestyle to the end. So... Mother... rest in peace. Love from your son.

Mother's last letters to me in the jail had been disturbing. Erratic and wandering. I remember her expressing a devout predilection and need to join her long dead Mother and of how she talked often with the old girl and that everything was restful and peaceful in that place... Why not...?

When I wrote back and carefully suggested she might be in need of a quiet and calm adjustment, Mother replied that she was simply going thru changes and she would be just fine. So I let it go...

The O.M. was to further enrage Mother's family by going off and marrying his English mistress, not 30 days after Mother's funeral. If those Germans had been pissed off with him before, the satiric old bastard was totally ostracized by this rash act.

There were times when I honestly believed hanging was too good and much too easy for my shameless and unprincipled father. My father was sometimes a black bounder and incapable of remorse and regret. Life goes on.

At one point during the formal proceedings, I had sincerely wanted to deliver the O.M. a sharp rap in the nuts, give him a swift taste of the leather, don't you know. An incident like that would certainly have generated a good deal of applause and laudation from the relatives but my escorts, flushed and befuddled though they were, may not have approved. When we had first arrived at the O.M.'s spread, Rick had taken those screws aside and put them in a far – off corner, along with a bottle of cheap whiskey, told them to mind their own business and drink their fill. This they appeared to have done.

There were several times, during my association with the O.M., when I figured him for a wicked and evil excuse of a human being, that just possibly the O.M. was the baddast and meanest person I would ever encounter in my life – time. That his inclination towards corruption and immorality may have been offset by a lot

of luck, a few bucks and a superb set of wedding tackle. That, combined, these resources and assets had served to prevent an angry and wrathful husband or a used and wronged woman from putting him down and topping his cheatin' ass long before his time was up.

I think differently today. Today, I know the O.M. was only taking care of himself and his family in the best way he could. The O.M. was old world and old fashioned. "Weaklings and misfits... I trample them beneath my feet as I walk thru life." The O.M.'s way. The O.M. kept a roof over me when I was a young man. I never went hungry. I was never beaten. I was never abused. So father... courage and respect from your son.

To my brothers and sisters I say, given what I know and what I may know and what I've come to believe, I'll tell you the truth. Mother *became* a confused and frightened lady. Mother had never been kind enough to herself. Mother was always *too* willing to sacrifice for others. Mother was *too* loving and not strong enough to handle living on this planet, not without all the world loving her in return. Mother stopped caring. Mother gave up. And when you stop caring and quit, ultimately you lose the right to live on and laud this pleasurable and enjoyable planet.

This is the understanding which came over me, back in 1978 and it was no trick for me to comprehend and appreciate my Mother's death. It had been Mother's turn to leave and move on, to shine and serve God, in another special and mysterious way. An admirable and worthy quest I would have to say.

Towards the end of the festivities, James, my one true friend, presented me with 2 grams of excellent hashish. Donald palmed me a crisp, new hundred dollar bill. I stashed the balloons in the washroom and once again I was ready for the jail.

If the journey from Drumheller to Edmonton had been one of quiet introspection, the return passage was a hushed serenity.

Rolling into Drumheller and then diverting on thru to the jail was no fun at all. It was weird and kinky. I was dreadfully C.O.N. and expecting the digger, but no, my escorts, by then my pals and being slightly corned themselves, slurred and stuttered me past security and I was back. I was home once more.

Sleep was no problem but before the silent night came down in D.P., in '78, I was of the faith and credence that God was an anarchistic and uncompromising fellow and He would keep everyone guessing and waiting for a while yet. Which is about all the time I need, to do the things I have to do, on this wonderful, wonderful planet.

All is well.

G.B.T.

D.P. – Imagine.

After my brief visit to Edmonton and my return to D.P., I somehow began to feel older, that life was passing me by, as though I were missing out, that I was a mere spectator and not a participant in the uniqueness of being on this rare and phenomenal planet.

The death of my Mother was an illumination, a gift from her to me, an enlightenment, bringing me back to reality and reminding me there was a big ol' beautiful world, lying in wait and mine for the taking, beyond the walls of D.P. Mother's death was just the jolt I needed, to snap me out of the lethargic complacency I had come to set store by in the jail. I was restless and ready to leave D.P.

I became a solitary man. Outwardly I was calm but inside I was true – tempered steel. I filled my time. I willed my time. I did my time.

The dream began then. Imagine. It was a cold – sweat dream and it stayed with me and overwhelmed me and overcame me with curiosity and wonder. Imagine. Imagine early morning in the jail and the heavy steel door that kept me prisoner never came crashing open. Imagine the rumble and roll of 16 other cell doors on my range never opening. Imagine the groanings and moanings and the scuffles and shuffles and the slappings and patterings of warm feet on cold concrete as not coming to pass in the morning. Silence... Imagine 7 A.M. and only silence in the jail.

In the dream I screamed. No reply. No one heard me. There *was* no one to hear me. Heavy silence. Why? Where had everyone gone?

I screamed again. Silence. No one to tell me why, no one to show me the way, no one to tell me the story. Alone. Alone with myself. Confusion and disorder. I could see myself then, an apparition of myself, above and over myself, remote and detached, as I looked down on myself, sitting on the edge of my bed, staring mournfully at the far and distant wall of my cell, alone and quietly resigned and quite insane.

Then even my screaming was silent. A tree falls in the forest... Then I knew... The whole world had died and I was alone. Alone and in an impossible cage, one I could never, ever work my way free of. Alone and there was never and absolutely no way I could go thru the concrete and steel walls that surrounded me. I was truly alone at last.

Then a furious switch to the gleaming and glistening white arm. On a planet without firmament or foundation. Everything that should have been solid and fast was crumbling and collapsing into swirling and whirling pools of black putrescence and rot. Sinking and rising waters, drifting and decaying bodies of mankind

choked the horrid depths. Lightning flashes and thunder and darkness. A steady throbbing and an apocalyptic cadence of storm and fire that covered the world. It was real. Nothing was real.

Except for the white arm. A pale and pearl white arm which beckoned to me. “Come closer!” I refused. I was positioned at every point of the imagination and the classic beauty of the ivory white arm continued to reach for me. “Empty. Barren. Nothing.” Again. “Reach out. Touch me. Hold me.” Gripped and enthralled, I refused once more.

Then I would come awake in a rush and sleep was done and I would think on the dream and I would try to imagine its meaning. Imagine...

Existential denial? I had no idea worth considering and trusting and I had no one to interpret the dream for me and I was afraid because I couldn't understand the dream.

Freud believed dreams were symbols and manifestations of frustrated rage and peaceful expression, of repressed and forbidden desires. Perhaps ambitions and aspirations which are hidden deep from conscious awareness, mysteriously and ominously secret and buried deep within the psyche.

Did I want the world to die? Was the world going to die? I had no rational response or explanation.

What I safely surmised however, was, the dreamscape was a message and a warning, an outlandish communiqué, telling me it was high time for me to be leaving D.P. It was time to be movin' on. Otherwise and in essence, I might find myself as unreal and unanimated as those rotting and moldering bodies in the dream and I knew I would never recover and return from a frightening oblivion like that. It was time for me to be gone from D.P.

Decided to drop welding and transfer to the jailhouse school. John and I did a deal. I would attend classes and do what was needed, to lock onto a high – school diploma and then do a jubilant about – face back to his shop, as his exceedingly well educated lead – hand man, for one more time around.

At the time, back in '78, I reckoned a high – school degree might come in handy when I left the jail and might even make a difference in my harrowing and long suffering life. Ho! Ho! Another howler. How was I to know, exactly how overrated and exaggerated that flimsy piece of paper actually was, back in the real world.

In 1967 I had graduated Grade 12 but had never obtained or required a diploma. This was because my Alma Mater, Salisbury Composite High School, of Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada, had only wanted to close its doors on me and my rebel manners. So I was propelled and pushed out the front entrance of this most worthy and exceptional faculty of higher learning and forced to fend for myself. Even at such an early point in my praise and proclamation of life, there were people in steepled places who strongly objected to my reaching and teaching their young sons and daughters.

Which was fine by me, as all I had wanted to do, from the time I was able to think and reason on my own, was to flee Edmonton, to cleanse and purify my body and soul. Which naturally led me to discover the

Northern Lands. And in the parts I ran to and worked out of, a high-school diploma, paper from any institution, was regarded as a joke, scoffed and sneered at and ridiculed mightily.

Fortunately, I came away from my high school days with a fair balance of knowledge and education before I realized almost every situation and nearly every person on this planet was equally ready to deceive and to lie to me. Equipped with a curious desire for facts and information, I therefore sought the pure and unsullied truth and searched and sifted carefully thru the data and evidence available, wherever I've traveled in this world and usually arrived at a locus of contented understanding. I've run with an equilibrium, an insight and an awareness of horse sense and horse feathers, all the days of my life.

In D.P., in '77 – '79, I decided that when I returned to the world, it would behoove me to use every resource and contrivance I could lay and put my meritable hands upon, to help explain and defend myself on bad days and to prevent myself from going too fast and becoming a terminal man. To tell people of the good days and of yesterday's errors and the hazards of today's choices. To tell everyone that tomorrow will be chockablock awash and alive with marvels and miracles. Do you see me?

To continue. The jailhouse school. Yes. Well now, my 1st day and I found myself seated across from and caught up in a rather interesting conversation with a neurotic individual who suggested he was the principal of that laudable fraternity. "How many credits do you have?"

"85"

"That's not enough."

"No sir."

"Let's see... have you traveled?"

"Yes sir, all around the world."

"That's good. I can give you 5 credits for being a world traveler."

"Thank – you sir."

"Good... good. Now you have 90 credits..."

"Yes sir."

"Where can we pick up 10 more credits?"

"Well sir... what about credit for worldly experience?"

"Worldly experience? Well... yes. Why not? After all, your being in a federal penitentiary is a type of worldly experience. Five more credits."

"Thank – you sir."

"Now, let me see... we now have 95 credits. Where can we find 5 more?"

"How about if I teach school for a couple of months?"

"Great idea! Can you teach math?"

“Not a problem sir. I know math.”

“Good... good. I’ll see you get 5 credits for teaching math. That makes 100 credits and I’ll be sending off for your diploma today.”

“Thank – you sir.”

“Fine... fine... as principle of this school, I’d like to see you go out into the world with all the help I can give you. I’m behind you all the way.”

“Thank – you sir. I’ve always felt people like you were behind me all the way.”

So I taught mathematics for 2 months. Simple mathematics. And not many men gave a damn. Not many men had the slightest itch or urge to learn math, not even for a type of exemption and freedom. Each day I taught math in the jail was an observation in tedium and boredom. Which was about what I expected and accordingly, I was never bothered much about being unable to convince those men that mathematics was important and precious. Maybe 1 man... see...

These men had their priorities and the jailhouse school was mainly an excuse for the mentally misconceived to gather and relax, an opportunity for them to talk and rehash past battles and confrontations against the constraints of society, to tell each other of the ridiculous miscalculations and mistakes that had brought them to D.P. and of how they would do things differently next time. These men told absolute and confident lies to one another, of the perfect crimes and of how they would never be found out and caught and brought back to the jail, the next time. These stories were *so* great and *so* convincing and I may have restrained a chuckle on occasion but I was right in there with the best of those fibbers and prevaricators.

“Holy shit! What’s this? Your students have all failed! They’ve learned nothing! Talk to me!”

“Well sir, it’s like this. This is a jail. I’m not calling right or wrong on the bastards sir but at this wonderful point of their lives, most of these men aren’t interested in textbooks. All they want to do is their time. Let them be. Any man who wants to succeed and make his mark will roll right past you sir. You won’t be able to stop him sir. The way it is... sir.”

“I see... well... I don’t know if I should be happy with this turn of the story. By the way, will you be with us a while longer? The men like your style.”

“I promised I’d return to the welding shop in 2 mos. It’s been 2 mos.... sir.”

“I see... I see... I’m *not* happy with this twist of the story.”

“John’s depending on me and a deal’s a deal.”

“If that’s the way you want it...”

“Be seeing you sir.”

Back to John's shop once more but with an unusual interpretation. In return for not being brassy and bossy, the men had to take care of me. This meant supplying me with smokes and favors, a loose arrangement. Not a serious nip and tuck. I could be dealt with on a comfortable level is what I mean.

See, word was out in the jail. John's welding shop was a safe place to be, a place where once a man was accepted into the program, only rarely would the warden and his stooges come by to roust and challenge him. John, good ol' boy that he was, could get miffed and upset, when an oafish and slow – witted pig took it into his fool head to enter and invade *his* domain and come bothering and be upbraiding *his* boys. Pigs were *not* welcome in John's shop. No sirree.

John's welding shop was a peaceful place for a man to do his time in D.P., in the late seventies. As the lot of us had been cleared by security as being low risk individuals, bureaucratic reasoning was we weren't likely to pose a deadly and determined threat to the safety and well – being of D.P. So the pigs more or less left us alone. John's shop was a sheltered place, a sanctuary because the aspect of firm and rigid authority was low – profile and temperate. John's shop was a relief and a sit back, put your feet up, twine your hands behind your head, type of atmosphere and setting. Smoke cigarettes, drink coffee, scheme and plot with your brother convicts. Hide from the system and laugh at the jail. Over any other work area in the Drum, in 1978, John's welding shop was the place to be. In D.P., from '77 – '79, *everyone* was flying false colors and was blameless.

John seldom heckled or jeckled a man, so long as the man was learning about the lifeblood trade of welding and in a tainted and technical sort of way, the men were doing just that. The men mainly mastered esoteric welding techniques as applied to the fine art of safe – cracking and illegal entry. How to drill, water and cut a problem safe or strongbox. How to quickly and quietly go thru a fortified concrete and steel wall using the carbon – arc method and be careful of your eyes. In John's welding shop, the normal learning process was naturally and handily perverted and distorted into worth and merit as related to crime.

John trusted me to discourage and dissuade crazies and to see no drug – addled convict decided to burn down his shop when he wasn't looking. John trusted me and I valued his trust.

Convicts of the welding shop knew they had to keep me satisfied or else just maybe they might have been sent back to their units and there they would have had to find real jobs, surrounded by security and supervision. Hard time guaranteed. The idea of banishment from John's shop was *not* a desirable or acceptable one. So everyone resolved to be kind to everyone else, to esteem and tolerate or at least ignore each other. It was a cozy arrangement.

I was the boss and the other convicts respected and viewed my relaxed and easy ways with wry countenance and I in turn tolerated and stood for my associate prisoner's vices and virtues. We all did good time in John's shop, in '77 – '79.

Until one wild and wacky day when John saw the light and realized that not one convict had learned a damn thing about real and rightful welding. This became apparent and no hiding it, when the results from the 1st year welding examinations come back from Calgary and no one passed or came close to passing theory or practical application of welding.

John naturally had the answer for it, “Shit! The convicts they send to us are all mostly retarded anyway! The bastards! They should all be in zoos! Not in *our* shop, where we do *our* best, to send them out into the world, with a good trade, so they can earn an honest green – back dollar and not have to return to *our* jail! Am I right?” Our jail? John old friend... D.P. was never *our* jail.

By mid – ’78, John had doctored and falsified enough documents and records to enable me to write my 2nd yr. welding ticket. For 2 weeks I studied and welded myself dizzy and blind and then dashed off a superlative 98% in theory and a lowly but respectable 76% in practical. It was then that I knew I could come to rest and park at any place on this mighty and magnificent planet and survive thru the grace and benevolence of true and sincere labor and employ. I knew I could face down hunger and would never again have to concern myself with not having a roof and 4 walls around me. Right...

During the extensive and frigid prairie winter, the jail was a dull and dreary place to be and it was essential and important to have men like Donny in my world. Donny was a touch of necessary humor and mirth, which every man needs and appreciates while doing time. Donny was a bright light in a dark and cheerless world.

Thru – out the long and cold months of confinement and isolation in D.P., there were not a lot of warm choices to be found and a man had to do something or he would break down and go to seed. I did a fast and speedy survey of winter sports in the jail and determined there were not a great deal of worthy activities for a man of my demands and requirements.

I quickly established hockey as being much too dangerous. The Native Brotherhood had this pastime under lock and key and those sentenced and desperate men could get terribly serious when aroused on a cold winter’s evening, while wearing armor and waving frozen sticks at anyone white and they never needed me pushing them further. I passed on hockey. I needed something manly...

And so... It was curling. A gentleman’s game. What? Why yes, we did indeed have a curling rink, with 4 sheets of sleek and shining ice, as a matter of natural fact. Don’t you remember? D.P. was a good little jail in ’77 – ’79 and there were moments when I had to imagine myself as being in a federal center of correction.

It *had* to be curling. There *were* no other winter endeavors or concerns in the jail. Curling... a gentleman’s game. Donny and me and the old – timers, tossing deep and solid rocks down the ice like there was no tomorrow. And that damned ice was a glass perfect surface and those rocks would go straight and due – south every time. True and honest ice.

The convicts on the sports committee took pride in their work and care in their duties and had strong regard for our entertainments and pleasures.

We convicts enjoyed our leisure activities and an act of defilement such as, say, spitting on the ice, would have brought on fast and mean reprisals from every convict in the joint. Our amusements in the jail were sacrosanct and inviolate and not to be messed with.

However unlikely it seemed at the time, my team made the playoff final and had to go for the gold against Donny and his madcap, ‘ain’t nobody here but us chickens,’ collection of clowns. They were pirates. Winning was everything. Cheating was allowed and condoned but don’t get caught. They had fun. Hell, it was like real life in the real world.

A snappy winter’s night and the Championship game. The jail had turned out en masse and it was a hale and hearty throng and gathering. Everyone was there, to cheer on the victors and to harrow and harass the losers. It promised to be an exciting evening.

An hour before the black and dirty battle, Donny and his teammates had come by my house, wherein I happened to be sitting back with my fellow fools, discussing and planning strategy. It was an impromptu visit and Donny off – handedly presented us with a double pipeful of hardy and full – bodied marijuana. Well now, after Donny and the drugs had done with us, my players were no better than a confused and crippled circle of smiling idiots. Every one of us was absurdly and outlandishly C.O.N. and no one cared or gave a damn. “May the best team win,” drawled Donny, as he was leaving my nest and nook.

Donny’s team was nearly normal and we were impaired and damaged, to a point where Donny’s everyday and ordinary pranks were excused and welcomed. Even when he ran down the ice, scampering and capering alongside our rocks, on that slick as death ice, pretending to pluck straws from his broom and dropping them in front of the damn things. “You’ll never take me alive copper,” smirked Donny, as he went a – shuckin’ and a – jivin’ down that ice. All thru – out the contest, we endured Donny’s steady harangue and repartee concerning our lack of talent for the courtly and cultured game of curling. We abided his facetious compliments regarding our dubious and questionable heritage and our total absence of shame at having succumbed and submitted meekly to the establishment without, at the very least, having had an eminent shoot – out with the police. Hell, it was worth every moment because it was true. Each and every one of us *had* timidly surrendered and relinquished our freedoms and bodies to the confines of D.P. I know this today Don. Back then, yesterday, I never had the words. I have the words today Don.

My team was helpless. Some of our stones would have passed cleanly and cleverly thru downtown Calgary, if the ice had stretched that far. Donny always did have more tricks up his sleeve than the good warden on a 30’ leash and I really had no other choice than but to absolve and release him from his violations and nonsense that night. We lost... handily and decisively.

I applaud you Donny. Your most worthy contribution to the great Canadian Penal System surely must have been to reduce the recidivist rate by one. I recall your plea to a confused and angry young man. “This ain’t your home. You’re just passin’ thru.” Fine words to believe in.

Donny and I have remained friends, from those D.P. days gone by, to these present enlightening days. The rare times we do knock into each other, here on the streets, we talk. Not much of those bygone D.P. days. No. Don and I talk about working smart in the real world of today.

My appeal came down. And I had won. That 65 thousand dollar bitch restitution order was just a pipe dream, alive only in the green minds of the most vindictive of Giant Mine hierarchy. Not that I would have paid those low and greedy bastards a plugged nickel anyway but with an official ruling by the Alberta Appeals Court, it was *fixed* and I was not obligated to pay the fuckers anything. Not one red cent.

As I understood the matter, the spectacle went something like this...

Originally, Peter, my lawyer, had filed an appeal against the time factor of my sentence, as well as against the restitution order. At that dignified point, the Crown should have filed a cross – appeal, to have avoided and guarded themselves from sneaky moves by the defense. Which was me. By not filing a cross – appeal, the Crown had subverted and sabotaged itself badly. Giant Y.K. Mine, on advice from its lawyers, may have reasoned that I may have been concerned about the time factor. Not so. Because of, ‘the plan’.

Canadian jurisprudence was so structured, back in ’77 – ’79, that in a situation such as mine was, a court of appeal could have raised both factors, that is, the time element as well as the amount of restitution. The court could have lowered both. The court could have raised one and lowered the other or have let them both remain the same or have struck them both down. That was the scenario.

Concerning a full appeal such as mine had begun as, the Court of Appeal could have cancelled the restitution order but then have done me a mischief by upping the time feature of my sentence to 5 or 10 yrs. or any other damned amount of abstraction or abridgement their honorable and righteous minds thought fitting and correct. Giant Mine certainly had the power to influence and control an Alberta Court of Appeal decision and no doubt they had been hoping and craving this very thing. “Give the man 100 yrs...”

Peter had advised me on this fine point of due process and should I have been giddy and silly enough to have refused to drop the appeal against the time factor and proceeded with *both* parts of the appeal, to the bitter end, likely I would have been hit and hammered and destroyed by a horrible chunk of extra time to serve. It could have happened all right. We forged ahead with both sections of the appeal. Then...

At the last possible moment, my pal Peter cancelled the appeal regarding the time factor, the 3 yr. sentence I had originally received in Y.K and went ahead with the appeal of the restitution order. It was my right.

By not cross – appealing and protecting themselves, during the initial and *official* 30 day period of my confinement, when I had been caught and trapped in Y.C.I., back in '77, Giant Mine had set themselves up for nothing but hot grief and cold tears. Giant Y.K. Mine had made a monumental blunder and the Alberta Court of Appeal had wisely decided in my favor. “Giant Mine... you’ve been suckered again. If you want money from the defendant in this case, you’ll just have to take him to Civil Court. This court has no power...”

In the wake of the Alberta Court of Appeal decision in my favor, the only possible recourse left to Giant, in 1978, *would* have been thru a ‘civil’ action against me. It would have been a lengthy and drawn – out legal process, to determine how much indemnity I could pay them, every month, for the rest of my natural life. At an opportune moment during *that* hypothetical situation and before a judgment could have been rendered, I would obviously have run away. And kept running. An endeavor such as a ‘civil’ action towards me would have been plain foolishness and would have cost Giant Mine millions of dollars. A ‘civil’ action upon me would have had about as much chance of succeeding as a virgin in a whorehouse. *Had* a dubious and improbable event like a civil action against me *have* been achieved, well, as mentioned, no matter the circumstances, not one fucking thin dime. One or two semi – intelligent Giant Y.K. mine stupes were probably capable of figuring this tragedy for themselves. So Giant... in your ass! How does it feel?

Peter had proved himself to be one boss lawyer and I understand he was to go on to become a high and mighty magistrate of the N.W.T., fancy wheels and the entire kit and caboodle. Good moves Peter. Should we chance to meet again, hopefully it will not be as, “Your Exalted Honor.” No. As friends and over a beer. Thanks Peter.

I don’t suppose I would ever have gotten accustomed to John sending me back to my unit. This time John’s voice had an urgency to it, “Quick! Quick! Back to your unit!”

“John, what is it this time?”

“Never you mind! Back to your unit! Quick! Quick!”

Puzzled, I began walking. And I noticed everyone, all the convicts, from all the shops, were steppin’ high and movin’ briskly towards the units. It was a lock – up for the whole damned jail. Most unusual. It had to be bad. Whatever it was about, for the entire jail to be ordered locked – down, it had to be a deep and difficult kind of bad.

Inside Unit 10 and immediately, “Lock – up! Lock – up! Lock – up!” No questions. No answers. We all locked – up.

The jail had only been on lock – down for an hour, when, mysteriously, we were let out of our cells and given leave to visit or go on the yard. The gang and I stayed put on our range. In someone’s house and overlooking the yard. And waited...

In any prison a man may have the misfortune of being in, an intuitive agent and mechanism will occasionally be triggered inside his head. It's a feeling. An impression of dread and helplessness and it can leave a man cold and raise the hackles on his neck. He will know something is wrong and will experience a fear but he won't know why or from where or which direction to expect it coming for him.

There were some days, in various jails I have been in, when I could feel a panic and the hysteria would seep and run thru the whole jail and everyone would be *so* aware and sentient, ready and on edge, listening, watchful and waiting.

I remember that particular point in time as being an inexplicable ferment and dismay and it was many years before D.P. that I had first associated this feeling with death. An electric feeling of death in the air...

Death, unseen, is frightening and exciting and the notion of it and the confusion of it, will heighten a man's senses. A man will be fast inside but move slow on the outside. A man won't want to inadvertently make a wrong move. He becomes alert and wary. This was the way I felt and I was ready for a confrontation.

The gang and I had no idea of what was happening, except for a certainty it was *not* over. Except for a feeling that it was just beginning. We waited.

Then we composed ourselves and became sensible and practical and so organized a pretty run and raid on the unit canteen. We stockpiled every basic we could get our hands on, coffee, tea, chocolate, cans of near food and every other item a man might need in a solitary situation. As a hedge against an indefinite lock – up, which we thought was altogether possible you understand.

Perhaps we all felt the fear of the nameless because we all became sharing and caring and we could only sit back in a stuffy and silent cell, no one speaking much, all of us waiting on the news. Talk was subdued and in low tones and we tried to imagine the cause of the tightness and tension, which was slowly and steadily building in the jail and we knew it wise to be careful and prudent.

Then, looking past the concrete bars, we were witness to the early stages of a good old fashioned western showdown. On the yard were 100 men, young and milling, a menace on the make. The pack was moving as one, back and forth across the yard, from end to end, searching for a purpose and reeling like a huge, creeping and crawling spider, arms and legs strung out in every direction. It had no head. It was a mob.

Muffled and murmured noises and rising sounds and then, as though a collective decision had been arrived at, the crush and press began yelling and shouting. Rage and anger. Out came the sawed – off lengths of pipe, sticks and stones and bang and shatter and out went a lot of windows. Swinging across the yard, the mob careened, breaking and smashing whatever it could, whatever got in its way.

At that dramatic point the jail was ordered on direct and demanding lock – up.

The gang and I may have made brief eye contact but not much else. No words. No words were necessary. We separated and silently made for our cells and locked – up.

The yard was below my cell and I could effortlessly view any potential danger which might decide to disturb and distress my world and at that tremulous moment, I was relieved to be behind steel portals and concrete walls. Which is the good news concerning any locking mechanism and security system.

Now, I wasn't especially disturbed at the outset of what seemed to be shaping up into a full – scale incident and contingency. Rather, it was the question of the unfamiliar and the unknown that bothered me and until I knew more of the reasons for the problem or impending problem that appeared to be developing, I wanted no part of the damn thing. Until I could rationally decide what way to run or jump, I wanted no blind choice handed to me. There was no way I wished to become an unwilling participant in an event I didn't understand.

That erratic cluster and collection of angry young men on the yard interested me. It looked to have the general mullock and muddle which characterizes a mob. And I wondered on it... what possible sweeping and extensive damage could it do? Rocks and sticks against a fortress built of steel and concrete? Challenging impregnable power? I was *not* about to put my hard earned cash down on the boys that day. A riot developing...

Where is the dictionary? I have it now... flip...

- Riot: 1. Disorderly conduct.
 2. Disturbance of the public peace.
 3. Random or disorderly profusion.
 4. A violent public disorder

Well now, I believe at least 3 of the above definitions could pass as fine ones, to describe a good many days in my life. Anyway...

In a group, people act differently than they would act ordinarily by themselves because of the presence and pressure of others. People in a group will lose their sense of identity while in the group, particularly when subjected to extreme stresses and anxieties. Doubts and uncertainties such as being in a Federal Institution. Such fears as being experienced by those brave young men below my window and on the yard.

The term is deindividuation. When people respond not as individual units but as anonymous parts of a group. The more people in a group, the less personal an individual will feel in the group and the less responsible an individual will feel as a person and the safer a person will feel in the group. A group becomes a mob...

- Mob: 1. Masses, rabble.
 2. A disorderly crowd.
 3. A criminal gang.

All of the above, I would have to say, was occurring outside my window, on the yard below.

A mob has no designated leader, only the voices of the riff – raff, only the raw intelligence of unity and the exhilarating delight of no one person having to feel responsible. A mob can be a false power and it can instill a sense of greatness and gladness in an individual.

Even within my narrow and limited perspectives and parameters, I knew the uprising below me was doomed to fail. There was no definite plan, no significant motives or reasons for it, no strength to it and no escape route. It was not *credible*. *Had* there been any lofty explanations for a gathering and stand – off, I would have been advised.

Any mob without a majority will always lose. Not necessarily for lack of numbers but thru lack of acceptance and approval from the remaining rank and file. Which just happened to be 300 hard – bitten convicts like myself.

The men who were on the yard that day were united and important but only on the yard that day. They had no control. They had no *power*.

The warden and administration knew this and let the children play. The warden knew he could not diffuse the situation at that early point, not without physical effort and he knew there was not justification enough to use force to stamp out a few radicals and revolutionaries. No. Not yet. Not without official mandate. The warden of D.P., in the late seventies, was a wise man.

Unless... unless he and his yellowbelly line of pigs needed to toss the dice, to vent and appease their primal instincts and blood their evil spirits with a free meal compliments of the kids on the yard below my window.

But no, as mentioned, there was not a whole lot of damage those children could have done and our keepers knew it well. The smartest and best bet was to let the hostilities run their course before moving in, in about an hour.

Now, I happened to be holding property of substance and importance at the time, so I had myself a smoke and then did a safe stash. Freight had also included a 100-dollar bill and the happy thought crossed over my mind that, conceivably, had I been so inclined, I could have bought myself a body or 2 in the jail. Not saying life was cheap in D.P. but it could have been had. I smiled and hid my goods deeper.

Shaved and put on clean duds and settled back with a good book. I laid it on the blanket beside me after 5 minutes. Could not concentrate. The air was still but alive and waiting...

The term here is ‘anticipatory anxiety’. Waiting... not knowing... sensing something moving. There is no damn thing for it. Except... except to imagine...

I was far from the jail... away from certain people... amongst people who never asked my name and weren’t wanting to send me away in any case. To a place, a blue and green place, where I had stature and was important and needed and I was responsible for being needed. I drifted... to another place.

The first hours of the insurrection and other than speculation between cells, everyone was in the dark as to what had happened.

Until Bill the bull, about the only jailhouse screw I would ever have considered having a beer with on the street, came around and filled us in on the gory explanation. And it was a murder. A messy affair, as I conceived it to be, a knife straight and true and thru the heart of a rat. ‘Good news,’ thought I, back in ’78, in D.P.

Meanwhile, the kids on the yard were moving aimlessly and willy – nilly. No one had any clear idea of what to do and the thrill and excitement of the game was fast losing its flavor. The rout and revel was over and everyone wanted to go home.

It had begun as a lark, a juvenile prank. Something had happened in the jail, maybe a convict had run away or maybe the count was wrong, nothing serious. Truthfully, back in the Drum, in the late seventies, it was difficult to imagine a murder occurring in the jail but there it was for all to see. A murder *had* taken place in D.P. and the late afternoon pay off was going to those men on the yard.

When the straight goods came down thru the graces of the warden and his administrators, more than 1 of those average young men knew he was in deep and distressful waters.

The high – flying warden of D.P. ran a slack and safe house, when it came to bush – league chase and nonsense but the old boy had limited tolerance for any type of individual who chose to subvert his authority on cold and sober matters. Such as a murder in his jail. The man lost it and it was an exhibition and performance to speculate on.

The kids on the yard tried to return to their units but the units had been sealed. And the warden had other plans. Thousands of specially bred pigs, on the backs of large trucks, drove into the yard and where those monsters came from I really don’t know. They were like barn flies there were so many of them.

The screws I had been accustomed to dealing with, ordinarily not so bright and harmless knuckleheads, were not on the scene that afternoon. Upon learning their mammoth and mutant cousins were in town, they all ran off somewhere safe, to hide and not have to bear witness and answer questions later.

The razor – sharp and well – disciplined goons that did hit the yard that day, amidst the pleas and mercies asked by the children of the jail, which fell on deaf ears and with their own savage and barbaric howls and yowls, waded into and cut a swath thru and decimated that sorry mob of children. Moans and groans. The pigs were mean and they wielded clubs and they gave no quarter. Straight for the head, the arms, the legs, the balls.

At such a trepidacious sight as was presenting itself in front of my wide and open eyes, I was glad I had chosen lock – up and books and music and my nutritious and yummy vittles. ‘Saved again,’ I thought happily. ‘Fortuitously and by inadvertent chance to be sure but saved again’.

All my life I had been involved with lost causes and I understood failure and *because* I understand futility, today I know precisely when to turn tail and run from anything stupid.

About the only circumstance which would have seen me involved with any confrontation, in a Canadian jail, in any jail, would have been if everyone, every other convict was a party to the dispute. In which case I would have had no choice in the matter. A case like that would *not* have let me break down and flee and seek shelter from the Lee. I will never be a hero.

And certainly not that time and instant, back in D.P., in 78, not with a seedy and ragged collection of kids as collaborators. No. I had a choice and I used it wisely. I remained secluded and private. Hell, if I could have become invisible and sunk into the concrete, I would have done it, had I been allowed to take notes. I did my own time instead.

Those poor bastards on the yard were surrounded by nothing but authority and power and all the resources of the Great Canadian Penal System. I had recognized this right off the hop.

I have no time or use for stupid people and those young men on the yard that day had been utterly stupid. The gathering wasn't a noteworthy act of desperate protestation. It wasn't even a rational and balanced demonstration against the system. It was just a stupid conglomeration of confused and embarrassed young people.

Most convicts are children who forgot to grow up.

After the psychotic charge and the furious and glorious assault by the pigs on the men of the yard, some of those kids were dragged straight to the digger. Most were herded into a practical and serviceable unit and dealt with like cattle and then returned to their proper and respective quarters.

A murder. Interesting. And the facts behind it and beside it were far – out and fearful. I had known the man. Slightly. The man had been a welder in the industrial area. I had noticed him on occasion and his actual demise may have been the culmination of several 'freak' accidents which appeared to follow and hound him in the jail. He was the only welder, during my working days in D.P., to have experienced a 'flashback', a nasty trick that could occur when a man failed to clear and purge the volatile gases from his hose lines before igniting his torch. The bang and roar of the resulting explosion was felt and heard in downtown Drumheller. The ensuing boom and blast ripped and rocked the shop and us welders, unable to find big boulders to hide behind, were all real close to the concrete floor.

A further adventure, which should have made the kid suspicious and wary, happened when he, quite innocently, plugged in a shop grinder and the ugly bastard took off with a scream and a squeal and the electrical short – circuit nearly tore his arm off. About then the lad should have looked up and took notice. Yes.

Anyway, after 1 or 2 other misadventures, every one of them curiously suspect, no one would work with him. The man was labeled a jinx and a Jonah.

The boy had been doing a deuce, 2 years federal time. He had already put in 6 mos. when he was approached by the man and given the choice between doing his time or talking and walking. Against a west coast heroin operation.

The fool must have had his head up his ass to have even considered facing off with the oriental combine and tong. The intensity and power structure that is the heroin cartel in Canada, may have smiled coldly at the boy's folly, then, with little more effort than a slow and sad nod, the problem and threat to its integrity was gone and defunct.

No doubt the man had his reasons for shaking down a young person. No doubt. The kid had information and no doubt the man gave him good reasons to share it. No doubt.

Talkin' and walkin'. I honestly don't know how I'd react and respond to an offer like this, if the law waved big time in my face and gave me a choice. I really don't know. Once upon a time I might have been tempted. For a whole lot of money, a new identity, a different world to live in and a total memory wash. Maybe. Just playing with words folks...

Talkin' and walkin'. The older a man and the more times he has seen bars and walls, the less anxious a man will be to return to the jail. Classical burnout? Acquired strength and wisdom? Fear? Pick one but always remember this... never trust a man who has been to jail three times. Not with anything big and important. No. Never. See...

When a man goes to jail for the first time, it should be a learning experience. When he goes to jail for the second time, it *must* be an education. When a man goes to jail for the third time, it's a failing proposition. It's a losing game. Another true fact...

A rare man will discover time as being so much sweeter on the street, after having been in the jail and a smart man will cultivate whatever time is left to him on this incredible and outrageous planet. Which means not returning to the jail. Jail is a young man's game.

Talkin' and walkin'. It's a sad predicament, one which some men bring on themselves, when the law has them on an uncompromising and iron – fisted string. Talkin' and walkin'...

To return to the men who walked on the yard that afternoon. My immediate question had been why? Was I missing something? Were my perspectives wrong? There was nothing important about a murder in the jail. Not to me. Not back in '78. It never bothered or affected me. Not directly. Nor those young men who went out on the yard either, so far as I could determine. So why the anger and fury? Over a trifling event? Why had those young men decided to take it personal?

After thoughtful deliberation, I could only conclude there had been too damn many dog – days in the jail, too much slack time, too much time to think, too much favor and privilege and certain young men decided, unconsciously, to use the murder of a human being, as an admissible moment to protest authority and jurisdiction,

rule and control, over their wronged and misunderstood lives. I'll write no more on this entangled and complicated theme and topic.

I mention this incident in D.P., in '78, as being a riot but perhaps it was no more than a disturbance. Roger would have been amused. In the late '70s, D.P. was classified as a medium security institution, nothing like those mean and angry jails in eastern Canada and no where near as unpleasant as a bitter U.S. prison and long light years removed from any alien reformatory. Not a world class altercation. No. Still, it was all we had, the best show in town and it would have to do and some men played and used it for what it was worth.

Personally, I needed the distraction, to remind myself that jail should never be regarded or discerned as fun and festive. Jail is a serious business and the conflict in D.P., in 1978, was pure negative reinforcement to me and brought me on back to planet earth. I would not let down my guard again.

Roam with me here and imagine the occasion as being a riot. Imagination is a gift and a good thing.

The first day of the riot was a reserved one. Everyone was jittery and wondering on the aftermath of a killing in the jail. Of repercussions and reprisals that were sure to happen. Because... the screws *had* to do something. Something strange and unforeseen had happened in the jail and someone would have to answer for it. An inexplicable twist of fate had kicked over their free ride and someone would have to pay and not necessarily the perpetrator.

See, it looked bad on the guards because an event such as a murder should never have happened. Not in laid-back and unplugged D.P. in '78. But it *had* happened and those rat-bastard pigs would surely catch the faithful warden's attention and face his anger and wrath because of it. Someone had to be accountable.

In his own turn, the warden would be jabbed and jogged and thrust on the carpet and chastised and reprimanded by *his* masters and the bastard had been there before and he knew what to expect and sure as can be, he dreaded a return encounter. Afterwards, the dumb little fuck would take to strong drink and drop down to about 90 lbs. Anyway...

Us convicts were helpless of course. We were caught in the middle and all we could do was sit back with our provisions and pleasures and await the discretion of the state of Canada.

The second day of the riot was D.P. on fire. Some convicts elected to burn their sheets and blankets and clothing and other various items capable of taking a spark. Before setting these things afire and ablaze, the men would hang and drape them from the unit windows and at 1 A.M., it made for a spectacular sight to see. From my cell it appeared as though the whole damned jail was in flames. From a far and distant horizon, it may have looked like a broiling and blustering prairie fire, moving and sweeping changes across the land.

D.P. had the most powerful toilets in the world. They fairly growled and roared when flushed and these abnormalities became another way to dispense of government property. Holdings and belongings which had missed the ravages of the inferno and conflagration were sucked down and devoured by these formidable and

insatiable mechanisms. Those crappers were so mighty and strong, a sharp and stubborn convict could have axed and eighty – sixed a corpse down the damn things, had he so desired.

Some types of chicanery and trickery were to become a bother and nuisance to the management of D.P. The shitters for example. One toilet might have been able to accommodate a blanket, then a sheet, then a set of greens, then a curtain, then continuously, ad – infinitum. No problem so far. But when 16 desperate men, attempted to flush 32 articles, at the same time, the enormity of the bulk, along with one violent push, would back – up the traps below and flood the lower levels. Then the men unfortunate enough to be boxed – up and living in those gloomy and shadowy places had to do their time sitting on their beds. Usually no big deal. Even when the jail was a semblance of order, it would happen from time to time. It was a harmless gag and ruse and it broke the monotony of a long and boring day in the jail.

Then Wayne, plumber Wayne, would come strolling down the range, his tried and tested shit – whip draped fearlessly and carelessly over his shoulder and good-naturedly declare, “O.K. Who’s the asshole? Always remember men, your shit is my bread and butter.” Wayne would then fix and correct the obstruction and impediment.

But not during the riot. No. No way. Since we were *all* locked – down, after the quake and uproar, *everyone* declined to leave their cells and help the warden conduct and run his jail.

A condition, such a problem with the plumbing, was a dilemma and it kept the regular street – staff hoofing back and forth and hopping around in deep turmoil, at every unlikely hour of the day. There was a time when a jail refused to function, without the co – operation of its prisoners. Now you know.

Some men tried to burrow and battle their way thru the eternal concrete and indestructible steel of D.P. It could not be done. We were technical and we had the tools, drills and hammers, chisels and picks but the walls and bars would not buckle and yield. It was impossible to tunnel past those D.P. walls. D.P. had been built to endure and the materials used to build and construct it had been quarried and carved and fashioned and ordered from hell. D.P. was one tough jail, in a physical sort of way, in the late ‘70s.

All abuse against D.P. and towards the property D.P. was kind and considerate enough to loan a man, was later to come back to annoy and beleaguer a number of hearty individuals. No matter they had only been guilty of frustration and confusion either. See...

Everyone had a list, buried back in administration, stating and specifying just what he had brought with him to the jail and had acquired while in D.P. Every thing in a convict’s possession and *not* on the list of allowables was regarded as contraband. Each article which *should* have been found on a convict was written down and had to be accounted for.

There were a few men, for a fair while, after the riot, who walked about the jail dressed in the same clothes and even slept in the damn things, considering as how they had foolishly discarded and disposed of their

back – up wardrobes and bedding, down their toilets and into and onto the river and the rolling plains of the beautiful Drumheller valley.

One important feature during the riot. We were together, in touch and wired, to a point. The men had strung lines, on the out sides of the units, from cell to cell and if anyone needed a book or a smoke or any other object, he simply had to call out for what he wanted and it would be attached to one of these lines and passed along and directed to the distressed party.

Using threats and cautions, the screws had clamped down on communications between cells inside the jail and at the same time, we thought it prudent and wise to observe these admonitions. We were helpless you remember. And we *were* expecting a certain form of retribution. It was quiet on the range. But...

By way of our primitive telegraph, we *did* have contact and it became a necessary and vital enterprise. We convicts were constantly aware of what the pigs were up to, in what part of the jail, *thanks* to our cello graph. If the swine happened to be inquiringly and menacingly close to our region of the jail, it was only moments before we were alerted and we then had time to cache and stash our effects and trappings.

Me? Hell, I called up Bill the bull and handed over the merchandise and message and it was door-to-door delivered. Bill was a good man. Bill did his own time.

We were comfortable. Owing to Al and his obsessive need to create slick and artful toys and knick – knacks, every one of us had bugs, plug – in devices, which, when dropped and immersed into a cup of tap – water and instant coffee, the pure raw juice thereof, would just naturally boil up that elixir in .5 seconds.

For sustenance, the government had put us birds on army rations, canned beans, canned soup, canned fruit, packaged cheese, crackers, biscuits and basically weird stuff the boys back in WWII couldn't stomach and had passed on to us instead. It came in a box. Twice a day, the screws would crack open each man's cell and kick in 2 bologna sandwiches and that box of non-degradable muck amuck. And the general consensus was the grub and gravy they contained was far more exciting than the chow and scoff served some days in the jailhouse cafeteria. Much banter and cheering over the groceries, at feeding time, amongst friends. "Green stuff again! Wow! I'm *so* lucky!"

"Trade ya' my aged right cheddar for your switch?"

"No chance! I *love* this stuff."

"I *love* this jail."

The pigs were not amused. "Put a fucking lid on it!" Us malcontents were becoming much too relaxed. Again...

On the third day of the riot the pigs came a – callin'. 'Here comes the night,' thought I. Cell by cell and out went *all* the contraband. Rip! Tear! Smash! Out went every damn thing forbidden by D.P. Crack! Splinter! Break! Not pleasant to perceive.

Stereos and speakers, shelves and furniture, rare plants and photos of Linda and the girls, torn and shredded and tossed and fired out and onto the middle of the range.

Any crosspatch convict who wished to protest was welcome to do so. He received a bewildering number of reasons to dummy up. Whap! Smack! Slap! It was a pandemonic circumstance.

It was the goon squad. They were monsters. Fierce and frightening and paid for by the pound and the bastards were re – establishing authority, cleaning up their jail, taking back their own. Identities were being confirmed. “Me pig – you convict.”

The range on which I lived was only slightly immune to the pigs’ counter approach to the haughtiness and cockiness of us convicts.

For the most part, we were older and more clever and therefore, apparently, less trouble and not much for bullying the man, not in any obvious way and not unless we had just cause. We were a relatively calm and sedate gathering of gentlemen. So that when...

Bill the bull, the boss screw on that particular day of reckoning, led those slow and senseless goons thru our cells, Bill, largely by force of his 30 yr. seniority, put the hammer on the fuckers and we slid and escaped on the more common infractions we were obviously and blatantly guilty of. “What’s this? White powder and a rolled up fifty! Mr. Bill, come look! I think we’re on to something here Mr. Bill!” Whack! from a well placed shot off Bill’s ever ready riot baton. “Ow! Why’d you do that Mr. Bill?” from a pig nursing a rapidly swelling ear and hairline fracture of the scalp.

“Shut up goof!” from Bill.

Even so, many delights and enjoyments were chucked out but at least the whole sorry business had a degree of flair and finesse to it.

For me it was a quick and token search. If you recall, I had hidden my important effects real well, in a place where only a doctor might have found them. The swine never saw or touched my other property either and I *did* have a fair showing of pleasures strewn impudently and imprudently about my cell. “So how you makin’ out?” from Bill.

“Could use me a cold beer and a warm woman, if you can negotiate it.” A camouflaged smile from Bill the bull.

After, the storm had passed and in its place the goons had left behind a prim and prissy creation, a neat as a pin and orderly pile of luxuries and delectations, low and in the middle of and from one end of the range to the other. It was precise and proper.

The official why for and reason as to the search and seizure and the conduct and actions of the pigs while executing their orders, was that, they had been looking for the shank, the blade, the murder weapon. Right. Just prior to the shake – down and destroy, the coppers had bought in their dogs and detectors and other

apparatus and had combed the lawns and beat the fields and raked between the units and had even x – rayed the tarmac on the yard, looking for that elusive knife. It was a thorough examination and inspection. Nothing was found.

After the wrecking and the trashing, routine began to restore itself. The jail appeared to be coming around to normal. A bit longer and we would be released from our cages and be allowed to wander and to go on the yard and talk it out. So we thought. It had been a 4 day event and extravaganza, our parts of it mainly focused on the fuzzy underside of a dark and discouraging modicum of human tragedy, with merriment and music, jive and josh, gaiety and gala and we thought it was over. So we thought.

The warden, the sly dog, had one last swagger left in his wise old head. An invisible man, over the P.A. system, announced that we convicts had been given leave to return to the kitchen, the next morning, to partake of real food, one range at a time.

This procedure was to prevent further conflict and disruption, which may have happened, had the warden loosed 400 of us ill – bred and ill – tempered convicts at the same time. Absolutely, there were 40 –50 damaged and spoiled men, each one indignant and enraged, at their abhorrent treatment at the hands of the pigs, during the luckless and bootless fan and frisk of their houses and they no longer cared. Some of them might have been angry enough to do something stupid. To have let loose the whole jail at once may not have been a good idea. No. Seventeen of us they could handle.

As my cell faced directly onto the yard, sometimes at night I could hear unnatural and unusual sounds and noises not common to the jail, clamor and chatter which other cons in not so favored locations in the jail were unaware of.

The night after we had been granted permission to return to the cafeteria, I had heard soft rustlings and scrapings and voices on the yard. The lights had been dimmed and I could see not a thing. Scurried and flurried sounds. Disturbing and ominous sounds. Unsettling echoes of hushed activity. I was uneasy because I always noticed unexplained sounds in the jail.

The answer to it was waiting on us the following morning. The resourceful warden of D.P., in the fall of 1978, was certainly full of surprises. In the middle of the night, the clever little bastard had called in the army. Under the shrouded and protected cover of darkness, the Canadian Armed Forces had moved in with us, lock, stock and barrel.

We convicts knew there was an army base located somewhere in the near vicinity of the jail but none of us had ever figured on the dubious pleasure of a face – to – face with soldiers of fortune.

The morning was a curious one, colluding and conspiring, its' backdrop surreal. A low and gray sky hung over D.P. that day and a silent powdery and soft early mist floated eerily on the air. It was irregular and outré D.P. weather. It was spooky and creepy.

Then came my longest walk. And I suspect it may also have been the longest walk for 16 other rule — bitten convicts. Those army boys were *not* our friends that morning. No. And they were right there! Forty uniformed mercenaries, 2 lines, 8 feet apart, at attention and in rigid formation, unfaltering eyes staring straight ahead, weapons crossed and ready and no one was smiling that morning.

I walked that whetted and fretted line alone. Carefully and briskly. The hair raised electric on the back of my neck. My nuts shriveled. My asshole got real tight. Down the center of that line we walked. Single file. And I never doubted for a moment, that those fine young Canadians would have held back and hesitated to use their automatic weapons, had I been a fool and done a sudden and stupid move or advance on one of them. They would have riddled and peppered me with fire and hot lead.

Those brave young men were machines and following orders and they had been given authorization and it read, ‘to shoot down stupidity.’ I knew that. I was guarded.

I fixed on an obscure point, on the far side of the yard, past and well beyond the army boys and did a controlled walk. Not, ‘the walk,’ a self – effacing yet proud walk. Each step was a bold effort, to push aside the anxieties and fears inside my head. Only a natural and inherent skepticism had brought me alive and well to that point in my life and I had usually found a way to run and hide but flight had been impossible then and that moment of dread and dismay I had no control over. I was helpless.

In all my ramblings and roverings, I had never imagined myself as having a rumpus and wrangle with and being gunned down by Canada’s military establishment. I was afraid.

My spine was beaded with chilled sweat before I made the end of the yard. Every step was made in silence and it was a disquieting experience. Each step was made and moved by fear and uncertainty.

Today I realize my thoughts and feelings of fright and trepidity, while walking that line, back in ’78, in D.P., may have been slightly exaggerated. Primitive and unfounded and based on many years and yarns of jailhouse disciplines and visitations against rebellious conduct in the jail. Though I’ve always been a cautious man... and back in 1978 my fears had been all too real.

Realistically, what had been important and the end purpose of the whole riotous affair, was it had been an object lesson on authority and servitude. The warden and his men were telling us convicts, “Listen to us! While in this jail, you are nothing but helpless! You have no rights! You forfeited your rights when you broke the law! Do your time and be silent while doing it!”

Today I understand such wisdom but back in 1978 I was frightened. I was a child inside.

Quite naturally, the kitchen workers had refused to come off lock – up and it was an out of the ordinary meal, that first morning after the riot.

The food had been prepared and was being served up by the pigs and their wives and what made the meal for me, was the man who had once written me up was there, hiding behind a large wooden spoon. He was

dishing out the scrambled eggs. Our eyes met and he recalled and remembered me all right. He had seen my smilin' face before. And I had not gone away. No.

He commenced to quiver and shake and his eyes began to roll back in his head so I reached over the crêpe suzettes and the orange butter sauce and gave him a sharp slap across his mouth. He came back. He gave me a standard portion of scrambled eggs. "More," I said and it was the right thing for me to say. He gave me more. It was the right thing for him to have done. Reason and result. I smiled and walked away.

Once back to our units and we were dutifully free on the range and during the day and into the night, the army took back its toys and went home and were gone from our lives forever.

The jail reverted back to a desired state of slack and ease. It had to. D.P., at the very least, was required to put out food for its inhabitants or there might really have been a riot. Convicts must be fed don't you know. Also, without the convicts in their semi – executive positions in the jail, the fair warden may indeed have had to answer fast and heavy questions out of Ottawa.

It came to pass that damn few words of the 1978 disturbance in D.P. were reported by the media and then just to mention us convicts as being ingrates and villains. The warden was a master of deception and guile and I credit him for it. The man knew the only sure way to diffuse a crisis, such as had happened in his jail, was to denounce and vituperate those involved and at the helm, as being inconsiderate and irresponsible hooligans. Which was exactly what he did. And it culminated in the jail returning to its tranquil and whispered state of bliss. Hell, we convicts were beat and defeated and we only wanted a restoration of the good old ways and days anyway. Mostly we were ashamed and afraid.

Time, the days, the weeks, the months, were constricted and contracted after that escapade and I was rapidly running out of room in the jail. For the first time in 20 mos., I felt confined and contained. I needed to see and feel and hear and touch and taste the real world, a bright new world, which I knew was right outside the D.P. fence.

Was getting short. Four more mos. to go. A short time and I could sense the stress and pressure and I was becoming fretful and fidgety. Was shakin' it rough...and...the pigs who worked D.P. in the late seventies, were beginning to suggest deeply and darkly that they may not have had much use or purpose for me and my ways. The indications were there and I could feel the crush and squeeze accordingly. See...

The entire system, the whole mesh and complex was disappointed and dashed that I had failed to please and had let it down hard. I absolutely refused to accept D.P. and I refused to accept that I was an absolute failure. I knew there was hope for me. Hell, I had nothing *but* hope and faith and these 2 items can be *so* powerful and mighty. I refused to give up. I refused to be molded. Also, I had lately taken to telling any man who would listen that *he* could break away and *he* could lead a noble and principled life, if *he* refused to quit, if

he never gave up, if *he* kept his faith and hope alive. That with these precepts in mind, *he* could be a free man to the end of his days on this extenuating and forgiving planet.

On a more obvious level, was the hard as iron truth of me broadcasting, everywhere in the jail, to anyone who had ears, that, the right thing to do is to salt the very ground any pig walked on. No, back in 1978, in D.P., the pigs never regarded me highly.

I wanted out. I needed to leave. I wanted the street. I needed the world.

I was anxious to set into motion and put into practice my eccentric jailhouse education and I was willing to be eagerly dedicated about doing it. On the street, back in the real world, should my plans have gone awry, I had no fear. Doing time hadn't bothered me much and likely never would, so long as I had a good book, a pencil and a scrap of paper. So long as I remained forever young at heart.

I was ready. Ready for the thin white line and the fast lane and I was a finely tuned, trick – product of the state, with an entirely new interpretation of the way things go down on this puzzling planet. I was bold, courageous and true but before my next incredible adventure I ask you folks to stand by me.

Stand by me because now is the time to tell you of a typical pigs' purpose and place on this patient and permissive planet, of the origins of his species. Stand easy now... here I go again.

A person who watches over a man in a cage, for wages, is a pig. The person is a pure pig and has blackness in his soul and meanness in his heart. This person is one of the dregs of humanity. A true story.

Whenever the word, 'pig', crosses my mind today, it gives rise to and fetches up an explicit and vivid image of a nazi or a jailhouse guard. Yes.

I first became aware of and familiar with the pig – problem back in '65 or thereabouts, when I first started going to jail. Round about then I began to get myself into the odd brush and scrape with the laws of this land and it was no fun at all. Drunk and disorderly mainly, to begin with and those coppers, in that city of decay and dread, Edmonton, would regularly toss me into those old city cells and it really wasn't funny. Like a wounded and wretched dog, they would throw me into those cells and there, the amazingly large fuckers who worked the jail would habitually take perverse pleasure in beating me senseless and stupid. Not very much fun. No.

Times were when it was with a supreme exertion and the judge's wisdom and compassion I ever made it home alive and once there, I could only find solace and relief in a huge and steaming tub of hot water. I would scrub and scour the ravages of Edmonton's old city jail off my torn and tattered body. After this plain and powerful ceremony came the double – washing of my faded blue jeans or I simply and quietly stuffed the damn things in the garbage can down the alley. It was always a struggle, going to jail, in the late sixties, up Edmonton way.

Right from the beginning, there seemed something suspiciously evil and lurking about those dark and dank jail cells in Edmonton, which even the most hardened cross – country jailbirds declared to be the foulest and most offensive in Canada.

No matter the methods used to clean those loathsome and corrupt cages, detergents, disinfectants, sandblasting, the fetid and fragrant smells of piss and shit and vomit were constants in that cold and dreary dungeon, where the sun never showed itself.

Year after year would pass and I would go back steady and the same vile and vicious pigs would be working that jail. Ever and truly. They were freaks. They had to be. No sane or thinking person would lower and degrade himself into becoming a pig. In the slow paced world of the convict, it is generally acknowledged and agreed upon, any pig in the world is too stupid to steal and too lazy to work. Pigs are eunuchs this way.

One pig I still remember never smiled and never spoke. Now and then the bastard would give off a grunt or a snort, when he wanted a kid to do something a certain way, like strip and spread ‘em, get dressed and shut up. It was good if a man was experienced and knew the routine, bad if a man was a new boot, a beginner to the dark and shady world of the criminal. A lot of fledgling criminals received a fair portion of open handed, wall to wall therapy from the gung – ho pigs who worked the old city cells in Edmonton, in the late sixties. A true fact.

At an early point in my outlaw career, I came to believe that just maybe some of those pricks and cocksuckers never spoke English all that well. On occasion, perhaps once or twice, I may have considered giving the assholes the ol’, ‘Sieg Heil!’ but it might not have been a good idea. No. I was helpless in their jail and I would only have gotten another beating.

In late August, sometimes I would get arrested and quite naturally have had a touch of color to my bones and body. Maybe a tan. Not those swine who worked Edmonton’s city jail, way back in 1965. No. Those scum of the earth pigs were always fish belly white, colorless, pale and bloodless. They were dead men walking.

At about the same time in my younger days, I became convinced those sinister and menacing bastards lived in enormous, off – shoot caverns, below and to the left of the jail, thru a secret door known exclusively to their masters and the Chief Prosecutor.

There they were given food and water. Once in a long while, the group was thrown a stray and beyond redemption street – slut to play with. To get carnal and strange with. To be friends with.

Certainly, those pigs were never allowed to go out in public. Hell, a blind panic would have ensued and resulted and the citizens of Edmonton, each and every one of them, would have rushed wildly away from the downtown area, to get home quickly, to stock up on beer and to load their guns.

Now, I can’t write with a *whole* lot of authority and conviction regarding the problems with pigs *before* 1965. Much of my information and intelligence has been gleaned from old men, men rarer and wiser than me,

rusty old men from a long ago era, the '30s and '40s and '50s. Orts and pieces. With lore and legend, together with my hands – on factual experience, this is the accurate and honest story.

First, you have to understand that today's pig is a clone of yesterday's research with the weird and the supernatural. That the rudiments first began to emerge in the '40s, when it was discovered that a number of Joseph Mengela's experiments had survived and were spirited out of a devastated Germany and transported to various accommodating countries around the world. Canada acquired several of these oddities. Canada was a safe country to harbor and house, refine and protect any sort of aberration or abnormality, back in 1945. Canada was the land of opportunity in 1945.

Think of it this way. An evil and sadistic brute of a nazi is some kind of scientifically raised watchdog and custodian for the fatherland back in '44. He sees the game is up. He knows he has chosen the wrong team. He needs desperately to bail out and flee. And back in the forties, it was a smooth enough enterprise to scam and sprint briskly and breakneckedly to Canada. This he did. Once in Canada, becoming a pig in a federal institution was a kick and natural as shit sliding off a log. The beast fit and adapted and he belonged and he became a paper citizen and if he never fucked up and went crazy on whiskey and drugs, grabbed his dependable 'Luger' some night and started blasting away at his neighbors, he was a relatively safe and secure swine.

Then the pig met and married a sporting type of girl and they mated and had themselves a litter of piglets. And he trained them well. He taught them the bare essentials. The pig needed and desired savages and barbarians to continue the legacy you see. Nothing fancy. No glamour boys in his family. No.

From birth and while growing up, the mindless golems are force fed awful and big quantities of pharmaceuticals and hamburgers, french fries and beer. Steroids are standard.

The implacable kill – thirst is inbred of course and needs no re – enforcement. It's a surface anomaly and chimera, always there and waiting and ready when required.

Here I mention and write about the close harmony and accord the average family of pigs enjoys and savors, which tends to preserve and cultivate the horrible and abhorrent genetic traits, so greatly wished for and cherished amongst the pig community.

See, the male offspring of the species becomes mega – huge. The female of the class and stripe is a lesser and lower creature, not encouraged but necessary for the propagation of the race. The female pig is tolerated *if* adequate for breeding purposes. As such, the female swine must be hard-fisted and tough as leather, essential qualities and attributes, in order that she might couple and copulate with her brother pigs.

Now, when the male pig hits 18, his ugly bastard of a father has him stood up like a gargantuan pillar of agony and badness, clinically crazy and thoroughly insane but hungrily chomping at the gate to carry on the family tradition. Which is hardly a problem. Hell, the old man is patched – in and well – connected and has virtually no trouble securing a position in the jail for his 7', 300 lb. freeloading son. Definitely in the running for his bedlamite

mission in life, I would have to say. And when a kid turns out his way, he *will* become a jailhouse guard or a professional wrestler.

About all a pig has to know are the requisites, the nuts and bolts of survival, the fundamentals. How to shit and wipe himself, how to shower and shave, how to dress himself, where to catch the bus to work and once there, how to drink coffee, eat doughnuts and suck ass. He has to know how to sign his pay cheque, in the correct bank and how to get home again and how to turn on the television. A relatively simple life.

The pig's sister and bedmate, usually, is trained and disciplined to handle the more complex and complicated matters of their lives together. For example, going to the grocery store, knowing how to prepare pasta and open beer for her man, washing up afterwards, taking out the garbage and cleaning their half of the duplex, paying the bills and doing the laundry. The entire routine might take up 2 hrs. of her day. The rest and balance of her time might be filled and spent drinking closet gin and watching soaps on the 48" 'Jap – o – matic' color T.V., taking care of her pet kids and then 5 or 6 hrs. of 3rd rate sex and sleep with her brother, after he comes home from a rough day's work in the jail.

Any family of pigs, all of them, are test – tube marvels, in a sickening sort of way.

But wait, not every pig is borderline retarded. Imaginably, it may be true that 1 in 10 of the swine is given a primitive course in the humanities, to maintain a façade of order and competence in the jail. See, occasionally a situation would develop and get a bit out of hand and then these slightly less sluggish pigs would have to be called in to preserve the peace.

In D.P., back in '77 – '79, there were times late at night and on into the early hours of the morning, when those terrible mutations would get into the snacks and bon – bons, whiskey and hard drugs mainly and it *did* get extreme from time to time. A classic scenario went something like this...

I had just put in a grueling 10 hrs. in the welding shop, training and teaching men not to return to the jail. The sun was going down, my face was shining and I was feeling spiritual and free and the only thing I wanted to do was gratefully eat and enjoy whatever healthful and nutritious bounty and fare my pal the warden had thoughtfully prepared for me, with his own charitable hands, in his kitchen, that fine day. After, I fancied going home, having a shower, going to bed and reading a good book. There were times when it never happened this way folks.

Times when I was returning from the showers and on my way to my cell and I would pass a pig doing his count and I would spot a lear and a gleam in his eye and I knew it would be another one of those nights.

The 1st indication of devilry and roguery, that all was not well that particular evening, was the quiet scratchings and raspings on my door at 1 A.M. I was silent and shivering and praying earnestly and sincerely inside my house, for the pig to go away and leave me alone. Then came the hot murmurings and shameless

promises of favor and affection. Chilly stuff. I would remain silent. The pig would then become louder and bolder. Soft howls and eerie wails...

At this frightening point I would scream at the fucker for mercy and beg the bastard to stop and let me be and go away but his lewd and licentious behavior would continue and go on for hours. Now... I was safe.

That pig couldn't get to me easily. Because I was experienced, I and others like me, had jury – rigged the locking mechanisms on our cell doors and the elementary concept and principle was way beyond any pig on this planet's scope and imagination to figure out. We were the lucky ones.

Others were not so fortunate. Certain convicts, the younger ones mostly, were dragged out of their cells at 2 A.M. and beaten onto the middle of the range and there, those pigs would have at them... every which way... repeatedly... for hours. It was awful. Those kids were the unfortunate ones, the unlucky ones.

Some of us held out. There were some of us convicts who made it thru our sentences without having to give in and surrender to the whelp – swine who worked D.P. in '77 – '79. It was only by way of a saving grace from above that I was never forced into a life of degradation and dishonor in the jail. I was one of the lucky ones.

I was safe behind my true – blue steel door and concrete walls and the pigs were hard pressed to get at me, to party and play with, in a carnal sort of way, at 4 in the morning. They tried. They failed. They weren't done...

After the authenticity and realization of this cold, hard fact, those naked and hairy brutes, having not much else to do and needing to do some damn thing, would drift away from my cell and out of hindrance and frustration, would take to dancing and prancing amongst themselves and it an unequivocally gruesome and hideous spectacle to see and witness. Lower – level beings frolicking and fornicating and having each other a high ol' time? Try and picture it. Not pretty. Then...

After the amphetamines and alcohol began to kick in seriously, the total bunch of sons of bitches would do a well coordinated, close order, drill formation, goose – step, slide and slipper on down the range, left arms across their cousins' shoulders, back and forth, while thundering out boisterous marching songs, right arms raised stiff and straight and high in the dreaded nazi salute. Occasionally, they would stop, form up in ranks and someone would deliver, verbatim, a passage from 'Mein Kampf'.

Because you see, their deranged fathers may have left their achievements in horror and lunacy, the truth, behind and at the Canadian border before coming thru customs and immigration, many years past but certainly not their names and heritage. Hell no. These were passed on to their sons and daughters. In D.P., in the late '70s, the pigs all had monikers like Karl or Fritz or Eva or Herman.

After that amazing performance by the pigs, the same incredible pack and parcel, now considerably excited, would storm and parade everywhere around Unit 10, for the behalf and benefit of 100 terrorized and

paralyzed convicts, at last and finally coming to a grim and wild – eyed halt directly in front of my cell. I was petrified with fear by this time. But... comeuppance was on the way...

Then, it was always some kind of wonderful to see their masters come boomin' down the range, clad in riot gear and wrath and clamoring for order.

The noise and rebellion was absolutely out of this world at that point and would only continue.

Then, it was so damned delightful to see their masters grab onto and crack open those punishing and powerful, high – pressure fire hoses and turn them on those fucking pigs. To cool them down a mite. To bring them down some. To reach out and shake and thrash the creepy bastards. Ho! Ho! Good chastisement indeed. And then, other than to sweep and stack and cart away the prone carcasses, it was over for another night and I could sleep for 2 hours. It was over.

So many times, I can still recall lying on my bed with my eyes squeezed tightly shut, in the jail, in the early hours of a softly southern Alberta morning, after a successful day of thoroughly inconveniencing the bloodthirsty pigs of D.P. and it was easy for me to imagine a snarling mob of vigilantes, demented and torch carrying and uniformed swine, coming thru the jail, coming down the range, coming for me, to cast me out and to be rid of me.

I reckon the day the wise men in charge of Corrections Canada, decide to give brain-dead Neanderthal pigs guns to fool with and it will happen, is the day I pack up my world and head for the North Country, for the rest of my life.

The jail quickly reverted to its orderly state of affairs and I was back in the welding shop. Every little thing seemed to be going well... But...

One last time and John was tap, tap, tapping me on my shoulder. I damn near went horizontal. "Off to your unit m' boy." I never even asked. And it was another lock up, stick and sundry, for the whole jail.

There was no ill – boding to the day. The sun and the breeze was light and dizzy and the men were smiling. I was impressed and confounded, at how perceptive and canny the men were and of how they could read tones of disquiet and distress or currents of gladness and good cheer in the air. The jail had been still and hushed for a while and because trouble seemed a stranger, I felt almost an amusing curiosity to the lock – up.

Returning to my Unit, doing 'the walk' and I thought it might have been a deed completely distinct and different. Something offbeat, such as, some brave convict having gone away on a jackrabbit parole and the pigs needed a head count to establish a true number. Then again, the pigs could easily have counted wrong. It had happened before. When hiring men for the distinction and position of 'pig', brains are *not* included. No.

The mystery was revealed when I entered Unit 10. A person or persons unknown had blown away the jailhouse library or at least a fair portion of it. Three thousand books and 3 walls, was the way it read.

Which bothered me. Over 21 mos., the library of D.P. had stood by me and helped me do my time. That locus of afflation and inspiration had served me well and had been a good friend and had kept the fear and

loneliness at bay. To hurt and hide a source of learning is wrong. All knowledge must be shared, whenever and wherever it is needed and sought, for the benefit and well being of every mortal man on this enlightening planet. If you remember... the gift of being able to read, write and speak. The miracle of words... The D.P. library explosion, in 1978, was a misguided protestation. It was a silly and stupid statement.

Locked – down and wondering how the crafty and crooked warden was going to deal with and handle the half – baked question of the library at liberty, when the answer fell right on top of me.

Impolitely, I was jerked from my cell by 2 enormous pigs and paraded off to administration and there I was confronted by the warden and 2 Calgary cops.

Six of us foolhardy desperadoes had been pulled down for interrogation, every one of us in for bang – ups of miscellaneous representation. We were Correction Canada’s 4%.

“Why did you do it?”

“Do what?”

“Blow up the library.”

“Wrong man... sir.”

“What kinds of explosives are you familiar with?”

“Such and such.”

“So, where were you at 7 A.M. this morning?”

“In my cell, behind a locked door, smoking a cigarette and waiting on breakfast.”

“Yes, that could be true. So how did you do it?”

“Do what?”

“No smart – ass convict. Where were you last night?”

“Somewhere in the jail, more than likely.”

“Watch the mouth convict.”

“Only the truth... sir.”

“O.K. So you have no idea of where you were exactly in the jail last night or how you did the deed. Am I right so far?”

“Yes... sir, I have no idea of exactly where I was in the jail last night and no... sir, I never did the deed.”

“Do you realize the librarian could have been injured or even killed, had you timed the blast 30 min. later?”

“Listen to me. I *use* the library. I *like* the librarian. Her name is Jennifer. She’s done me favors. Brought me in books. I could never hurt or mistreat a library. Those of us who know how to read... like to. Give it some thought... sir.”

“O.K. O.K. How about doing a deal?”

“Why not?”

“Get back to us if you hear anything, about anyone, who may have done this evil thing. We can make it easy on you.”

“Right. Of course... sir. You can count on me... sir.”

“Good man. Be seeing you.”

“Right.”

The librarian had been on wheels, one of those semi – permanent structures which dotted the D.P. compound and complex in the late seventies. A sly and wily con, had crept and slithered his way into the crawlspace underneath and had split a gas connection. Then he had placed a lit candle nearby and scurried on back to his cell. When the escaping gas had built up and reached a critical level, well, the library had erupted and took off like a rocket. The rapscaillon responsible must have been an interesting and enterprising young man.

Back on lock – up but for a brief spell only and then it was back to the same track and treadmill in the jail.

The library fiasco became another unsolved mythos and mystery and a routine and ordinary phenomenon in the day-to-day existence of D.P. and a positive note and suggestion to me. It was a bright message and a sure sign that my final days in D.P. were close at hand. I wanted off the carnival ride that D.P. was becoming in the late ‘70s.

Every day I planned and projected on how to make a clean break from D.P. It was a dicey problem. I never needed another parole, which I’m sure Corrections Canada would have been glad to present and bestow upon me. Been there. Done that. Thank – you very much.

The solution came to me one night as a vision. It was, typically, so damn simple, I felt a touch of foolishness for not having seen it sooner.

I was down to 3 mos. and change and this was all-important to the grand design. See, when a man was doing his last 90 days in D.P. and he had not caused too much commotion or been a visible disturbance while in the jail, well, this man was naturally eligible for relocation to the annex. Now...

The annex didn’t take just anybody. Hell no. A man had to be special, in a basic and trustworthy type of way, although there were always 1 or 2 queer and questionable characters, sneaking and sneaping about in the annex, back in late ’78. Even so, I urgently *required* the annex. See...

After our mini – riot, several men had left or been transferred from the Drum and it was becoming difficult to find or run into an intelligent face or a stimulating and imaginative conversation in the jail.

Bill the brewer had packed up his evil and angry concoctions and headed west, to be closer to his family. The young man who supplied me with tea bags and sandwiches from the kitchen, days when I was too C.O.N. or too lazy to do the walk and get my own, was gone. After the riot, as many as 30 rebels and rabble – rousers

were relocated off in every direction, to various other institutions and bridewells across this wise and wonderful country. Convicts I had come to know as friends and were still in the jail, were making plans and coming to the ends of their sentences. The gang was changing this very way and 1 year from my warrant expiry date, Feb 2 – 1980, every one of these upstanding and creditable gentlemen would be absent from the jail and we'd all meet again on the outside, off and on and we'd all have funny and fond stories and memories of our jailhouse years in D.P. and none of us ever went back for anything serious or severe.

With each rising of the sun men were leaving the jail for the real world. I awoke one morning with a lonely pain in my head and my heart and realized I would never be able to grasp and know just how many men had passed me by in the jail, thousands I suppose and except for the ones I've so skillfully and expertly referred to in sketchy detail, I will never remember their names or faces. They weren't important then and I wouldn't recognize them today. Anyway... I was surrounded by day to day blues and ennui and it was time for me to go.

Now, I was flexible and understanding and had no trouble bending and adapting to ordinary changes in the jail but one chilly day I noticed and marked D.P. as adroitly shifting to the left and into the bad and the wrong. Little things were screwing down tight. D.P. was becoming too rigid and too much of a jail to relax in and be comfortable with. Authority was no longer accommodating and was getting more secure and solid every day. It was a taut and tense feeling.

Most disturbing and distressing was the earlier expressed concept of my having become, in a small way, institutionalized. I *needed* to try and walk away from this apprehension and impression. I believed it a real good idea to be gone from D.P. before I surrendered and succumbed totally and did a romantic and exotic deal with Canada's old guard establishment. It was time I showed my heels to my jail house situation and station. Yes.

I was on the horns of a dilemma and the answer to it was 'the annex'. But how to get there? This was the challenge. See, at that distinguished point in my 3 year term and bit for illegal use of explosives, there was absolutely no one around me, in a position of power and influence, thru – out the vast and comprehensive network and campaign which was Corrections Canada, who would say hello to me or even wish me good morning. In my own spectacular way and manner, I had made sure of this standing and stature, don't you know.

Once again I claim a vision. To do a properly classic fade and exit from the jail, I required a key to the front gate and this meant I had to center out and buy off Harley, the top ranking, shoulder to croon and cry on councilor in the Drum.

Seeing Harley was a stretch and a walk. In a federal penitentiary, not many real men were about to move fast, to snow and spoof a central control sort of person. Not unless there was something to be gained and I suspect there usually was, only it may not have seemed like a natural and normal way, to a certain kind of man. In *my* exclusive and remarkable case, there was a perfect advantage and reward to dealing within the system and the prize was freedom. I was going for it.

Harley was the one man in D.P. who could say, “Yes. Send this man up the hill. To the annex. This man is worthy” and the bureaucratic executive would be taken in and approve instantly. The haphazard and slapdash management of D.P. trusted Harley’s soundness of judgment regarding any side – grained convict.

Harley welcomed my approach and contact. And why not? Not only did I want to leave D.P. in an honorable fashion, I had decent and upright motives to back my play.

Quietly, I had been paying close and keen attention during my last months in the jail and winds of portent and prosperity were blowing and gusting over and thru the grapevine, eager and anxious rumors and gossip which was to become a tide and a tempest in the Drum.

D.P., back in ’78, was in the early stages of radical modification and excess alteration. Contractors were coming to the jail, to do structural expansion and enlargement, to further develop the strength and fastness of D.P., inside and outside and these outfits would be using convict labor and paying street wages.

Now, I wasn’t interested or ready for chain – gang yoke and hoke you understand, not inside the fence but a cool breeze had murmured in my ear, of a Calgary based company, that would be building a new V+C, visiting and corresponding complex, outside the fence. While the task had not yet begun, it was a go from bottom to top and I wanted to be part of it. And I understood I would have to forego and sacrifice my languid and listless ways, in favor of healthy exertion and duty. Work...

After the obvious desire to be semi – free, up in the annex, the one other factor, was the attraction of accumulating a pocketful of dollars for the street which was so close, so very close.

The only snag to the outline I had formulated was, any convict employed on the V+C project would have to reside in and be recruited from the annex. I was resolved and convinced. I needed that setup and feather in my cap.

It was no great effort to make Harley understand me. Harley understood the hard word. “Be with me here Harley. You *must* send me to the annex. Listen up. It’s the right thing to do. Let’s be realistic here Harley. I’m short. In a week I’ll be on the gate, doing my last 90 days. I have 2 welding tickets, earned here in the Drum. I made good on my high – school diploma, again thru the sweet charity and good graces of D.P.

“I’ve caused no trouble, nothing you can prove and pin on me, while staying in your jail Harley.

“My release date is Feb 2 – ’79, the coldest middle of an icy Alberta winter. Pay attention. I need cash. Get me to the annex and I’ll take it from there. I’ll put a sleek and suave move on an unsuspecting employer, get hired, save all the money and not have to rob and steal, to keep from starving, when the fuckers do cut me loose and shove me out the front gate of the jail.

“I speak the truth Harley. You know all the stories Harley. Of ex – cons going beggarly and back scrabbled and getting down and dirty and collared for the crimes of having no home and no place to go and no

one to talk to. Not that for me Harley. No. I don't plan on returning and we both know money is an answer and the annex is a solution. Hell Harley, I'm qualified.

"Imagine my plight Harley. My friends have all gone away. Strange people and mad as hornet faces are walking the yard and if you keep me here much longer, I'll be going off the bottom end and start debating and disputing those losers and this wouldn't be good Harley. The new V+C project is my way out of this glum and gloomy place. All the pieces fit. I'm a natural. I don't belong in D.P. anymore Harley."

A fabulous recital and disquisition, I'd have to say.

Harley leaned back in his 'Lazy Boy' recliner, laced his hands behind his head, fixed me with a knowing smile and said, "O.K. You got it." And that was it. Harley had been with me every step of the way. It had been a sure thing and a cinch from my first five words. Harley was some kind of talent, one sly fox in this world and I hope you stepped to the head of the class Harley.

Yet how could he have refused me? Hell, from what I could gather in D.P., in late '78, he could have stood me up against any 100 vanquished young men in the jail and I still would have been the one, the right choice for the annex. I was almost convinced Harley himself, would have driven me up the hill to the annex, on his own time, in his own car, the very same day. It was that tight a deal. Thanks Harley. I'm beholden to you.

A week of loose ends in the jail. Paid off debts and collected on others, returned books to what was left of the library and gave tribute boneroo to friends, items which would have stood in my way and been a bother on the street. Sadly, I passed my custom and cozy cell on to Harvey, a good man who is no longer with us today. Harvey never questioned my presence in the jail and had once helped me out of the games room of the Commercial Hotel, up in Edmonton, many years later. "Money? Hell, I stole it anyway." Thank – you Harvey.

Having disposed of my worldly cares and possessions, of necessity, I had to slide by John's shop and swap a few stories, drink three cups of his imported coffee and explain to him that I was leaving D.P.

With great appreciation, I thanked John, for helping me thru my 3 year federal sentence for illegal use of explosives.

John then proceeded to beam and brim at the edges, exceedingly pleased at my deliverance from the recompense of the state of Canada. John knew how to get excited and damn near squeezed my arm off shaking it, while reminding me of what a positive and powerful future I had as a rod – burnin', street – weldin' man. "Never work hard, work smart." I said goodbye to John and his welding shop. It had been a good thing.

Returning to my unit that afternoon, from the industrial area, down a walkway and crossing the yard and I couldn't help smiling and realizing the esteem I had for John and of how the old boy had saved my work – aversioned ass on more than one occasion, many times in fact, times when it seemed as though every pig in the jail wanted to see me crashed and crying. So John... stay the way you are. Friends.

Walked softly in the Drum those last days and thought and planned out a righteous farewell for the gang. To show respect and to honor the bastards, for the guidance they had given me, which had kept me safe and secure, during the long and many days of my hitch and tour of D.P. A party is what I had in mind.

Across the yard from Unit 10 lived a dealer, a man who had long coveted my 10K, smoky – topaz ring. It was a cheap bauble I had picked up for a beer, some years past, in a thoroughly disreputable and desolate Vancouver tavern. It really meant little to me except for its buying power and for the status value such tokens inevitably attract in a jail. In a jailhouse situation, a man who wears jewelry, while doing his time, is a guide and a member of a functioning and controlling hierarchy. A lesser and weaker man will be stripped of his materialistic pretensions, shortly on entering the inscrutable and toplofty domain of the convict. A man must be strong, to serve and survive an honorable jailhouse journey. I wore my gems and jewels 2 years less 4 mos., in D.P. proper, in '77 – '79. Bear it in mind.

I had street cash but preferred not to spend it foolishly. Inside the jail, a man never knows when a dire and desperate moment might come his way, so he keeps his real money, for just such a time.

That dashing and daring, the ring I was wearing, had become a form of emergency trade and truck. The timing was right and need was all over me. A maneuver requiring brashness and audacity was called for because the chandler – man trusted no one... So...

Right off, it was a quick visit to see Paul, who, coincidentally, had taken to dabbling in lapidary. See, the outer face of that gray stone was badly marred and scratched, results of a couple of tangles and tumbles in assorted bars and public houses on Hastings and Granville and Georgia streets, back in the late sixties and early seventies and it simply would not do. No. But...

By the time Paul was done polishing and buffing that ring of mine, the damn thing shone and gleamed like a jewel of the first water. Next...

It was a pleasant and amicable chitter and chat, with the drug dealing son of a bitch who lived in Unit 8. His eyes were eager and bright. I was reluctant and disheartened at having to part with a paragon of such obvious value but times were tough. His eyes sparkled and flashed with understanding and calculation and we dickered back and forth. Terms were agreed upon. The ring in exchange for 3 dimes and 10 reds, 10 plastic jailhouse dollars. An exceptional arrangement on my end, I would like to declare. I strode lightly on out of the man's house and out of his unit and into the honest light of day on the yard and I may have been thinking, 'thank – you, thank – you, thank – you.'

It was my last evening with the real men of D.P. and it was a quiet one. The best was missing. Gone were the dreams and the illusions of brash and bold deeds done, of battles lost and won in distant lands, the horns and the pipes, of low treachery and honor, of warriors and maidens fair, of glory and defeat and dark adventure,

of lore and legend and stories of strange and fantastic worlds, dares and risks we had entertained and amused and inspired each other with on so many past gatherings.

Fantasies abound in the jail. Every convict lives in an ivory tower and every convict wants to sail away. But not on that final evening with the men. No. The verses and the visions were no where to be found that night. Even though the marijuana was excellent and earned Wayne's highest praise, "Ya' done good," which I took to be an all – round endorsement on my entire D.P. performance, some of the men in our gang were heavy hitters and life before life is a bleak and dour agony and anguish you have to understand. Left early, blanketed and covered by a sadness I couldn't name immediately. It was me leaving the nest of course, the only home I'd ever known. Walked around the jail.

Did 'the walk'. Let me explain 'the walk'. 'The walk', was more than a typical and special gait and constitution. It was an attitude and it made a pig crazy. When a pig spotted a man doing 'the walk', he could become agitated and aroused. The pig knew from a man's bouncy and buoyant step and stride that a certain man had not been broken and that his spirit was strong and whole. 'The walk', was almost a verbal affront, as though a convict was saying, "beat me, hurt me, make me cry. Do what you like to me. I'll be out one fine day. And I'll be looking for you. And all you believe in."

It was an act. 'The walk' was a harmless defiance and I gauged and valued acts of insolence and effrontery, simply because they *did* drive the pigs nutty and wild. Usually not much more than a slow burn and a silent fury ever came of them but every once in a while I'd catch a glimpse of terror and hatred on some pig's face and then I was glad of certain words having been hammered into the dumb fuck's head during his exhilarating, 'easy to become a pig,' education, words like 'restraint' and 'curb and control.' 'The walk', was a high – principled and whole – hearted play and statement.

But and here you can bet your ass, had Ottawa decreed all prisoners walk a prescribed and circumscribed way, assuredly, we would all have been walking a determined and dedicated way. See, there are damn few men, on this astounding and astonishing planet, who do not fear the possibility of pain and punishment. Every man is afraid of something. A web and network will bend its purpose to finding a man's fear and it will prey and play on that fear and then the system owns that man.

The Canadian Establishment, specifically Corrections Canada, understands this strategy well and exploits fear to the maximum. Which, naturally, is how it manages to control its prisons and the thousands of prisoners in them, with a bare minimum of force and robotics, right across this great country Canada. Everyone is afraid.

That mellow and melancholy evening saw me do my last walkabout D.P. Across the yard, a turn around the track, a slow walk over the sports field, under a pointed and painted sky and then there was Hans. Hans with no hands.

Hans was a diverse and distinctive character in the jail. Hans with no hands was so called because he was minus several digits, fingers gone missing from both hands, by way of a fantastic mishap in another one of Canada's incredible institutions. Hans was habitually angry and hot and he held the gracious and good government of this fair land solely responsible for his misfortune and mischance, his crippled and maimed status and he was all for drilling it righteously and collecting on a massive monetary settlement before doing a fast exit and retreat to South America, where he had friends in high positions. Until that great and glorious day, Hans with no hands was living and hiding in D.P.

One of Hans' favorite tirades was to bitch and squib on about silent and glinting objects, drifting and twinkling high above, on a dark and clear summer's night in the jail. Hans would vehemently swear to anyone who cared to listen, that those mysterious and hovering blips and specks were Russian spy satellites, watching him and wanting to know what he was up to. You see, Hans with no hands had played serious hardball for the other side, back in WWII and he was still a certified and classified, dyed in the wool, nazi.

Over my 21 mo. slot in the Drum, there had been a number of times when I had listened, spellbound, as Hans rattled off, from his perspective, the horrors and atrocities he had witnessed or personally been familiar with, as one of Adolf's pure and perfect storm troopers, during this planet's last global conflict and confrontation.

Hans could go on endlessly, his eyes a fanatic double – eagle glitter, telling stories of crashing thunder and lightning, fire, murder and mayhem, death and dying everywhere, chaos and commotion, total war. The world in a mad and frantic shambles and scrambling to get out of his daffy and dapper way. Of men on the eastern front, men of dubious dedication to the cause, who could take no more and would falter and leave off the lunacy, be relieved or go insane and of how he would volunteer and ask for another turn on the big guns. In 1978, in D.P., Hans was loaded and packed down with nostalgia, to go back in time and do it again.

Hans with no hands never once denied the Holocaust. Hell, he had helped to create it and make it happen and he was devilishly proud of it. Hans was a crazy man.

The appalling and terrifying demons Hans lived with was not what attracted me to him. No. It was the sincere and genuine delight he reveled in, when he spoke of his noble and sacred, quest and pursuit on behalf of his homeland. When Hans talked, his eyes became hard and intense, his voice was a whiplash and I would be tripped and trapped and frighteningly, I would begin to understand.

Hans with no hands, tall and ramrod straight, every inch an officer, his triple – braided colonel's insignia radiating power and authority. Images of black crushed velvet uniforms, silver death – head swastikas and gold emblems of mastery and supremacy, danced menacingly in the moonlight, as I walked with Hans, long ago, on a night of new beginnings.

Hans with no hands. No remorse. No guilt. No regret. No. Hans was a crafty and sinister villain with no excuses. Repent and atone? Never! Hans was way past this point and instead, he hoped and waited on the express and unconditional day when he could do it all over again, the next time around.

A long time ago, Hans had been placed on a pinnacle, a climax and conclusion of an idea and had lost everything for believing in it and he was saddened to have dropped thru the cracks of a world that no longer had use for him or would even tolerate him and his conceits and convictions and his quaint philosophy. Hans was grieved to have had his act cut short and replaced by another kind of festival and frivolity, which saw fit to take away his moment and to quash his dreams and fantasies. For it all and like so many others who had been scattered into an impulsive and uncertain world, Hans was a survivor and he *would* survive.

Hans was a curious crackpot, whom I could only suspect and assume as being on the run from the Mossad, wanted as a hellish and fiendish monster war criminal. Could be Hans had been responsible for thousands of lost lives, in some terrible extermination camp, way back in the '40s.

Walking and talking and listening to Hans, a person could easily begin to doubt and question the concept and conviction of, 'the family of man'.

Wholeheartedly though, I would have enjoyed chuggin' back a large stein of lager beer with Hans, back in Berlin, in '39, just as he was starting to roll on his solemn essay and undertaking. Hans with no hands. Mercy.

Locked up early and my cell was an old friend, that final and closing evening in D.P. And it came to me and I understood the silence and the isolation of my standing in the jail, at that remarkable and momentous point of my 3 yrs. federally inflicted condemnation for 'illegal use of explosives'.

I was a fortunate one, a man who had a lock on a mysterious and premium state of existence called freedom. The word itself, 'freedom', is an elusive image to a man in a jail. See, in the jail, when no man knows for sure, the exact date when he will be released, the last thing this man needs, is some asshole beaming and brimming and telling everyone how happy he is to be going home. I had become a stranger in a strange land and it was a lonely place to be. I no longer belonged in D.P.

That last night in my cell and I just had to hinge and peer past the bars on my window and onto the yard below and pick up on some introspect, a closing reminder as to why I would never be returning to D.P.

On the yard, a minority clique of snitches and diddlers roamed heedlessly and fearlessly. They were secure in the notion that D.P. was their jail and no one was about to question or dispute the novelty of this suggestion. The solid and steady convicts had become resolved to this predicament and were *not* going to step out and brace them for control of the jail. It would *not* have made good sense to put a move on an undesirable and then have had to do time for the bastard. It was *not* worth a life bit for doing any one of the fuckers.

That last evening and looking out and past my window and I could see and maybe understand, in my humble sort of way, how a great majority of those young men had come to D.P. Several of them were the

derelictions and forfeitures of their parents and the examples and excuses of Canada's social plan and system. Some of them were weaklings and misfits, whom, thru a thousand errors and mistakes, had come to the jail. Some of them were lonely and confused; men who rarely asked questions and no longer or seldom had a passion for answers. Some of them were blades and bloods, men with quick names, until they, in their own turns, were stood up and challenged by a faster hand, another raging young man. Unequivocally, there was no messing with some of these young guns. They were mean and they never cared. For some of these men, after D.P., life on the street would once again be a familiar tunnel of darkness and despair, from end to end, back, back, back to the jail, a continuous and unbroken circle, which might go on forever.

A few of those special men had accepted their lots and fates and they were the losers and they would be and stay this way until a certain man saw a light and heard a voice and then he would change. I know because I was there and I was one of those young men. Maybe some of them...

For most every one of these tall young men, the jail was a suspension, a temporary setback, a pause and a rest from their labors, from an open and unfulfilled pursuit of a sensible and satisfying lifestyle which only they could have named and spoke of and gave voice to. All of these men had their own sense of purpose and being on this remarkable and radiant planet.

In 1978, D.P. was in the process of becoming a wasteland. Down on the yard, my last night in the jail, kites were flying and friends were dealing friends. No one was safe and it was so wrong.

A different and contrary type of criminal was coming to the jail. The 'inmate' had arrived and he had a new way of talkin' and walkin' and was talented in his own peculiar way. This interesting and intriguing young man made me feel old and I quite correctly assigned each and every one of Canada's institutions of mystical and magical direction over to him that night and about all I can say in closing, on this issue, is that I sincerely wish I had the words and could write even better than I already do, to have told you folks, of the sad futility, of any young man, in any Canadian jail.

My last night in D.P. and before the dark came down, my one clear and level – headed thought was, 'there are no master criminals, in any jail, anywhere in Canada.' D.P., in the late '70s, had been a good little jail. I'd be leaving for the annex in the morning.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Annex – C.O.N.

The D.P. Annex was a minimum security institution, a loosely strung – out series of trailers, located thru the gate and up a hill and overlooking the confines of D.P. proper. The annex was a temporary shelter to 30 – 40 men, most, like myself, serving out the last 90 days of their sentences. There were others. Some prisoners had been in the annex suspiciously longer than the basically imposed period of 3 mos. and I knew, instinctively, those sorts were not right and to be cautiously avoided. Another indication that all might not be perfect was provided by my initial and immediate contact with the annex staff. “Where would you like to cell up convict?”

“The far end of the range. As far away from your office as possible.” My words brought forth much mirth and merriment.

“Har! Har! Har!”

“What’s the problem?”

“No problem convict. In fact, we’ve taken care of any problem you may want to give us, by assigning you a cell right around the corner. We’ll be able to hear you breathe. Har! Har! Har!” What could I say? Hell, those idiot horselaughs were being issued by lifer pigs and there was no recourse to such stupidity.

So it was that I had to share the same atmosphere with 20 pigs, who were besprinkled aimlessly around the clock in the annex but I would handle it with my usual finesse and style.

Almost all I had brought up to the annex was my stereo, a collection of choice books I had borrowed from the library, by means of an indefinite understanding with those good people and approximately 12 lbs. of scrap paper thoughts and sentences I fancied finding a purpose for some fine day. Also, I had packed up 1 gagger of a joint, a leftover from my last night in D.P. with the gang and I suppose the infamy may have begun at that very point.

Soon enough, I was established in my new house, feet up on the bed and smiling at the rapier – like charm and cleverness which had allowed me entrance to the annex and it would be an interesting peril and achievement. My most recent domicile was paneled in cheap mahogany and carpeted with standard, impossible – to – wear – out green baize. A bed, a desk and a chair. The motif was spartan. I had no where to go but up.

The pigs had put me nearby their office as a challenge and for the nuisance value my presence was sure to cause in their otherwise illiterate and ignorant lives and I *was* bound to give the swine a laudable round – up and run and everyone understood this straight – goods bit of wisdom. Hell, it was inevitable and I determined, if the need arose and likely it would, to run the uncensored truth by the fuckers and let them figure it out for themselves.

Did a fast shuffle and look around my new world and everything seemed about right. Outside I inhaled and smoked long and deep of that top – of – the – walk free air and it was tantalizing and satisfying and just what I needed.

The annex knew no fences, no bars, no wire, no locks, no physical restraints of any type. The idea of the annex was based on an honor principle, “You’re in the annex now. Please don’t run away.” That was all. Naturally, a man had to meet with a few provisos, as already explained so eloquently by myself but yes, this was essentially the spirit of the annex.

Now, any man with the inclination, could simply have walked away from the annex. A man could have arranged for and have had a ride awaitin’ down the road a – ways or wiser still, on a pass into the city of Drumheller, have had a friend pick him up and he could easily have sunk over the next horizon. It happened. A number of exceptional men did the run.

Intelligent? Not for me to say here. Most men in the annex were merely doing a 90 day stretch and after having done no less than 21 mos. in the jail down below, 3 mos. was nothing but a kiss from a sweet girl.

Still, once in a blue moon, some jittery jailbird would go for it. Sometimes a man with only a week or less days left on his sentence would run away. Why?

Well, it’s like standing on a narrow ledge or looking down from a high level bridge. Adrenaline boils and courses. Your feet tingle and your hair rises. You feel the excitement and thrill that can be had by taking one more step. Usually a man knows it to be a terminal madness and he hesitates and restrains himself *because* he understands it to be a final ending. The feeling passes... Self preservation... But...

In the jail a man senses his last days and the expiry of his sentence and he savors the passion of imminent release and the intoxication of the street calling to him and he sometimes marks no convincing reason to hold back and he’s gone. It can be a powerful drag to resist a curveball exit and sometimes it happened just this way. A man’s last days in the jail are electric. Usually though, when a man came to the annex, he would be thinking a long ways removed from ducking and running away from the jail. Usually.

Supervision in the annex was minimal and slight. Clearly, it was there all right, just not so visible and open as in the glass house down the hill.

While in the annex, a man found the emphasis to be on turning him around and putting him together and preparing him for re – entry into the real world.

Immediately upon arrival at the annex, I was stripped of prison green and given back my street clothing and allowed to carry real money. I was encouraged to meet and talk with decent and upright people, people who haphazardly decided to wander into D.P.’s wide and open annex and claimed and professed to be interested in my welfare and well being. It was a game and everyone played. Everyone bobbed and nodded to each other.

Everyone smiled and it seemed to me as though I detected a smattering of falseness in those smiles, on 1 or 2 occasions.

It was the desensitization process but in a reverse mode. It was a totally opposite approach as compared to the methods used to alter and change a man, back when he first came to the jail.

The city of Drumheller was 3 miles down the road and a man could get a 4 hr. pass to go there but you have to know, the municipality of Drumheller, was, decidedly, a miserable and despicable suckhole of a town. I *will* be writing more on this repugnant and deplorable certainty, a little further on in 'the book', so you folks should just keep on reading. You'll be amazed and astounded I'm sure.

Anyway, while no seriously credible convict was in any big hurry to go into town, there were times when it became a necessity. If a man *had* to venture into Drumheller, the best approach was with a cold – shoulder attitude and state of mind. Go see a movie, do a slow walk down mainstreet, spit on the sidewalk and try to screw your head back on right. It was a need sometimes.

That very first day, I met Ken, the one and only solid convict I was to know and call friend in the annex. Ken was a jailhouse effect and prodigy. The man had been going to jail for an excessive number of years and was a direct consequence of Corrections Canada. For now, all you rapt and attentive readers need to know about Ken, is, he was regarded and esteemed as a righteous and honorable convict. Also, Ken was a weightlifter of formidable ability. The man had 20" guns. Ken was built like a small tank.

I happened to be loitering and standing outside my house when Ken came meandering down the range. The man was focused on me and there was no avoiding an encounter. I stood my ground. "Hi there. Ken's the name. Just took a readin'. The joints full of nobody but gulls and goofs. I see the pigs gave you the skinner's cell." Ken smiled. "Do you play backgammon?" Ken was not a man to trifle with and in his world and in his business, he never took prisoners. It would have been a foolhardy assumption for me to have considered otherwise.

"No. Never caught on to the game."

"You're gonna' learn."

I grinned. "Right." And there was friendship then.

Ken and I had at it. In the skinner's cell. Ken's custom built game board was laid out on my bed between us and he commenced to explain strategy and procedure regarding the many – sided pursuit of backgammon. For a while, due to my incredible lack of patience towards anything garbled and irrelevant to my world, I was on the rocks and couldn't fathom or follow the game and I'm not forgetting that backgammon is an amusement which can be learned by 12 yr. old children.

Ken suffered to teach me, with a quiet grace that could only have been gained from so many secluded years, of being in so many jails.

From my side of the board came horrible threats and terrible language was common and several of those early games ended abruptly when I locked onto the dice and in a frustrated rage, slammed and exploded the bastards against the far wall. It was frequently a coarse performance. Ken would smile and assure me, “You have to understand. Backgammon is a gentleman’s game.”

“No way! Winning is a gentleman’s game!”

“You have to learn how to be a good loser.”

“A loser is a loser!” Indubitably, Ken showed amazing fortitude and forbearance at my uncouth and unsportsmanly conduct and today I know, back in late ’78, Ken had, possibly unintentionally, been teaching me self control and how to do my time.

But I learned the game of backgammon. I had to. I had no choice and I became awfully good at the game. I became fanatic over backgammon, to the point of ordering one of those good – for – nothing annex pigs into the town of Drumheller, to purchase and bring me back Oswald’s definitive book on the game. Thirty six combinations on the dice and the odds on each. Blots, doubles, naturals, the running and the back game, intelligent moves in sticky places, wise and dumb plays and advice depending on position on the board.

In the jail, back in the late seventies, backgammon had been a rave but I had missed it. I had been much too busy to be an ordinary person and to enjoy such little pleasures.

Today, I rarely play backgammon but I can still be tricked or talked into a fast game, if the timing is right, say, on an empty and exhausted evening and if you have 64 dollars to spare and spend.

A curiosity regarding Ken and myself. Both of us had hit D.P., almost 2 yrs. before the annex, had arrived in R+D on the same day and all thru those long months, had never spoken more than a dozen words to each other, maybe a curt and casual nod and hello, in passing, on the yard or in the breezeway, in the jail down the hill. Ken had returned to the jail, those many months ago, to finish off a 6 yr. bit on the ice for dabbling in heroin (Her – on to us insiders). Ken and I had come up the hill together, that same day, on the same cutthroat transport. So...

There we were, Ken and I, in the annex, during the winter of ’78, doing our last 90 day slams for the high and mighty government of Canada, one of us with 1 day on the other and located on a final height on a hill and we *would* be entertained and have fun, until Ken took another nasty fall but this is a further story and it *will* come around. Relax, have a cup of tea and keep reading these important words.

Another curious item about Ken and me and today I know, there were brilliant and unfamiliar forces at work and doing their dark and deep mischief in our lives because, as close friends, we were both to be employed and working for the same Calgary company, on that soon to be, cutting – edge, V+C and laughing riotously right on thru those last crazy 90 days of our sentences.

There were no 2 other convicts in the entire annex complex more fiercely and ferociously determined and anxious to be part of the new V+C undertaking. Hell, it was mid November and Ken and I were short enough to shake and shudder and be in a slow panic because of it. Neither one of us was exactly wild about the idea of hitting free street in the snow and freezing cold with only poor pocket change to sustain us. Ken had privacies and I had plans.

Though I still held with my natural loathing towards and concerning manual labor, I knew there was no other way. I needed money. Ken and his inborn aversion against the work ethic ran basically the same as mine and except for hooking the odd fish, off the western shores of Canada, Ken had seldom been obliged to do a snick of work in his fast and frantic lifetime. For Ken and myself, in the D.P. annex, in 1978, work was to become a ridiculous obsession but we would labor hard for the money and no one got hurt and everyone received a fair shake and share and everybody walked away as better people and every person on this incredible planet should have been watching.

Day 2 in the annex and first thing, after breakfast, we set about worrying and wherretting the boss and the crew, on the jobsite down below. We came early, bearing a dozen pastries and a large thermos of boiling coffee, an act much appreciated by the men. As the preliminary stages of the project had only just begun and there was not much cover for the men to hide behind, from the mean and owly northers that regularly thought to moan and groan across the barren prairie, that masonry crew welcomed anything warm and free. And some of those blustery north winds were so damned evil and bad, not even the snow could survive in the higher elevations. Hell, it would blow away south to big sky Montana, right down to sand and bedrock. Inclement weather was routine and commonplace, the winter of '78, in southern Alberta.

Ken and I and our down – to – earth approach and contact naturally came with a fair bit of chatter and chat and we were not above bowing and scraping and occasionally bending the knee. We were *not* modest in our advances and the upshot of our efforts at respectful begging and kow – towing, was that, after 3 days of this diplomacy, the boss – man hired us. We were his type of employees.

K+K, a masonry outfit, fresh out of Calgary and Ken and I were common labor boots for the next 8 weeks and it would be a good deal for every person involved. Unlike some companies from my nefarious past, which I had suffered the sad misfortune to become mired and mixed up with, K+K was no slipshod organization. No. K+K had first class machinery and equipment of mass construction, all of which functioned well, when we needed it most. Best was the outright and undeniable fact that we would be working with men who invariably knew exactly what they were doing.

The concrete slab had been poured, the foundations were in place and it had been handed to the block layers to erect the walls. Obviously, it was going to be a physical nightmare of a job, involving a minimum of

smarts, from the niggers like Ken and myself but I resolved to reason and deal with the misery of the circumstances enjoined and imposed upon me that winter.

It was a bitter winter, the year of '78, down Drumheller way. No matter. The institution of D.P. would supply us with whatever we needed and required or just plain wanted. Which was right. Parkas over thermal undergarments and extra warm jeans and shirts, thick wool sox packed and encased in heavy duty boots and polar gloves for our hands. "Standard arctic issue." So said the pigs. "Prime and necessary components." So said I. The pigs in the annex gave us everything with a smile and even with a morose and morbid sense of obligation or maybe from a sincere sense of duty which perhaps a sprinkling of those bastards possessed. Whatever... Ken and I were being repatriated back into the world and the way I saw it, it was their intense trust and burden to help us with anything we thought we could use and we insisted on the best. It was a beaut and bully deal for us men.

Ken and I were in tip – top shape, him from his years on the iron and me from having been heavily fixated on handball the past summer and I had never let myself go slack and I was a powerful figure in 1978.

Annex food was an indulgence, first rate and quite acceptable, as a matter of satisfied fact. Annex fare seemed proper retribution for some of the gruesome swill that had been forced on us, sporadically, back down in the jail below.

In the D.P. annex, in '78, there were no cooks. No! The annex boasted chefs! Yes indeed! And never mind they were men who had worked in classy chophouses and fancy establishments back in the real world before stabbing or shooting a co – worker or poisoning a haughty and arrogant bon vivant. They were damn fine chefs and Ken and I became gluttons for annex cuisine.

Our first days working with the block layers were cautious ones. Everyone was feeling each other out. Establishing trust, if you take my meaning.

Erecting the scaffolding for the new V+C was our first responsibility, then hoarding in the work area, to protect the men from the biting cold. Hell, it was an easy and interesting enlightenment and it was almost fun.

The annex pigs were pleased with us and may have taken to beatin' on their baby sisters, as they witnessed and observed genuine, 'rehabilitation', in progress. They could see for themselves, recovery was being eagerly practiced by 2 rebel wrong doers. "We're all just a little proud of you convicts. Y'all keep workin' and get honest y' hear."

"We want to be citizens pig."

"Good. Good. You men are doin' good." The fools. Sure we were doing good. But it was mainly the money, back in '78 I did it for the money, 8 bucks an hour but sufficient, considering my pitiful financial status at the time which was close to broke and bankrupt. Had D.P. taken away those hard won dollars from the project, absolutely, I too would have been gone down the hill and back to jail.

Up at six in the morning, pull on the 'Pierré Cardin' housecoat, get clean, wolf down a healthy and hearty breakfast in the dining area, get dressed for a -30° day and then slide to the bottom of the hill, to the jobsite and Ken and I were salt – miner pranksters and mischief the whole day long.

Break for lunch and up the hill for another splendid meal. Have a smoke. Then a slippery return to the jobsite once more. The actual work day consisted of a fair amount of labor, a number of coffee breaks, several cigarettes and lots of talk. Ken and I never worked hard. We never worked fast. We worked productive. We were involved in honest – to – goodness consortium dedicated to progress and advancement and the betterment of the planet, don't you know.

Quitting time and up the hill, order supper, wash up, down our medium and well done belly – timber and then it was backgammon in the skinner's cell.

For a while, maybe a week, Ken and I were model prisoners and the pigs left us alone. We never wandered much, never spoke with the other residents unless necessary, were quiet and could always be found. In the skinner's cell.

Other than a cursory glance, as the shift pig passed my house, doing his head count every 2 hrs., Ken and I were never conspicuous enough to draw the heat. It began this way. Click – click – thwack!, as the dice cracked off the sides of the backgammon board, were the only sounds, the extent of the din coming from my cell. In the beginning.

In the beginning and after the pigs saw me as recognizably changing my ways and well on my way to becoming citizen of the year and a likely prospect to marry one of their daughters, I suppose I could have gotten another cell, further and safer down the range. However, given the mentality inherent to any pig on this planet, I wisely surmised my select and choice skinner's cell, as probably the securest place to be in the entire annex. Actually, for weepy and sobby reasons, I came to like and be fond of that cell of mine.

The situation reminded me of a time around about 1973, a time when I had to decide where to hole up while wasting one of my illicit but propitious and promising fortunes a government agency had been foolish enough to think I practically deserved. I chose the Edmonton drag. Skid row. On the row, I knew the coppers would never find me, not until I was poor again. In their faces, if you read me here. I was back of beyond and obscure and within a pistol shot of police headquarters and it astounds and amazes me today, at having drank so much beer in those sleazy and shoddy taverns in that part of Edmonton and at never having took a pinch for being lonesome, ornery and mean, as I passed by that crooked cop shop every night.

I employed the same basic and classic logic with respect to the skinner's cell. Hell, I could almost have spit into the pigs' office without getting out of my chair. Some types of people, on this trusting and simple planet, never expect to find trouble and bad behavior in their own back yards.

The men from K+K masonry were a lunatic and loco bunch of good ol' boys. So we were able to deduce and conclude. Real quick. And the zany bastards were certainly never bothered by a small amount of pressure and pretense. Ken and I had just completed our first shift when the fast run began. Ken did his walk on over to the boss' truck and leaned inside. "Here's a crisp new tenner. How's about bringin' us in 2 bottles of vodka tomorrow mornin'. We got it comin'." I flinched but thought, 'what a wonderful idea.' At first, the boss – man was startled and a mite confused but he only hesitated a moment. The bill vanished. The crew returned to Drumheller and we trudged up the hill for supper.

It was a high profile risk we were taking. An infraction such as having someone bringing you in booze in the jail, was an extremely humorless offense and generally frowned on by the authorities and administration of D.P. And no one in the annex was to be trusted. Ken and I had this fact figured. We would have to be careful. Were we to be caught red handed by the pigs, we would have lost our jobs and the coinage that went with them and been sent down the hill, to do a 30 day stay in the digger. At the very least. We could even have lost some copper, good time.

As it was, Ken and I had compromised the boss – man and his position and conceivably, the wisdom of D.P. hiring convict labor on the new V+C project. It was a rash act on our parts but what else could the busman have done? He could have straight out refused and reported us but he knew we would *not* have been pleased with a response like that one. Word would have gone out. And there were other convicts working that V+C project. Not as any of the assholes would have done much more than laugh at us and call us stupid but the boss – man had no way of guessing this. Could be the cruel and ugly thought and notion of a snub – nose 38 special in the hands of an angry and exasperated convict bent on revenge and vindication crossed his mind. But I doubt it. Perchance, had he denied us yet not betrayed us, he would have had to admit defeat and slunk thru the duration of the project with his tail between his legs and forevermore have worked with a little shame. Was he this type of man? We thought not. The boss – man of K+K masonry, back in 1978, had likely studied and evaluated carefully, the sense and sagacity of employing convicts on *his* project.

We read the man right. He was no quitter. No doubt the man had had sorry occasion to have words and discussion with an obstinate lawman, once or twice in his lifetime. Could be he had done a night or 2 in some reeking and stinking southern Alberta jail. The busman for K+K masonry in 1978 was no pussy.

Ken and I had put up the scaffolding during our 1st shift. You know the sort. Those silly metal pipes that snap together and gradually form rising boxes. Then the damned things are overlaid with planks so the men can work effectively at different levels.

Well now, we had put in an exciting 10 hours the day before and had done a fine job. The block layers had been impressed. Everyone seemed pleased. Everyone except the keeper of the north wind, who unexpectedly sent a savage of a storm to our part of the planet in the middle of the night.

The following morning Ken and I came scampering down the hill, eagerly anticipating the essence of strong drink, only to find that a devil and demon wind had come razing and rampaging out of the north country. The bastard bent and twisted that steel piping and strewn and littered the prairie with the remnants and remains and positively leveled our previous day's work. It was a dry – gulch and unexpected surprise.

The boss – man was philosophical concerning the meltdown. “Oh well... these things happen... coffee time. Oh yeah... almost forgot... you men come on over to my truck... got something for you.” And he gave us our goods. We thanked the man profusely, swore it would never come back on him and assured him he was cleaner than a hound's tooth. The man nodded gravely, smiled and said, “anytime men.” So, right there, on that same sand, I handed him another ten – spot. Same deal. The man shook his head submissively and savored the circumstance he had become involved in. He stashed the cash.

For this glowing service, Ken and I were willing to go to extremes for the project. We knew a jackpot when we saw one and so did the boss – man. Hell, we owned each other after the first transaction. The man procured and we put out. It was elementary arithmetic. In the weeks to come, an indifferent passerby may have thought we were building a bridge over the River Kwai. “Work another hour men?”

“No problem.”

“How about a half – day Saturday?”

“You got it. By the way. Listen up. It's a long weekend. We could do with an extra 2 bottles of firewater. Give us a fightin' edge.”

“Let's see your paper.” At an early point during the smash bang and sensational V+C project, the block layers had begun talking jailhouse and it was befitting as to the pass and predicament they were to become embroiled in. The project would come in on time and wearing bells.

Being C.O.N. in the annex was a hazardous proposition and a risky business. Because of the limited confines and the scanty population, it was much more difficult to be invisible in the annex, as compared to being incarcerated in the sprawling jail down below. And if a pig suspected a man of being C.O.N. in the annex, the swine was within his government given dictatorial rights to slam a better man than him up against the nearest wall and ponder his fate. “Why you smilin' convict?”

“It's the fresh air pig. Leave me alone.”

“Booze? Dope? Goodbye convict. Har! Har!” And then the pigs would drop a man back down the hill, to do a bit of time in the hole before returning him to regular population, to finish off his sentence. “Convict, you can come back up to the annex when you can squeeze thru the bars down the hill. Har! Har!” They were pigs, pure and simple.

During the early stages of the project, any of the block layers could have ordered Ken or myself to do any miserable and muck-ridden task or errand but they didn't. It wasn't that way at all and it was actually

humorous, to have one of the men ask us politely, to fetch a tool or bring him a special piece of equipment. Ken and I laughed over it for a week and then we decided to give the bastards a hook and anchor. After all, those K+K men were down – home folks and they never needed to be working surrounded by mystery and fear and besides, they were keeping us happy and satisfied.

One honest morning, over coffee, we could see it in their eyes and on their faces, the sordid and seedy questions they wanted answers to. We knew the moment had come, to de – program and correct whatever misinformation K+K masonry had been given by the yokels who inhabit the town of Drumheller, Alberta, Canada.

The K+K block layers had every right and reason to be cautious and careful you see. The very idea of working with convicts, in such a setting, must have been a rude awakening and worthy of a pack and peck of death – defying banter and bibber, back home and amongst their friends and family and beer parlor buddies.

For starters, the crew was staying in Drumheller’s one hotel and eatery and doubtlessly, the pig population which infests that city had been quick with their sympathies and observations towards us convicts. “They’re scum. Animals. Be real careful.”

And there they were, stuck in the center of a woe – begotten desert, in the middle of a chilly Alberta winter, building a jail and working with unfettered and unchained federal prisoners. How could they have understood? Almost all those men knew about a jail, was ridiculous late night distortion which shines off any 21” glass tit. For all the depravity they may have believed practiced in a federal penitentiary, they might have viewed Ken and I as just waiting on the right moment. The K+K crew could possibly have imagined us as deranged and perverted, watching warily for an opening, marking time until their backs were turned and their guards were down. And then...

We would have been on them. Grunts and snarls would have been the only awful sounds thumping and drumming the frosty white winter air, as we bugged and bludgeoned each man repeatedly and when the deed was done, we would have taken their money and pictures, grabbed off the company truck and gone south.

The spectacle of seeing Ken having to turn sideways, when going thru a future doorway or to see me bundled in enough winter clothing to make me appear to be 800 lbs., was eerie and strange and may have made the K+K block layers tremble and wonder on the bizarre.

To counter and preclude the nonsensical hogwash fed them by the citizens of Drumheller, Ken and I were level and straight with the K+K masonry crew. We began by talking about the jail, life inside, of the men to be found there and why they were there. We spoke of getting out and coming back. We told of being free.

We left openings. During a deliberate interlude and the extended silence which followed, one of the braver men warily asked the question, “What are you men in for?” And I proceeded to ramble on about Giant Y.K. Mine and of how I had correctly blown the bastard away and how the deed had earned me a 3 yr. bit for

'illegal use of explosives'. Ken breezily told of his 6 yr. sentence in praise and favor of heroin. The men's eyes were quiet and wide. Suddenly, everybody, the young and the old, were jumping up and down and the barriers were gone and the truth was on deck and we were a team.

More and many questions and queries and we rolled with them and the culmination of this penitential state of concern, that everyone agreed upon, was that jails are necessary but ignoble evils, that jails strip away a man's pride and integrity, both his and yours folks.

Ken's job was to maunder and wander around the jobsite and to see the men had what they needed, various tools and assorted gizmos, easy duty. No one worked stupid on the new V+C project. It was too organized to be foolish.

My role and function was to keep the block layers supplied with mud, mix, warm mortar. I had volunteered. I was *sui juris* and never had to answer to close supervision. This was why and the way I wanted it to be. During the early phases of construction, until everyone learned to work together and agree with each other, I wanted no part of a confrontation. I wasn't at all certain of how I would react to a brush with authority. A form of paranoia back then, back in '78? A fear of responsibility? A fear of failure? I dare say it was all of these weaknesses.

Anyway, left to my own creative devices and disposition, I knew I could contribute more to the project. I've always been a bit bored, whenever I've had to deal and treat with society's and convention's old saws and methods, such as, 'how it should be done' or 'this is the way.' I will never be a fan or devotee of another man's discipline or certitude.

It was a harsh and intemperate winter, in '78, in southern Alberta. It was brutally cold. There had to be a way to handle it. I *needed* to handle it. Otherwise, I would have panicked and cunningly padded my way back to the real jail and there I would have been ridiculed and scorned by the real men of D.P. I thought on this disgraceful possibility and potentiality and the solution was, as usual, an obvious one. Lock out and eliminate the cold.

To this end, I designed and erected a plastic shack, with intricacy and ingenuity aplenty built into the damn thing. The structure was detailed in such a way, that with easy twists of a couple of wires and the removal of 4 heavy bastard planks that rested on the roof, the front and top of it could be flipped and peeled back and a delivery truck could rumble on in, drop its load and roar away. The forklift could walk right in, scoop up a full box of mud and hurry out again. Then everything could be rolled together once more. Creative motivation indeed.

Inside and best of all, was a propane heater. "To keep the sand warm," said the boss.

"To keep my lazy ass comfortable," I replied.

When mornings were excited and moving in a confused sort of way, I would routinely and regularly vanish from the scene, into my polyethylene hut, where I could remove my heavy work jacket, sit on a concrete block and drift away.

Unless on some mornings, I decided to ride and roam around the jobsite, just to hear that north wind singing.

Once organized, I had no problem keeping pace with the K+K block layers. Inside my elastic hut, if I wasn't feeding my thoroughly dependable, spanking new cement mixer, I would be laying back on my summery sand pile and dreaming and wondering, with uneasy anticipation, of the street which loomed closer with each passing day. Closer...

That damned sand was perpetually warm enough to appease the southern in my soul and to allow for a catnap now and again. So blow and rattle prairie wind. Can't catch me.

At the very outset of the project, the boss – man was impressed with my dexterous and inventive capabilities. To a point where the sly dog occasionally took to coopin' in that shack himself. "Cold today huh?"

"Real cold."

"So, when ya' gettin' out?"

"When I've done my time."

"This is nice."

"Real nice." Ken and the men were moved to shed tears of respect and gratitude, once *they* discovered my sand pile and *they* conceived and cooked up considerable motives and reasons to be in my shack. "This is fine."

"Real fine." *Everyone* inside my little house on the prairie was smothery and warm, the winter of '78, down around Drumheller country.

Within the partially completed V+C, after we had sealed off the scaffolding with huge and heavy canvas tarps, we installed gigantic, propane powered, jet – air fans and heaters. They were as menacing as any flamethrower. Pass close to one of those fuckers and it was a scorch and torch risk a man took. They were mean machines. But just what the project needed. The fuckers were essential and indispensable. But...

Due to the enormous work area of the project, the volume, not even those inventions from hell could provide uniform heat everywhere. A man could feel his bones rattle in one baggy corner of the building and wipe the sweat from his brow in another yet we were all grateful for those ugly monsters. Still though... in the winter of '78, there was no place on this glorious planet, cozier and comfier than my plastic cave, down Drumheller way, where I was jailed – up in D.P.'s annex.

Those good men of K+K masonry had to suffer and work in the cold and freezing weather, while Ken and I were content and warm, having been winterized and provided for by the grand and gracious government of

Canada. It didn't seem right that our brother employees should be less comfortable than ourselves so we set about helping the poor bastards out of their fix and dilemma. We extended a gesture...

Winter work clothing is expensive, don't you know. Ken and I had access to a complete storeroom of the stuff, a room packed and crammed to the rafters with every manner of snow gear and survival accoutrement. We offered the works, right across the board, to the men from K+K. They went for it, the whole beaver. It was the dawning of an arrangement, which was to become a roaring and capital deal and accord in every direction.

Each item had a price. Money or booze. A parka went for 20 bucks or 4 pints of vodka. A pair of gauntlets, with liners, was 5 bucks or 1 pint, boots were 15 bucks or 3 bottles of vodka and so on and so forth. Incredibly low prices for quality clothing, fractions of store bought prices and Ken and I had an abundant and plentiful supply of stock and it was not likely anyone would be disadvantaged and have to do without winter raiment.

This entrepreneurial enterprise was to virtually guarantee us fools a constant and as good as free supply of money and alcohol, right on thru the life of the project, from beginning to end.

From the start of the project, Ken and I craved the cash for working long hours and this ambition had been realized by Chris, the project superintendent. Chris was in a dither and a dather regarding the project's schedule and never minded us working overtime. We had all the hours we could use.

As to our sweet deal with the block layers, well, it was an equitable arrangement for everyone. Considering our low tolerance for discipline or authority, we needed K+K to be easy on us or, unquestionably, Ken and I would have been back in the jail, on the other side of the fence, where we would have taken to lengthy evening walks around the grounds and feeling sick and sunk, the whole drawn – out winter long.

The block layers were dippy and delirious with warmth and well – being. Those good ol' K+K men could stand the savings on winter apparel and we were on their sides this way.

As an additional spot of frosting and happiness and after having walked and talked with us and gotten to know and understand, in a small way, what going to jail was often about, the men from K+K masonry may have took pleasure and satisfaction, at having flaunted and flouted the system, in a paltry and gentle kind of way.

So many mornings, Ken and I would come tunneling and tumbling down the hill, wearing 2 parkas each, multiple sets of gloves and sox, our pockets overflowing with other hot items and ready to set up shop and do business with the men from K+K masonry.

At first it was a cautious and discreet adventure and exploit but after bringing down a lush and copious payload of winter wear to the jobsite, over a relatively short period of time, we just naturally came to believe we owned the store. Therefore, we became outright daring and reckless about robbing it. Ken and I began to openly hi – grade and plunder our federal discount house of cool clothing.

Early mornings were, thereafter, down the hill, a spare parka or 2, in either hand, extra sets of boots dangling brazenly from our shoulders, a disdainful trail of mittens and muffs, laces and liners and habiliments, as we heroically challenged the D.P. annex pigs to stop us. We were as bold as brass and approximately twice as shiny and bright.

Soon, everybody was supplied and trimmed out in pale green livery and apparel and with us *and* the K+K crew dressed the same, we may have looked like and could have passed for a family of creepy religious freaks. The merry men from K+K masonry even bought clothing from our dry goods store, “for my son” or “for my brother.” Why not?

There were no worries an inquisitive swine from the annex might venture down the hill. Pigs who watch men in cages, for money, are indoor creatures. *Had* a pig come flying down the hill, he probably would never have noticed anything as being unusual anyway. D.P. pigs weren’t that smart. From any vantage point, they would have seen 20 – 30 men, all dressed alike to be sure but working diligently to build and create a better world for everyone concerned. No cause for sentiment or suspicion of wrongdoing. No. Powers of perception and intelligent observation are not necessary or compulsory characteristics for a jailhouse pig to have. No.

Now, once we had delivered the merchandise, we were scott free and in the clear. Ken and I saw it this way. So...

To save the block layers more money still and to dare the pigs farther, in defense of what was fast becoming a familiar and jaded commercial endeavor and to positively ingratiate ourselves with the men further and deeper yet and to extract another crumb of reward from the government of Canada, Ken and I began bringing along provisions from the kitchen every morning and afternoon. Sandwiches and steaks, fruit and desserts, coffee and cocoa, whatever we would get away with and truthfully, not much of anything in the annex was safe and secure from our greedy and speedy fingers, times when we wished for something.

Times such as when Ken and I stalked on into the annex kitchen, after a tough day on the project, looked the head – chef straight in the eye and requested a roast or a dozen switches, to be wrapped and ready to go at 7 A.M. the following morning. Such petitions were invariably granted with zeal and zest and the chef would fairly hop to our order. The annex chefs, back in ’78, were astute and wise this way.

Somewhere within the annex period of time, I became intensely involved with the California citrus crop and harvest the excellent year of 1978. For temporal reasons, maybe to prevent scurvy or beri – beri, my make – up and essentiality craved vitamin ‘C’. Terrible and frightening quantities of grapefruit were necessary to quell and satisfy my passion and appetite for the damn things. “Hey Chef! Another crate of the sun’s kisses! I’m hurtin’!” And one of the Chef’s retainers would call the jail below and *they* would rush right up with my solicitation. And other items I desired or required. The D.P. annex was an amazing and incredible kindness and gentleness, back in the late seventies and we convicts were learning to be responsible.

The K+K crew was touched and affected, those mornings when they could toss their gristly and greasy Drumheller Hotel bag lunches onto the rubbish heap or bury them deep in a distant snow bank.

At one point, not far along on the project, Ken and I tried to make arrangements with Archie, the chief annex executive, to have the block layers bunk up the hill with us convicts. There was room enough. But this consideration was too much of a bureaucratic entanglement for management to cope with and it never happened. Which was probably just as well. During the 2 mos. we worked with K+K, Ken and I were to witness a number of incredible performances by those block laying bastards, facts and conduct, that, if had become known and recognized by the annex staff, would possibly have earned every one of them 2 yrs. in the big house on the prairie.

Concerning the plethora of grub and gear, which went missing and home with real people who needed it, stuff we stubbornly claimed was vital and basic to our survival, well; no pig ever did get on our case over it. Should an inquisitive pig *have* been overly curious, I'm sure Ken and I would have been quite offended and have become somewhat defensive about it. "Sixteen parkas? Twelve sets of liners and gloves? Fourteen pairs of boots? What the fuck are you jailbirds doing with it all?"

"We're hard workin' men. Don't bother us pig," and we would have beat the beef.

Only 2 weeks into our hustle and racket and I ascertained that the annex pigs coveted our store and stock for themselves.

One gainful evening, I was rootin' around the supply room and was knee – deep into the stores and reserves and in walked a pig. "Hey convict! Nice parka! Warm I'll bet, huh...?"

"Sure is pig. Real warm."

"Hey convict! I could use me a parka like that one there. The green job."

Careful. "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Want to do a deal?"

"How so?"

"Thirty dollars cash money and I'll deliver this genuine government issue parka into the trunk of your Edsel."

"No shit?"

"I can do it."

"Deal!" And the pig gave me his money and I came thru for the fucker. The word quickly spread.

Archie, the chief annex executive, in a moment of weakness, some nights before, had flat out given me the hooks to the room of plenty, as Ken and I had become too much of an encumbrance for him to deal with. We were forever demanding an item from the storeroom and when the need was on us, Ken and I had to

squeeze and choke the old boy for the key. Archie was a busy man and it would piss him off. We were millstones and also, our approach and attitude may have been crude and lacking. “Hey Archibald! We need gear and garments, duds and drapery, clothing and equipment! Give us the fucking key to the supply room and be quick about it!” So, one dramatic morning, Archie favored us in a big way.

“You men hang on to the key. I trust you men.” And that key to the dry goods room stayed in my blue – jeans pocket until I fell from grace but this amusing and carefree anecdote will be along soon. Don’t go away. Be patient.

But in the meantime... the annex pigs formed a long line stretching clear to the Saskatchewan border and gave Ken and me all their Christmas money. Cash on the barrelhead too and no credit accepted and we laughed all the way to the bank.

“Hey convict! I was gonna pay 90 bucks at Zellers to get me a parka like this one here for the little lady. Golly! I got me a deal. Guess I got the best of ya’ convict. Har! Har!”

“I guess ya’ got me pig. Tell your friends. Ya’ all come back now, ya’ hear.”

“Sure will. The kids need clothes. Should be able ta’ save m’self some cash ta’ go drinkin’ with m’ brothers and sisters. Har! Har!”

Folks, back in the late seventies, down in southern Alberta, it would have been a fantastic and frightening experience, to have been anywhere close to the town of Drumheller.

January 15 or so, 1979, a group of government psychiatrists should have descended on Drumheller. For certain, those rational and reasonable men would have warned the authorities and Canada would have tossed a barbed wire net over that city of idiots and imbeciles.

“Gentlemen, we have a problem. Inbreeding on a controlled level we could conceive and believe as being necessary to their occupations. So long as they never strayed or ranged, we could permit and tolerate this aberration. But now, the situation seems to have gotten beyond our command and jurisdiction. Now the swine are wearing armbands on the sleeves of those fucking green jackets they’re all wearing that read either Jethro or Ellie May. Now they’re dressing the same. No identities. Where *do* they get their clothes...”

Those ridge runners and chaw bacons were freaks all right, straight out of ‘Deliverance’ and the Ozarks and geeks like them get exactly what they deserve. Each other is a status, which comes to mind this morning.

I am basically a sunshine type of man. Whenever winter comes to Alberta and I have to involve myself in it, for obscure reasons, I feel like poor Ivan Denisovitch, stranded in the high Soviet Arctic and building a wall. I felt this way building the V+C for D.P. in ’78. It was a breathless and heartless torment, standing on top of that structure, alone and above and looking down on that cold and barren prairie in 1978.

Occasionally, I would descry an unsettling and unnerving spectacle, as viewed from the height of a frigid and frosty scaffold. General Hand grenade and his brethren swine. Every hour those pigs would pile into their 4-

wheel drive jeep, mitts wrapped tightly around their guns and billies, drop 20 bucks worth of government rubber on the parking lot pavement and go whooping off into the wilderness surrounding the jail. Their mandate was to patrol the fence for leaks and breaks or maybe the long shot and eye popping opportunity to chase and run down a convict, which, as I've explained, somewhere back a' piece, was almost a ridiculous theory and hypothesis. D.P. was a good little jail in '78 and no one wise wanted to leave in such a flamboyant fashion.

In addition to the obvious restraints and the many incentives and inducements held up for the average man *not* to escape, General Hand grenade and his troopers were another visible deterrent against even considering the idea. They were an evil bunch of bastards.

Rabbits and coyotes were their favorite targets though sometimes a mare's nest of rolling sagebrush would do to placate their killer instincts. First off, I would hear the screaming and thunder in the distance. Then, like a murderous cavalry charge, those cocksuckers would appear and the onslaught would begin. Bucking and bouncing in their jeep, past the new V+C, screeching and roaring over and across the sand and snow covered dunes, howling with insane and deranged laughter, around the fence and past the guard towers and what really got the scumbags to baying and wailing with frenzied glee, was when they *did* rundown a helpless animal and saw its blood and it was a disturbing scene to behold. Times when I watched this slaughter and massacre, I could step back and know and testify for all the world to harken to, I have never intentionally hurt or damaged the alive and living planet. I knew I wasn't totally off center and I appreciated that I was more of a man than General Hand grenade and his henchmen would ever be.

Three weeks into the project and my world had developed into a full – blown C.O.N. comedy. Ken had locked onto a serious and steady supply of valium and this fell circumstance, combined with an inordinate backlog of vodka, as owed to us by the block layers and graciously given to us as requested, generated a C.O.N. effect that was considerable and continual.

Money was never a problem. In the annex, a man was allowed to carry 40 dollars street cash in his pocket. Ken and I always had a sawbuck or a double- saw on our persons and it was a strong feeling. Owing to our outside interests and our speculation in fine clothing and men's wear, we never had to touch our paychecks. No. Rather, we just let those exciting credits build up in our street accounts. We were fat cats in the tall poppy.

It was inevitable, having become backgammon aficionados, for Ken and I to start playing for money. Rattling the dice and juggling the cube and gambling for cash, gave the game energy and spice. Ken, I hereby acknowledge, after 900 games of backgammon, I do so owe you 19 dollars. Well now, do the words stiffed, duped and dusted, done, skinned and spoofed mean anything to you Ken? I believe they do Ken. Ho! Ho! Friends.

I've mentioned before, being C.O.N. in the annex was a perilous adventure and achievement. Yes it was folks. In the jail down below, I knew who was solid and who was N.G. Not so in the annex. No. In the

annex, I could never be certain of who was in the cell next to me or who was across the range from me and if he might not want to settle an old score and drop a dime on me. Therefore...

Ken and I treated everyone equally. With suspicion and contempt and except for a credible few men we had known from the jail down below, we calculated on near everyone in the annex with being wrong. The uncommon few, we pieced off with Valium and vodka and these men were our eyes and ears and kept us aware of any sneaky moves the pigs might get up to. It was practical and useful insurance. It was a reasonable and realistic guarantee to our often pitiful and wretched postures.

See, come about 10 P.M., Ken and I would be bagged and baked, to a far off brink where there was just no fooling anyone. Consummately and ultimately C.O.N. and we both knew it. Still and slow as posts. Limited and laggard. Deliberate and dilatory. Except when one of us had to do the run. To the pop machine. Where we would buy up a hefty and healthy supply of O.J., to compliment our vodka ration of the evening. Then, it was back to the skinner's cell and no unscheduled stops along the way.

Quiet in my house. No jitter and jabber. Dreamy and drowsy conversation.

Click – click – thwack! “Nice roll. Have a ‘V’.” Click – click – thwack!

“Care for a drink?”

Click – click – thwack! “Too bad. Know any other good games?” Click – click – thwack!

In some of the conditions and states Ken and I got ourselves into, had either one of us been stupid and stepped out onto the range, sure as heartbreak and hard time, *any* boneheaded pig trotting by my cell would have had us for C.O.N. and down the hill and into the digger and in extremely short order. But...

The vodka and the valium had made us canny and cagey. Ken and I were in for the short haul, our last and final dash, at an unkind and uncaring clock. We poured back *all* the white liquor and ate *all* the blue pills, to quiet and calm the virtuous fires within us and for the honesty between us. It was a stimulating and stirring experience and I was invariably puzzled and mystified at the chances I was taking with my freedom so close and contiguous.

Ken had words for me. Words which today, I sometimes think on still. Words which defined and chronicled Ken's world. I'll come off the blues and put away the clear spirits and trace a touch of solemn truth by you open – minded folks. Words. Simple words. Words...

When the twilight drifted over us blah and blurry and we were too slopped and stoned to move much, we would get to talking thoughtfully and reflectively. Ken was, on occasion, capable of deep and profound expression and even today, his explanation of running and hiding and of how he used heroin to do it, is a typical and true one. Ken's words were revealing and correct. Words...

“Like this friend. Been going to jail since I was a young man. Don't know no other life. Don't know how to change or if I want to. I've always been alone. I've never had a friend. Never saw the need for one.

I've never met a man I could trust. Heroin came to me like a friend. Like a lover. Heroin will always listen to me. Understand me. Talk to me. Set me free.

"I don't like the world I see around me. I don't understand the world around me. I'm afraid sometimes... so... I fix the smack and I can handle it. When I fix the junk, I have a friend and I'm never alone. Heroin tells me everything is going to be all right. Then I can manage my life. When I get together with my white lady, I read the world thru rose – colored glasses and everything is fine and everything makes sense. When my lady is with me, it's a perfect world and I can do no wrong.

"Sure, the bitch has put me down a time or 2. But that's a chance and contingency I take. I know someday, I'll crank back the magic lady and she'll put me down forever. I accept that behest and judgment. And when I do go down, I'll be satisfied and smiling. I'm some kind of fool I suppose...

"Understand friend, I'll never leave my lady. When I put a spike in my arm, I'm a free man. And I'll never be free without my lady.

"The important thing for you to remember, my friend, is, never get in my way, trust me or believe me, when I'm on the wire. I'll use you. I'll hurt you. For my lady."

Which were brilliant and remarkable words. They just happened to describe and illustrate exactly and precisely how I thought and felt about books and booze, the blues and symphonic music in general. Some kinds of friends...

Today, when I think back on Ken's words, back in '78, in the D.P. annex, those words seem so familiar. I still believe in beautiful and mysterious learning and teaching. I believe in the truth. From 1978 until today? Some kind of power, I have to say.

As mentioned, come 10 o'clock, Ken and I were equally C.O.N. and the evening would be over. Had a brain – dead pig have seen us in such a condition, maybe he would have attributed our states to weariness and exhaustion from the work and the weather. Perhaps. I'm not sure. Whatever. We were lucky.

Mornings were O.J. and Valium, an extravagant breakfast, 2 coffees and 3 cigarettes and I was clear – headed and on the job and I was bursting with vim and vitality and I was a mighty man in 1978.

Did you know those V+C walls were made of glass? No? I'll tell you...

Every day, after work, Ken and I were in the way of bringing 2 or more pints of vodka up to the annex and the problem with this ploy and maneuver, was, how to dispose of the empties. The usual methods, the trashcans or deep – sicing them in the snowdrifts surrounding the jail were impractical. Snowmelts and garbage cans have to be emptied. The pigs were notorious snoops and constantly on the prowl for this very kind of slip – up. Also, the rats who were proliferate and plentiful in the annex had to be taken into account. I could hear it. "They did it. They decorated the property and topped off the trash with all those empty vodka bottles on your desk sir." It could have happened.

Quite early into the madness and foolishness, the solution came to us. Ken and I may have been in never never land when the answer came along like a smile from a pretty girl and it was a manifestation of immense reach and respect. The walls! Those hollow and empty V+C walls! Ho! Ho! Why not?

After this apocalyptic bolt from above, the first item of business each day was to gather up and haul those incriminating bastard bottles down the hill, to the jobsite and up a scaffold, to the top of a partially completed block wall, where we would smash the damn things with a hammer and the evidence would clitter and clinkle down and disappear. The block layers would look on these rituals and ceremonies and smile with approval and everyone was buttoned – down and home – free. Which was good.

Because, as I've said many times before, had Ken and I been captured with booze on our hands, in the annex, downbeat questions would have been asked and though we would naturally have denied any complicity, a small scale investigation would have taken place and after finding slim answers, the pigs would have put it right on us and we would have lost everything. Management would have had to find or create a scapegoat to save face and of course, it would have been Ken and myself.

Our shrewd and crafty method of jettisoning those bootleg bottles was a wise one. Safe and solid. With the V+C walls rising higher and higher each passing day, no pig was going to rip into one of them, just to lay a dirty beatin' on us, even if they were capable of thinking it out. Hell, the annex pigs could have *known* and *seen* us breaking those bottles, on top of the scaffolding and they would only have been aware of a cold and vicious slap in the yap over a no – win situation and a first – rate conspiracy.

Don, my brother, drove down from Edmonton, to rescue my stereo and papers. Forty days hence, I would be returning to the real world and I only wanted to be carrying money and whatever else fit into my pockets. Don also brought along 2 oz. of righteous and convincing marijuana. Which was exactly what the project required at that point in time.

Back in '78, I did indeed smoke buds and leaf. So did everyone. Poor people and presidents... On such an assumption and apriorism, Ken and I asked the K+K block layers if they indulged. "Certainly." And the project took off in several new directions. The block layers went about half – crazy with lickerish and passionate inspiration. The bastards sure could lay down those concrete blocks, graded to the max and plastered C.O.N., on that powerhouse marijuana. No matter some of the walls and partitions were bowed and wowed, the results of the men's innovative expertise, everything would be straightened out and leveled in the end.

Before Ken and I and the K+K masonry crew had smoked up that whole damned 2 oz. of marijuana, certain sections of the new V+C looked as though demented but absolutely and positively gifted and exalted drunkards and hypes had been left to their own creative devices. In some places a hallway led nowhere and had no practical function, a door might open onto a dead end blank wall and blocks were positioned at odd angles of their imaginings. We'd take care of and fix it. From another view, that new V+C structure could have been

reckoned as a 20th century tower of Babel. Everyone was talking the same language and understood precisely what each other meant. “Someday soon, all walls will look like this.”

“Sure thing partner.” The men had fertile imaginations. They were artists. The boss – man was amused before walking away. Corrections would be made.

Any shred of a claim I might have had, to any degree of normalcy or conformity, had to have been decisively shattered the Christmas of 1978.

As the project rolled on, different trades with diverse skills began to be required and had to be brought in. As a further gesture of magnanimity, D.P., good little jail that it was, allowed another dozen or so convicts from inside the fence, to work outside with those various street crews. After the day’s work was done, these convicts were obliged to return to the necessary jail.

It was an offer and gesture valued and appreciated and regarded with dignified respect from the men inside the jail. “More than just a convict ‘eh? O.K. Let’s put you to work doing something useful and productive. We’ll pay you a fair wage, which we understand you might find a need for, when we turn you out on the street. Maybe you’ll have time enough to find a home, get straight, get a job, meet a girl and settle down and not be returning to our jail.”

“Thank – you sir.”

Every morning, early and bright, the inside convicts would troop and rally out the main gates of D.P. In the late afternoon, after their work was done, those same men would circle back thru those same gates, with not much more than a token frisk from security, pigs who had to assure themselves and Administration those convicts weren’t bringing in forbidden treasure and other paraphernalia.

It had begun as an exciting crusade and adventure for the pigs on the gate. To grab a federal prisoner, dead to rights, smuggling in dynamite and guns? It’s every pig’s dream. It couldn’t get any better for a pig. But no, as time dragged and moved onward and the gatekeepers became accustomed to the routine, those pigs began to see the drill as a bother and a nuisance and were irked and fatigued at having to shake and sniff the same men day after day. It was humdrum and it involved a pig having to set down his coffee, lay aside his comic book, slide his feet off his desk and get up off his fat ass. Then the ignorant swine had to do an exhaustive search thru 6 layers of winter clothing and come up empty – handed. Actually, it was a job they were called to and they did their job well. On occasion... Anyway...

After a week of this beaten path, the pigs took to nodding the men thru the gate and into the jail. Men in jail observe and attend to mistakes in an anticipated cycle. Any deviation from a known pattern is conspicuous and will get a convict to thinking concise and clever thoughts. We noticed a discrepancy in regular surveillance and used it to get the drop on those pigs. The pigs on the gate were predictable and we simply *had* to take advantage of their imprudence and carelessness.

Our conjecture was to prove correct and the pigs on the gates of D.P., in '78, erred and blundered miserably.

Ken and I ran the intriguing question of relaxed vigilance and isolated searches past the men from inside, along with a happy and healthy plan.

The men were only reluctantly willing at first, not as though they had much choice in the matter. Ken and I were in control. We were outside and established. They were inside. Our people were inside. Our people inside would be expecting them to come thru. The plan, dicey and risky though it was, may have been a dangerous one for them, had they refused to cooperate with us and never mind them being caught by the authorities. Hell no. Ken and I were about to help out a few grim and determined men, humorless and hard men who never asked for favors, men who might not have taken kindly to being deprived and dismissed by chickenshit convicts. Our people inside had been advised to be expecting intoxicants and kickshaws and what they may have said or declared to those inside workers remains a mystery to me but overnight those inside men became eager and enthusiastic zealots of the plan. We were resolved and determined. The men were ready and the plan was in motion and everyone had a piece of the action.

Ken and I overloaded on our liquor order, Christmas 1978, in D.P.'s annex. Thirteen bottles of vodka! Yes! The block layers freighted in our staples with due caution and care and one celebrated and never to be forgotten morning, saw Ken and I and the K+K masonry crew, bunched up and together, within the comforts and confines of my industrial and insulated hut by the D.P. fence. The block layers proceeded to pull and pluck bottles from the several dark and deep recesses and crevices of their dull and drab jailhouse green parkas, while Ken and I dug and buried the scandalous spirits deep into the depths of my warm and welcome sand pile. "Now, you men be careful. We don't want you getting in trouble. We *like* working with you men."

"We're bustin' out. Keep it quiet."

"Right."

End of shift. The deed got done. Solemnly, we had presented 'bug house' Bruce, a solid con, with the merchandise. "Holy shit!"

"Never mind the theatrics convict. Remember who these are for."

"Right." And we watched with eagle eyes as Bruce and the booze passed smoothly and effortlessly under the very noses of the pigs and thru the gates and into the jail. It was a mighty fine year, the year of 1978, in D.P. It had been a year full of the stuff of which legends are made.

Even as Ken and I forged cheerfully up the hill that afternoon, for supper and towards yet another catastrophic shape of C.O.N., the both of us laughing like children and feeling good at the strange craziness and basic wonderfulness of life and living on this divine and awesome planet and packing our own 6 bottles of liquor, neither of us had any doubts whatsoever, our friends in the jail below were in for a lively and loaded Christmas.

This or the damn fools would be shakin' off a throbbin' and poundin' case of the heebie – jeebies in the hole. Maybe both. Any miscalculations on their parts, were beyond our meager and paltry control.

In the annex, the Christmas of '78, Ken and I became revolting and disgusting casualties of vodka, Valium and backgammon. We were paralyzed and pickled, lit and legless, helplessly C.O.N. and some evenings rising we had to call in all our markers and favors. We rode out the injudiciousness.

Past Christmas and new year's day and shortly after returning to work on the project, D.P. ran a routine check on my villainous past, as they did on any man about to leave the comforts and confines of the jail. The R.C.M.P. web and grid advised D.P. of how Edmonton had a virtual *stack* of outstanding warrants on me, paper which had been gathering dust and doing quite well without me, thank you very much. The warrants had been dilly-dallying in Edmonton 2 years and better, since I had last vanished from the world. They would have to be dealt with before leaving D.P.

A sympathetic pig drove me into Drumheller, to the courthouse, a dilapidated old building and the pride and joy of the city's heritage minded citizens. It was an unsullied and innocent morning and I stood smiling in front of an honest magistrate and he recognized the absurdity of the Crown's presentation and rather than giving me a rope and trundling me off to a remote penal colony in Canada's far north, he gave me a 10 day concurrent sentence, which, other than another black mark against my white name, meant zero. Technically, those 10 days had been served almost 2 yrs. before Jan. 1979. 'What a wonderful, wonderful country,' thought I.

Once again, I was safe and sound in the hands of the fair and lawful government of Canada.

Also, I was back on the job at noon, with no pay lost and this was right because K+K needed me as I was a sturdy and reliable benefit and advantage to the company. Proud? A job and the money along with it, a clear conscience and a clean bill of health will do this to a man. Proud, in what I can only describe as being a humble sort of way. Not arrogant.

As the block layers came ever closer to the end of their labors on the V+C project, those good ol' boys began to get real loose. They began to exhibit their own stamps of aberrant and abnormal behavior. More so than usual.

The last days of the project and it wasn't rare or remarkable for 1 or 2 of the men to be on the absentee roster. On such occasions, the boss man knew the town jail was the first and foremost place to go looking for the bastards. If a man *was* found there, the boss would arrange bail and the man would be sprung and back at work, sickly and strength less and in such an altered state, his only stratagem and hope of release from his sufferings, was to crash and burn on my warm and easy sand pile for an hour. When the man regained consciousness, well, he could usually count on a straightener from the bottle of vodka I was by then flashing and flourishing all around the jobsite. Insane C.O.N. conduct was a natural and regular occurrence, towards the end of the V+C project, back in 1978, down Drumheller way. We still looked good though...

It would *not* have looked good, for one of the block layers, C.O.N., to have walked off the top end of a scaffold and bit the dry dust at the bottom. It *would* have been embarrassing, to have had to explain to the coppers, a body, of a man who had guilelessly wandered away from the jobsite, while lost in a C.O.N. trance, behind a pile of blocks and dead of exposure to the elements. None of these tragic scenarios befell the project. They *could* have happened.

As it was, it was hardly surprising, to me, to see a man drive a speeding forklift off an embankment and put the damn thing on its side or race the contraption into a concrete wall or to run the machine over an errant set of toes. *Everyone* was getting the short – time jimjams and jitters.

As the project drew to a close and had any of the annex pigs worked up the courage and toughness to have braved the cold and come stormin' down the hill, to the jobsite and have seen some of the tom – foolery and hi – jinks going on and had those pigs held any direct influence or control over the K+K masonry crew, had those swine been important in this way, easily, Ken and I and the block layers would all have been put on indefinite lock – up, pending contempt, ridicule and C.O.N. charges.

Towards the end of my adventures in D.P., during the late '70s, at some quaint and antiquated point in time, I became convinced I was the only sane and sagacious person in the jail.

Ken and I smiled and heartily agreed with and approved of the block layers' deeds and actions and we covered them as best we could. We were allied and in league with them, real people, battling the odds and sharing misfortune, against the politics and power of a callused and cold – blooded system. We were little people but so what? It mattered not because we were doing our share. The project and the pride and the gratification a man feels over a job well done, a special rite of passage to a certain type of man, filtered and percolated down, from management above, to us below and made us important people. And that feeling of importance and achievement was wanting and just what I needed in my life, back in 1979.

Are you ready? Here it comes. C.O.N. All during the annex time frame, Ken and I had been eligible for day passes into the city of Drumheller. We had, for reasons already explained, always managed to decline this charitable request and invitation. The most notable argument against a swing thru that city of fools, was, either one of us would have been hard pressed not to have become grandstand degenerates and drunkenly taken to lecturing that town and its brainless and baffle – headed inhabitants on being human and the rights of man and have broken a few spirits in the process. Which of course would have brought us both back to the jail in chains and straight into the digger, where the residents of D.H. would have been invited and encouraged to line up and laugh at us thru the bars.

I could see absolutely no redeeming social advantage, at the frightening prospect of sloshing around that verminous sewer of a town. No. Furthermore, we knew we weren't fit, not cut from the same bolt, not presentably mean enough to walk the streets of D.H. No. We were way above that tainted and blackened city.

I might have snapped after 8 or 10 beer and went completely off my nut and run amok. The temptation to go insane and beat up on a town full of hillbillies and hicks may have come over me, overcame me and have become an overwhelming need and I may have gone looking for a gun. It was a grim possibility. Best not to think about it. A four-hour pass into a cursed and condemned town, populated by no one but retards and rednecks, made no sense at all. No. Never in a hundred years. No.

But... Ken and I were both stir crazy and each of us had cabin fever and neither one of us was strong enough to say not for love nor money and we were both fools naturally.

A curious despair visited itself on me and in a fit of despondency, I decided to try my luck and say 'howdy' to the city of D.H. And so...

One extraordinary evening, I crossed my fingers, rapped sharply on the door of my plywood cell, offered up a silent prayer for strength and protection and there I was, downtown D.H., on a Saturday night.

The 1st indication that all was not well, was marked by the illuminating fact that everyone was wearing the same green colored clothing. I looked up and down main street and realized I was smack in the middle and midst of thousands of smiling faces and gleaming eyes. 'Not good,' I thought, 'Where have all these sub – normals, these feeble – minded, half – wits come from?' Then I remembered...

After psychic and visual experiences like these, *any* man would have had a damned difficult time avoiding the hole. And this was what I had to steer clear of. I was keenly aware of the decree and ordinance which stated that a convict returning from D.H. and back to the annex, from a 4 hr. pass, in a primal state of C.O.N., was destined and guaranteed a 30 day place and stay in the digger. Perhaps more, depending on the assortment of crimes he may have committed or been a part of, while in D.H.

But I'd manage it. Right there on main street, I resolved to do some grueling and gutsy reintegration, marked by my own brand of suggestion and character. Directly, I set to looking for the dirtiest and darkest tavern I could find. Easy enough. The closest saloon was on the other side of the street. I walked across the street and stood facing it. I pushed thru the swingin' doors and I was inside.

After the 6th screwdriver, René sashayed on over to my table, to tell me I was a convict but she would help me if she could, should a pig she was forced to serve, enter the bar and begin sending suspicious and questioning glances in my direction. "Am I that obvious?"

"Yes and yes, they're all pigs. Me? Hell, I'm just passin' thru." I gave the girl a buck.

Chris flagged and waved me to his table. Chris, the project superintendent, was one of those necessary men, to be found on any worthwhile building endeavor. Chris was, maximally, the overseer of the V+C project and the man to blame had things gone wrong. Every morning he would issue orders from the safety and comfort of his company truck, to the K+K crew and to the other tradesmen, as to how it was going to be done that day

and then the men would drift away and do what *had* to be done that day. Chris, as a rule, knew what the project needed and was all about. Chris was a good man to work for. He was a smart man. “Should you be in here?”

“Positively not. I’m drinking vodka.”

“Right.”

Two hours later I was standing outside that barroom, holding up a piece of street furniture and staring at the magnificence of the heavens above. I was heavily and horribly drunk and disfigured.

The annex van arrived and crew – cut Joe, the headmost evening pig, happened to be behind the wheel. Straight away, I realized Joe was not happy with me and my sorry condition. “I’ll be talkin’ to you convict.”

“Right.” The ride back to the annex was ominously quiet and I felt as though I was sinking into an enormously deep and dark quagmire. The annex.

“Back to your cell convict. I’ll be there in a minute.”

“Right.”

Ken was lolling and lounging about my house when I staggered in and he began to grin and giggle, at the absurdity of some peoples slips and slices on this benevolent planet. “Holy shit,” smiled Ken, “I do believe I’ll be leavin’ now.” And I could hear him moving along the range and chuckling up his sleeve, as he made his way back to his own cheerful dwelling.

And I too was smiling like a fool when Joe came by, to talk to me, like he said he would. Joe sat his skinny ass down on one of my chairs and started. “Now look here convict, maybe you had yourself a couple drinks downtown. Am I right?” I shook my head. “Maybe just one? A beer maybe? What’s so funny convict?”

“My ass and your face Joe.”

“Convict! I *know* you’ve been drinking!”

“I don’t think so Joe.” I was loaded and looped. I was this far away from crew – cut Joe and I could barely see the bastard.

“If this is the way you want it convict! Don’t even *think* of leaving this cell tonight!”

“Right.”

The next morning and I was in Archie’s office explaining myself and trying hard not to throw up on his floor. I was by far the crankiest and crookest man in the world. “So, you went into town and went drinking?”

“No sir.”

“O.K. O.K. I really don’t give a damn but forget about another pass into Drumheller. By the bye, give me back the key to the fucking supply room.”

“Right.” I wanted to tell Archie thanks for being generous. It was *one* of his services. Archie’s good will patronage had made the annex an easy place to do the last 90 days of my federal sentence. But I said nothing. Rather, I hurried it out of his office and down the range, to the relative and reliable safety of my cell.

It had been a close call. I could have lost a lot. As it turned out, after their disappointment of great expectations of me had set in, the tried and trusting annex staff considered me as not any better than low and detestable vermin. Which never bothered me much. I was going home.

It was Ken’s turn to take a chance and test the mettle of the annex. Ken had picked up a 3 day pass to Edmonton and *he* was set to double – door Archie and his shoofly pigs. This was apparent by the way he strode into my house, on the heels of *my* incredible expedition into downtown D.H. With a hoot and a holler and a flourish, Ken tossed up and let fly a sheaf of twenty-dollar bills. “Yahoo!” and 300 dollars fluttered and floated thru the air and down and spread over my bed and timeworn carpet. “What do you think? Should I bring it on back for the boys?”

“Ken... I don’t know. I can’t help you on this one. Be careful.”

“I will.”

It was a bad feeling. Ken was unmistakably the type of man the coppers would give special attention to.

After the 3rd anxious and troubled day, I knew it had gone wrong. Something went wrong... The jailhouse grapevine told me little...

It was only after I had departed D.P. that I heard a story. Ken had been apprehended at the D.H. train station, loaded bags and all and I don’t know and I can’t say and I’ve never figured out the details and I only understand, Ken had been bringing it back for the boys. In the annex though...

I slowed right down. False hope and regard will do this to a man. Also, seeing a friend take a bad fall is ever a misery. I went from glad to sad real fast. My heart was heavy. I was alone again.

Well Ken, I reckon the correct thing to do, is to reflect and rejoice on the fast and final moments we served in D.P. I know these words could be a tribute to you living or a eulogy to you dead but either way Ken... nothing but respect.

Ken... don’t be dead. So many people I have known, have gone away and left this gracious and giving planet and some days I get lonely for a credible person to talk with. I myself have walked the edge of the abyss, all sorts of times and it’s a forlorn way to exist. I have no way of knowing where you are Ken. I hope you’re off fishing, on a still and peaceful strip of water, somewhere in Canada.

Ken, than for the courage and the fortitude. Than for the laughter and humor we found and shared, despite an organization and aggregation dedicated and determined to breaking and changing us but which had to tolerate and put up with us instead. Than for the fellowship of friendship Ken.

Ken, I pray no jail comes your way to hold and haunt you ever again. Be good Ken. Friends.

The K+K masonry outfit was leaving D.P. The block layers had done their jobs and behind them, aligned and level walls reached up to greet and meet the proud Alberta sky and it was an inspiring sight to behold. I was able to stand on top of a hill and look down on the product of my labors and I felt honored and esteemed to have been associated with that enterprise. It was a rare and beautiful feeling.

Prior to their journey home to Calgary, those good ol' boys of K+K masonry stopped at the annex and gave me their numbers. "If you get stuck and need a job." I thank you men.

Chris approached me, then fell to his knees, tears splashing and spilling unabashedly and uncontrollably down his cheeks, begging and imploring me to work out my last 7 days.

"Please. Just one more week. Pleeze..."

"No Chris! Quit blubbering! You're a grown man! Stand up! You're getting my shoes wet! Stop!"

I was on the gate and doing my crowning and concluding days in D.P. and by then I was exhilarated and excited, even if getting out of jail and returning to the real world seemed a rightful and accurate abstraction.

Four days before my official release, I was inveigled into visiting the tailor shop. In that federal boutique and emporium, I was offered a gaudy and glaring array and assortment of costume and clothing. A '50s, off the rack, navy – blue, pin – striped, 3-piece suit with adjustable lapels on the jacket. The dress pants had flared 24" cuffs. A pair of sturdy and stolid English shoes, resting on 2" platform heels and ¾" orthopedic soles. The sox were black silk. The ensemble was replete with a dark blue shirt and a wide white tie and a purple Panama hat. An interesting mélange and medley. The Alvin Karpis look. Trendy. I refused most of these items.

I accepted 2 pairs of blue – jeans, 2 pairs of black sox and 2 white shirts. These articles, together with the fashionable brown suede boots I had been wearing at the time of my arrest, would do me until I settled with the street.

Two days before leaving D.P., I arranged with administration to square and seal my accounts. The V+C project had netted me \$1500. I took a Government of Canada cheque. From the convict trust fund, I had \$400, cash and in my pocket.

And then it was my turn and quiet pleasure to be walking away from D.P. D.P.? D.P. saved my life. D.P. was an education and a learning experience. D.P.? D.P. was a good little jail in '77 – '79.

I never looked back as I was leaving D.P. The date was Feb. 2 – 1979, the sun was shining and I was bound for glory and greatness.

All is well.

G.B.T.

Coming Home – Reflections.

Clackety – clack, clackety – clack, a slow train moving me drowsily from Drumheller to Edmonton. I was mildly at ease and rest because of the two 10 mg. Valium I had chewed and swallowed before breakfast. Inside my head was a mixture of memories and emotions, of the jail and the men I had found there and of the man who was leaving the jail.

So, just what had the grand and gracious government of Canada accomplished by putting me under lock and key for 3 years? What had Canada gained? What had I gained? Had Canada and I prospered in any way? Were there *any* benefits?

I could be obvious and write of how Canada had extracted pure and unadulterated vengeance and retribution upon my contrary and dissident person and lifestyle and of how I had contributed to a hidden and concealed segment of the Canadian economy and establishment. Trite and cryptic.

Several thousand words ago, I claimed the penal system of Canada plays with and adjusts a man's mind, in a cunning type of way and that a man will change. It happened to me. I changed.

Today I think and reason much more than I did in the days of my youth. I know how to make choices today. Today I don't *seriously* consider breaking the laws of this great land and I certainly never *want* to be a criminal. The idea of me perpetrating a *direct* act against Canada has been purged from my conscious awareness. I'm writing of growing up and it's a warm and glowing feeling folks. And...

If I accept the above premises and postulations and I do, then both parties, Canada and I, have availed and profited each other.

Now, I'm not referring to Solzhenitsyn and a totally restructured life in compliance with the state. No. I'm not endorsing Orwell and Smith's understanding and acceptance of the ruthless paternity of the state. No. I'm not attesting to Dostoyevsky and Rodion and his utter repentance and redemption by the state thru a mysterious qualification named love. No.

No, I'm writing of being a citizen of Canada, a worthwhile citizen of Canada.

Canada is the most excellent and exciting country on the face of this magnificent planet. I'm so very proud to be a Canadian. I raise and praise Canada.

So, will I ever return to the jail? Will I ever go back? Never would be safe money bet. Going to jail is a young man's game and I no longer have this excuse. So long as I never run out of words. Please God, never let me run out of words.

Any evil inclination, which once may have come over me, has been banished and replaced by hope and faith in myself. And... I'll share with you kind folks a little miracle...

Today, I'm no longer angry and I no longer have a fear of being. I've become aware of *who* I am today. Today, my heart is light and my head is clear and today I care. I care.

Today the sun is shining brightly, I'm smiling contentedly, I'm 50 and more and I look over my shoulder and I can say truthfully, what a life, what a wonderful, wonderful life.

All is well.

G.B.T.