Welcome to issue five. Summer is in full swing, and so have been our editors. You now hold this issue in your hands due to the hard work of our readers, donators and writers. Work continues on our website due to volunteer work by Corey Tracy who has helped build our new site, and updated it with a new look. Visit www.Beyondthebars.us and see our new blog. Feel free to download issues online or to check for updates.

Thanks go out again to the Journal of Progressive Human Services and MPAC who have helped us cover the costs of this issue. This is the first newsletter in some time that has no fixed agenda but is here to receive your news, letters, poems, essays, short stories, art or “shout outs.”

How you can help:
- Please pass around the newspaper and encourage others to get on our mailing list
- Please send us your thoughts, letters, writing, art or prayers or anything that can fit within size constraints.

-- Please send notices of any prison groups or meetings, allow a lag time of a month or six weeks ahead.
-- Please feel free to donate as we are individuals not funded by or part of a larger group, as you are able including stamps for postage.

Beyond The Bars is a bi-monthly newsletter which will increase communication among prisoners themselves as well as family members, friends, allies, and others concerned about the prison system, primarily here in Maine. Happy reading:

Kristine
Calvin
Forrest
Dave
I’m looking around this cell wondering what to do,
So I thought I’d sit down and write to you.
Another Saturday night and I feel so alone,
I’m looking at every picture that I own.

Oh, but the sweet memories begin to rise,
As I wipe the tears from my eyes.
These pictures are gonna be the death of me yet,
Some memories I’m better off to forget.

But I can’t bring myself to throw them away,
I torture myself with them most every day,
And I’m not the kind of guy who likes pain,
Sometimes I think I’m going insane.

It never fails that when I’m feeling blue,
I haul out those damned pictures of you.
You’re still the most beautiful girl to me,
And the love I have for you will always be.

I can only look at your picture for awhile,
It brings tears when it used to bring a smile.
You’ve moved on and have a new life now,
And I have to go on being somehow.

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Poverty by Harold Sanford Carter III (Inmate MSP)

At the church supper bags by my side.
Ghetto survivors is what we salute.
Street people fight and fuss but also give.

Thugs and gang hand shakes roll and give salute.
A smoke or a shirt what else can I give?
Stick up kids lurk so a knife by my side.

Peace with god the best I can ever give.
Minimum wage hustling on the side.
All hard times to the fallen I salute.

Inside I salute,
and give my heart:
....to the slums

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Post Visit by Ken Joondeph (Inmate MSP)

Sat 8.28.11

Why, why, why, oh why, oh why, do the four hours of an AM and PM visit go so fast? After the sliders open and let all of you go back to the lobby after each visit every guy strains their neck to see if we can catch a last glimpse of our beloved before you drive off.
Us guys in here at MSP and all the other “correctional centers” the MDOTC has around the state, try to act tough and all, but our “true” selves show after the slider closes. Whether it be fighting with our shut buttons, pretending to wipe off our tables, straighten the pictures our children just drew, or taking deep breaths to smell remnants of your perfume, again, again, and again.

Then, as if on cue, the sniffs start, our eyes mist up, then a fake cough to discretely wipe our tears. Sniff, sniff, snort. Cough! Yep, we’re prison, we’re tough! Right? We’re tough alright, yeah, right. Uh huh. Yep. “I’ll call you later. Ok? I love you baby, and you too kids. Sniff. Gonna come and visit daddy next week? Sniff. Ok, bye guys. I love you! Alright I’ll see you next time. I’ll see you next time.” I’ll see you next time. When is next time?
The Rollin' Hills of Maine State Prison by Roland Jalbert (Inmate MSP)

The Rollin' Hills of Warren Maine State Prison!
Where the snow sticks to the razor wire,
I hear the lonesome whistle blowin’ day and night.
Four times a day, at breakfast at lunch, at supper,
At bedtime, nine o’clock every day,
The officers yelling lock up!

These Rollin’ Hills of Warren Maine State Prison,
The place I now call home is not a way
For a man to live, with a thousand men all alone!
The judge said I’m a bad man with handcuffs
Upon my hands and feet, they brought me to this prison
And they tried to break me as a man!

These Rollin’ Hills of Maine State Prison
They keep me from my home and all of my loved ones
Who I left all alone, it was all my fault!
Having lived with these hollow men,
I watch the seasons pass away?
I only know that Jesus Christ loves me
And everyone else, and he is with all of us.

Each day at these Rolling Hills of Warren, of Maine State Prison!
This my my surreal journey, as I find my way home some day,
But where I go, only Jesus knows where my
Heart and soul will go, home to be with my Savior in Heaven.
If I die in the Rolling Hills of Warren, Maine state Prison!

A Reason to Live By Billy Leland (Inmate Fort Dix)

I’m back in the hole because of a fight
I know I’m in for a long and lonely night
There’s no telling how much longer I have to go
It will be weeks before I see the DHD

I’m real depressed and filled with hate inside
I lay in this bunk contemplating suicide
I don’t know how much more I can take
I’m in pain every minute I’m awake

I look around this cold, dirty prison cell,
And think I might be better off in Hell
My eyes slowly close and I drift to sleep
Not even aware that I’m beginning to weep

All this time I’m holding back a scream
Drifting off again into what must be a dream
And I hear God talking to me as if I’m a child
He said, “There’s a price to pay for being wild”

I’m trying to teach you things you haven’t learned
You don’t listen and keep getting burned
The laws, the hearts and the bones you’ve broken
Because you don’t listen to the words I’ve spoken
You continue to live life your own way
Partying and using drugs day after day
To the ones you love all you do is lie
Keep going your way and soon you will die

I keep you alive because you can be a good man
But now you must try as hard as you can
Get off the drugs and straighten yourself out
Learn what love and family is about

I’m telling you, now you have to change your ways
You’ve forced me to number your days
Pay attention because this is your last warning
Or soon you won’t be waking up one morning.

I woke in a sweat to a fast beating heart
I’ve got to change my ways and today I’ll start
He’s taught me that I have love to give
And He’s given me a reason to live.
Why Can't I? By The Student

Some inmates in the Maine State Prison have tried to get programs started to give back to the community. One such program is a hair drive. There are some people here that have been growing their hair for years with the hope the prison would allow us to hold a hair drive for children with cancer. Letters were sent to the warden without any response. When the barber asked about sending hair out, he was not allowed to send hair out. I was informed that a system was in place but was discontinued. One man cut his pony tail off with toenail clippers and tried to send it out through property. The property officer threw out the hair.

Requests for blood drives, to donate a kidney, to give bone marrow, even half a liver were presented to every level of prison officers and staff and all were met with silence. They did not even have the respect to give a verbal response. Some people want to give back to the community. These inmates want to give back because it feels good. These programs should be in place.

I am proud of the programs we do have; The Longtimers, the Veteran’s group, NAACP, and Jaycees. These groups have fundraisers that the prison has approved. The groups then donate the “profit” to a good cause. I commend these groups for finding a way to give back to the community. The prison had a program that converted books and papers into brail. That program was dismantled and the brail machines were given away. The program was considered a waste of time. This program has been gone for many years now.

Why does the Department of Corrections refuse to put good and wholesome programs in to action? Why do they refuse to even acknowledge being asked about them? The prison does everything it can to disrupt the college classes here at MSP. They have chow running past 1:15 PM, well past recreation time of 1:00 PM. They cancel Rec without informing college professors that drive here, taking an hour or better, and turning them away.

This sort of thing would be unacceptable in a prison like Sing Sing where Doris Buffet also supports a college program. Why is it okay here in this prison to say we support education and at the same time throw roadblocks in the way as often as possible? This is unacceptable behavior in my eyes. If this is a corrections institution, then programs need to be put in place to make reform possible for inmates. I will fight with my words for constructive change!

The Spirits of MSP Warren by Ken Joondeph (Inmate MSP)

6.14.11 1:17pm

The other night I had to go with the medium medical escorts to medical to switch over my insulin pump. There were a couple of dozen of us, as usual, I strolled near the back of the pack. It was a chilly night, not cold and the fine drizzle added a contemplative tone to the walk.

I’ve been here at MSP since 11:15 hrs, Friday October 19, 2007. How many times have I trod down the mile, the runway, the close paths of concrete to medical, to chow, to property, to receiving? Then the return trips back to close, medical or SMU. I’ve gone through the front door to MSP (coming back from a late trip) maybe a handful of times. How much sneaker rubber or boot vibram of mine are on those paths? To the activities building for church, the library, the canteen, to the rec offices for pictures?

With 9am inmates, security staff and others here at MSP, how much ole (soul) have these paths and corridors seen? How many for the first time? How many come back for a second, third, fourth time? How many for the last? How many on “The wall of Honor” roam these paths, corridors and halls? How many roam the same of “The Old Place,” which is now but a field of glass? Since 1865, how many inmates, staff, and officers still roam their posts, cells, their cages. How many?

I pray that nearly all have gone to heaven, their earthly burden forgiven, but what of those who have not? What of them? Has the lord sat in judgment when they came? Had he denied them entrance to the streets of gold? The land of no more pain, no more tears? No more crying, death, nor mourning? Did the Lord send them to their fiery second death? (Revelation 21:8) I’ve known, or known of nearly a dozen here that have passed. Where are they now?

Did they repent on their death beds? Did they experience their second death, due to their earthly crimes? Or do they still roam among us, our tracks trampling over theirs, fading further their footprints on our earthly world? I’ve been leaving my footprints here for almost four years now, and another three and a half to go. After then, what will come of my footprints on the concrete paths of close, the runway, the mile? I can only pray.
As I wrote about a couple of months ago in these pages, it is very important that every prisoner having a discharge date PLAN AHEAD for re-entry to the community. The prison officials and the Department of Health and Human Services have an obligation to work with you to make sure you locate a place to live and the means to survive. Several months ago, I wrote about eligibility for the disability program. There are other programs that we will discuss for those eligible including Veterans benefits, TANF (for those with children), Food Stamps, and medical and housing benefits.

For many prisoners without an income or assets, DHHS should initiate action with the General Assistance office of the town or city you plan to return to. General Assistance welfare is as widely described by those who have been on it as an extremely minimal program with big strings attached. In Maine, general assistance provides NO Cash assistance, and also can make you work (called Workfare) for your aid if you are able-bodied. Nevertheless, despite many negatives and the stigma, those who do not have a job or other income need to be familiar with it.

It is best to go to General Assistance office with an advocate if possible so that you know your rights. The GA office should grant you a housing voucher and other vouchers for food and travel. They should also tell you about other benefits you may be entitled to. The operation of the offices and the workers varies greatly throughout the state and depending on the city or town.

Some cities where housing is scarce, such as Portland, may use the voucher to send you to a homeless shelter, while other cities and towns will have more available housing that provides a roof over your head. Because of cuts and limited funds, workers will want to monitor your work plan if you are able-bodied and whether you are looking for work (there are exceptions here for people who are disabled) and the aid will be time-limited. Again, however, despite the limitations of “welfare” this assistance can make a difference in surviving when you get out of prison.

DAVID WAGNER is a professor of social work and sociology at the University of Southern Maine.

YOUR EDITORS ARE:
Calvin Dube - Directed Trinity Soup Kitchen for 12 yrs. He is involved in an inmate reentry program to help inmates and homeless on release; other community resources linked to inmate needs for hygiene items, clothing, medical care, psychiatric counseling, and job searches. Today, three churches in the Lewiston/Auburn area are involved in our reentry work.

Forrest Lancaster - Holds a BA in Anthropology, and one in English. He previously wrote for The Other Side and was active in the Prisoner Reentry Program.

David Wagner - A professor of Social Work and Sociology at USM who works with groups of homeless and poor people. He is also active in reentry work.

Kristine Catalogna - Has been working with homeless populations for five years and has worked with incarcerated women in Massachusetts. She also worked with pregnant women while incarcerated and reunification with children after prison.
Maine State Prison Civic Groups
Meetings Calendar

MSP Veteran's Group: 1st Friday of every month, PM rec. Five dollars a year membership.
MSP NAACP: Last Friday of every month, PM rec. Ten dollars a year membership.
Long Timers Group: The last Saturday of every month, AM rec. Five dollars a year.
Fresh brewed coffee for all those who attend.
Humbug: Players, Cards and Deal
This game is for two players, using a standard Anglo-American 52-card pack. The cards in each suit rank from high to low A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2. The dealer is chosen by drawing cards from the shuffled deck: the player who draws the lower card is the dealer. The dealer shuffles again, the non-dealer cuts, and the dealer deals all the cards one at a time, turning the last card face up. The suit of this card, which belongs to the dealer, is the trump suit for the hand.

The players look at their cards, and since they know that the opponent has all the other cards, there is no harm in laying all one's cards face up on the table, organised into suits, for a better overview.

The aim is to win tricks. Each trick consists of two cards, one played by each player. The first player plays any card and the second player must play a card of the same suit if possible. In this case the higher card wins the trick. If the second player has no card of that suit, he or she may play any card. When the two cards are of different suits the first player wins unless one of the cards is a trump, in which case the trump wins.

The non-dealer leads (plays the first card) to the first trick. The winner of each trick takes the two cards, stores them face down, and then leads (plays the first card) to the next trick.

Players are not allowed to look at the cards in completed tricks, neither their own nor their opponent's. After the first few tricks players normally pick up their own cards and hold them so that the opponent cannot see them. So in order to know what cards one's opponent still holds, it is necessary to remember which cards have been played.

A revoke occurs if the second player to a trick illegally plays a card of a different suit, even though a card of the same suit was held. The penalty is that the offender must transfer three tricks to the other player.

When all the cards have been played, the player who won more tricks wins in proportion to the difference in tricks between the players - for example 8 units if the winner has 17 tricks and the loser 9. It is clear from the article in The Sporting Magazine that the game was usually played for money, and for quite high stakes, each deal being a separate event. It would of course be possible instead just to keep a score on paper and add up the scores for a series of deals.