

IIII Postscript IIII

Frank "Cocky" Moore became a cause célèbre when his plight was widely publicized in the Louisiana news media. The warden's office was inundated with calls and mail offering him assistance, employment, visits, and even a few marriage proposals. Two attorneys, Vernon Claville and Michael Walker, along with the Lakeside Baptist Church, all of Shreveport, began an active fight for his freedom. In January 1980, Governor Edwin Edwards commuted Cocky's sentence to fifty-five years, and he was released. A long-lost cousin, who had become a successful New Orleans businessman, took him in. Several months later, Cocky and his cousin had become great friends and were spending much of their time together engaging in their favorite pastime, fishing.

Edward Lassiter and Earl Billiot were also freed. Within six months, Billiot committed another sex offense and was returned to prison, where he remains. James Poindexter's sentence was commuted to sixty years by Governor Edwards, and he was released a few days later after serving thirty-one years behind bars. On July 17, 1979, Edwards commuted the sentence of Joseph Williams, but his intended release, queered by confusion created by conflicting state laws, caused him to remain imprisoned for several more years. Jack Turner also remained imprisoned until he was paroled in 1989 to a nursing home in St. Francisville after spending thirty-three years in prison.

"Conversations with the Dead" won the 1979 American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award. It was the first time in the ABA's hundred-year history that it honored a prisoner publication.

THE SEXUAL JUNGLE

IIII

Wilbert Rideau

Leaving the bullpen, he strolled toward the cell area. Stepping into the darkened cell, he was swept into a whirlwind of violent movement that flung him hard against the wall, knocking the wind from him. A rough, callused hand encircled his throat, the fingers digging painfully into his neck, cutting off the scream rushing to his lips. "Holler, whore, and you die," a hoarse voice warned, the threat emphasized by the knife point at his throat. He nodded weakly as a rag was stuffed in his mouth. The hand left his neck. Thoughts of death moved sluggishly through his terror-stricken mind as his legs, weak with fear, threatened to give out from under him. An anguished prayer formed in his heart, and his facial muscles twitched uncontrollably. He was thrown on the floor, his pants pulled off him. As a hand profanely squeezed his buttocks, he felt a flush of embarrassment and anger, more because of his basic weakness—which prevented his doing anything to stop what was happening—than because of what was actually going on. His throat grunted painful noises, an awful pleading whine that went ignored as he felt his buttocks spread roughly apart. A searing pain raced through his body as the hardness of one of his attackers tore roughly into his rectum. "Shake back, bitch!" a voice urged. "Give him a wiggle!" His rapist expressed delight as his body flinched and quivered from the burning cigarettes being applied to his side by other inmates gleefully watching. A sense of helplessness overwhelmed him and he began to cry, and even after the last penis was pulled out of his abused and bleeding body, he still cried, overwhelmed by the knowledge that it was not over, that this was only the beginning of a nightmare that would only end with violence, death, or release from prison.

Rape . . . for women, one of the most terrifying words in the English language. It haunts their footsteps like a vengeful ghost and creeps into their dreams like a silent thief in the night, stealing their peace and security, gripping their souls with icy fingers of fear. Rape

and fear of becoming a victim of sexual violence are a part of every woman's consciousness—but, while many women live in fear of rape, so must the typical man walking into the average jail or prison in the nation, where rape and other sexual violence are as much a part of the men's pained existence as the walls holding them prisoner.

Penal administrators rarely talk about the sexual violence that plagues their institutions, turning prisons and jails into jungles. Prisoners are too involved to ever want to do anything more than forget it once they regain their freedom. On the rare occasions when the subject is discussed, it is euphemistically referred to as "the homosexual problem," as if it's a matter of individual sexual preference or perversion, something done only by homosexual "perverts," sickos slobbering at the mouth for an attractive young boy. And it's often the butt of jokes. But rape and other sexual violence in prison has little to do with "heterosexuality" or "homosexuality" and is generally not the work of sex-crazed perverts. And, despite the humorous references to it, rape is a deadly serious affair in the pained world behind bars, almost always a matter of power and control—and often, of life and death.

Man's greatest pain, whether in life or in prison, is the sense of personal insignificance, of being helpless and of no real value as a person, an individual—a man. Imprisoned and left without any voice in or control over the things that affect him, his personal desires and feelings regarded with gracious indifference, and treated at best like a child and at worst like an animal by those having control of his life, a prisoner leads a life of acute deprivation and insignificance. The psychological pain involved in such an existence creates an urgent and terrible need for reinforcement of his sense of manhood and personal worth. Unfortunately, prison deprives those locked within of the normal avenues of pursuing gratification of their needs and leaves them no instruments but sex, violence, and conquest to validate their sense of manhood and individual worth. And they do, channeling all of their frustrated drives into the pursuit of power, finding gratification in the conquest and defeat, the domination and subjugation of each other. Thus, the world of the prisoner is ruled by force, violence, and passions. Since the prison population consists of men whose sexuality, sense of masculinity, and sexual frame of reference are structured around women, weaker inmates are made to assume the role of "women," serving the strong, reinforcing their sense of man-

hood and personal importance, and providing them the gratification of their needs that would, in the normal world, be provided by women. Within that peculiar societal context, an exaggerated emphasis is placed on the status of "man," and the pursuit of power assumes overriding importance because power translates into security, prestige, physical and emotional gratification, wealth—survival.

Rape in prison is rarely a sexual act, but one of violence, politics, and an acting out of power roles. "Most of your homosexual rape is a macho thing," says Colonel Walter Pence, the chief of security at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. "It's basically one guy saying to another: 'I'm a better man than you and I'm gonna turn you out to prove it.' I've investigated about a hundred cases personally, and I've not seen one that's just an act of passion. It's definitely a macho/power thing among the inmates. And it's the basically insecure prisoners who do it."

The act of rape in the ultramasculine world of prison constitutes the ultimate humiliation visited upon a male, the forcing of him to assume the role of a woman. It is not sexual and not really regarded as "rape" in the same sense that society regards the term. In fact, it isn't even referred to as "rape." In the Louisiana penal system, both prisoners and personnel generally refer to the act as "turning out," a nonsexual description that reveals the nonsexual ritualistic nature of what is really an act of conquest and emasculation, stripping the male victim of his status as a "man." The act redefines him as a "female" in this perverse subculture, and he must assume that role as the "property" of his conqueror or whoever claimed him and arranged his emasculation. He becomes a slave in the fullest sense of the term.

"Sex and power go hand in hand in prison," C. Paul Phelps, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Corrections, explains. "Deprived of the normal avenues, there are very few ways in prison for a man to show how powerful he is—and the best way to do so is for one to have a slave, another who is in total submission to him."

The pursuit of power via sexual violence and the enslavement of weaker prisoners is not peculiar to the Louisiana penal system. It is an integral feature of imprisonment throughout the United States, in both jails and prisons, and even in juvenile institutions—yes, the children do it, too. Dr. Anthony M. Scacco, Jr., a criminologist formerly with Connecticut's Department of Corrections, publishing the results of a study in his book *Rape in Prison*, reported that rape and

other sexual violence were rampant in juvenile and young-adult institutions in Connecticut. Staff at Michigan's Wayne County Jail once candidly admitted that "guards are unable to prevent cases of robbery, assault, and homosexual rape among inmates." An exhaustive 1968 study of the Philadelphia prison system by the police department and the district attorney's office concluded that sexual violence, in the word of Chief Assistant District Attorney Alan Davis, was "epidemic." In 1968, Illinois' Cook County Jail officials reported mass rapes to be "routine occurrences at Cook County Jail."

And while few prisoner-victims ever want to talk about their experiences, every now and then one will. In 1977, during hearings in federal District Court in Cincinnati, an inmate from Ohio's Lucasville State Prison told Judge Timothy Hogan that he had been raped shortly after his arrival there. "The guys that raped me put a straight razor to my throat and held me down," he testified, adding that he had to become a "wife" to one prisoner in order to protect himself from random sexual attacks by others. "I had no choice, so I got a man," the inmate said. "I didn't want to be killed." He testified that he had been sold for sexual purposes by one prisoner to another. "I was sold four times to different guys," once for \$400, he told the court.

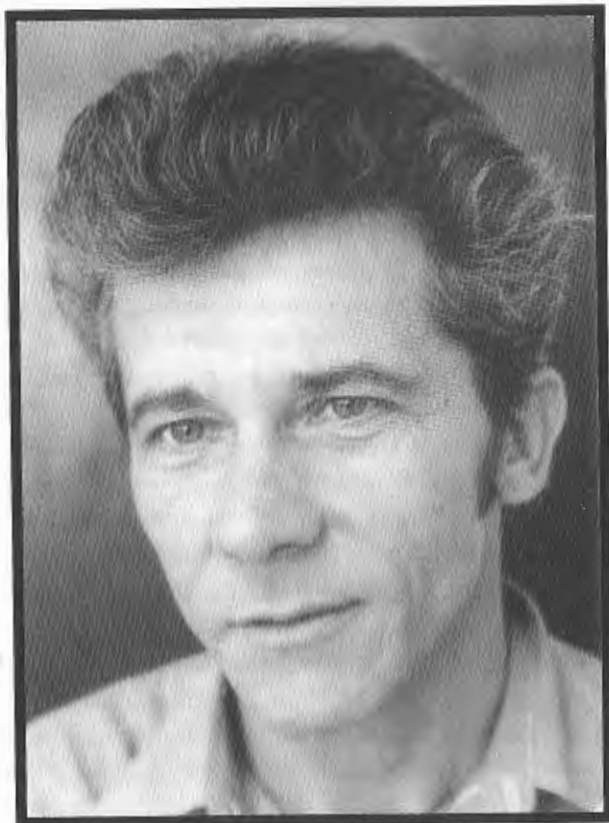
Dr. Frank L. Rundle served as chief psychiatrist of the 2,200-man California Training Facility at Soledad, and also as director of psychiatry of Prison Health Services for all of the correctional institutions, both juvenile and adult, in New York City. His observations have led him to conclude that rape and other sexual violence are universal in the nation's prisons. "I think that that same picture is true of any prison," he states. "It's not just Angola or San Quentin or Soledad. It is a feature of prison life everywhere.

"This whole macho/power, master/slave thing certainly does go on, and it goes on in several different categories," Dr. Rundle explains. "There certainly are weak men who become forced into the position of being a slave or the 'whore' and accept it unwillingly—but accept it. They have no alternative—they're either going to be hurt or killed if they don't. On the other hand, there are a lot of younger, weaker guys who are unwilling to get into the struggle of establishing themselves as strong macho men and who will seek out a strong man to protect them—and in that case become a voluntary sort of slave, knowing that that is the only way they're going to survive. The alternative would be to be forced into it by someone else that they

don't really want, or become sort of gang property . . . and that's much less acceptable to a lot of them." And Dr. Rundle points out that "generally, those who are turned out and made into slaves remain slaves and never can get out of that."

James Dunn was one of the exceptions: He freed himself from his enslaved state, but at a terrible price. Dunn first came to Angola in March 1960 at the tender age of nineteen, toting a three-year sentence for burglary. A month after his arrival, he received a call to go to the library, where an inmate "shoved me into a dark room where his partner was waiting. They beat me up and raped me. That was to claim me," Dunn explains. "When they finished, they told me that I was for them, then went out and told everyone else that they had claimed me." He recalls his reaction as being "one of fear, of wanting to survive. Once it happened, that was it—unless you killed one of them, and I was short [i.e., had a short sentence] and wanted to go home. So I decided I'd try to make the best of it." He cites an influencing factor in his decision: "During my first week here, I saw fourteen guys rape one youngster 'cause he refused to submit. They snatched him up, took him into the TV room and, man, they did everything to him—I mean, *everything*, and they wouldn't even use no grease. When they finished with him, he had to be taken to the hospital where they had to sew him back up; then they had to take him to the nuthouse at Jackson 'cause he cracked up." Shaking his head at the memory, Dunn says: "Man, I didn't want none of that kind of action, and my only protection was in sticking with my old man, the guy who raped me."

Few female rape victims in society must repay their rapist for the violence he inflicted upon them by devoting their existence to servicing his every need for years after—but rape victims in the world of prison must. And Dunn, like others, became his rapist's "old lady," his "wife." And, as the man's wife, Dunn did "whatever the hell he wanted me to do." The alternative, Dunn points out, was: "Back then, they'd throw acid in a kid's face, beat 'em up, and everything else you can think of." But Dunn was fortunate, in that all his owner required of him was to be a good housewife. And Dunn was. He'd wash and take care of his old man's clothing, make the beds, prepare meals, bust pimples on his face and give him massages, and generally do all of the menial things that needed doing. Like all other wives



James Dunn (Courtesy The Angolite)

around the world, he'd also take care of his man's sexual needs, with the only difference being that Dunn could never say no. His old man had a dope habit and once, not having enough money to get a fix, he sold Dunn for two bags of heroin and the settlement of a hundred-dollar debt. As a slave, Dunn had a market value at the time of \$150. "Two weeks later," Dunn recounts, "he bought me back because he was loving me." Two months after that, Dunn was paroled.

At the age of twenty-one Dunn returned to Angola with a five-year sentence for parole violation and burglary. His former owner was still here, and "he let me know in no uncertain terms that things hadn't changed, that I still belonged to him, that I was still his old lady," Dunn says. "And he had a clique to back him up if I had any questions

about it. Back then, cliques were running everything and that was how you survived."

Dunn did not rebel. He was eligible for parole again in two years and he didn't want to do anything that would mess up his chances of making it. But he had changed somewhat. While he accepted the role of slave again, he was already thinking of ways to free himself of that state. "I waited on the parole, playing it cool, so that I wouldn't jeopardize it," he recalls. "But I made up my mind that if I missed the parole, I'd do something to stop this and become a man again, the kind of man I could respect. . . . I was being used. I was a slave. There was nothing I could do on my own. I had to have permission from my old man for everything I wanted to do, even to just step out of the dormitory, to go anywhere or do anything. Hell, my life wasn't mine—it was his, and I just lived for his pleasure. I didn't want to live like that. I was tired of it."

The Parole Board denied Dunn's request for parole. "And I decided that I wasn't going to live that kind of life no longer," he says. "And when my old man went home, I had made up my mind that I wasn't gonna be for nobody else." He knew freeing himself wouldn't be easy and that he could be killed. "You know how it was back then, the attitude and all—'Once a whore, always a whore,'" he explains. "Everything and everybody in here worked to keep you a whore once you became one—even the prison. If a whore went to the authorities, all they'd do is tell you that since you already a whore, they couldn't do nothing for you, and for you to go on back to the dorm and settle down and be a good old lady. Hell, they'd even call the whore's old man up and tell him to take you back down and keep you quiet. Now, if you wasn't a whore and you went to them, that was different—they'd take some action. But if you was already a whore, their attitude was more or less that you just go on and be one, and the most you'd get out of complaining is some marriage counseling, with them talking to you and your old man to iron out your difficulties. As for the courts, they didn't give a damn about prisoners back then and they wouldn't interfere in what happened up here. So, when I decided to quit being a whore, I knew that I would be bucking everything—prisoners, personnel, the whole damn system."

Dunn told his old man how he felt and expressed the desire to be a man again. When his old man was freed from prison, instead of

selling Dunn or transferring his ownership of him to a friend, he left him on his own, probably because he cared for Dunn. Now that he had no old man, other inmates moved in on Dunn in attempts to claim him as their property. It wasn't difficult for him to find the determination to stick to his resolution to be a man. "After literally being screwed in and screwed over, misused and treated like an animal for so long, I had learned how to hate," Dunn explains. So he fought. There were between fifteen and twenty fights during the next two months. But the strain and pressure he had to live under soon wore his nerves to a frazzle. "I was tired of this dumb shit. They wouldn't let me be a man, and I was tired of having to fight off everybody." His last fight was with Coy Bell, an inmate serving time for kidnapping and rape. "He threatened me," Dunn says. "I did the only thing I could do. I killed him." That cost Dunn an eighteen-month stay in a cell, but the killing made a difference. "Nobody tried to claim me anymore," he recounts. "I was finally free—but it cost like hell." That killing added a life sentence to his original time, and, after seventeen years here, Dunn is still paying the price of his freedom from sexual enslavement.

For the next four years, his life was relatively peaceful, and he was his own man. But this peaceful state of affairs only lasted until 1968, when Dunn had to fight once more to reaffirm his manhood. He stabbed another inmate, an act that added six more years to his sentence and got him a thirteen-month stay in solitary confinement, a period that proved beneficial to him. "Man, I got to thinking that this was all so futile," he recalls. "I wanted to get out of prison, but I was just getting deeper and deeper into it. And it was there that I decided that, no matter what happened, I would do everything in my power to try to prevent what happened to me from happening to other kids." That became Dunn's personal mission in life, one he's pursued since. Upon his return to the Big Yard, Dunn went to work, waiting for the weekly new arrivals to the prison and pulling the youngsters over to the side to educate them about the various games of con and violence that other inmates would play on them in attempts to turn them out. If they needed money or items from the store, Dunn would personally take them to the canteen and buy whatever they needed, to prevent them from borrowing things from guys who would later insist upon collecting the debt by turning them out. Over the years Dunn has led many young kids through the thicket of games and intrigues

inmates use to snare the unlearned and unwary in a web of violence and slavery. Working to help and protect the young and the weak has been his constant theme. When Dunn learned that the Lafayette Juvenile & Young Adult Program, which houses local juvenile offenders, was in need of money, he conducted Green Stamps fund drives. With a group of other inmates he created the L.J.Y.A. Club of Angola, which operates a pizza concession at the prison, with all proceeds going to help support the juvenile home. When prison authorities approved him for outside travel a couple of years ago, Dunn took his tragic tale to Louisiana schoolkids as part of an Angola Jaycees juvenile crime-prevention program, telling them about his experiences as a slave and the violence he had been involved in, and pleading with them to obey the law and stay out of prison.

It is a truism that men will attempt to function as "normally" as possible given the situation they are forced to contend with. A world of deprivation is marked by the pursuit of substitutes—the law of supply and demand prevails. So, while homosexual rape in prison is initially a macho/power thing, slaves are created because a need exists for slaves—to serve as women—substitutes, for the expression and reinforcement of one's masculinity, for a sexual outlet, for income and/or service, for the sense of self-worth and importance, and so on. Slaves are "property" and, as such, are gambled for, sold, traded, and auctioned off like common cattle. What results is a widespread system of slavery and exploitation created and maintained by fear and violence, a system that involves all either by choice or by force, a system that also serves as the foundation for the maintenance of the peculiar macho/homosexual culture that exists in the nation's jails and prisons.

The deprivation of basic human needs and the effort to find substitute gratification are the forces that shape the world of prison, its culture, its values, and the roles of those trapped within it. Sharp class lines divide the prisoners who are "men" ("studs," "wolves," "jocks," and so forth) and those who are slaves ("whores," "turn-outs," "galboys," "prisoners," "kids," "bitches," "punks," "old ladies"). An inmate is always identified by his place on the continuum of passive and dominant, weak and strong, with the weak and passive viewed and related to as "female." As those investigating sexual violence in the Philadelphia prison system observed, the "stud" in a

homosexual relationship "does not consider himself to be a homosexual, or even to have engaged in homosexual acts." The prison sexual terms "pitching" and "catching" exemplifies how the definitions are based on aggressive and passive sexual roles. An elaborate subcultural code exists with respect to the treatment and behavior of the enslaved. As Dr. Rundle points out: "There are rules which every inmate is expected to follow in dealing with a man's boy or whore—that they're off limits and they know if [they go] past those limits, they're in trouble from the old man . . . even to the point of risk of death. On the other hand, all those who are identified as whores or punks are required to show respect to all those identified as old men or studs. I think that's part of the prison culture everywhere."

While the first sexual act performed on the prisoner, the rape, was essentially nonsexual, aimed at redefining his role, the ensuing sexual activity he will be made to engage in as a "female" while in prison will be sexual in nature as well as in form. Jails and prisons are crammed full of men at the peak of their sexual potential, and they need sexual outlets. But since the majority of the prisoners don't own slaves, their need for a sexual outlet creates a large market for potential profit. In an economic sense, a slave is capital stock, property that can be made to produce income, and prison pimps don't hesitate to put their whores to work hustling for profit. How many tricks a whore will turn depends upon how much administrative heat there is. If there's none, he handles as many as possible. As for physical limitations, one Angola "homosexual" explained: "Well, a man who has forced another into this life—do you really believe that he cares? The boy handles as much as he can, all day, every day, until he gets hemorrhoids, and then his old man might feel something for him and give him a break." But most of the turn-outs don't hustle because their relationship with their old man is mostly a "man-wife" thing, in which case all they have to worry about is satisfying their old man.

"—and don't come back in my face, bitch, unless you got the money!" a lean, sturdy young black was telling another prisoner at the railing of The Walk as I passed the Bandroom on the Big Yard. "Do you understand me, whore?" he asked the other prisoner, who nodded his head nervously and left quickly. "Having trouble with one of your whores, Silky?" I asked smoothly with a smile. "Man, you know how them bitches is," he answered, looking bored. "Ah tell the bitch to

make me twenty dollars, and the bitch come back with fifteen. So Ah had to send her back out—got to make her know Ah mean business." It was 1974, and Angola was wide open; it was a time of cliques, violence, and lawlessness, and everything was possible, including owning as many boys as you were strong enough to claim and hold. Silky had two and he kept them hustling. They produced around \$600 per month for him. After extracting what was needed to provide for their personal needs, Silky loaned out the remainder to other inmates at high interest rates, or invested in illegal or black-market enterprises that would turn a quick profit. Each month he was able to send \$400 to \$500 out of the prison to meet the expenses involved in his effort to secure his freedom. Ruining the lives of the two youngsters by making them prostitutes was immaterial. "Ah wish Ah didn't have to do this," he once explained to me, "but Ah ain't got no choice. I'm fighting for my freedom and Ah can't support myself and pay my lawyer on the two cents an hour the state gives me. So it's either Ah stay here with them, or Ah use them to get myself out of here." He did, and he got out of prison.

In some prisons, "prostitution of an organized sort does go on," Rundle points out. "There are young guys who are taken over by mobs, by the prison version of the Mafia, and who become the whore for this group of pimps, who set up their schedule every day and night. They tell him you go to this cell, and after that to *that* cell—they take either the money or the cigarettes or whatever the medium of exchange is." While organized, clique-controlled prostitution no longer exists in Angola, it is definitely a feature of life at California's Soledad Prison, according to Dr. Rundle. "A young kid who was in for the first time had been forced into it and was really upset about it and came to see me because of it. But he couldn't say anything about it to the administration because if he did, he's ratting, and he's setting himself up to be either killed or hurt badly or having to accept protective custody for the rest of his prison stay, and he was unwilling to do that."

One of the perverse mores of the world of prison is that the victims of sexual violence are rarely regarded as "victims." A key element of the prisoners' belief system is that a "man" cannot be forced to do anything that he does not want to do—a "real man" cannot be exploited. Those unable to meet the stringent demands of that stan-

dard are regarded as not being "men," as being weak and unworthy of respect from those who *are* "men." Their weakness both invites and justifies exploitation. Many prisoners, upon learning that someone has been turned out, commonly state of the victim: "That's his issue—if he didn't want it, he wouldn't have let the dude do it to him." The attitude reflected in that comment isn't that much different from that of the inmate's rapist, who often feels that he was not only "justified" in turning out the inmate but also had a "right" to do it because of the other's weakness. "He can't protect himself," one guy explained to me a couple of years ago, after having claimed and turned out an inmate. "Hell—I just proved that. He can't make it in here, and you know it. As his old man, I'll take care of him. He give me sex and I give him protection. That ain't no bad deal if you look at it right. Hell—it's more to his benefit than mine." Neither do the prisoners who patronize the services of galboys forced to prostitute themselves regard them as victims or see any wrong in having sex with them. "Ah ain't got him prostituting—his old man got him doing that," is the typical attitude. "Ah'm not making him a whore. He's already one. And Ah ain't misusing him in any kind of way. All Ah'm doing is buying what he's selling. And fair exchange ain't no robbery." The victimization and continuing exploitation of the inmate are regarded as part of the natural order of things.

And, with one of the major concerns of prisoners being sex, studs will "get down" with an available whore . . . during the day, at night, hidden behind doors or bushes or in the middle of a crowd of onlookers, in buildings or under them, anywhere circumstances will permit. The form of sex engaged in is dictated by opportunity, which in turn is determined by the degree of administrative "heat" or supervision. Where opportunity exists, anal intercourse will be the normal form of sexual expression. On the other hand, where tight security supervision is imposed on the inmates, prisoners will switch to fellatio. It does not require the removal of clothing, so it is quicker and easier to conceal from authorities. Administrative action does not halt sexual relations; it only effects a change in the form. The bitter reality for weak inmates is that what kind of sex they will have to perform for their exploiters—anal or oral—is, in the final analysis, determined by the jail or prison administrator's action or lack of it. "There is nothing that prison authorities can do to stop two consenting prisoners from entering into homosexual relationships," Phelps admits. It's a crazy world.

While the initial rape-emasculatation might have been effected by physical force, the ensuing sexual acts are generally done with the galboy's "consent" and "cooperation." Given the combined factors of his personal weakness and the psychological pressure of the prison world, which dictates that once emasculated he must accept the role of a female, he generally resigns himself to his no-win situation and cooperates. Feeling that being a "good woman" is the path to good treatment and protection against abuse during his confinement, he pursues that goal, sometimes playing his female role as well as a real woman.

How extensive is homosexual activity in the nation's penal system? Rundle believes that it's almost universal. "That doesn't mean that everyone who is in prison is regularly into homosexual behavior," he states, "but almost everybody at least sometime." Colonel Pence estimates its extent at Angola: "Roughly, I'd say about seven out of ten inmates here either [are] now participating or have participated in homosexual activities at one time or another during their confinement." But Phelps points out that "they're not medically or clinically homosexual. Many resume normal heterosexual relationships when they're released from the institution." He adds: "Homosexual sex in prison is a natural phenomenon of all one-sexed institutions and environments."

Penal administrators generally claim that much of the violence between prisoners in their institutions results from the homosexual state of affairs, a claim that Rundle feels is somewhat exaggerated because it ignores the racial conflicts in many institutions. Phelps, on the other hand, admits that there is no way for him to know how much of the violence is attributed to the homosexual state of affairs, but "I do know that in the ten years preceding 1976, statistics show that the Louisiana State Penitentiary was the most violent prison in the nation."

It was. The fabric of life in Angola was woven by the thread of violence. The only law was that of the knife, and the only protection available to you was what you could acquire through sheer force of character and the ability to impose your will upon others. Slavery was widespread, and human life was the cheapest commodity on the market. It was a jungle that only the strong survived and ruled. The pursuit of survival fueled a heated arms race among the prisoners for the superior weapon: a sword over a knife, a broad ax over a sword, and a gun over everything. Individual disputes, gang wars, and fac-

tional feuding kept the blood flowing incessantly, leaving the concrete floors stained despite daily moppings. Locked in the violent fishbowl of that period, men fought, killed, and died with little thought. The knife claimed the lives of 40 prisoners between 1972 and 1975 and left 350 more seriously injured.

“The formation of inmate power groups or cliques is symptomatic of a high level of homosexual activity and enslavement,” Phelps states, pointing out that “during the ten years preceding 1976, the inmate power structure at Angola was very, very powerful. And anytime that happens and a high level of homosexual rapes and enslavement is taking place, there has to be a tacit trade-off between the inmate power structure and the administration.” Most of the trade-off, he says, generally takes place on the lower level of the administration. “When it gets down to the lower level, it’s usually an agreement between the inmates and security officers, and the agreement doesn’t have to be verbal. Much of the communication between inmates and between staff and inmates is on the nonverbal level. They have their own peculiar method of communicating what they want to say without really saying it, and each understands exactly what the other is saying. It’s probably the most sophisticated nonverbal system of communication ever invented in the world.”

He explains the typical minor trade-off: “Take the cellblocks, for example. You put two men in a cell together, then suddenly you’re getting complaints—one of them can’t get along with his cell partner. Then he tells you that there’s another inmate farther on down the line who he *can* get along with, and would you put them in the same cell? We know what’s happening there. But officers would prefer to have two people in a cell who get along rather than fight, spit, and yell at each other—so they put them together.” The officers, playing dumb, grant the request, giving the two inmates the opportunity to engage in homosexual relations, in exchange for peace in the cellblock.

But the practice of “trade-offs,” as Phelps calls them, is not peculiar to Angola. The generally unrecognized reality in the prison business is that smooth prison operations can only be achieved through the tacit consent of the prisoner population. While prison administrations possess the power of force, the prisoner population, on the other hand, possesses the power of rebellion. All penal institutions function through some form of accommodation or conscious or unconscious compromises between the keepers and the kept, to prevent or mini-

mize conflicts and to ensure peace. Thus, the only differences among penal administrations and institutions lie in the degree of accommodation and in those peculiar factors in an institution that especially favor the accommodation process. Institutions burdened with a regimented chain of command and/or a sluggish bureaucracy, which prevents the needs of prisoners and personnel from being met quickly and effectively, automatically create a demand for short-cuts, thus fueling the accommodation process. Staffers at the bottom must meet the needs of their operations and those of the inmates and solve the problems that bureaucratic red tape doesn’t, and they can do so only through trade-off. The process of accommodation flourishes in institutions plagued by insufficient personnel and supervision because, crippled by lack of manpower, staffers are forced to trade off with the inmates to a large degree in order to maintain control.

Accommodation manifests itself in a pattern of relations through which administrators and staffers maintain control and minimize their trouble through personal relationships and trade-offs with the prisoners they supervise. In the absence of meaningful incentives to make compliance desirable, and when there is little difference between reward and punishment, staffers are forced to sacrifice a degree of their authority through trade-off to secure compliance. Physical coercion and the threat of punishment are ineffective instruments to achieve long-term compliance because their power to intimidate is limited. The more they are used, the less intimidating they become, and once prisoners exist close to the tolerable limits of punishment and deprivation, their continued use will elicit rebellion. Within that context, staffers tend to choose accommodation over force. Recognizing their inability to achieve their ends through the enforcement of impersonal rules and the continued threat of force, they pursue their purposes through friendship, ignoring infractions that do not threaten the overall security of the institution, making deals, and doing favors—all consciously or unconsciously designed to bring both sides to a mutually tolerable, if not agreeable, working relationship.

While it is the accommodation process that determines what kind of sexual behavior will or will not be tolerated within an institution (with administrations generally drawing the line at actual rape), the almost natural inclination of the institutional security force is to be tolerant of any type of situation that divides the prisoners into predators and prey, with one group of prisoners oppressing another because

such a situation prevents the development of any unity among prisoners that could tear down the institution. A "homosexual" jungle-like state of affairs is perfect for that purpose. It's another, perhaps the most effective, means of control. Prison officials' readiness to utilize any means to secure a division among inmates is confirmed by Rundle, who points out that inmate gang divisions along racial lines are encouraged in California prisons. "The whole system is set up in such a way as to, if not overtly, at least covertly encourage racial war," he says.

There is a certain amount of staff involvement in maintenance of the "homosexual" status quo in penal institutions, via encouragement, active involvement, tolerance, or silence. In his report on sexual violence among the kids in Connecticut's juvenile institutions, Dr. Scacco charged that "administration knows who the victims and aggressors are, and in many instances, the guards are directly responsible for fostering sexual aggression within the institution." And Davis's study of the Pennsylvania jail system revealed that many security guards discouraged complaints of sexual assault, indicating that they didn't want to be bothered or pressuring victims not to complain by asking if they wanted their wives, parents, or friends learning of their humiliation. An indictment of guard exploitation of homosexual situations in institutions was leveled by Simon Dinitz, Stuart J. Miller, and Clemens Bartollas, who, reporting the results of their study of the situation to the First International Symposium on Victimology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, charged that "some guards will barter their weaker and younger charges to favored inmates in return for inmate cooperation in keeping the prison under control." The reality is that penal security forces operate much like any police force in the world, pursuing control and peace in penal institutions just as police pursue the maintenance of law and order in any city; and one of the instruments traditionally employed has been the utilization of prostitutes, gamblers, pushers, other minor criminals, and street characters as agents and informants, unofficially rewarding them by permitting them the freedom to practice their vice in return for their cooperation. The matter of acquiring control and access to information in prison "is a game played by both sides," Phelps acknowledges, pointing out that information is power in prison. Penal security staffs will also, if not encourage, then definitely tolerate a homosexual relationship by a potentially dangerous or

troublesome prisoner, theorizing that a prisoner who is getting some degree of emotional and sexual gratification from his prison "wife" is less likely to cause trouble than a prisoner who is not because he's comfortable and, once emotionally attached, he will not want to lose his "wife." On the other hand, the authorities often can threaten a partner in a homosexual relationship with the loss of his "wife" to elicit information and/or induce cooperation with the administration in pursuit of its ends.

Much of this tolerance and acceptance in penal institutions is a result of staffers' becoming conditioned to the prison's macho/homosexual culture. They eventually adopt the prison homosexual jargon and games and even some of its belief system, an effect evident in the banter that take place between bottom-line staffers, with jokes about turning each other out, and playful references to each other as "whores," "galboys," and "bitches," in very much the same manner as the inmates they work around daily (though this is not to imply that they practice what their language suggests, as inmates do). But the peculiar prison homosexual culture does have an effect. Rundle points out the preoccupation among staffers: "When I first went to Soledad, like for two weeks, *all* that the staff asked me questions about or talked to me about was homosexuality." While Phelps admits that he had no idea to what extent the continuous exposure to the prison's macho/homosexual culture affects the attitudes and behavior of Angola correctional employees, he does admit: "I know situations where staff got involved in overt homosexual relationships with 'boys' and even owned them."

In 1937, Haywood Patterson, chief defendant in the famous Scottsboro rape case, came face-to-face with that reality when he arrived at Alabama's Atmore State Prison and had to fight to prevent other inmates from making him into a "galboy." In his autobiography, *Scottsboro Boy*, published in 1950, Patterson said that homosexual rape was not only tolerated but actually encouraged by prison authorities, primarily because "it helped them control the men. Especially the tough ones they called devils. They believed that if a devil had a galboy he would be quiet. He would be a good worker and he wouldn't kill guards and prisoners and try to escape. He would be like a settled married man." Patterson stated that the most valued galboy was a young teenager. "A fifteen year-old stood no chance at At-

more," he wrote. "I've seen young boys stand up and fight for hours for their rights. Some wouldn't give up." Patterson reported in his book that both prisoners and security guards would watch the assaults with impassive interest. "They knew a young woman was being born," he said. "Some just looked forward to using her a little later themselves." Once made into galboys, "some carried on like real prostitutes," he reported. "They sold themselves around on the weekends just like whore women of the streets. . . . Usually you could hunk up with a galboy for two or three dollars. Galboys got sold to different men. If a guy had a galboy but didn't get along with him any more, he could put him up for sale. He could sell him for twenty-five dollars. News of a sale went through the prison pretty fast and bids came in every time." He described the extent of sexual enslavement of Atmore prisoners: "I once heard Deputy Warden Lige Lambert tell some state patrolmen that fifty percent of the Negro prisoners in Atmore were galboys—and seventy percent of the white."

That was more than five decades ago, and there is no reason to believe that Louisiana's penal system was any different from Alabama's. Old-timers at Angola tell of how, not too long ago, staffers used to perform prison marriages in which the convict and his galboy-wife would leap over the broomstick together in a mock ceremony. That could not happen today in Angola, for any evidence of sexual violence elicits swift administrative reprisal and prosecution.

Ironically, most of the sexual violence occurring not only in Louisiana but across the nation takes place in the parish or county jails, which act as a sieve filtering the strong from the weak and producing the sexual slaves long before they reach the penitentiaries. A number of factors contribute to this situation. The major one is that the typical jail is grossly understaffed and constructed so that adequate policing of inmate activity within it is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Given that situation, jailers can only maintain some degree of control and order by unofficially designating a strong inmate or group of inmates to keep control and peace in exchange for favors and the privilege to practice their own vices (usually homosexuality and profitable rackets). But it's a forced bargain for the jailers; regardless of their efforts the strongest inmate or gang will, via the process of natural selection, do it anyway.

With the exception of the few prisoners serving short sentences, the

jail population generally consists of people who are simply waiting, some for months, others even years—the majority go to court; the others waiting out an appeal or transfer to penitentiary. Their existence is dominated by prolonged idleness and profound boredom, accompanied by an urgent need to find something to do. The stronger quickly discover that the weaker prisoners are good objects for games of violence and abuse. The true and imagined tales about prison instill fear, and those convicts on their way to prison believe that they must secure reputations as tough macho men. They hope their reputations will precede them and intimidate convicts who might have designs upon them. It's a futile effort, but some pursue it anyway. Prisoners with minor charges, who are waiting to go to court, and weak and old men are the most vulnerable for exploitation.

The jungle in jail is vicious. In his book *Rape in Prison*, Dr. Anthony Scacco, Jr., wrote the following account:

Many cases could be cited of actual rape of an individual in jail, but one in particular is chosen to let the reader hear the events from an ordinary citizen. He is married with a family, no previous criminal record, and a former Georgia legislator and businessman who found himself the victim of a jail situation. William Laite was indicted and convicted in Texas of perjury relating to a contract he had with the Federal Administration Housing Authority. He was sentenced to the Tarrant County Jail in Fort Worth, Texas. The moment he entered the tank or day room, he was approached by five men. The first comment from one of them was, "I wonder if he has any guts. We'll find out tonight, won't we? Reckon what her name is; she looks ready for about six or eight inches. You figure she will make us fight for it, or is she going to give up to us nice and sweet like a good little girl? Naw, we'll have to work her over first, but hell, that's half the fun, isn't it?" "I couldn't move," said Laite. "I was terrified. This couldn't be real. This couldn't be happening to me." Laite was saved from sexual assault when a seventeen-year-old youth was admitted to the day room as he was about to become the victim of the five men in the tank. The men saw the boy and turned on him, knocked him out, and then, "they were on him at once like jackals, ripping the coveralls off his limp body. Then as I watched in frozen fascination and horror, they sexually assaulted him, savagely and brutally like starving

animals after a raw piece of meat. Then I knew what they meant about giving me six or eight inches.”

The attack did not end there, according to Laite, for while the boy was still unconscious, the attackers jabbed his arms, neck and body with the burning tips of erasers, so that the boy's body twitched making it more sexually exciting for the aggressors. Then one of the attackers, “in a final sadistic gesture . . . shoved his fingers deep into the boy's rectum and ripped out a mass of bloody hemorrhoids.” Laite was shocked by the unconcern shown by the guards. He stated that the “guards were protected from the violent prisoners, but I, an inmate myself, was not. The guards never made an attempt to discipline the prisoners. In fact I suspected that they might pass the time of day watching the fights and sexual activities from some secluded location.”

Laite's experience is not the exception, selected because of its horror and ability to shock and offend. The Louisiana State Penitentiary and other prisons around the nation are crammed full of men who can attest that this kind of occurrence is fairly common. (Brutal and senseless incidents are rare, however, in penitentiaries with established cultures and inmate power structures influencing inmate behavior.) Davis and his team of investigators concluded that more than two thousand sexual assaults had occurred in the Philadelphia jail system during the two-year period they investigated, many of the rapes matching the horror of the Laite experience in the Fort Worth jail. According to Davis, “virtually every slightly built young man committed by the courts is sexually approached within a day or two after his admission to prison. Many of these young men are repeatedly raped by gangs of inmates. Others, because of the threat of gang rape, seek protection by entering into a homosexual relationship with an individual tormentor. . . . Only the tougher and more hardened young men,” Davis stated, “and those few so obviously frail that they are immediately locked up for their own protection, escape homosexual rape.” The district attorney attributed the sexual violence to the violent subculture's definition of masculinity through conquest and subjugation.

Davis's study also revealed race as a factor in sexual violence in the Philadelphia jails. He found “a disproportionate number of Negro aggressors and white victims.” Fifty-six percent of the rapes were

black-on-white; only 29 percent were black-on-black and only 15 percent were white-on-white. This corresponds with Dr. Scacco's conclusion in his study of Connecticut's reformatories that the homosexual rapes occurring there were usually blacks raping white boys for power and revenge; Scacco found that blacks saw more social prestige in having sex with whites. Rundle confirms the racial factor: “It does happen that blacks often have a preference for white slaves, and that gets into the whole business of racial subjugation and revenge—the same way it does in society. There are a lot of blacks who prefer white women and it has to do sometimes with a conscious kind of revenge and a conscious status which it confers upon them in the eyes of other blacks. I don't think it works that way with whites for blacks. I think in that instance it would be more of an individual matter and preference.” However, he points out that the racial factor “really depends on the atmosphere of the prison. For example, in Soledad, blacks and whites stayed strictly apart and there was a constant power struggle. If any white associated with or consorted with a black in any way, he was in trouble with the white group.” Interracial rape under those circumstances, Rundle states, would “precipitate racial clashes.”

Classroom-bred “experts” generally attribute homosexual activity in the world behind bars to what they call the failure of prison authorities to properly identify and segregate overt and latent homosexuals from the general population. That sounds practical. But, as Rundle points out: “One of the unavoidable facts is that, considering the organization of the inmate society, the hands of the administration are often tied.” One of the strengths of the society and the exploiters is the refusal of the inmate-victim to admit that he was raped or is being used as a “female,” for fear of his family and friends ultimately learning of his humiliation. Given that situation, who will distinguish who's a “girl” and who isn't in a world in which everyone looks the same? If the administration were to make an official determination of who is homosexual and who isn't, it would inevitably touch off a flood of lawsuits requiring the authorities to prove their allegations and demanding civil damages if they can't. However, the whole effort would prove fruitless. When people talk about homosexual activity in penal institutions, they automatically think of the obvious homosexuals, the gays, the “effeminate” homosexuals. If they were responsible for the horrendous situation in these institutions, the problem would be easier to deal with since they are often easily identifiable. But the

reality is that the passive homosexuals are not responsible for the sexual violence. On the contrary, they are often also its victims, though generally treated better than non-gays by their exploiters. The truth of the matter is that sexual violence, the turning out of youngsters, and the enslavement and abuse of weaker prisoners is primarily the product of criminally corrupt "heterosexual" males, the "studs." Trying to identify them before they commit their first homosexual rape is almost impossible, much the same as trying to identify the potential rapist in a city before he assaults a woman. Given that reality, removing "girls" (usually "gays") from a prisoner population solves nothing. It automatically creates a demand for a new batch of "girls" to be found or made to replace those removed. As Angola warden Frank Blackburn points out, "The studs will just turn out some more"—the law of supply and demand.

That doesn't mean that the situation is hopeless. While little can be done to stop homosexuality, given the pragmatic approach to the psychological and sexual needs of heterosexuals confined in single-sex institutions for long periods of time, rapes can be reduced to a tolerable level. While they used to be a regular feature of life here at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, they are now a rare occurrence. Homosexuality still thrives, but the violence and forced slavery that used to accompany it have been removed. In 1976, Federal District Court judge E. Gordon West ordered a massive crackdown on overall violence at the prison, which paved the way for the allocation of money, manpower, and sophisticated electronic equipment to do the job. Since then, *any* kind of violence at all between inmates elicits swift administrative reprisal and certain prosecution. This, more than anything else, has made Angola safe for the average youngster coming into the prison today. No longer does he have to worry about being raped. Of course, if he lets himself be conned into giving up his status as a man, that's his business—the institution is only concerned about the possible use of violence.

Every prison in the nation has a section that it refers to as "protective custody." This is where authorities keep prisoners who request protection from the possibility of being killed or exploited by other prisoners. Generally, persons confined to protective custody are there at their own request. Usually this more restrictive situation eventually forces the weaker inmate to reach a point where he decides that he

would rather permit himself to be sexually exploited and enjoy a certain amount of freedom than suffer the mental and physical anguish of solitary confinement. The punitive and painful nature of "protection" is one of the major factors in rape victims' decisions to accept the role of a "female" rather than report the victimization to the authorities and request protection. In many respects, the "protection" offered is seen as being worse than the exploitation by the inmates.

In the prison's pursuit of protecting weaker inmates from sexual exploitation, the authorities also arbitrarily lock some up who do not wish for this "protection": the gay prisoners, a small class of prisoners who are locked up simply because of what they are, homosexuals. For the most part, they are transvestites, the "queens" and "ladies" (as distinguished from turn-outs and galboys). Of the four thousand prisoners at Angola, "I'd roughly estimate that there are between sixty to eighty, but not over a hundred," Colonel Pence states. Unlike the turn-outs, the effeminate gays want the role of a female, as they regard that as their natural role. They don't want to be "protected" from the men. Despite what they want, the authorities lock up many of them.

Gary "Sheila" Keylon is a twenty-five-year-old gay from Oklahoma serving five years for receiving stolen property. He's been here two years. "I've been in lockdown ever since I been here. . . . When I came to Angola and arrived at AU [Admissions Unit], they looked at me and my record and just bluntly told me that I was a whore and that I go to Camp H lockdown, giving me no choice in the matter." Sheila asked to be permitted to live and work with the other prisoners, but the authorities refused. In an attempt to be transferred someplace else, he deliberately cursed the camp supervisor. He was immediately transferred—to Camp J, the prison's punishment unit. Brought before the Disciplinary Court, he explained that he had violated the rules in the hope of achieving any type of transfer that would remove him from his lockdown situation, that he didn't want to be locked up, and that he wanted to live and work with the rest of the prisoners. Sheila was lucky: Colonel Pence was acting as chairman of the court on that day and, instead of imposing a punishment, he tried to help Sheila by transferring him to the main prison's Cellblock B, where he could at least work in the field in the special work detail made up of "protection" cases. And that's where Sheila is now, a little freer but still segregated from the rest of the prisoner population.

"Security shouldn't put as many bonds on us as they do, because if we feel that we can't live on The Walk, we'd be the first ones to know it," Sheila says. "I'm not afraid to go anywhere in this penitentiary. Many of us are perfectly capable of taking care of ourselves, but they won't let us go down The Walk. They're more afraid than we are—and we're the ones involved. I don't need no protection. I want *out*, to get myself an old man of my choice and to live as normal an existence as is possible for me here."

Thirty-four-year-old Calvin "Carol" Clark from New Orleans also lives in Cellblock B and, like Sheila, does not want to be protected. "Hell, what are they supposed to be protecting me from—sex? I do it in here anyway. So I don't see why I can't do it in population. You see, you have to understand—I'm a homosexual and doing it is a



Calvin "Carol" Clark (Courtesy The Angolite)

natural thing with me." He points out that he's been "doing it" since the age of twelve. "I feel that if we need protection we can ask for it. We don't need it forced on us. Boy/gals are comfortable with this lockup situation 'cause they can lay up here and do their thing together—they relate to each other. I don't and can't relate to a turn-out. I feel like I'm caught in a mental cobweb, having to live with them all the time. I don't want to be locked up like this. I've got time to serve and it's hard doing time like this. I even signed papers saying that I don't want protection, but they still locked me up. I want to go down The Walk, choose an old man, and do my time peacefully and constructively."

As Carol points out, doing time in protective custody is hard. "Protection cases" are always segregated from the rest of the prisoners, denied the kind of freedom and wide range of activities afforded ordinary inmates. They are also denied access to the prison's education and vocational programs and, so long as they are confined in protective custody, they carry the social stigma of being a "catch-out," a "rat," a "coward." The regulations and restrictions governing their existence are the same as those governing the prisoners locked in Cellblock A, across the hall from them, for "punishment." "You're caught between two extremes," Sheila states. "Sure, you may be mistreated by some inmates in population, but then security turns right around and mistreats you in the name of protecting you from it." Then, too, the "girls" say that there is abuse among those confined in protective custody, with the gays sometimes being exploited and abused by the non-gays confined with them—a case of the stronger among them becoming the top dogs, the rulers in the house of the weak. (Following our interview, we received reports that Sheila received a black eye from a non-gay in protective custody for refusing to have sexual relations with him.)

"They keep saying that homosexuals start arguments and fights in this penitentiary no matter where they go," Sheila says, "when actually it's not the homosexuals at all—they're just the excuse used by the authorities for a lack of security."

Phelps points out that prison administrators are generally convinced that homosexuals and kids with violent backgrounds are more likely to cause trouble than anyone else. For example, Colonel Pence cites the problems at Camp D, which houses the more sexually attractive and younger inmates. "Now, here's a camp with about 530

prisoners," he points out, "and you have damn near as many disciplinary actions and problems in that camp as you have in the entire main prison where you have in excess of eighteen hundred men. Of course, not all of the problems are sexual, but that serves to demonstrate that there are problems with whores." Colonel Pence adds: "Every time you put a whore in population, you're reestablishing the pecking order—which is a particularly dangerous thing to do in a prison. You got to worry about more than just their own protection. You've got to worry about all of the mess you're going to kick off among the other inmates by putting them in there."

Gwen White is a twenty-five-year-old Morgan City native serving time for prescription forgery. Openly gay ("I've never made it with a woman and have never had a desire to be with a woman"), he is also confined to B Block. He recognizes Pence's concern about putting gays in population because of the definite power and influence they can wield over other prisoners, the feminine charm and grace they can utilize as a weapon to pit prisoners against each other, to foment jealousies and rivalries. But, he points out, "it depends upon the individual—she can be a lady or a whore. She can conduct herself where she don't create chaos, confusion, or conflict, or she can constantly keep trouble stirred up." But Gwen feels that "most of your problems in this area comes from the prison turn-outs—they don't really know how to handle themselves as real homosexuals do. We've lived this life all our lives, not just our prison lives, and that gives us more experience at it. . . . I don't like playing the field," he points out. "I get me one man and stay married. If I see anything else developing with someone, I let them know quick that it can't go like that." Sheila points out that he's also not promiscuous: "When I'm with a man, I stay with that man." Colonel Pence, acknowledging that all of that may be true, stated that "there's always the possibility that no one will permit them to settle down." And that's where the problem enters the picture.

"I feel like I'm being punished simply because I'm a homosexual," Carol complains. "And I'm not the only one. The rest of the girls—the real ones—will tell you the same thing. We all feel as though they've singled us out and locked us up."

"We do the same thing with young people coming in with long sentences for acts of violence," Phelps states. "We lock them up until we, the administrators, are satisfied that he can do his time without

bothering anyone. So homosexuals are not the only ones locked up."

"They're a source of violence and as long as that's the case, we have to separate them," Warden Blackburn says of the present practice of arbitrary lockup of gays upon arrival. "They should go to some type of lockdown until we can judge them." However, he does feel that they should be given a chance to work their way out of the cell and into the normal prison population like all other prisoners, on the basis of merit.

Mark Dwayne Smith ("Melody"), a twenty-one-year-old homosexual, worked his way out of his former lockdown status and into the prisoner population. Serving a life sentence for murder, he was initially confined to Camp H, where he participated in that camp's incentive program, then transferred to Camp D, and a few weeks ago to the main prison, where he now lives in a dormitory on the Big Yard. "I haven't had any problems since I've come here," he says. "Free



"Carol" doing "Gwen" White's hair
(Courtesy The Angolite)

folks [personnel] say that girls cause trouble—well, some do and some don't. It all depends upon how you carry yourself and what you do. If you're into criss-crossing [dangerous intrigues] and all that, eventually it'll come back on you. I don't engage in that kind of thing. The only trouble I'll get, if I get any, will come from the free folks," Melody states. "With me being the only out-front white gay on The Walk, any kind of trouble that might come up, I'll probably get the rap for, even if it has nothing to do with me. They have a lotta out-front black whores on The Walk and, while I've only been here three weeks, I don't see where they have any problems. But with me, free folks are always kind of watching me and all. I have to be extra careful." Toward that end, he points out, while he tricked at Camp D, he no longer does so. In addition to now having an old man, "I know that if I started doing that here in the main prison, pretty soon I would be gone, and I don't want to go back to no cell." He's perfectly content as a "housewife."

Gay prisoners are the only prisoners in Angola who are locked up because of what they are rather than what they do, and the practice of arbitrarily locking them up raises the question of discrimination. "Homosexuals are being discriminated against here because of the fact that they're homosexuals," Sheila states. "They should be allowed the same choices and privileges as other inmates—the freedom to make right decisions and to make bad ones, and even to fall on your face if that's the case. But classification [nonsecurity inmate affairs] officers, and especially security officers, tell us no to almost everything . . . because we're homosexuals. They aren't supposed to treat us this way—we have rights too."

Just what "rights" gays have as prisoners, other than the right to protection, is still unclear at this point. A couple of jailhouse lawyers, asked to research the matter for this article, reported back that they could find nothing on the books in the prison's law library pertaining to the treatment to be accorded gays in prison, other than that they have a right to protection from sexual abuse. "Apparently, it's still pretty much left up to the authorities," one of them said. While the United States Bureau of Prisons appears to have no firm policy on the treatment of gays in federal institutions, it does advocate that "the feminine appearing, sometimes 'pretty' prisoner, must never be classified as a suspected homosexual . . . nor be issued identification that



Mark "Melody" Smith in 1979 (Courtesy The Angolite)

differentiates him from other prisoners."* However, it urges personnel to be careful in selecting housing for him, for his own protection placing him in a single cell if possible.

Phelps points out that the federal court order by Judge West requires the segregation of overt, aggressive homosexuals from the rest of the prisoner population. But some jailhouse lawyers at Angola contend that the order does not apply to the "effeminate" gays, as they are "passive" homosexuals, not "aggressive." "They don't rape

*The Jail, Its Operation and Management, U.S. Bureau of Prisons and University of Wisconsin.

anyone," one pointed out. "If anything, they might get raped."

Phelps agrees with the gays in principle, stating that "nobody should be discriminated against just because of who and what they are. But if who or what they are presents a security or control problem, then it is our responsibility to see to it that they don't cause a security or control problem—and in that context, they are not being discriminated against. We're not dealing with classes of people. We deal with individuals, and they haven't proven discrimination as a class."

Still, the gays claim that they are discriminated against as a class of people merely because of what they are. "There is built-in discrimination against homosexuals," Gwen says. "That's part of the society within the prison. Most people, free people and inmates alike, think that we have some kind of mental problem because we're homosexuals. That traditional attitude has a lot of discrimination built into it." Gwen, who is a first offender and who intends to return to college to continue his education in medicine, was a registered nurse prior to coming to Angola. According to him, prison hospital administrator Diane Peabody and medical director Thomas Beamon refused to let him work in the prison hospital because of his being a homosexual. "I was denied a job assignment there," Gwen states, "simply because I am a homosexual. There are other homosexuals working over there, inmates and one free person I know for sure. But I am quite obviously a homosexual, and that's why they would not let me work there. That's part of the discrimination thing we constantly have to put up with."

"I'm a first offender with five years," Sheila adds, "not a violent person. I wrote the officials at the State Police Barracks,* told them I was a high school graduate with two years of training in air-conditioning and refrigeration. I've never heard from them, though they've responded to other inmates who wrote them. Instead of denying me, they just ignore me, which puts me in a situation where I can't do nothing. I can't even appeal because they have not actually denied me." Sheila doesn't really think that they would seriously consider him, "simply because I'm a homosexual. They'll let your old man go to the Police Barracks, but not you, because you're homosexual."

*the least restrictive facility in the Louisiana penal system

Hell—what he's doing to you doesn't make him that different. He's homosexual, too."

"Discrimination? . . . That's the system," Warden Blackburn acknowledged after being apprised of the gays' complaints. However, he states that he will look into the matter of their being given no choice, and their charges of being discriminated against, "and, hopefully, see what can be done to remedy the situation, to make it fairer for them." Colonel Pence is also studying the matter.

"Sexual deprivation is apparently a part of the system, an unwritten rule or part of the punishment," Phelps states. But it doesn't have to be.

"While it wouldn't end it, I feel that a lot of the homosexual activities could be reduced through a conjugal-visiting program tied into the disciplinary system or some type of honor system," Colonel Pence, the prison's chief of security, says, adding that it would have to be restricted to only medium- and minimum-security prisoners, not maximum-security inmates. "It would be controversial, but it wouldn't be the first controversial thing to come up in this business." He feels that most of the prison's security force would accept conjugal visiting if it's adopted as a policy. "There will always be some disagreement," he states, "but we will stand with policy and enforce it. Naturally, there would be problems, but I feel that the overall good would offset the problems."

Pence is not alone in his desire to see conjugal visiting in prison. Professor Columbus B. Hopper of the University of Mississippi spent ten years making a comprehensive study of the evolution and effects of the practice of conjugal visits at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. He concluded that conjugal visiting is at least a partial solution to the sexual problems plaguing the nation's penal institutions. While admitting its inadequacies, he states in his book, *Sex in Prison*, that "conjugal visiting deserves serious consideration by those who wish to develop normal sexual adjustment among the inmates of American penal institutions." He concedes:

As its critics argue, conjugal visiting may have relatively little effect on the biological needs of prisoners. Under current visiting regulations in most prisons, the conjugal visit could not occur

often enough to significantly reduce the sexual needs of those participating in such a program. What it would influence, however, is the image of a man. It would allow a man to keep his masculine image and reduce the need to establish it through homosexual conquests.

Unfortunately, too many people, including penal administrators, see conjugal visiting as strictly a physical thing. However, as Professor Hopper discovered, and the inmates in his study indicated: "Physical satisfaction is not the most important aspect of conjugal visits. The most important element is emotional satisfaction. Its influence on his self-esteem and emotional needs keeps a man who has conjugal visits from resorting to homosexuality." And emotions are also a factor in many prison homosexual relationships. Dr. Rundle points out that, despite the junglelike state of affairs, "a lot of inmates form very close emotional and affectional relationships which many times include the sexual. And that's purely voluntary—that doesn't get into this whole power and domination and [is] what we would consider a normal emotional relationship. And as far as I'm concerned, for that to happen in prison is healthy. It can in some way ameliorate the really desocializing process which goes on in a prison."

While Warden Blackburn states that he does not see conjugal visiting as *the* answer to sexual violence and homosexuality in prison, he would like to see it instituted, "but sort of at the end of the prison process—a family-type affair with emphasis more on family than just sex."

And, while both Angola's warden and chief of security would like to see some form of conjugal visiting instituted here at the prison, Colonel Pence doesn't really expect to see it happen anytime soon at Angola. "I wish it would," he says, but acknowledges that the political atmosphere in the state will prevent it, much as it has virtually killed the furlough program that the Louisiana Department of Corrections had promoted as a better solution than conjugal visits.

So, while politicians play politics, the "experts" theorize, and penal authorities censor *Penthouse* and *Hustler* to prevent a possible "obscene" influence upon the inmates, the nation's jails and prisons continue to be incubators of violence, abuse, murders, suicides, and warped psyches. The effect of it all upon prisoners has to be a contributing factor to the recidivism rate among ex-convicts and to the

institution's failure to rehabilitate them. How can rehabilitation succeed with one segment of an institution's prisoner population enslaved and the other in a constant struggle to escape deprivation, abuse, and exploitation? A prisoner too often has a tough enough time just keeping his head together, staying alive and safe.

The effect of it all upon the victims of sexual violence? "It's got to be bad," Corrections Secretary Phelps states. "If you're a sexual slave or in a homosexual relationship for an extended period of time, it will have a great effect upon you. While most return to normal heterosexual relationships, there is the strong possibility that, having become comfortable in a homosexual relationship, you'll choose to stay with it, rejecting heterosexual relationships."

That's what happened to Melody. "I got turned out in St. John the Baptist Parish Jail and discovered that I liked it," he admits. "So I just stayed with it. . . . I enjoy it. The attention turns me on. When I was young, I didn't get much attention. This way, I get plenty of attention and I like it."

"It does happen that sometimes although the relationship may be established against the will of another, it may become a relationship which becomes positive, desirable, and the person who is forced will then continue in it voluntarily," Dr. Rundle states. "But to say that if that happens, the role is accepted as a natural role in life, has to be taken in the context of the prison, where I would see it as a healthy kind of compensatory or coping behavior. It could certainly mean, for someone who had been in prison for a long time, that that would become established as the kind of relationship most desirable and would continue after release. For instance, I knew people in Soledad who had gone into the Youth Authority Institutions when they were twelve to thirteen or fourteen, stayed there till they were eighteen, transferred to the Adult Authority, which meant going to adult prison, and had been there for ten years, so maybe had never had any kind of normal social, sexual relation with women, and who would say, 'I don't know if I'm homosexual or not—never had the chance to see what it would be like with a woman. All I know is that I've been for fourteen years in prison and that I only know what it's like to be with a man, both emotionally and sexually.'" Melody states that he has never had a "normal social, sexual relationship with a woman" and has only had one nervous sexual experience with a woman in his life. He feels that the lack of a healthy relationship with a woman

"definitely had some bearing on my willingness to accept homosexuality."

Unlike Melody, however, most sexual slaves forced to play the role of a woman during their confinement do return to heterosexual relationships upon release. But the experience is not without its effect. Dr. Rundle states that "if this was all against his will, he has to deal with all the fear and anger and resentment and frustration that goes along with that. It would really mess up his head." And it does. To what extent, nobody knows.

The deprivation of basic human needs imposed upon prisoners, and the violence resulting from that deprivation, have created a horrible situation in the nations' jails and prisons, one that adds an extra dimension to the punishment of an offender, one that it can be reasonably assumed no sentencing judge intended. It would be easy to blame the whole affair on the prisoners, to use the violent situation as proof that they're criminals or animals and justification for the present penal practices. But their behavior merely reflects their desperation; they are locked in a cruel and abnormal situation, exercising the only avenues left them to cling to the very normal need to feel strong, masculine, and worthwhile, to keep in touch with the "real" world by creating an artificial one patterned after the one they left behind. The violence, the murders, the suicides, and the human debris left in the wake of their effort, are the cost.

"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons."

DOSTOYEVSKI

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

[December 1979]



Postscript



James Dunn's sentence was commuted to forty years by Governor Edwin Edwards on February 2, 1987, and he was released later that summer, after twenty-two years in prison. Gary "Sheila" Keyton and Gwen White were released after completing their prison terms. Calvin "Carol" Clark is still confined. In October 1982, Mark "Melody" Smith and another inmate swam across the Mississippi River in an escape. Smith made it to San Jose, California, where he was captured three months later; he was returned to Angola, where he remains confined. His accomplice wasn't so fortunate; he drowned in the Mississippi during the escape.

"The Sexual Jungle" won the 1980 George Polk Award and was cited as the most definitive work on the subject. It also reaped a 1980 National Magazine Award nomination for *The Angolite*.

The advent of AIDS has affected the state of homosexual affairs at Angola, but not dramatically so. The overwhelming majority of the 5,200 inmates here are serving sentences that consign them to die in prison, a situation marked with a fatalism that undermines the terror of AIDS.