

Behind Prison Bars

Women's 'Campus'

By Charles Howe

THEY CALL it "The Campus" and at first glance California's only prison for women does look like a teacher's college in some suburb.

But to the 655 women doing time at the California Institution for Women near Chino, it is a place of confinement.

The superintendent of the establishment is Mrs. Iverene Carter, a veteran of 28 years in corrections who can come on like everybody's favorite grandmother one minute — or like one of the Seven Furies the next.

Mrs. Carter, who is scheduled to retire later this year, talked about her charges:

"If these women are different than their sisters on the outside, the differences are pretty hard to define. Somewhere along the line their thinking got out of focus. I don't think most of these women set out to be criminals but they extended their morality too fast and they got caught."

Judges "hate like hell to lock up a woman," a staffer said; less than 4 per cent of the women convicted of felonies end up at Mrs. Carter's institution.

Totally unlike their male felon counterparts, the women behind bars tend to identify with the prison staff; it's not considered bad form at CIW to be caught talking to a female correctional officer — or even crying on her shoulder.

Half the male felon population doing time has a history of violence, but this isn't true at CIW.

A quarter of the women in on drug offenses and 19.2 per cent more are serving time for writing bad checks.

One woman awaits execution, pending a court appeal, and 96 more have been convicted of homicide.

What happens to women when they are locked up?

"Oh, I suppose they tend to be more emotional than the men," said Mrs. Carter, who pointed out that women inmates are allowed to hold hands as they walk about, though overt homosexual behavior is discouraged.

Nevertheless, we encountered perhaps a dozen women who, because of the mannish cut of their hair and clothing, appeared at a distance to be handsome young men — at first glance.

The establishment has no adjustment center. "The more of that close custody stuff you have, the more need you have for it," Mrs. Carter noted.

What brings a woman to prison?

Bobby is an attractive Chicana — and an armed robber doing time for her second offense.

"I guess I just came back because of boredom on the outside. It was either the joint or death. And, you know, I've got an older sister

who's a square and she's proud of me. She thinks what I do on the outside takes guts!"

She shook her head. "I wish she could be proud because I was a doctor or a lawyer."

Psychiatric services at CIW, like those at most California institutions, are admittedly minimal.

"I spent 25 minutes with the psychiatrist last year," Bobby recalled. "I told him I was developing some insights and that I still dug girls and he said that was nice, and that was it."

CIW has one psychiatrist and one psychologist, Dr. Vera Dreiser.

"If I had the time I might be able to do something for 25 per cent of the women here, using insight therapy. But you need at least three psychologists to get much accomplished."

She shook her head. "I've seen women sent here by judges for psychiatric care. It's ridiculous, when you consider how short we are on psychiatric staff."

The bulk of the women doing time are between 25 and 35 years of age. Some, like Jackie and Betty, had never been to prison before.

"I was scared to death when I first came here," recalled Betty, a brunette who



A cell at the California Institute for Women

killed her boy friend. "I knew I'd be here 40 years and I imagined gun towers, all that stuff."

"The thing is, after a while you realize it isn't so bad and some of us — not me, that's for sure — aren't afraid to come back."

Jackie, who was convicted of possession of heroin — her first criminal offense — put prison life this way:

"You try to keep to yourself. It isn't easy, I know, but by yourself you do better. You don't get in trouble if you stay out of cliques."

She has about a year more to do before she will come up for a parole hearing. What keeps her going?

"A family on the outside: people who care. You see, as long as you've got something to go back to, it makes all

the difference in the world. And the ones of us who have families are really rare."

Running a women's prison is probably as much an art as it is a science.

An ethnic celebration was held in the institution's cafeteria the night Chronicle reporters visited CIW. During part of the performance, one of the young inmates — she'd been a narcotics addict since she was 15 — came up to Mrs. Carter with a complaint.

"Mrs. Carter, I'm sleepy and I want to go home because nobody's paying any attention to me."

Mrs. Carter stood up and extended her hand. "Come on, child, let's go home then," she said. They both walked out of the cafeteria, just like mother and daughter.



The inmates: Totally unlike their male felon counterparts

Library Full of Herstory

By Beverly Koch

ONE OF THOSE modern glass and wood houses perched atop the Berkeley hills has become what may well be the largest archive anywhere of materials on the women's liberation movement.

The house belongs to Laura X, and the Women's History Research Library began as her personal collection. She borrowed the idea of using X for a last name from Malcolm X.

"It's the notion of having to carry your own name," she explained. "A woman's maiden name is still her father's name. We have no names of our own."

Laura once was archivist for the Free Speech Movement at UC and had an intuition about saving things everybody would be looking for later. So early in 1969 she started saving everything about and by the women's movement.

At the time Laura began collecting, she was editing a newsletter called SPAZM and then she later co-founded the now-defunct Berkeley women's liberation newspaper, It Ain't Me Babe. So word about her library spread quickly through the underground papers and it was not long before the library began to serve as an informational clearing house for women's liberation groups.

The library has newspapers and other publications of women's groups throughout the United States. Since many of the original organizations are defunct, the library is the only source for their publi-

Coffee Break

My Son, the Actor

By Adeline Daley

AS BETTE DAVIS once said, "I have told my children when they're trying out for the school play, no actor is too big for a role. Sometimes the role is too big for the actor."

At least I THINK it was Bette Davis who said it. Anyway, it makes a nice line to deliver to your kids when they're given a

ing other kids perform and a total of one minute and 27 seconds watching our own deliver such memorable one-liners as:

"They went that-a-way."
"Dinner is served."
"All hail the Queen."

And, "Seating in the center aisle." However, this is where my husband draws the line. He feels we should not be obliged to attend a

well-type role in which the other characters refer to him continually, but he never appears on stage.

Well, not quite. There was the play in which Brian portrayed a sheriff in a junior high school production, and the sheriff finally did show up... after 1½ hours of "Hark, I think I hear the Sheriff." (Hoo-beats, but

For Women Only

'But How Can I Be A Woman?'

By L. R. Curtis, M.D.

DEAR DR. CURTIS: After years of testing and seeing different specialists, I have now learned from a gynecologist that I am missing my ovaries. You can imagine my shock and following unhappiness. How could such a thing

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I'VE OFTEN wondered they don't hold beauty for older women—those 40, that is. Naturally any woman who admits to being probably well into her 50s by now surely everyone agrees the fact that lying about age is as important to a locking woman as sharing