

Pretending to Be Stupid Wins Parole on Second Try

Dottie Mather, 21, was arrested in Washington, D.C., on drug charges. She served 21 months in Alderson Federal Reformatory for Women.

When I was sentenced, the judge—and I really think he believed this—said that if I was good and did what they told me for six months, then they would release me. My lawyer and my parents were all under the same impression.

Well, I met the parole board the first time and they gave me a 20-month contract, which means there's no way to get out before 20 months.

Q. How long did you meet with the parole examiner?

A. It was about three minutes. He asked a little bit about my drug record, then you walk out and wait about a month or two till they send back an answer.

Q. Did they give a reason for denying parole?

A. No. They don't say. "Continue with a review hearing in January, 1972," is how it read. Well, you can ask for a reconsideration. That means you know that you think you're ready to get out, my case worker and treatment team thought I was ready to be out, so they wrote Washington.

Q. How did you know what else you could do to help you get a parole?

A. The case worker tells you. Usually, they set goals for you, like earning your high school diploma. But I already had a high school diploma so I just had to think of things that I thought would look impressive.

I got into therapy because I thought it would look as if I cared about myself and I was admitting I had problems, which is one thing they really like you to do.

I wrote down every little thing I could think of. I was in pottery class. I was in two different therapies. I was in key punching. I was going to school taking advanced studies. I was getting any extra things I could, just to say, "Look, I'm doing something, let me out."

So I met with the examiner again in September of '71. I was in a tight position at the time because people at the prison didn't like the people I was hanging with, the political people. I had a promise

of a job as a key puncher working for the Central Committee—for Conscientious Objectors and the examiner asked me if this wasn't like the blind leading the blind.

And I did a thing which I really don't believe in doing but I thought it was the only way to get out and that is to act like I didn't know much of what he was saying and that I was really stupid. I'm kind of sorry I had to do that but I really felt it was necessary to get out.

Q. How long were you with the examiner?



DOTTIE MATHER.
"the only way"

A. About 10 minutes that time.

Q. And this time parole was granted?

A. Yes.

3 Black Women in Jackson Jail: Stripped, Searched Almost Daily

Iasha Salim, 29, was one of a group of blacks in the Republic of New Africa aimed at carving a sovereign state from land in the Deep South. She, two other women and several men were arrested in a morning raid in Jackson, Miss., and held without bail for two weeks in the Jackson City Jail.

There were three of us women. One of the sisters, Njeri-Quaddus of Camden, was pregnant. She said she was tear-gassed while she was in the police van on the way. Each of us was put in a tiny cubicle with no blankets and no sheets and very thin mattresses. Next to me was a white insane woman, hollering and screaming. They had to move her after awhile. There were mice and bugs everywhere.

At city jail they let us out once in two weeks for our only shower. There were three of us and by the time the third girl got to the shower, they shut off the water.



IASHA SALIM
"tiny cubicles"

We were searched almost every day. We were stripped and had our clothes thrown outside the cell. They'd take us to a subcell cell for this where we'd be in the charge of a very timid black woman. While we were naked the uniformed police would walk by and laugh at us.

We couldn't eat the food. There was one cup of coffee in the morning with no sugar and no milk, and cold corn bread with worms in it. We got by on candy bars brought for us by male prisoners who got money from visitors.

The guards and the police were foul-mouthed. They kept asking us why we didn't wear bras and they threatened to handle us. They had arrested us early in the morning and one of the sisters was still in her night gown and they wouldn't give her anything else to wear.

Once we were all together, all three of us women, and all stripped for our daily search. Sister Njeri was four months pregnant and showing it, and one big fat jaller came up and he said, "Aren't you the one with the filthy nasty worm inside you? You must have had a ball with all those men, nasty filthy rogues. Are you a Christian?"