

Honor Rancho Has Its Faults

One of the Best---but: No Medical Care, Not Enough Rehabilitation

Last year, more than 600,000 Californians were locked up in city or county jails. This means that, barring repeaters, just about one out of every 18 men, women and children in the State was behind bars for some time. How many were repeaters? There is no way of telling from official records.

A Chronicle staff writer, under an assumed name—Peter Emil Flick—and unknown to his jailers as a reporter, did time in two of these jails. He found filth, degradation and sordid conditions. Today, he tells more about the Wayside Honor Rancho of Los Angeles county, considered by many to be one of the State's finest installations.

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By **PIERRE SALINGER** (alias **PETER EMIL FLICK**)

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Criminologists and penologists universally agree that the Wayside Honor Rancho of the Los Angeles county jail system is a great, forward step in county penology.

The Rancho, however, also has its faults, many of which are recognized by the men who run the institution, located in the rolling Castaic valley, 40 miles north of Los Angeles.

Here are some of its flaws:

1—After attempting to rehabilitate the prisoner, the county sends him back to the same environment from where he came—and without funds of any kind.

2—There is virtually no medical or psychiatric care for the prisoners at the Rancho.

3—There is virtually no educational program for the prisoners.

4—There is always a personnel problem, because of the high turnover of Deputy Sheriffs who work as custodial officers at the Rancho.

5—There is still the unfortunate mixture of hardened criminals and first offenders.

Men put in six hours a day

The Weather . .

That June-in-January of the past few days will run over into February today, with this additional summer feature: morning fog, the nice thick drizzly kind.

Otherwise, said the district forecaster, it'll be fair and perhaps even as warm as yesterday's 65 degrees, which was still below the all-time high for the date, 68, both in 1906 and 1913.

working at the Rancho on a multitude of tasks. They are paid nothing for this work. Usually the money they have when they come into jail is depleted in the time they spend there; buying the little extras they want—cigarettes, candy and magazines.

When release day comes at the Rancho, the men are taken to the overcrowded downtown Los Angeles county jail and released. They are given nothing, besides the clothes they wore when they entered.

Captain Bill Baron, the Rancho's Care and Treatment officer, said he was aware of this problem. "We are now trying to work out a program with the State Department of Employment to get some jobs lined up for these men when they get out."

MEDICAL CARE

As to medical care, the Rancho has a small hospital manned by male nurses. No doctor is in attendance, however, and the male nurses are left with the problem of diagnosing illness.

Not very long ago, a man (a convicted pickpocket) became ill at the Rancho. He went to the hospital but was told he was well.

At the next meal, he commented to the man eating next door to him, "I can't eat this stuff."

He was overheard by an officer and taken to the maximum security unit at the Rancho and placed in solitary.

While there, he started spitting up blood. One of the guards, however, reported, "This is an old trick. Lots of men bite their lips and make blood come out so we think they're spitting blood."

A TB CASE

Two days later, however, during another medical examination, it was discovered the man had a very bad case of tuberculosis. He was finally taken 40 miles to the Los Angeles county hospital.

There are a number of narcotic and alcoholic cases at the Rancho. For the narcotics, there is no medical treatment. They just have to "kick the habit."

For them and for the alcoholics "work therapy" is the road to recovery. In addition, for the alcoholics, there are weekly meetings.

Continued on Page 4, Col. 4

L. A. Ranch ---Good, but With Flaws

Continued from Page 1
of Alcoholics Anonymous at the
Rancho.

There are few classes. A teacher from the near-by Newhall High School District makes periodic trips to the Rancho. Some attend these classes.

Most of the men in the Rancho, however, come from urban surroundings. And their experience in milking cows and herding sheep will be of little value on returning to the city after release.

Captain Baron said plans were being made to set up some shops at the Rancho where men could learn a trade useful on the outside, such as carpentry, electricity, or metalwork.

The personnel problem is an acute one.

"Men join the Sheriff's office under the belief they are going to do cops and robbers work," Captain Baron said. "Then they send them out here. They all have to do a year out here. As a result we have a terrific turnover of personnel."

The Rancho officials with whom I talked agreed that such a turnover raises the odds against a successful rehabilitation program.

As for the segregation problem, the Rancho was first set up for first offenders. In recent years, however, the downtown Los Angeles county jail has become increasingly crowded—with the result that first offenders are now in the minority at the Rancho.

Narcotics violators and homosexuals are placed in a separate compound there.

Racial segregation does exist. Negroes, Mexicans, and whites other than Mexicans are housed in separate barracks but work together.

Several months ago, a gray-haired, distinguished man, was released from the Rancho after serving a four-month sentence there.

That man, Walter Wanger, noted and wealthy Hollywood producer, came out with the firm conviction that something should be done about our county jail system.

He told me this about the Rancho:

"I feel that with such a beautiful place, it is a distinct shame that they don't do more with it.

"I found little segregation of offenders at the Rancho. I, as a first offender, was thrown in with professional criminals, psychopaths, alcoholics and epileptics.

"I am not so much concerned about my association with these men as the effect they would have on young, impressionable first offenders.

"Many of these psychopaths and alcoholics should receive proper medical and psychiatric treatment. But many times, the Sheriff's office is unable to get even a doctor to look after the 1100 men at the Rancho.

"The food, for the most part, I found to be good—but poorly prepared.

"I found many outstanding officers running the Rancho—like its superintendent, Captain Ambrose Stewart. But I felt these men were under wraps—that they were being interfered with in their work.

"The attitude of the guards is unnecessarily grim. Unfeeling treatment was an everyday occurrence."

Another thing that shocked Wanger was the fact nothing was done to try and help a man make his way once he got out of jail.

His efforts to organize a group which would work through the Sheriff's office received lip service from county officials. But at the same time he was subjected to severe pressure to forget about the whole thing.

People told him: "Why don't you forget all this stuff. You did your time, now forget about jail."

Continued Tomorrow