

Warren Praises Chronicle Expose of Jails

SACRAMENTO, Jan. 27 (AP)—Governor Earl Warren today called California's county-jail system "a relic of the dark ages."

He described some of the jails as firetraps almost of the dungeon type. He said the Sheriffs should not be blamed for conditions.

Warren was asked at his news conference for comment on reports of "scandalous and dangerous conditions" by Pierre Salinger, San Francisco Chronicle reporter, who had himself locked up in two jails to study their methods of handling criminals.

"I have been reading The Chronicle's series with great interest," Governor Warren declared.

"I believe the articles are most timely and that a disclosure of county jail conditions throughout the State will not only startle people but will be of great benefit to the public in getting the present conditions cleaned up."

"I look forward each day to reading the series," the Governor said.

"It's not the fault of Sheriffs most of the time. They are humane people, who like to do a



Pierre Salinger

good job. But when the jails are firetraps almost of the dungeon type and when the jails must be run by prisoner-trustees, instead of public employees, they are often in no sense to blame.

"I'm hopeful the series will turn the spotlight of public attention on our entire county-jail system, which has become a relic of the dark ages."

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(Salinger, a Chronicle reporter, served "time" in two county jails in California. He

lived as a prisoner with the other prisoners in filthy tanks ruled by "con bosses." He ate the food prisoners eat.

(With the background he learned as a prisoner, Salinger then visited other city and county prisons up and down the State. He talked to officials, learned their problems and points of view.

(His documented articles revealing brutality, filth and public indifference are currently running in The Chronicle.

(Today's installment is in columns 1 and 2.)

Ugly Violence Behind Bars

Reporter Tells How Cellmate Blew His Top

Last year more than 600,000 Californians were locked up in city or county jails. That means just about one out of every 18 men, women and children in the State were behind bars for some time.

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. Today he completes his inside story of four days at the county jail in Stockton—four days with filth and violence behind bars.

By PIERRE SALINGER (Alias Peter Emil Flick)

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There was violence, sudden and ugly, in the San Joaquin County Jail in downtown Stockton on Saturday night. It came without warning.

We had finished our evening meal, a poorly cooked stew, when the cell door opened and a man in his late forties was shoved in the door. He was neatly dressed in a sports jacket and slacks, with a pale green sports shirt.

As soon as the cell door closed behind him, he began to beat on the door's bars with his bare fists. He shouted: "Let me out!" several times. Finally he sat down on the edge of a bunk.

Henry, one of my cellmates, spotted it right away. "He's a squirrel, that one," he said quietly. (A squirrel is prison jargon for a person who is mentally ill.)

London to Australia by Jet—22 Hours

DARWIN, Australia, Jan. 28 (AP)—Britain's record-breaking Canberra jet bomber landed here at 4:07 p. m. today (Wednesday) — only 22 hours and one minute after leaving London.

The previous record for the England-to-Australia flight was 43 hours 23 minutes, set by a four-engine Lancaster.

The man fidgeted, got up and beat on the bars again.

Then he looked up at the ventilator screen on the wall and started a conversation with an imaginary friend.

"DON'T WORRY, MAC"

"They've got me in here, Mac." He paused, and then went on. "I'll be over to see you as soon as I get out." "They don't understand me here, Mac, but I'll be out soon." "No, Mac, they won't let me out right now." "Yes, I'll be there. Don't worry."

The cell door opened and the man made a rush for the exit. The trusty at the door caught him just as he hit the opening. He shoved a meaty hand into the man's chest and pushed him back in the cell. The man leaned with all his might against the cell door and it took all the trusty's strength to get the door closed and locked again.

"The Squirrel" now became increasingly violent. He beat repeatedly on the bars. And he went over to the table where four of the men were playing cards. He picked up one of the makeshift cardboard ash trays and started tearing it to shreds.

"Get away from here, you S.O.B.," Jack, the Tank Judge, told him.

HE BLEW HIS TOP

"Watch out for that man, he's going to blow his top," one of the men told Jack.

And it happened. "The Squirrel" made a rush for Henry. Henry retreated and held him off with his right hand. "Get away from me, old man," Henry warned him. But "The Squirrel" kept coming. Henry finally swung.

You could see the right coming. It came from the floor and caught the man flush on the mouth. He went head over heels onto the floor, hitting his head against a slop bucket.

"The Squirrel" was on his feet.

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The Squalor Behind the Bars

Blow Ends Jail Dispute

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before a fight referee could have counted to five. He started for Henry. But this time, several of the other prisoners grabbed him and held him in. Blood ran from his cut mouth.

The Tank Judge best a tin cup against the bar windows and shouted for a trusty. "Get this madman out of here, he's causing trouble."

A SICK MAN

"He's a sick man, he should be in the hospital," the Swede said in a low voice so the others couldn't hear.

The trusty who came to the door apparently felt the same way. He talked gently to the man. "Come on, old man, we'll send you to the hospital."

The man didn't get to the hospital, however. They threw him in

"The Hole," C Tank, the punishment tank.

"There is a who in there plenty drunk," another trusty told the Tank. "This guy better not give him any trouble or he'll get killed. He was only taking his was crazy. He's in here for checks and the just doesn't show any other way of beating the rap."

Sunday was the same as any other day. Just one more day. Except Sunday is church day.

Four men from the Methodist Evangelical Church of Stockton came into our cell for an hour of singing and preaching. Half the men slept through the entire service. Most of the others were plainly bored.

Tony, my bunkmate, was the most serious about religion. He spent all his spare time reading a Bible.

The four men passed out song books and then asked us to sing with them.

Tony and the old Mexican stood up for the singing. And finally the Burlesque King and Louis joined the group.

SERVICES IN A CELL

They said a prayer and the church services were over. But for several hours afterward, you could hear the religious singing going on in other parts of the jail.

Sunday night dinner was special. While Navy beans in a thick white sauce. Some of the men complained about finding "pebbles" in the beans and spit them out on the cell floor. After dinner, the sweepers accumulated a neat little pile of these "pebbles."

Monday morning came along, the day I was to be released.

The wino was going out too. He had been in six months and he had no money. The county doesn't give him any, either. So the boys look up a little collection and handed him \$1.75 for a start on the outside.

Just before I went out, Adams came back into the cell. He had been in court that morning to get his sentence after a bad check conviction.

"One to 14 years in San Quentin," he told the boys. He picked up his belongings from the bunk. He had a black and gold sport shirt. "Anybody want it? I'll sell it for a buck." There were no takers. A trusty took him out of Tank A to the Felony Tank where



Jail violence—drawn by Chronicle Artist Hubert Buel

he was to be held for transfer to San Quentin.

WORK PARTY

A trusty came in and told Jack: "I want a three-man working party."

"Well, I'm one," said Jack in a hurry. He picked two friends. Almost everybody in the tank wanted to get on the working party, where a prisoner gets three meals a day. And it's something to do—better than sitting around the cell doing nothing.

I was taken down to the booking desk. A trusty gave me back my wallet, \$2 and my watch. Somewhere along the way, the 25-cent, mystery thriller had gone astray.

Then I was let out the pea green side door of the jail onto Channel street in downtown Stockton. I had that jail smell. I was unwashed and dirty. I had slept in the same clothes for four days and for four days I had had no

shower. I had not been able to brush my teeth.

A LONG, LONG TIME

It had been an interminable four days. No four days in my life had ever seemed longer. But I thought of the men doing 60 days, 90 days, a year, two years in that jail. What was being done for them? There was no attempt to rehabilitate, to find them jobs when they got out, to give them any feeling of decency or self-respect.

But in Stockton, as in the case with many of the State's county jails, the men who administer them are the first to recognize the jail's shortcomings.

San Joaquin County Sheriff Carlos Roush has been complaining about his jail for many years. He had a bond issue on the ballot last November in an effort to get a new jail. The voters turned him down.

He gets 14 cents per meal per

man. Not much you can do with that.

In 1952, more than 10,000 men passed through the jail—built in 1870 to hold 75 men. One day last year there were 512 prisoners in the jail.

The overcrowded conditions make it impossible to guard against sex perversion, the introduction of narcotics into jail and other illegal practices.

I had to blink several times in the outside sunlight as I came out of that jail and walked apprehensively down the street. Stockton is known for picking men up right out of jail, charging them with vagrancy and tossing them back in.

As I rode out of Stockton on a Greyhound bus, I felt better.

I had a place to go. I had friends. And I had a job.

But how does a prisoner feel who hasn't any friends? Who has no place to go and no money?

(Continued Tomorrow)