

Sex Fear Among the Cons

Behind Prison Bars -- Homosexual Attackers

Nobody knows how many overt homosexuals there are inside California's prisons — but authorities do admit that homosexuality is a dangerous problem in the society behind walls.

Some prisoners choose homosexuality. But some are forced into it— victims caught between terror of other inmates and the iron code against informers.

Today, Chronicle reporters Tim Findley and Charles Howe explore that dark side of life behind prison walls, part of their candid report on their three months inside prisons.

★ ★ ★

By Tim Findley and Charles Howe

Davey is a short, clerkish 27-year-old from Modesto who two years ago brutally murdered a prostitute.

Quietly efficient and blessed with a good mind and a fair education, he was considered among the best of the inmate office workers at Soledad Prison who chip at the mounds of routine paper work necessary in running an institution.

He was heading back to his cell in "A" wing of the prison after taking a shower one evening about a month ago, when he was suddenly grabbed from behind in a choke hold.

"Get in your cell man," a voice from behind him hissed, "I'm going to f--- you."

Had it not been for a friend living on the same tier who spotted the incident and fought the other man off, Davey would almost certainly have been "turned out" — prison lingo for homosexual rape.

One rescue would not be enough to save Davey, and, in fact, probably aggravated the situation.

The next day, another man approached him in the prison shops.

"We're comin' for you tonight," he warned.

And in the long crowded corridor at Soledad, Davey was approached at one point by four men, including the two who had already threatened him.

At first, Davey simply "locked up" whenever he could. He'd return from his job in the evening and go back to his "house," avoiding the darkened television room and the busy tables at the center of the wing. For almost two weeks, he walked directly to his cell on the third tier and locked himself in, often catching a hostile glance from one or more of the four men who seemed to be waiting for their chance.

He stopped at the drinking fountain in the tier one morning, stooped to drink and straightened up to find himself face to face with one of his tormentors.

"You snitch and we'll take care of you," the



Confinement in close quarters can breed unwanted — and dangerous — intimacy.

man said in an iron voice.

Eventually, Davey knew, the men would catch up with him. One cannot hide for long in prison, and problems cannot simply be left to solve themselves.

He went first to Hairy Max and Freddy, two "bikers" with reputations as toughs — and men who hire out their services. For a "box" — a carton of cigarettes — they agreed to defend him from two of the men. The other two they would not challenge.

Then to Johnson on the second tier, where another box and a half bought him an ugly "shank" honed from a flat piece of metal smuggled in from the welding shop.

Davey was prepared to fight the men if neces-

Prison Fears

Sex Attackers Hide Behind Code of Silence

From Page 1

sary, and he knew that if he did it he would probably have to kill at least one of them.

For Davey, however, the dilemma was only deepening. A first timer with no prior arrests on his record, Davey could expect to do at least seven years for the murder, but if the officers caught him fighting, he would likely be sent to "the hole," where the deadly code against snitching would follow him even more tightly.

The beef itself for violence would probably be read by the Adult Authority as a reason for giving him more time in prison, and he could be prosecuted for a second crime of assault while in prison — meaning perhaps life behind bars.

The strain ate at Davey constantly. Three days after he bought the shank, he slid it out on the tier where authorities could find it. Davey feared they would soon search his cell and find it in there.

His monthly phone call home came up two days after that. It is one of those maddening paradoxes of prison that inmate mail is read and censored by officers, yet the telephone calls — allowed in some prisons such as Soledad — are not monitored.

Davey told his mother he thought he was about to be killed.

The next day, he was called in to see his counselor on the pretext that he was being considered for a job transfer.

"I been here long enough to know you don't talk to you guys (staff) even casually, let alone about something like this," he told his counselor.

"I'm scared. Anybody in here who isn't scared as hell is crazy or lying."

Arrangements were made to transfer Davey to another institution where it was hoped — but not promised — that his problem would not follow him, and Davey went back to his cell to wait the three days until the bus arrived, shutting his door and locking it against the dangers of another night.

Shakedown

Take the case of Ford.

Ford was one of the prison's overt homosexuals and correctional officers discovered during a routine shakedown that Joe the Goon wanted to kill him.

They stopped Ford, a burglar in his late 20s who has plucked eyebrows and, for a white man, an incredible accent that is the patois of the ghetto black, with a soupcon of New Orleans Irish.

When Ford spread his arms the officer frisking him felt hard padding hidden beneath his shirt, all around the man's chest, ribs and kidneys.

Ford started to weep.

"Joe's got a contract out on me," he sobbed. "They're going to kill me. I couldn't come to you—I didn't want to be called a snitch. Please, please do something."



Cell walls reflect their tenants' tastes, one for a topless blonde, another for Gaïnsborough's satin-clad "Blue Boy."

They took Ford to protective custody and locked him in a tier where men whose lives are in danger are kept. Later, they transferred him to another institution.

Chronicle reporters sat in on Ford's disciplinary hearing while a group of counselors and correctional officers decided what was to be done with him.

Magazine

Sometimes close to tears, Ford described why he has been wearing lengths of magazine wrapped across his torso, an inmate technique used to blunt the thrust of a knife.

"I don't want to be nobody's old lady anymore. I just want to do my time... I was scared to come out of my cell... I'd been Joe the Goon's old lady, and then he got mad at me and started peddling my ass around the yard... I didn't know how to get out of it..."

There is no accurate count of how many men in the California inmate population are overt homosexuals, nor do officials have any idea of how many men, deprived of women, are forced to engage in homosexual practices.

Youthful inmates are always a target of "old

jockers," or aggressive masculine prisoners, and the Department of Corrections has separate facilities for younger men.

No inmate under 26 years of age, for example, can be transferred to Folsom Prison, where the State's older and more intractable offenders are housed, without the express permission of corrections Director Raymond Procunier.

Dozens of other men — aggressive homosexuals who have been adjudged a danger and who have been involved in knifings and killings — are housed in adjustment centers, on permanent lockup.

Car Thief

At an Adult Authority meeting at San Quentin recently, two board members quickly arranged for the transfer of a 24-year-old inmate, a twice-convicted car thief.

The inmate had been involved in repeated fights since he had arrived at the prison two months earlier, but he refused to explain why.

"He's a nice looking kid," one board member said after the youth left the room. "Sure as hell some old jocker is trying to make a punk out of him and he's acting out; acting tough in order to gain a

reputation that he thinks will make them leave him alone."

The problem of homosexuality within a prison is always a serious one, officials say.

"A lot of your fights and stabbings are the result of homosexual triangles," one officer told us. "In here, they fight over punks just like men on the outside fight over women."

"Hell, you can't blame them too much. How would you like to go without sexual contact for five or ten years?"

California is one of the few States in the Nation to have a program of conjugal visits. At three institutions — Soledad, Tehachapi and the California Rehabilitation Center for Men near Corona — selected inmates may spend weekends with their wives and families. A conjugal visiting plan will be put into effect at San Quentin this year.

Procunier spoke recently of legislation that will take effect January 1, 1972.

"It will let me send anybody home on a pass," he said, "regardless of how much time they're facing."

Tomorrow: Racial Troubles—the Nazis and the Muslims.