The Odestar

MEMBER
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SUMMER 67

BEAVER CREEK CORRECTIONAL CAMP
P.O.BOX 1240
GRAVENHURST - ONTARIO
CANADA

THE LODESTAR

Published by and for the inmates of Beaver Creek Correctional Camp, with the permission of Mr. A.J. Mc Leod Q.C., Commissioner of Penitentiaries, and through the courtesy of Mr.C.W. Chitty, Superintendent.

The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the camp administration.

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THE COVER

The LODESTAR takes on a new look this issue. Our new Editor, Jim Law, wants sophistication and news rolled into one attractive and readible magazine. So here it is - if you notice the change - if you like it - let us know!

PASS THE LODESTAR TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

THE LODESTAR IS A MEMBER OF THE PENAL PRESS EXCHANGE

"A man must have experience and training before he can be qualified in almost any position."

Ed's Note: Work release will provide the training and the experience, qualification being the ultimate benefit to prisoner and society alike. If we may coin a phrase: "Let us 'pre-re' and see."

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CONS FIGHT FOREST FIRES

by Ram

The Spring of 1967 saw an interesting turn of events at Beaver Creek. During the past few years, the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, in conjunction with neighbouring "Minicipalities," has been calling upon volunteers at this camp from time to time, to assist in the control of forest fires in the surrounding area. The training offered, however, was usually perfunctory, lasted no longer than the better part of a day and took place at the camp where a few films were shown, tools described and a little field-work arranged. The latter consisted of various methods of trenching and the use of the shovel and back-pack. It goes without saying, however, that our men enjoyed lending their services.

Time off from work, a little travelling along the highways and byways of Ontario, excellent feeding, an honorarium of $1.00 per hour (tax free) and the satisfaction of accomplishing useful tasks, all of these are very acceptable at any time.

This Spring, the Department, through its local corps of rangers, apparently decided that with a bit more organization, our inmates might become of greater use in the field. As a result volunteers in groups of 10 were moved out to Lands and Forests Headquarters north of Bracebridge. There, in almost luxurious surroundings, lectures were given to begin the formation of "pump-gangs" and to instruct in handling, placing and maintaining pumps, laying of hose and general setting up - so that gangs might act autonomously when called upon. In this way, it is felt, the contribution of Beaver Creek personnel to local fire fighting services would increase, our gangs would be called upon more frequently and the results would be more effective.

The inmates of Beaver Creek Camp appreciate the confidence placed in them by the Department as well as by the Camp authorities. They can hardly long for forest fires to break out but, it must be admitted, the new hourly rate of $1.50 and the amenities offered, do lead to wishful thinking! The boys at the "Creek" could be asked to do more of this type of useful work, besides, they dont believe a bear does the whole job alone.

- - -

Ed's Note: On May 18, 1967, a caucus of fire fighters - which included members from the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Wyoming State Forestry Division and 18 potential smoke eaters from the inmate body of the Wyoming State Penitentiary- assembled in Rawlins, Wyoming to plan tactics for the forthcoming fire season. This event marks a milestone in Wyoming penal history and points up a growing spirit of cooperation between inmates and non-prisoners.

ALWAYS REMEMBER - ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES.

EDITORIAL:

"AND SO TO WORK"

Throughout federal and state penal institutions in the United States of America, new emphasis has been placed on the value of work-release programmes. Work-release is "real rehabilitation" in that it provides the basis for a more sensible and productive system of changing the social offender into a worthwhile citizen.

The rising rate of crime and recidivism in Canada has filled our penitentiaries to capacity, with the result that millions of tax dollars have been consigned to the construction of more prisons. In addition to this tax burden, the citizen of Canada must also bear the cost of maintaining the dependents of of our prison population.

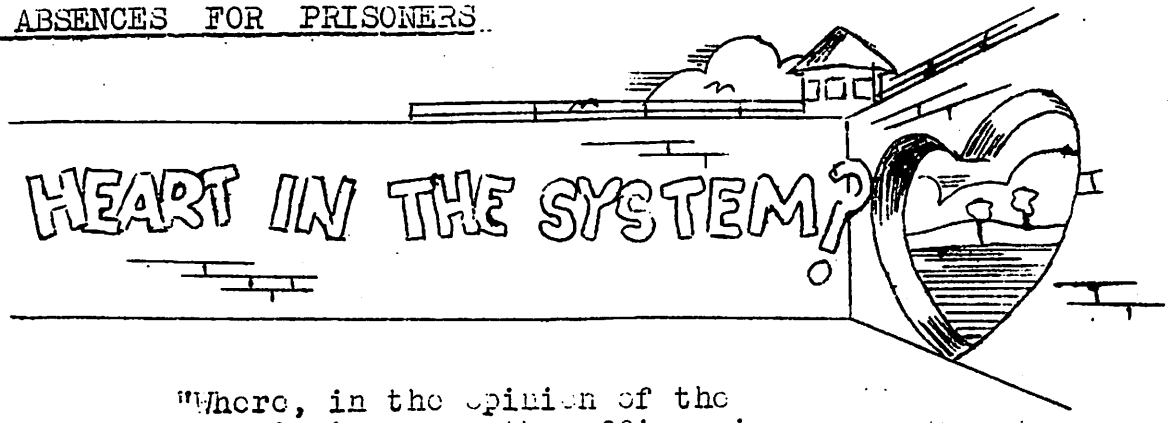
If the offender could be returned to society as a useful and productive member, this expense might be justified, but too often we find men within the prison walls who are serving a second, third and fourth sentence. Is this not adequate reason to take a good look at the rehabilitation systems within the prisons, and to study, conscientiously, the merits of a sensible work-release programme?

In the interest of society and the prisoner, the establishment of a sound work-release programme must be considered and made law.

Under our present system, an offender is quickly removed from society, forced to live an unnatural and unproductive life for several years, then, on his return to the ranks of society, expected to simply pick up where he left off. Why not utilize the progress and experience of the United States as guide posts for the development of a work-release system permitting the prisoner to live and work, to a restricted degree; seek employment in that field for which he is qualified or trained, and contribute to the support of his family. To quote Mr. Harold Winch, M.P., " I sincerely hope that the government will look into such things as the policy of work-release which has been followed in the last 20 months in the United States. They are convinced that if a man has become rehabilitated, he is fit for society." end quote. Amen!

"AN INDEED THOUGHT"

TEMPORARY ABSENCES FOR PRISONERS



"Where, in the opinion of the Commissioner or the officer in charge of a penitentiary, it is necessary or desirable that an inmate should be absent, with or without escort, for medical or humanitarian reasons or to assist in the rehabilitation of the inmate, the absence may be authorized from time to time ..."

- Section 26
Canadian Penitentiary Act

Under this law, it has been possible to permit inmates to leave our federal prisons for the purpose of attending funerals, for special medical attention, or to take specialized training for future employment. Some men have attended university classes, others have become qualified X-ray technicians. Only a few men have been allowed out of prison for training purposes, and most of these have been under escort.

In recent months, however, there has been a decided upsurge in the number of men permitted to leave this minimum security camp for humanitarian reasons. They have all gone out unescorted, and there have been no abuses of this very special privilege. In most cases the reason for the inmate's temporary absence has been a death or serious illness in the family, and the absences have been for periods of about 18 hours. The effect of these absences on the men who received the privilege, and also on the other men in the camp, has been a tremendous morale booster.

One of the most psychologically punishing -- and damaging -- aspects of being in a prison is that you are totally helpless if a loved one is in trouble or seriously ill. It hurts to see a wife or child, a mother or father, needing your comfort and to know that through your own actions you have deprived them of that comfort. And when the authorities, upon learning of the crisis, tell you that you may travel home to see them, unescorted and immediately, there is great relief and gratitude.

To the credit of our Superintendent, Mr. C.W. Chitty, and Warden J. Meers of our parent Institution, there have been few delays and very little red tape. When an emergency has arisen, they have usually had the inmate concerned on his way within a few hours of hearing of the problem.

The first inmate to leave this camp unescorted (last Fall) was allowed the privilege in order to at-

SPOTLIGHT CORNER

This issue the Spotlight is on Chester -- Gee Whiz -- Gwizd. ("G", not "Q", he insists.)

Chester is probably the most active man in camp, both at work and at play. Carpenter Shop Instructor Jack Pierre refers to him as his right hand and Chester is always on the go in the shop. Mr. Pierre works right alongside our Whiz and when Mr. Pierre tires, Chester keeps right on going. He simply switches from shop work to hobbycraft, which is really why Mr. Pierre stays so close to him.

-II-

At least 37 years old, Toronto-born Chester has had no difficulty adjusting to life in Canada's northern wilderness. (Billed as Playland Ontario by the local Chamber of Commerce, but wilderness to a boy from Niagara Street!) Chester is very active in A.A. programs, he refereed in the last part of our hockey schedule and was doing a fine job as Umpire-in-Chief of our baseball league until all the players decided that they'd rather umpire their own games this year. Chester always has a ready smile on his face and he's one of the few around here who doesn't lose his smile when he's asked to help out in some activity. The Whiz is a hustler and always ready to pitch in where he's needed. (He's even helping on this issue of The Lodestar: the sport pages are his domain.)

Not due for release until 1971, Chester has hopes of a parole before that time. Married and with five children, he works as a gyproc and siding installer and has over 15 years experience in that line. Chester says that he works a lot of overtime to make his money, and judging from the energy he displays here, we believe it! Good luck with the parole, Chester, and thanks for being "good people" while you're here.

-II-

Poetry

by
J. Austin Law

The gaity and excitement of Canada's Centennial celebration has never shadowed the death of the most outstanding of modern poets - John Masefield.

Masefield's poetry was taken directly from life as he saw it. He was a poet of the ordinary and commonplace as well as the common man. It may be said that he was a poet of truth; writing of the evil and ugly in life exactly as he had seen and experienced it. He concealed nothing, nor did he dress-up or falsify the less appealing facets of life.

He was convinced that the evil and ugly in life affected every living and thinking man, regardless of his station in life. He became dedicated to the task of finding beauty, and in his search, found courage, loyalty, devotion and heroism among the lowly and the humble. He possessed deep admiration and respect for the poor, and sincere tenderness and compassion for the weak and downtrodden. His work radiated his admiration and pity, for example: "A Consecration," consecrates his life and work to the underdog. "The Wild Duck," reflects, most effectively, his compassion for all caged things, whether human or other.

John Masefield was truly the most prolific of the modern poets. He possessed a sensative soul, aware of the world's ugliness and suffering. He faced life squarely and never relinquished his faith. The world has surely been gifted with the beauty of his prose and the sharing of his most cherished experiences.

BEAUTY
by
John Masefield

I have seen dawn and sunset on moors and windy hills
Coming in solemn beauty like slow old tunes of Spain:
I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils,
Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm April
rain.

I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant
of the sea,
And seen strange lands from under the arched white sails
of ships;
But the loveliest things of beauty God has shewed to me
Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and the dear red
curve of her lips.

- - -

LIKE Laff

A man was consulting a psychiatrist.

"What's your problem?" asked the doctor.

"I'm worried, doctor. I've got into the habit of making long distance calls to myself and it's costing me more than I can afford."

"Hmmmm," mused the medico. "Why not reverse the charges?"

- - -

Two Hollywood producers looking for talent, sat in the front row watching the star of a Las Vegas show.

"I wonder who made her dress?" the first asked.

"It's hard to say," the second replied, "probably the police."

- - -

PROPOSALS:

Country Boy: "Let's get hitched"
City Boy: "Let's get married."
College Boy: "Your what!"

- - -

A woman tourist in Ontario came to a fork in the road where signs to Gravenhurst pointed both ways. She called to a native who was standing nearby:

"Does it matter which road I take to Gravenhurst?"

"Not to me," he replied.

- - -

A farmer on his first visit to Toronto was fascinated by the asphalt streets. Scraping his feet on the hard surface, he remarked: "Well, I cant blame them for building a city here. The ground's too damn hard to plow, anyway."

A young married couple bought a second-hand parrot, but all he would say was: "Let's neck."

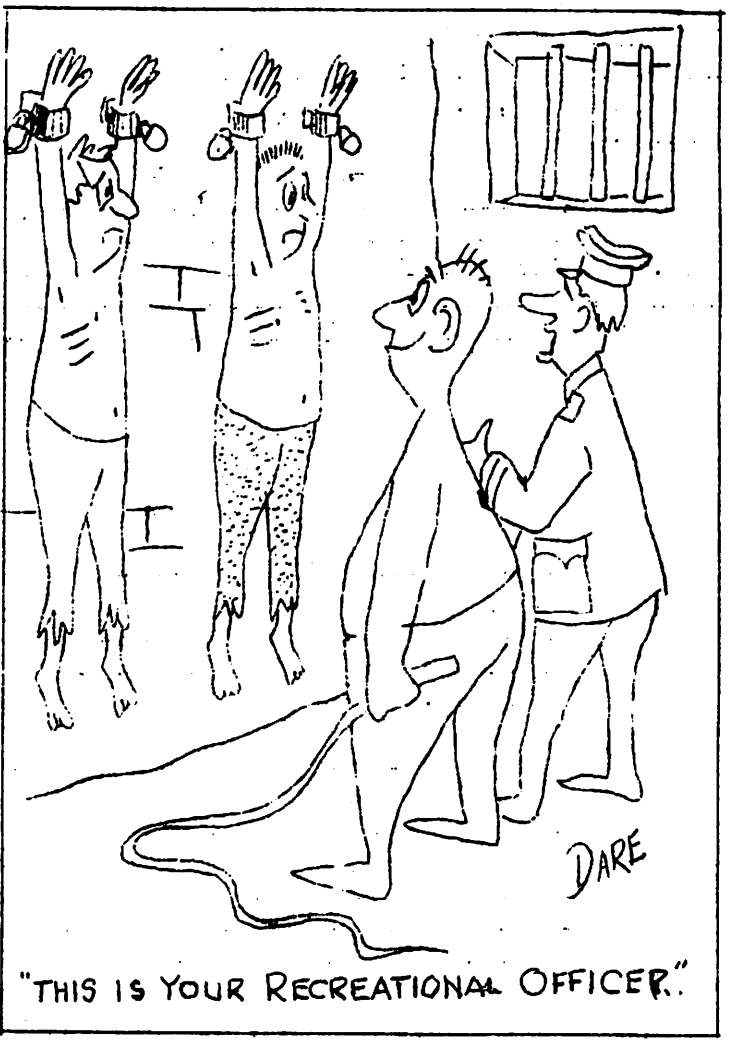
A preacher, who heard about it, suggested that they put his bird, who always said: "Let's pray," in the cage with the delinquent bird, and maybe it could teach the other the more uplifting phrase.

When the birds were put together, the couple's bird began to shout: "Let's neck!" as usual, whereupon the preacher's bird replied, "My prayers have been answered!"

- - -

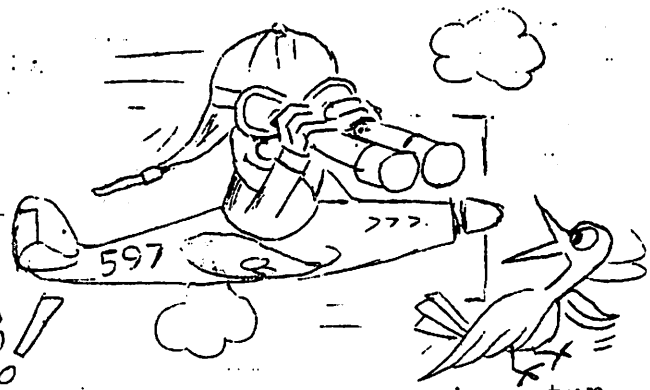
Jim: "You say your father was a land baron up in the North?"

John: "He sure was. He owned the most barren piece of land in the province."



"THIS IS YOUR RECREATIONAL OFFICER."

"BIRD" WATCHING!



With Muskoka Airport forming the northern boundary of this camp, it is not surprising that many of the inmates here have become expert bird watchers -- particularly when it comes to identification.

This expertise was recently attested to when one of the RCAF's Red Knights put on an aerobatic display over the southern end of the runway -- and right over our heads. It was a tremendous display of skill and nerve and the pass over the airport was made at an altitude of about 25 feet, upside down! This was followed by a vertical climb until a stall was achieved, and then a straight down dive that carried so close to the ground that most of us turned away to avoid the crash that fortunately didn't materialize.

Guesses as to the type of aircraft being flown with such finesse ranged from Banshees to Vedees, but the argument was finally settled by "Pud" Davidson who said it was a T33 and to prove it he brought forth witnesses who had heard the airport controller calling the jet. Pud's radio will, by some quirk, often bring in the local air control signals.

Nevertheless, many inmates spend a considerable amount of time watching the comings and goings of the aircraft at this busy summer strip. Small executive jets come in dozens of times each week and in enough variety to keep the experts in constant argument. Lears, DH125s, Falcons, Caribou, Hercules and even a stray RCAF Argus have all made stops at Muskoka this summer. The bulk of the air traffic, however, consists of light aircraft, some from the local flying club.

Interest in flying is naturally stimulated by this activity and there also seems to be something about an aircraft in free flight that suggests an ultimate freedom, which also appeals very strongly to inmates. Many men here have stated that they would like to take flying lessons when released. A few have been bold enough to wonder if it might not be possible to take lessons now -- at their own expense, of course.

A radical idea at first. But is it really so wild? The federal government has an active program to encourage young men to learn to fly and provides a bonus of $100 to every person under 33 years of age who obtains his private pilot's license. Canada, with its vast lands, needs pilots now and the need will continue to grow. Most inmates at this camp would qualify for the bonus so their instruction costs would be about $150 if they were to be allowed this training.

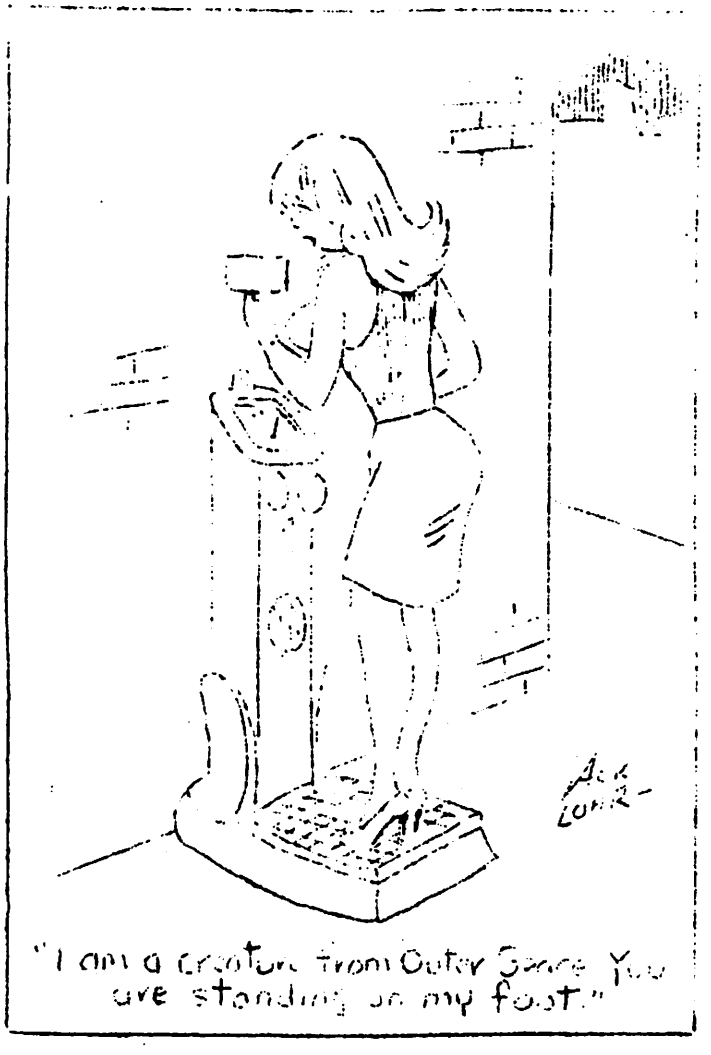
No institution in Canada has ever allowed its inmates to learn to fly so far as we can determine, but at least two similar camps in the United States do. Florida and California both allow inmates to take flying instruction. Jack Nancy, writing in The Nugget, publication of the Sierra Conservation Center, puts it this way: "Don't get excited, Mr. Taxpayer, prisoners are not allowed to fly airplanes over the countryside at state expense. If they want to fly, they've got to do it with their own dough, and that ain't easy."

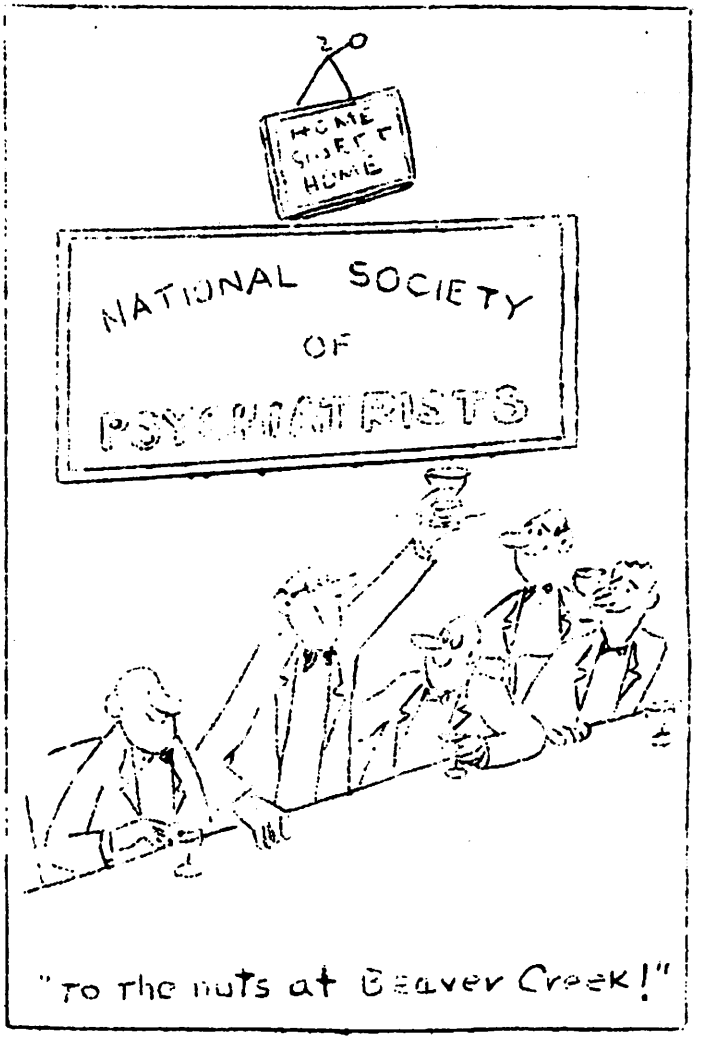
Eight inmates at that California minimum security unit took an 18-week course and successfully passed the FAA examinations.

Flying instruction is training. Being able to pilot an aircraft will become an increasingly useful skill in our society. Bill Sands, author of My Shadow Ran Fast, also claims that the excitement of flying can be used as a replacement for the excitement of crime for youthful offenders. Bill may have a point. An ex-con who is now an extremely successful businessman, Bill is also actively engaged in prisoner rehabilitation societies and particularly with juvenile delinquents.

One thing is sure: flying instruction can do no harm. Being able to pilot a plane is not a skill that can be perverted to any criminal activity. No security risk is involved with inmates at this prison -- we wouldn't be here if we were liable to escape.

Who knows, we may even start a few men on their way to commercial pilot's licenses and a career in flying. Certainly the desire is here. Like in the twenty-four year old who watched a jet take off the other day, turned to a group of equally envious inmates and said: "I'd give my left hand to be able to do that."





NEWS LINE

by Herman S.

The Sixth Anniversary meeting of the Beaver Creek AA Group was held at the camp on Saturday June 10th., 1967, in the evening. The lounge was filled to capacity, with well over a hundred local members, outside members, relatives of members and invited guests, being present. The large number of members and friends who travelled from as far as Toronto, Hamilton, Kingston and Ottawa to share with, and to support our group, was most gratifying. One of the warmest aspects of all AA groups, is the completely unselfish dedication of the individual to the group.

The well organized program, arranged by our inmate Chairman, Bert G., was smoothly put into operation by so many of our members who either assisted behinmd the scenes or who were actually "on stage." Space does not permit the number of verbal bouquets which could so justifiably be presented. Suffice it to say that the AA team certainly rated HIGH for performance.

Guest speakers for the evening were: Pappy and Pat M., a husband and wife team from Toronto, Ontario. They both spke at length on their individual problems with alcohol. Both speakers had suffered "the slings and arrows" of penal institutions and could certainly speak from personal experience attuned to all of us here at the camp. It would be impossible to ignore what AA has done for this couple who have experienced the full gamut of emotion, from the depths of despair to a strong sense of security and serenity. Proof positive that AA really does work for those who are really sincere.

Our G.S.R., Hughie D., expressed thanks to the speakers, and gifts of appreciation were presented on behalf of the entire group. One of particular interest being a hand-carved wood plaque commemorating the anniversary and presented to Pappy and Pat M. The plaque was carved by Jim Law.

Due to his very close association with this group, over the past six years, Father Thistle was asked to speak. He indicated his pleasure in this lengthy friendship and commented briefly on the spiritual side of the program. Father Thistle holds an AA medallion as an honorary member.

First year medallions were presented to Lot L., Chester G., and John H. Fred C., also earned his medallion.

When called upon for a few words, our camp Superintendent, Mr.C.W. Chitty, was kind enough to pay high tribute to the entire group for its rehabilitation work here at the camp. He also indicated that in his opinion, his praise was merited, as there had never been a single problem between the group and the administration officers since the group had been formed. He also stated that the group has his trust and respect.

The anniversary meeting concluded with the singing of the Lord's prayer by Harry Brown. Following the meeting an excellent buffet luncheon and commemorative cake were enjoyed by all. Entertainment was provided by the camp musical combo, a fitting climax to a delightful evening which was shared by so many from many walks of life.

CENTENNIAL GIFT TO LEGION

Undeterred by the fact that Prime Minister Pearson's promise that Centennial Year would hold something for every Canadian - except prisoners - Jim Law, chairman of our Committee, and Mr. Jack Pierre, Carpenter Shop Instructor, came up with an idea for a camp Centennial Project.

The idea: a hand-carved wood mural depicting the D-Day Invasion of Normandy which would be presented to the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. The idea had special appeal to both Law and Mr. Pierre as they are both veterand and it is hoped that the project might arouse the interest of the Legion Executive in their former comrades who have gone astray and landed in various institutions.

The mural was crafted in the industrial carpenter shop under the supervision of Mr. Pierre. While many men had a hand in the preparation and finishing of the wood, the bulk of the credit for the fine mural must go to Jim Law. Jim worked over 200 hours and personally carved every inch of the 4 feet by 8 feet cedar mural, which is also two inches in depth. Completed on July 13th., the mural is presently on display in our lounge where it has been admired by persons visiting the camp lately. The scene is that of the Canadian Forces landing at Juno Beach in landing craft, and assault boats, with the beach in the foreground and the supporting navy and airforce in the background. The title of the mural was borrowed from Cornelius Ryan: The Longest Day.

Mr. McNaughton, president of Legion Branch 302, Gravenhurst, will officially receive the mural on August 5th., 1967. It is also hoped that the Legion's National President will be on hand that day as well as Legion Executives from various points in Ontario. It is our understanding that several other dignitaries have been invited and our Superintendent, Mr.C.W. Chitty, feels that as we missed out on amnesty this year, the presentation ceremonies should be a "bang-up do" to celebrate Canada's Centennial Year.

We are aware of only one other Centennial Project being carried out by a Canadian Institution. Dorchester Penitentiary produced a book of Canadian Ships.

PENAL PRESS LETTERS TO THE Editor

PONTIAC FLAG NEWS, Pontiac, Ill.
Excellent production - especially enjoy Bracken's "The Sound of Music." Good thought provoking material - the real purpose of the Penal Press.

THE EYE OPENER, McAlester, Okla.
A favourite publication. Editor Tuggle's articles and those of Jim Moore thoroughly enjoyed.

SAGEBRUSH, Nevada State Pen.
A good magazine. "A Lifer Speaks," (June issue) by Jack Loughton rates three stars. Keep this type of material coming Jack!

BEST SCENE, Rawlins, Wyoming.
"Here Today - Here Tomorrow," (June Issue) by Tom Blackledge strikes a familiar note. Seems like starting all over again. Welcome to the club Tom!

THE NUGGET, Jamestown, Cal.
Good format follows - how about letting us in on the secret of your typing column technique. Seems we can't get parallel column edges with any degree of evenness.

TO ALL PENAL PRESS MEMBERS:
We require plans for the manufacture of a bass viol. If any of the exchange readers can furnish us with this material it would be sincerely appreciated. They may be forwarded to The Editor, The Lodestar, P.O.Box 1240, Gravenhurst, Ontario, Canada.

K.P.TELESCOPE, Kingston, Ont.
Sorry to see Canada's top prison publication demoted to mimeo. Another step backward.

March 17,1967

The Editor,
Lodestar,
Box 1240, Gravenhurst,
Ont.

Dear Sir:

We, the Seven Keys to Freedom Club, are asking to be added to your mailing list.

Our club here publish a monthly bulletin called "Key Notes" and would be more than happy to add you to our list.

Hoping to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

James W. Shores
Administrative Ass't.,
7 KEYS TO FREEDOM

Ed's Note: Seven Keys to Freedom has been added to our mailing list. We are looking forward to receiving "Key Notes."

- - -

June 6 , 1967

The Editor,
P.O.Box 1240,
Gravenhurst, Ont.

Dear Sir:

On behalf of the "Londonaires," as leader, I would like to say thank you very much and also that our week-end was a very happy and exciting one.

The "Londonaires" appreciated everything done for us on May 20. The boys and myself would be thrilled if we were asked to play for the camp again.

Your camp musical group are good and have a good sound.

Garry Wilson