

Exchange Between Matrons And Inmates Can Be Helpful

BY TOM HONIG
Sentinel Staff Writer

Images can be cruel oversimplifications. The mental pictures conjured up by the terms "hippies," "rednecks," "old geezers" and "women's libbers" can be as degrading as they are inaccurate.

Yet those images are nothing compared to the popular idea of how women prisoners and their guards look and act. The average matron, for example, is not a mean and massive woman who chews gum and twirls a ring of keys on her forefinger.

SC Honors Volunteers

A big "thank you" was said by the City of Santa Cruz Thursday night to the dozens of men and women who donate countless hours on the city's various boards and commissions.

The "thank you" was said with words and a toothsome buffet at DeLaveaga Golf Lodge, in keeping with the city's tradition of honoring its volunteer officials with a year's end party and salute.

Certificates for meritorious service were given out by Mayor Vernon Smith and other city council members to eight citizens who have completed eight years of service each to benefit the community.

But Smith made it clear that the city council and city administration has a particular admiration for all the men and women who help to keep the good things going in the city every day of the year.

Smith said: "This is one of the fun functions of the year, when we all get together to thank the members of the boards and commissions for their dedicated service."

Certificate awards were han-

Nor are the majority of women prisoners prostitutes or lesbians (or both.)

"The time I've spent in jail has only strengthened my belief in God," a woman prisoner said last week while waiting for court to commence. A short, thin, and very attractive young woman, she was about to plead guilty to a

lesser charge than the one with which she had originally been charged. Still, she was about to be convicted of a felony and a stretch of prison time was in her immediate future.

"When I first came in (to jail,) I was so shaken up that I didn't know what I was doing. I'm doing better now, though."

A sheriff's matron was sitting next to her. "You are," she agreed, and then added good-humoredly, "Now you're the mother to everybody back there."

Sharron Brady, the matron, is a distinctive looking woman in her 20s. Her short light hair, her striking features and her clean good looks would prevent her from winning a role in a movie as a prison matron.

As the two ladies talk, they

look like any two friends taking the time to sit and chat. Except the two of them are better looking than most women.

Later, at the Santa Cruz County jail library, a three - by - 10 foot room on the third floor of the sheriff's department headquarters on Front Street, the woman prisoner, now dressed in the standard jeans and sweatshirt prison outfit, discussed her fellow prisoners and the matrons.

"When you first come in, you don't trust the matrons at all. After a while, you find out some of them are really concerned about you as an individual."

Some, however, aren't concerned.

"We have one who feels we're lucky to be sleeping on a mattress when we could be sleeping on dirt. All she wants us to do is sit and think about the bad things we've done to the State of California."

Just as all people are different, all matrons are different and the women inmates are fond of some of their guards.

"Sharron is more our age than the others, and with her, you can just be yourself. She comes back and we tell her our problems and she tells us hers."

Talking about the women inmates is a pet subject of Mrs. Brady's. There are usually between eight and 12 women in the jail. (There are accommodations for six — late entries must sleep on mattresses placed on the floor.)

"Often it's like a family or a kinship — even including the matron," Mrs. Brady commented. "When one of the girls has a problem and doesn't want the others to know, often she'll ask for my opinion."

Mrs. Brady has a collection of letters sent to her by former Santa Cruz prison inmates. "I have one from a girl telling me how hard it is to stay off drugs. She wants to stay straight, but she says there are so many drugs available in CRC that she writes to me for moral support."

CRC is the California Rehabilitation Center, which was established to help convic-

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toilet is this far from your face when you lay in your bunk?" she said, holding her hands at shoulder width.

"It's cramped, it's overcrowded and it can just get filthy when women come in with bugs. They get in our hair and our clothes — everything."

That's not to say the women don't get along with each other. "You have to get along. You get along with girls whom you'd never have for friends if you worked with them or something. I like just about all of them."

Her face brightened as she related how she started a Bible study class in the jail every Wednesday night. She's anticipating when the class might go to two nights a week.

"When I first came in here, I didn't know what I was doing. But God has helped me — I know He has. Now I'm 'tank mama' in here."

She had never been in trouble before her current difficulty. Getting a job when she gets out is a major concern. Ideally, she'd like to work with people in trouble. "You never know when it can happen to you — and it can happen to anybody."

"We need more people in the probation department who have been in jail and been in the filth. They just can't know how you feel."

Leaving the library and on her way back to her cell, she commented, "Little things become so important." And as the door was closing behind her, she added in humor, "Do you think you could bring me a steak?"



Sharron Brady, a matron with the Santa Cruz Sheriff's Depart-

ment, visits with a woman inmate in the county jail.

County Issues Permits

Santa Cruz County issued building permits with a total valuation of \$313,050 during the week ended Nov. 23.

Those valued at more than \$20,000 include a \$28,100 two-story home for D.W. Singer on Alta Drive, La Selva Beach; a \$29,200 two-story home for C.B. Shapero on Ridge Road, Los Gatos; a \$22,700 two-story house for Ted Peirce on Japanese Road.

A \$37,700 two-story home for Manny Rannals off Amesti Road, Watsonville; a two-story home for Andrew Barr at 605 Middlefield Drive, Aptos; a \$47,200 one-story house for Hank Shimpler off Mt. Madonna Road, Watsonville; a \$31,000 one-story home for Michael Evans at 665 Ranchitos del Sol, Aptos.

Election Reform

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