

**A LOOK INTO THE  
"FAR SIDE" OF PRISON**

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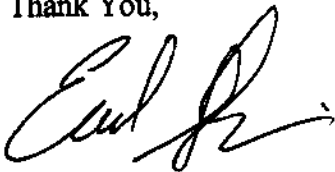
Please, can you guys help us?

Enclosed you will find a collection of short stories / poems written by my brother, Edward S. Slavin. He is an inmate at Menard Correctional Center, Menard Illinois. Edward asked me his brother, to send his work to you in hopes that you would put it on your web site.

I am including two SASE (self addressed stamped envelopes). One for me, and one for my brother, I did all the typing and as such if there are any problems, I would be the one to contact. Please use the other to notify my brother as # 4 spells out in your "submission guidelines" page on your web site.

Please, this means a lot to Edward. So if there are any issues preventing publication, please let me know.

Thank You,



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## **INTRODUCTION**

I offer my eclectic, sarcastic and peculiar view of life in an Illinois Maximum security prison. Each article is a concise slice of prison life the public knows nothing about. I poke, jab and otherwise aim at the strangeness of it all, kind of like a "Far Side" comic only in words. So join me in the bazaar and costly world that is the Illinois Department of Corrections.

## **WAXED PRISON FLOORS**

I was amazed at such dedication and fierce devotion to something inane as a prison floor.

## **HOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE**

During the presidential debates between Obama and McCain my colleagues demonstrated superior problem solving skills.

## **YEAH WHAT HE SAID**

I was working in the employee kitchen at the time these words were spoke. The guys are especially fluent in urban language techniques.

## **CONTROL GONE WILD**

We do get searched going to yard; mostly it's a simple pat down. I heavily puffed up this one just for the entertainment value.

## **PROJECTS**

My cellmate described his growing up in the housing projects of Chicago. I found our early lives were completely opposite.

## **RELIGIOUS SHOPPING**

I never heard of so many religions until I got to prison. It seems as though you could make up anything you wished. I made a prediction for an event far into the future.

**WHO ARE WE**

The fellas in this are real. For the most part prisoners talk about prison life, getting out and what we left behind.

**BLOODY OIL**

I wrote this as gas prices were skyrocketing.

**PRISON TOILETS**

Absolutely amazing, I've never seen such violent and powerful machine as these toilets.

**COMPRESSION**

This is pure insanity! Yelling in the shower is an Olympic event and these guys gold medalist. What's astonishing is after the shower they lock up as quietly as mice.

**DEATH PENALTY**

I had a cellmate who was on Death Row for shooting a Chicago Policeman in a gun fight. Governor Ryan commuted all Death Row prisoners to Natural Life.

**WHAT ARE THE ODDS**

This fella does exist, his name is J.J. and he's my true friend. He's a living breathing mathematical computer. He's unbelievably sharp at detecting numerical trends, seeing ratios and charting statistics.

**SOBRIQUET SAY WHAT**

Nick – names in here are amazing and the guys remain firm on using them. Yet when staff calls out their real names they say nothing. The last paragraph actually happened as I described.

**AGAIN**

To the prison lock down is the only form of control and punishment they know. When your only tool is a hammer then everything looks like a nail.

**PEACE ON EARTH**

I'm a little snarky here, as I equate World Peace to dollars and cents.

**GOODWILL TOWARDS MEN**

I wrote this when I heard of a new term called "racial profiling" as it related to the Travyon Martin killing.

**BATTLEFIELD**

I work in the prisoner kitchen and all of this occurs. I did however take liberties with the adjectives, hope you like it.

**K.I.S.S**

I am obsessed with simplicity, all my writings are concise. Yet, I see the world becoming far more complex with each generation.

**CONSIDER THIS**

I was angry when I wrote this. It's sarcastic, snide and very pointed.

**TIMES UP**

To the outside world prisoners have all the time in the world. I count time by the seasons while the years pile up.

**THE GREAT STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Politics and money go hand in hand. Follow the money and you will always find the real reason for all decisions.

## WAXED PRISON FLOORS

Floors have two main functions, walking on them and dropping things on them. Maintaining a floor is easy requiring only logic, reasonable thinking and a little effort. However, sustaining a waxed prison floor is governed by sheer stupidity, unless traditions and just plain idiotic behavior. Here are two legendary policies the average floor moron swears by:

1. Mopping with ice water, this is to preserve the molecular structure of the wax – **WHAT!** These imbeciles can't even spell the words yet blindly follow this path. Pity the fools trying to remove spilled food the following morning with ice water. A prison floor wax is designed to withstand a riot so, get real, warm water won't injure the atoms.

2. Stripping a waxed floor is the most useless and laborious task imaginable. Extremely time consuming, consistently under estimated, often needing an extra day to complete and a guaranteed headache for sure. So why this tedious undertaking, because there's an over caffeinated porter eager to get his project approved. So anyone claiming to know stripping or has proudly graduated a floor maintenance class - step back and let these dummies do it!

All that's needed is repairing the problem, re-wax the area, buff and the shine returns, super simple. To staff it's just a prison floor with no importance period but to a porter, his floor is paramount and no amount of energy is spared to achieve perfection.

I can't fault these young men eager to prove their worth and take pride in something. Yet, I wonder what would have happened had this legitimate work ethic surfaced before coming to prison. I've used harsh descriptions because I too, foolishly labored on floors, so I know of what I speak.

Bottom line; picking a fight with a floor ends only one way, complete disaster! A total loss the floor always prevails!

## **HOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE**

Across America one can hear debates amongst great minds discussing deep topics such as; our national economy, defense spending, social science, religion, energy, politics... and other weighty issues. These great thinkers have decades of experience and are completely qualified to comment on these vexing problems.

These men, aged and mature have seen first hand the failures of mankind, from the earliest days of recorded history right on through today and into the next century. These men of vision, hardened by time can clearly see where others are blind. They know the impact of complex emotions like; greed, lust, ego, power and have the reasoning strength to solve the intricate human psyche. Balancing the national budget, ending social injustice, settling delicate religious situations, educating our young, selecting political candidates or government spending, no issue is beyond their reach.

Only these men hold the keys to unraveling and correcting this nation's problems. The accumulation of this information comes at **great sacrifice** to family, but these men dedicated their lives in pursuit of unquestionable knowledge.

Where are these men of vast wisdom? How have they amassed such intelligence? Where can one hear such thoughtful and inspiring debates?

Come to my prison, in my, cell house, on my gallery, anytime and you'll hear the largest collection of "Know-it-alls". It's amazing how smart and mature convicts become after twenty years of T.V., cigarettes and coffee.

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## **YEAH, WHAT HE SAID**

You “gotta” hear this one, last week one of my esteemed colleagues spilled forth this verbal gibbership “y’all all finna eat”. It was delivered in a rolling slur, hard to understand and still difficult to fathom. Let’s see; one smeared slang, a nonexistent verb, an incomplete sentence a 75% failure, amazing.

Woe is the English language sentenced to an eternity of abuse in the hands of these mental giants. What happened to diction and clarity, instead words pour in a stream of utter incomprehensible non-sense. Also if cussing were an Olympic event these guys are medalist for sure. Any adjective can be substituted with (m.f.), sh t... and the listener is expected to understand. Example, “it’s raining like a (m.f.) out there”- care to guess at this description?

Finally, season this verbiage with un-known pro-nouns like, dude, man, player and old boy then add indigenous slang’s, **shake well** and **serve**.

However, when the above vernacular is executed properly it’s unique, even interesting. I find myself listening to gallery chatter: titanic discussions masked in innuendo and crafty slang’s all designed to derail ear hustlers like me!



## CONTROL GONE WILD

You should see the security policy for entering the prison yard - talk about over powering control - this place excels. The swarming guards create a smothering situation, Fort Knox is less secure.

We're paired up and driven through a gauntlet of tense guards waiting to search, poke, look, probe, feel or press anywhere they want. So in we go, two by two for our body inspections - arms and legs spread, the examination begins - your doctor isn't even this thorough! Incidentally this occurs under the watchful eyes of armed tower guards, locked and loaded, trigger fingers at the ready. Finally we pass a wand metal detector looking for metallic objects in our shoes. If you're bringing a shank, shiv or other persuasive equipment to the yard it'll be in your shoes. Upon completing this traffic stop we're allowed (or it is rewarded) yard time anyhow off we go.

I recall navigating "The Gauntlet of Inspection" one day, when "The Wand" went off on me at the shoe station! Oh no, how could this be, I'm an old, small man, only my feet are in my shoes. After a second attempt with the same **tragic results**, I'm guided to the ground, (NHL defensemen don't check this hard). Pinned, pasted and smeared, I'm looking at the concrete, Like I've never seen it before at the microscopic level, I'm that close!

Radios blaring ("all available units-stat") guards are sprinting from every direction, the rifleman take aim, I'm the cause of all this, ugh! Whoa, here comes the command staff all puffed up and ready to command. My shoes are quickly severed, actually I'm lucky to still have my feet, Florsheim\* salesmen their not. "Check them shoes again" they bark, same story "beep, beep, beep", that's it my shoes are opened and gutted like a field dressed deer!

Now I'm surrounded by every available guard (more are still arriving), the tower has me in their sights, all that's missing are helicopters, spot lights, sirens and dogs perhaps they're enroute! "Check the wand" someone shouts, "yeah, let me see that" the Major says! All is quiet, then he says "I don't believe this, it's a low battery alarm"!!!

## PROJECTS

Robert Taylor, Cabrini Green, Henry Horner, Ida Wells, Stateway and Wentworth Gardens, Prairie Courts....what are these places: the Projects of Chicago.

I grew up comfortably in suburbia quiet streets, good food, clothing and schools, didn't everyone? The T.V. was full of trouble in the Projects drugs, gangs and violence of all kinds. Who are these guys and why do they live like this? Depending on where you reside perspectives vary, I'm in prison, this is my view.

Just listing I hear conversations from the hood, shocking in its reality yet as normal as the weather. He got shot, he got killed, and he is in jail and the up-dated turf report. I see ugly scars from Cook County surgeons who have crudely repaired gun shot and stabbing wounds. Short hair cuts reveal a maze of stitches from count-less head injuries or broken teeth, missing parts, self inflicted tattoos - these guys are easy to spot.

I can't pretend to know how to survive one day in the Projects, now I live with guys who grew up in there. Forget "TNT", these men know real **drama**, violence and despair 24 / 7.

Wasn't the whole idea of these Projects to create a better living environment and give young men a fair chance? With little hope, no encouragement, weak schools, poor food and clothing, they never had a chance. However I do see bright eyes, full smiles, high morals and good ethics, so there are exceptions. I offer no solutions and the Projects are gone along with the answers.

I'm lucky I wasn't born there, but proper up-bringing and environment didn't help me, I shot a man.

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## **RELIGIOUS SHOPPING**

Jews and Christians follow Old Testament scriptures which covered creation and the behavior of man. That should've covered it, yet Muhammad had a different calling, thus Islam was founded, (a 3<sup>rd</sup> religion) what's this! Hey what about Buddhist and Hindus weren't they already organized, oops, of course they were!

Through our first thousand years we struggled and fought over who was right but there were no winners just losers. Our next millennium gave us choices, thusly options on the religious tree multiplied like a chain reaction. In America today, there's 61 religious divisions with 134 sub-groups and these are considered main stream! Nothing "suits you", start your own or select from hundreds of quasi, para, neo, pseudo or semi-religious groups seeking members. This specialization should have eliminated religious conflict, instead we produced more problems, and can we ever be satisfied? To me religion is about honoring our creator, respect all living things and treating others as we wish to be treated.

Our population is expected to reach 8 billion in just 17 years, further compressing us, and our greedy egotistical ways, more fighting is inevitable. Where technology breeds complexity, religion must be simple and unifying, offering safe harbor for all.

I foresee the discovery of alien life beyond earth something so dramatic it will humble all mankind forever. Powerful enough to eliminate our skin color, race differences and petty borders, leaving us with a single spirit. Without such an event our path will surely lead to self destruction.

## WHO ARE WE

I'm at our table with the usual guys, a weekly meeting spot to discuss topics influencing our world. Can you guess who we are?

To my left is "Doc", a robust fellow full of spirit, he knows medicine, human physiology, pathology and has a good job. Facing me is "Kelly", our eldest, slender, good natured and reserved he knows earth science, physics, geology and is quite a logical thinker but he's between jobs. On my right "JT", this kid knows chemistry, biology, psychology, very quick witted and with big glasses he looks like "Morocco Mole" the cartoon character at least to me, "JT" doesn't work, says he's retired. Finally me, name's Ed, I'm a slim nervous person with a short attention span. I know money, real estate, insurance, state and municipal financing and politics plus I've a good job.

Lately the headings are energy related; solar, wind, nuclear or geothermal, maximum production with minimal environmental impact, "Kelly" and "JT" excel here. Politics is also talked, Obama v McCain or the war in Iraq and the growing economic power house called China. One topic we all know is our state's correctional system, its history, present problems and dismal future. Getting information from a secretive and corrupt department is sketchy at best plus, boundless rumors cloud everything so it's difficult to see what ahead.

You might feel we're volunteer advisors, problem solvers or analyst meeting for lunch maybe guys gathering at the club for cards or even members of a **think tank**. Actually we are a watch dog group meeting weekly in the gym at the Menard Correctional Prison in southern Illinois.

You see we're convicted murders (except me I only attempted) "Doc" and "JT" are naturals while "Kelly" and I have mathematical life. We meet weekly to discuss our future and hope for the best.

## **BLOODY OIL**

Crude oil is anything but crude and America can't survive without it, in fact we'll need more tomorrow than we used today. Crude oil runs this country but, when we surpassed our production we went right to the source, ...Arabia.

We brought drilling technology, built infrastructures and taught our new **Arab friends** how it works, finally we paid a fair price for their crude. What value was this unlimited gooey mess to Arabia back then; well it wasn't much so we bought every drop. Thusly America set a standard of living unattainable to 90% of this planet with an ego to match, we enjoyed the good life for generations and why not, we solved the petro puzzle. Our new Arab friends aren't fools, with many centuries of history and the world at their feet, supply and demand was clear. So when they curtailed production to flood their countries with cash as we were doing, who could blame them?

What should've been an energy omen wasn't instead we learned the true value of crude which is now measured in blood. Keeping America moving requires stability in the Persian Gulf at all costs. Would we kill or be killed for crude oil, definitely!

In the petroleum business nobody's a fool, although we missed the signs and paid dearly, our path to energy independence will be achieved. What of the Gulf States... another player stands ready and they'll be the largest auto manufacturer ever, yet their high mileage cars won't off set titanic production numbers. China will follow us but, are they prepared to guard the gulf with blood as we did?

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## PRISON TOILETS

Toilets are basically designed and built for one purpose and over the years they have evolved to perform their jobs exceedingly well. Today's prison toilet is built with superior materials which results in amazing power.

Virtually indestructible these prison toilets are capable in ingesting almost anything a maximum security prisoner can think of. Small items easily surrender: pens, books, magazines, tooth brushes, plastic cutlery, eye glasses, false teeth, **chicken bones**, apples, and keys.

To give an example of its power, roll up any towel push the button and you are drawn instantly into a tug-of-war with the "Beast". The prison toilet is all business but there is still some fun to be had, we call it free wheeling, any roll of toilet paper will do. Simply feed in a leader and hit the power button, bam the reel un-spools just like you caught a trophy game fish, (suitable for mounting).

For larger objects some disassembly is required and when the toilet has been properly tuned up, almost anything is digestible. The "Beast" has been know, to swallow up pillows, jackets, blankets, sheets and all forms of clothing. In fact if you can break it up there isn't anything this toilet can't handle. They are celestial black holes, acting like a portal to oblivion, nothing escapes.

Just think of the destruction one of these babies might cause around the home. As handy as they are for prisoners, adult supervision is required when small children and house pets are present. If only the prison toilet could suck up the stupidity that never seems to end in here!

## COMPRESSION

Shower time in a max prison, is not to be missed. We're herded into a garage sized room, twenty five of us eager to wash up, but instead of singing it's all yelling.

It seems compressing these, these.....young urban characters in a shower triggers a shouting festival rivaling the roar of a shuttle lift-off. Each is hollering louder to be heard creating an escalating spiral of damaging noise and what's amazing, each knows exactly what's being shouted every where at once! Some boom across the room while others close by are flourishly shouting. It's like nuclear noise!

I first noticed this ridiculous behavior awaiting a court date in a packed bull-pen, the racket was a jarring cacophony of **audio crap**. A runaway chain reaction...sound intensity accelerating beyond the normal hearing range in just seconds, quite unbelievable.

Does this barbaric performance occur in other states? Is it just an urban phenomenon or what? How would Freud diagnose this situation? To me it's quite clear, their having a wonderful time yelling at friends. However what's easy to see is atomically destructive hear and that's the part I don't understand.

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## **DEATH PENALTY**

The Judge proclaimed, "By the power vested in me by the State of Illinois, I hereby sentence you to penalty of death. A Death Warrant, in your name, stating the exact date and hour of your execution has been issued and signed by me. Case closed". That's it; you are now classified as a condemned prisoner and off to death row to await your ultimate punishment.

Immediately you are hustled from the court in waist and ankle chains, as three very large guards pin your arms tightly to your sides to completely restrict all movement. The following day the Illinois Department of Corrections arrives with a specialized "transfer team". To ensure you're safely escorted to a maximum security prison. It's a non-stop journey as state police control traffic the entire way. They carefully select routes devoid of ambush points and if necessary a state helicopter will be deployed. Awaiting your arrival is the warden with his top brass. He'll sign your papers, review your file and watch your every step to the Condemned Housing Unit (C.H.U.)

From a prisoner's view point, life on the "Row" isn't bad. You get double meals, daily showers, outdoor recreation (albeit severely curtailed in scope), lots of phone time plus a single man cell. Everything comes to you; legal materials, commissary, library books, hair cuts, minor medical procedures, even religion. You get abundant mail (prisoners love mail) offering help, comfort and money from all over the world. You only leave the C.H.U. for major medical reasons or visits. All visits are conducted apart from the general population and even with chains; you are anchored to a steel table while two guards and the camera keep watch.

In 2003 then Governor George Ryan commuted death row prisoners all 163 to Life With Out Parole (L.W.O.P.). Many considered their **prays of mercy** to be answered. Others felt cheated.....how can this be? Some had valid appeals pending with strong Chicago law firms offering free representation. However with an L.W.O.P sentence these lawyers quickly fled, leaving weak public defenders which caused some appeals to expire.

While some were simply ready to die. They wanted to die and asked to be excluded, but their requests were denied.

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Thanks to "Big Chris" my cellmate and Marty who helped me write this.



## WHAT ARE THE ODDS

Picture this scene: a small balding man hunched over a drafting table sporting a visor and garter armbands toiling over numbers. Under a bare bulb, he's listening to three scratchy radios picking up live baseball feeds from Chicago, NY and Philly. Newspapers are scattered about, cigarette smoke curling upwards. This guy is setting odds for a local bookmaker, recording stats and tracking all the action, and doing this without computers, satellite TV, ESPN or the internet

Today this same fella is surrounded by computers, with sophisticated software making calculations, enabling him to predict outcomes and scores. Well I know a guy doing the same, except he works from a prison cell and he's neither bald or small but young and strong. He uses TV and pen & paper only, no lap top, internet or specialized software. This guy's different; he can process numerical equations, assigning odds and probabilities almost instantly and absorbs data like a scanner. For every fantasy league, NASCAR pool or college bracket, **his odds of winning approach 80%.**

If it wasn't for prison he could easily be managing a Vegas casino sports book or developing cutting edge software in Silicon Valley or running the futures market for a Wall Street firm, each would yield him a fortune. Yet today he's paid in coffee, cigarettes, or postage stamps. He's amassed huge quantities of each, which makes him quite wealthy in here. You see, not all us prisoners are dumb luck characters or mental morons a few of us "Could've Been Contenders"!

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## **SOBRIQUET..."SAY WHAT"**

Pronounced so-bri-q. It's French and means fanciful name, but in America we call them nicknames. The world is full of these clever names and some have been legalized: 50 Cent, Sting, Madonna, Bono, Meat Loaf... Some are just nicknames: A-Rod, Sweetness, Cher, The Rock, Sinbad, Mr. T...

I live among convicts using nicknames that are commonly selected for toughness: J.Bone, Scuff, Killer, Slug, Psycho, Chopper, or Stone Cold. While some pick names as a description of themselves: Burn, Fatman, Slim, Nub, Shaky, Face, or Scar. And of course animal names are popular: Crow, Grasshopper, Wolf, Ant, Bird, Pony, or Bear.

A few of my friends have great nicknames: Biggie, who's actually small; Butterbean, a twin to the boxer; Maniac, who's quite calm; Turtle, just looks like one; Hillbilly, well, he really is; and Bumpy's covered in lumps. It's amazing to hear the variety of names in the cellhouse, at the chow hall, or on the yard.

Check out these characters:

Misfit	Irish	Quick	Peanut	Bull
Smooth	Toy	Welder	Jocko	Doc
Prince	Brick	Cook	Ball	Twenty
Angel	Squirt	Luck	Pyro	Woody
Country	Loco	Patches	Fly	Smiley
Diesel	Pops	Snoop	Crip	Zap
Punch	Shadow	Thirty	Droopy	Ghost
Tweet	Dog	Blue	Spoon	Mousey
Rabbit	Chaos	Dusty	Bone	Hammer
Paco	Worm	Champ	Gin	Coach
Cork	Honest	Twin	Nitty	Flaco

Prisoners insist on using these humorous titles as if this sheer cloak will hide their real identity. Keep it real. My name is Ed and that's what I go by, but Mr. Ed isn't bad either.

Once, I called a fella at work by his real name... big mistake! He ripped into me saying, "My name is Knuckles, it's always been Knuckles, everyone calls me Knuckles and you best learn that!" As he sat back down with his friends our supervisor approached and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Hertz, I need you to sweep the loading dock." Knuckles rose with a look of shame and silently left the room.

## AGAIN

Routine is my survival. I rely on stability to keep my sanity. However, when a lockdown occurs everything comes to an abrupt halt – like hitting a brick wall! Zero movement, meaning no work, library, chapel, chow, yard, gym, showers, barbershop, commissary, visits, or health care.

We have two types of lockdowns, first is administrative. It's when things happen either inside or outside and not caused by us prisoners. Such as weather, maintenance, flooding, visitors, and events beyond our walls like 9/11, trouble at the other state prisons, or Chicago gang violence. The second type is disciplinary. It's caused by us and occurs far too often. Fighting is common and little squabbles go unnoticed, but yard fights can't be hidden. Quick pushing and shoving matches are no problem, it's when a tower guard fires his gun – that's when a lockdown happens. Bigger fights, involving gangs or stabbings, equals longer lockdown time.

The worst thing we can do is harm staff and this type of lockdown is measured in months. Following a staff assault, the guards retaliate by going cell to cell destroying our property and exerting their power. They dress up in ridiculous orange riot suits and go marching around **singing songs**, it's quite a performance – still it proves nothing.

Stress and misery is created as we are locked in a small cell with another man and forget what you see on TV, its 24/7, for days, weeks, even months. The clock never moves fast enough, as if living each day in slow motion. It's difficult for me knowing the loss of all my privileges hangs in the balance as two guys fight it out. These worthless characters fight over honor and respect, yet they didn't possess these qualities until they landed in prison. Still I'm subjected to a policy of punishing all prisoners for the actions of a few.

Lockdowns have been around for decades, but has never stopped or even slowed violent behavior, yet it's all they know. Legislators enact more laws requiring longer sentences, so prisons are overflowing with angry young men and violence is all they know.

And so it goes...Again! Another brilliant display of stupidity two idiots slugging it out over a chicken leg – bringing all 3100 prisoners to a complete Halt!

Copyright March 2012

## PEACE ON EARTH

Peace on earth. The universal goal of all mankind is totally undisputed. Now, imagine if it actually came true. What if the world prayed on Dec 31<sup>st</sup> and we woke to World Peace how wonderful that would be. Let's dream a little...

Brother lives with Brother, Country with Country, Religion with Religion, Race with Race and no more fighting. Man becomes loving, tolerant, trustworthy and is eager to "Do unto others as he wishes done unto himself". Worldwide barriers fall, doors open on every border for all men. No killing, no crime, no wars, no more greed, lust, envy or hatred, only love for your fellow man. Sounds great – let's keep dreaming...

In this new setting, we won't need armies, navies, military bases nor will we need the people who build ships, planes, **bombs or bullets**. With no killing or crime, we won't need police, courts, judges, lawyers, and jails. Nor will we need the millions of guards in thousands of prisons or the vast network that services this growing industry. Certainly, no need for the FBI, DEA, ATF, DHS, and immigration. Also no defense pacts like NATO or the EU. The world is now united in the ultimate Peace Pact.

But Wait, what will happen to all those jobs? Who will support those 25 million families out of work? Who will support all the jobs lost worldwide? Can our state and federal welfare system carry this huge burden? What will happen to our Social Security? It can't support itself now. How high will our taxes go? How many businesses (large and small) will fail? Can the Dollar, Euro, Pound, Yen, Yuan, Ruble, and Peso even survive? How quickly will this collapse the U.S. economy and with it the World? Then the unthinkable happens someone picks up a gun - Now what?

Everyday we pray for peace but after this dream, we just can't afford it.

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## **GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN...REALLY**

For over 20,000 years modern man has been grouping himself and continues today. We divide by continent, country, state, county, city, town, village or tribe. We group by region, territory, compass, climate, hemisphere or geography always establishing borders.

Those are tangible but we separate based on color, race, religion, nationality, lineage and heredity. We further group around likes, politics, professions, status, causes, wealth and power. Then functionally by area codes, sex, age, education, health, language and assets. We stereo type, profile, and presume based on what we hear not what we see, or how we feel. It's endless how deeply we classify our species and this complexity will multiply with time.

Now add human emotions of lust, greed, envy, power, love, passion, honor, loyalty or hate and there's always a problem. We enrage ourselves and kill our neighbors within our borders or beyond.

When we crushed the American Indians we didn't give a damn. In America today it's all about racism and we developed a new vocabulary putting a nice spin on it. Ethnic cleansing, **racial profiling** or religious persecution it's all racism, who are we kidding. Racism is in our genetics, unique only to the human species and it will always exist. As our population expands we are forced to live more compactly. We will then develop new words again, pretending to be even nicer this time.

We strive for peace and goodwill toward men, but it will never occur, CNN proves this daily. The power of man is derived by his enemies, either real or imagined. If man had no enemies he would invent them as his strength comes from conflict.

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## **BATTLEFIELD**

I work in a large prison kitchen, serving 7,800 meals a day. My shift starts at 4:00am; we make lunch with 11 cooks. There's 8 huge steam vats, 3 Olympic sized deep fryers, 2 grills big as plywood sheets, tilt skillets, steam prep tables plus 2 massive wheel ovens. It's a hellish environment. Escaped steam is blasting, grills crackle violently, and fryers are roiling and splashing. Heat vapors cling and smother. Being near these machines you can feel their strength, the force is overwhelming.

Venting steam this powerful is pure energy, when the humidity is just right, real fog shrouds the area, huge ceiling fans are useless. The cooks are hulking characters yelling to each other yet they know where to stand. It's a surreal view, like on the flight deck of a carrier, a scene from "Top Gun". By using the power of steam the product is burning hot, far beyond any gas kitchen. After 3 solid hours of exertion the slop is loaded into hot boxes and lugged to the serving lines.

Adjacent to the cooking area is the washing station. There, hundreds of pots and pans are continually scrubbed clean. The detergents are industrial strength; they can clean barnacles off a battleship. The real combat starts when the big metal cookware is smashed together like symbols. The banging and slamming is utterly explosive. Naval guns are tame by comparison. Add in the dropping of every possible commodity and it's as if a grenade detonated in your garage, it's all happening at once.

During restocking dozens of heavily skidded products arrive and are speedily pushed through the kitchen headed for storage. Propelling these ballistic missiles are double muscled workers and they haul ass! Shoving skids of #10 cans or crates of frozen chicken or 100 lbs. bags of beans can't be stopped. A collision is very painful requiring x rays and stitches.

I'm a slight Jewish guy; my job is to sling this slop to 2,600 starving prisoners. For me the kitchen is a dangerous battlefield filled with peril and injury. When I do maneuver in this evil place I watch for venting steam, speeding skids, dropping steel, or booby traps. The worst is bumping into men the size of trees, it's like getting ambushed. I find myself ducking, dodging, darting, and scampering for the nearest fox hole.

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**K.I.S.S.**

I can't carry the federal law books in one hand. Add the I.R.S. tax codes plus Illinois's criminal and tax law regulations, I'll need wheels. The complexity of these books rival anything man has ever produced and the power within them exceeds even the Bible! The American legal system of courts, judges, lawyers, prosecutors, clerks, officer's of all kinds, jail and prisons of all kinds is proof of their power over man.

Across the land our legislators produce thousands of new laws each year. They need to prove their worth and further their careers by adding new bills. They think of every eventuality, every angle and every loophole impressing themselves with their complexity. So every bill presented and passed is far greater and more sweeping than ever. In fact we grade each legislative session by how many new laws are enacted. We actually strive to make our society more complex. Laws are written to protect us from ourselves and left unchecked they would pass laws governing the entire planet, moon and stars.

In many places, the village elders are convened, sides are heard, a ruling declared, punishment at sundown. Is there corruption and bias sure, but, doesn't our system contain the same elements – of course. Yet we'll spend \$500 Billion nationwide to get the same results. So does our complexity guarantee justice? **I THINK NOT.**

In the natural world simplicity is paramount, not intelligence, the shark has lived 200 million years with out a thinking brain. We won't survive 1/100<sup>th</sup> of this time based on our current growth of complexity.

So it's come to this: Next case your Honor, and the charges are an untied shoe lace and sneezing in public. How does the defendant plea?

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**CONSIDER THIS:**

If I worked at Menard Prison or any of the 24 other state prisons or any other controlled facility or any part of the vast parole system or company that supplies goods and services to the Illinois Department of Corrections than, my career is based squarely on the backs of convicted prisoners.

I need a steady supply of new prisoners to ensure my stability, my way of life. Any reduction in this supply will jeopardize my life's income and threaten my family.

So let's consider my major supplier, Chicago. I actually need a failing school system, more high school drop outs, more gang violence, and more black - on - black crime. Chicago is the main engine supplying what I need most, prisoners. For Chicago's collar counties and the state's lesser cities, I need more gang expansion, more violence and expanded drug trade.

So do I say **thanks** when I hear the Chicago School System is on strike and future funding is questionable? Do I say **thanks** to the multiple shootings during a hot summer weekend? Do I say **thanks** to the Chicago Police Department for using the latest technology to increase conviction rates? Do I say **thanks** for legislators writing and passing tougher laws???

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## **TIMES – UP!**

Time is a continuous series of irreversible events: past, present, and future. I can track its history, see its movement, predict its path and certainly feel its pressure. Time exists everywhere yet it only matters to the human species, to the natural world time just is. Stars are born, live and die with the span of billions of years yet it's actually meaningless. The concept of time is absolutely the most important item governing our lives, nothing even comes close.

Here's my problem with time: it's my greatest asset and my biggest liability. You see I'm a prisoner doing life, so I'm basically waiting for my time to expire. I can see the human race striving for useful, purposeful and valuable lives. Yet each day there's not enough hours to accomplish their goals.

We became obsessive with the idea of maximizing our time, becoming more efficient. We invented cars, planes, computers, phones all to save precious time, so what did we do with this extra time? Will we live longer, will we enjoy our lives more, and will we achieve more? The answer should be yes by a factor of ten, but sadly it's not. Each day we struggle to put 26 into a 24 hour day.

I get up each morning figuring out how to waste 24 hours. A Soccer Mom or the U. S. President won't meet the day's goals, just not enough time. I truly wish I could donate 2 hours a day to a charity or worthy cause that should certainly help or would it? A great college coach said "We didn't lose the game, we merely ran out of time".

**What we should do is, invent a 26 hour day.**

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## THE GREAT STATE OF ILLINOIS

Illinois is one of a few states with a large economic center, ours is called Chicago. NY has N.Y.C, FL has Miami, PA has Philly, GA has Atlanta, TX has two Dallas and Houston and CA has two L.A and S.F. These urban centers drive the state in regards to money, power, influence, political control but, they also contribute quite heavily toward crime. All these states lead the union in prison population.

To look at today's prison problem we need to look back. In the 1980's, 1990's and 2000's the Illinois answer to crime was simple; "lock-em-up-longer". Legislation passed tougher laws, police got more staff and equipment, prosecutors pursued maximum sentences, more prisons were built and tens of thousands of jobs in all aspects of criminal justice were created. Re-elections in Springfield were assured; heavy paying jobs for generations were also assured. Strong unions fought and won amazing benefits and huge pensions and everybody supplying goods and services to this gravy train profited greatly.

Well the money has run dry and this financial run-away-train called criminal justice in Illinois won't be easily slowed. Factoring in city, county and state police; criminal and appellate courtroom employees; jailers and prison guards; health care staff; parole officers; and administration workers at all levels and all the people supplying everything from ink to rifles. I estimate an easy 150,000 jobs involved and each person has a financial stake. So who wants to make the first sacrifice?

Releasing any prisoners is bad for business and disastrous for re-elections and besides who will guarantee public safety with just a signature? The proposed sentence reform for non-violent non-victim crimes calls for much more county based service's addressing issues like: drug, alcohol, parenting, detox and anger problems all in a locked setting. Also more intensive probation, greater county jail time, supervised work release, electronic monitoring and supervised community service. The financial burden to the counties will be immense and this entire infrastructure has yet to be designed, built or staffed. As good or bad as this proposal sounds recidivism among this group is staggering. These felons could now stay close to home while the counties pay to punish them in-situ. So more county real estate taxes and state income taxes will be needed to fund this proposal. I truly believe it's a case of trying to apply a "Band-Aid" today, and pushing the greater prison problem into the future.

Illinois is forced to raise taxes today just to cover the basics of state operations, yet the budget still won't be balanced. State employees now question the future in regards to dependable pay, health benefits and retirement pensions. Promises of healthy retirement payments made 20 years ago can't and won't be honored today. Asking for more revenue over and over from a shrinking tax base will further entice good workers and quality companies to flee to more financially stable states.

To me the future is certain; Illinois will be the first state in the union to experience a total financial collapse.

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