Honor Camp

by
Erik D. Wiegardt

Copyright © 1996 by Erik D. Wiegardt
All rights reserved

CONTENTS

PAGE

3) PREFACE Of 2023

5) INTRODUCTION TO CAMP BARRETT

7) THE CAMP

15) INMATE SLANG

20) HAIKU

30) EPILOGUE

Cover photo: The author in 1995, "Crew Boss and Truck"

Preface of 2023

Honor Camp and the Stoic Registry

In 1995, when I discovered it was possible to create something called "web sites" that could communicate all over the world I immediately thought of creating a kind of registry where I could find if there were other Stoics out there. But, the idea for a registry of Stoics actually began in 1964 when I was 19 years old and a private in the US Army. I had recently discovered the *Discourses of Epictetus*, and after reading it I remember saying to myself, "I'm a Stoic." I felt so strongly about being a Stoic that I wished there was some place where I could sign up, some place where I could make a declaration, take vows, whatever, and officially *be* a Stoic. At that time, such a place did not exist.

Thirty-two years later, on 8 MAY 1996, I founded a website called The Stoic Registry. Until that day, I had never met or heard of another living person who was interested in Stoicism. I was sure there must be someone out there somewhere, and I wanted to find him, or her, but I was also aware that I may have been on a fool's errand. I thought that if I couldn't find anyone who was already a Stoic, maybe I could get other people interested in becoming one. I decided to write and self-publish a book about Stoicism, one that was comprehensible to the average reader, and I would give it away.

First, I had to create a web site, and to do that I had to have a computer. I had never owned a computer and didn't know how to use one. In 1996, a decent computer started at about $2500, and I paid for mine by working overtime–after my 12-hour shift as a Correctional Deputy at Camp Barrett. I didn't really like working overtime after my 12-hour day, so I kept a record of exactly how much money I needed to buy a computer, and I took my name off the overtime list as soon as I had that amount.

The good thing about this job at the honor camp was that although I worked 12 hours a day, seven days in a row, at the end of my full week on duty I got seven days off. In the weeks off, I studied academic tomes on Stoicism at the local university library and wrote *The Path of the Sage: An Introduction to Stoic Philosophy.* Then, I self-published 100 copies, hired a webmaster to create the Stoic Registry, and offered a free copy to anyone who happened upon the website and wanted one. I even paid the postage for shipping all over the world.

That was how the Stoic Registry began. I found one Stoic, then another. They each said, “I thought I was the only Stoic in the world.” I heard this same statement over and over for years. I started a newsletter which I wrote, printed, and mailed to our members. After eleven years of almost daily email correspondences we still only had 100 Stoics worldwide.

I stopped posting the newsletters in the mail and started posting them on the website. The eMagazine, “Registry Report” was born. Slowly our membership grew, then it suddenly mushroomed. Something happened in the world, and suddenly 2 or 3 new members per month became 20 or 30. Today, there are more than 3,500 members who affirm they are Stoics at the Stoic Registry. Stoics of all kinds. From the beginning, it was conceived and preserved as a Big Tent, welcoming all Stoics regardless of their personal interpretations of what our philosophy means to them. And it all started in Camp Barrett.

Introduction to Camp Barrett

This is about a California honor camp, a work camp, a medium security jail for convicted adult male felons. I was a Correctional Deputy there. The name of the place was Camp Barrett, named after Barrett Lake, located a couple of hundred yards on the other side of a 12 foot, chain link fence topped with razor wire. We were hidden in the back country invisible from any home or highway and surrounded by hills of fat boulders, native grasses, and California oak 35 miles east of the city of San Diego on the southern edge of the Cleveland National Forest just north of the Mexican border.

Everything is true. Nothing is fictionalized or exaggerated to make it seem more interesting than it was. In fact, most of the haiku contained herein deliberately deal with the commonplace and the mundane because that's what life was like there most of the time. The haiku moments I've recorded were seldom inspired by the shenanigans of inmates or officers but by the cycles and routines of the natural world in which we were contained, enclosed, locked down. Some of those moments were recorded while I was the Crew Boss of a work crew outside the camp at various locations throughout the county. More on that later.

These verses are both haiku and senryu but have been referred to as haiku as is the common American practice. For those who care, there is a difference. The form is the same, but the subject matter differs. The best way to distinguish between haiku and senryu is to remember that haiku relates to nature and the seasons whereas senryu relates to human nature in the seasons of a human world. To those who insist that human nature is nature and that the human world is therefore a natural world, it's all haiku.

What is written here is a description of life as I saw it during my 2 ½ year assignment to the camp. There was no attempt to objectively chronicle events as an outside observer; I was inside and I was an officer, not an inmate. To bring the reader closer to the inside with me I've included a glossary of slang and other terms commonly used by everyone there. I wrote all of it over a span of one year in 1995 and 1996, beginning in Spring and concluding with the end of the following Winter. It was written in the present tense in moments of boredom during my shift or after hours in the staff quarters.

Our camp was one of two camps in San Diego County and one of the last county honor camps in the state of California. Both camps were operated by the San Diego County Probation Department, and both were highly successful, profitable, and of considerable value. Today, the camps have

been transformed to other uses or closed altogether, victims of ignorance, indifference, squabbling, and political power plays. Conservatives on the Board of Supervisors thought they should be privatized. The citizens didn't know we existed and didn't care one way or another. The County Sheriff thought they should be brought under his control. The Chief Probation Officer, a good friend of the Sheriff, was unwilling to fight for us, and eventually the last of the California Honor Camps became a footnote in correctional history.

*

The Honor Camp

1995. Camp Barrett. This is a medium security work camp. What that means is the average inmate in here is judged to be less of a security risk than the rank and file convict in secured jails and prisons. For those who haven't spent a lot of time around law enforcement, courts, and criminals it may be a surprise to know that in California there is difference between jail and prison. Jails are run by the county, county jail, where the prisoners are incarcerated for up to a year. Prisons are run by the state, state prison, where the prisoners are incarcerated for more than a year and up to a natural lifetime or early death by inmate violence or capital punishment. Jails and prisons are both maximum security because jails may have to hold even serial murderers until they're tried and convicted, which can take a very long time. State prisons usually hold only the most grievous offenders according to what the state defines those criminals to be. For example, in some states, especially in the deep South, growing marijuana can bring a life sentence. But not here. That grower would be in county jail – or at our camp.

We get our inmates from county jail, and most of the guys in here are what the California Penal Code deems to be the lesser offenders: Driving Under the Influence (DUI) with multiple priors or injury, drug dealers and users, car thieves, breakers and enterers, child molesters with no priors, wife beaters, coyotes, and all the same small time in-your-face hoodlums, petty criminals, and gangbangers you have in your own city or town. The inmates we get from county jail have requested a transfer to the camp because they are bored sitting around the jail and watching TV all day. If the Sheriff determines this guy hasn't caused a lot of trouble, doesn't appear to be uncontrollably violent and may be a reasonable security risk for us, we get him. The Sheriff is glad to get rid of him. Honor camps are an escape valve for the pressure cooker of jail overcrowding.

We run a work camp and work the men six days a week. The inmates are all men, 18 years of age and older, no women allowed for obvious safety reasons, and they get paid 70 cents a day. Considering a pouch of Bugler rolling tobacco and papers currently cost 90 cents, that income would pleases only the taxpayers—if they knew about it. We're not big news for the media, and most taxpayers don't know we exist. That's OK. Officers prefer the anonymity, and the inmates rarely complain. Most of them are glad to be here.

Camp Barrett is located on ten acres surrounded by a twelve foot, chain link fence topped by a double row of razor wire. The camp itself was opened in 1958, but before then, before we had these permanent buildings, the

county had their convict road crews living in makeshift camps, tents erected right at the work site. Many of the miles of paved roads we enjoy in the back country today were built by county jail inmates of an earlier time. Today, within the confinement area we have four dormitories – Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta – and each hold a maximum of 70 inmates, 35 in each wing. In addition to the dorms we have a number of other buildings: administration, where the officers hang out when they're not at their quarters; recreation and hobby, which amounts to two pool tables, three or four card tables, and a pottery kiln; the mess hall, everyone's favorite building; laundry for inmate uniforms, sheets, towels and miscellaneous; remedial school for drop outs who want another chance; landscape and nursery for inmates who want to learn a trade; and staff quarters, a day room with a TV, refrigerator, some old couches, and a pool table—all connected to a dozen sleeping rooms just big enough for a single bed and a dresser reserved for the officers who don't like the long drive back to the city after a twelve-hour shift. I always stayed in the staff quarters. Outside the fenced perimeter, we line up the dark green work trucks beside a gas pump and toilet dump. Outside there is also a visitor's center, maintenance and tool shop, storage sheds, power control shed, and a dirt baseball field and backstop next to a sewage treatment pool. All the buildings were built in a functional 1950s camp style without architectural flourishes or aesthetic considerations.

As a line officer I work an 84-hour shift in seven days, and then I get the next seven off. Seven on and seven off. Seven 12-hour days followed by seven days to work a part time job, develop a serious hobby, or just go home and get "hammered." We love this job half of the time.

Being an around-the-clock institution, we have seventeen to twenty officers for each seven-day shift. All but four of them work days. The four exceptions work the night shift, 6 PM to 6 AM which they work for two seven-day work weeks. Two work weeks, then, encompasses a total of four weeks, and this four week period is called a rotation: a week on, a week off, a week on, and a week off. New rotation, new job. The job an officer is assigned changes every rotation. One rotation I'm a crew boss, the next I may be on nights, the next I'm a school officer, then town trip, swing shift, or assistant day officer. It takes the average officer about a year to learn all six jobs and about two years to develop what we call *style*.

Being cooped up with a lot of strangers, mostly criminals, misfits, and social rejects, for seven days in a remote back country location takes a little getting used to. Some officers never really get used to it, or maybe it's just their unpleasant personalities wherever they are, and they take it out on the inmates and on one another. I usually have less trouble with the inmates than with those officers I'm talking about and who probably know I'm talking

about them. Some people are never easy to like even on their good days. The job attracts people like that, abusive and mean-spirited people with a badge, but overall it's a good job and I'm comfortable being surrounded by wilderness out here in this manly village. The native, non-human inhabitants make it all worthwhile. You can see animal relationships here that you will never see in the city.

Here's what I'm talking about. Do you know what a swallow does when another swallow tries to take over the mud nest it is building? The rightful owner of the half finished nest who was temporarily away getting mud from the sewage treatment pool flies up to the interloper, grabs it by the shoulders, furiously flaps those powerful wings that recently carried it thousands of miles from its winter home in South America, and pulls the miscreant out. Then it calmly places the daub of mud it was carrying onto the construction site where it belongs. Here's another one. Have you ever seen a crow raiding party? Early in the morning when the mud swallow babies are sleeping snugly in their mud nests and their parents have just left, six or seven crows quietly fly to the nests, break them open with a few sharp jabs of their beaks, spill the babies out onto the sidewalk below, and scoop them up to a nearby tree to be eaten for breakfast. How many times do you see that in the city?

In addition to the swallows and crows, squirrels, rabbits, coyote, foxes, cougars, wildcats, rattlesnakes, tarantulas, scorpions, black widow spiders, and brown recluses we have two camp dogs. We were adopted by these two honey brown brothers of mixed breed about the size of young adult German shepherds who just showed up one day and never left. They pass the time eating doggy chow, chasing rabbits and squirrels, loafing in the sun or in the shade, and walking around looking for strokes, pats, and kind words. I've never seen either dog mistreated except by a squirrel who got tired of being chased and turned around and bit one of the dogs on the face. The bite wound got infected and the dog damn near died. We took it to a vet.

Inmates do all the real work. The officers supervise, maintain discipline, and count. The Count – formal, informal, or walking – is the highest priority inside and outside of the camp. Its purpose is to know where each inmate is at any given time. In camp, there's a formal or walking count every two hours or less from six AM to lights out at eleven PM. Between eleven PM and six AM the inmates are counted while they are sleeping every hour *or less*. Those are the rules. Out of camp, the officer informally counts the inmates on his crew every 10-15 minutes because the escape risk is considerably higher outside camp and the sooner an escape is discovered the sooner the likelihood of apprehension. Inmates on crew do escape occasionally, I lost two myself, and as a camp we lose an average of one a month.

There's much more that goes on here, of course, so I need to go on a bit longer in order to more fully introduce an environment distinctive of a certain time and place. The best way to see what life is like in the mid 1990s in a California county honor camp may not be from the perspective of what an officer sees but it's the only perspective I know. It's fair to assume an inmate sees things somewhat differently just as a worker sees things differently from a boss and a slave sees things differently from a master, but I can only describe what I see. And, perhaps the best way to show what I see is to describe each of the six jobs an officer must learn.

Crew

The hardest time an inmate will do is crew. Those who like manual labor don't seem to mind; others will do almost anything to get out of it, including faking illness or violating rules to get sent back to the county sheriff. The hours aren't that long, usually five to six hours of actual work sandwiched between a truck ride to and from the work site, lunch, and a couple of breaks. Our trucks are big boxy things, dark green, with our department badge painted in gold on the doors. There's a large crew cab with small windows, too small to crawl out of, that carry up to seventeen inmates, and there's the driver's cab up front where I, the Crew Boss, sit with my Lead Man and Swamper.

I drive the inmates to various parts of the county, sometimes fifty and more miles away, where we meet what we call the Overhead that shows us the job we have to do. The Overhead represents a city or county department that pays our department, the County Probation Department, to have our inmates come out and do some labor at a rate far less than they would have to pay a private contractor or their own employees. Last year the two honor camps took in over a million dollars from local cities and other county departments for the work we did.

The most common work we do is what we call weed abatement: cleaning out drainage ditches beside the road, aqueducts on the side of mountains, residential hillsides, vacant lots, alleys, and ravines. Sometimes we're in the ghetto, sometimes we're cutting a fire trail behind million-dollar estates, and sometimes we're restoring a trail miles from any town. Sometimes we even get to work in a nice park, but that doesn't happen very often.

We usually take the weeds right down to the dirt. For that the inmates use a McLeod (pronounced, "ma-CLOUD"), which is like a large hoe but there is a blade on one side and raking prongs on the other. It's heavy. Of course we have a lot of other tools such as weed whips, rakes, pulaskis, brush hooks, and so on, but the McLeod is used the most. After about an hour of swinging a McLeod it quickly becomes back-breaking labor. That's the idea. All the tools are manual, none are automated. Speed, efficiency, and ease of

operation are not desired; hard manual labor is. And, when it's 104 degrees in the shade, and there's no shade, law-abiding society gets its revenge.

Crew inmates all wear gray cotton uniforms, hard hats, safety glasses, and steel-toed boots. Their ages range from nineteen to sixty, and they come in every size, shape, race, and every sort of physical condition. Some are big, tough, and belligerent. Others are on your leg all the time, ingratiating, eager to please to the point of being annoying. But no matter who we have on crew or where we go in the county, crew bosses never pack a firearm or injurious weapon of any kind. The officers wear a different colored uniform: tan shirts and a badge, a radio, handcuffs, pepper spray, and deliberately practiced command presence. We direct the work and the workers and do counts every 10-15 minutes and watch for injuries, fights, and escapes. As the saying goes, "On crew shit happens; it's just a matter of when."

School

From the hardest to the easiest. There are some inmates who only work on crew one day a week, Saturday, and the other five days they are in the camp going to school. For the officer on School Officer rotation this is usually regarded as the most boring, least desirable job of all rotations, especially by those who are not good at appearing alert while daydreaming. In short, the School Officer's job is to sit or stand, provide security for the teachers, and demand that twenty-five to thirty inmates study quietly.

It's not that difficult. The academic subjects are high school level but the inmates are more mature, and most of those who have requested school attendance are highly motivated to get a General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) while incarcerated here. Discipline problems are minimal. If anyone is in school primarily to avoid the hard work of being on crew it doesn't take long to figure out who they are. They are the ones who fidget, fall asleep, go to the toilet every fifteen minutes, draw cartoons, write letters to their girlfriends, et cetera, and if their performance on homework and tests agrees with the officer's observation, they're out of school and back on crew.

The teachers, three or four at any given time, are regularly certified secondary teachers, civilians, and they have a contract with the camp that an officer must be present at all times. There aren't any real classes. There is a classroom where the School Officer observes the inmates as they study, a conference room where the teachers answer questions one on one and help the student understand his homework, and there's the testing room. When the student thinks he is ready to take a test on whatever subject he has been studying he goes to the testing room. If he passes he goes on to the next subject; if he flunks, he studies some more and takes it again and again until he does pass.

The school is remarkably successful considering most inmates are here only six months or less. If he has no high school credit at all, the inmate will need at least six months to get his G.E.D. With one year of high school he can get it in four to five months; with two years, three months. Up to one hundred inmates get their G.E.D.s every year, and about 75 actually get a regular high school diploma. Periodically, the new high school graduate is bused to a high school in town that sponsors the program out here and they get to march around in a cap and gown and feel good about their accomplishment. And they do. As a School Officer, what I've heard most from the successful student is something like I recently heard from a middle aged inmate with thinning hair, hard wrinkles, too many tattoos, and bad teeth. He was on his way to his high school graduation, smiling with wonder and pride when he said, "I used to hate school, and I wasn't any good at it. I never thought I could learn this stuff, and now I'm a high school graduate!"

Assistant Day Officer

The Assistant Day Officer (A.D.O.) is a flunky and a gopher. The A.D.O. assists the Day Officer, obviously, which means he does counts in camp, checks on the inmates who are not on crew, checks the mess hall and dorm crews, passes out mail, does pat-downs and strip searches (see "Inmate Slang") when crews return, and is available for hill coverage and any other job that needs to be done to assist. The Day Officer stays put in the Admin office, does paper work, answers the phone and handles any emergencies that come in from the crews, while the A.D.O. runs around the camp.

Between a fourth and half of the camp population on any given work day remain in camp to clean the dorms, work in the mess hall, clean the staff quarters, do laundry, clean the admin building, and grounds maintenance. Except for the students who are off by themselves in the school building everyone else is out on crew or on town trip. The A.D.O. must know who they are and where they are at any given time all day.

Swing Officer

This is considered the most difficult job in the camp. From eleven AM to eleven PM the Swing Officer has two primary functions, inmate locker searches and processing inmate intakes, but he usually ends up doing a whole lot more. That's because he is also vacation and emergency relief, which means he has to be available for any job twenty-four hours a day. He may be swing one day, crew boss the next, A.D.O. the next, and finish out his week on nights. He's the one most likely to be called upon when an officer is needed to take an inmate to the hospital or back to county jail.

Every week he's assigned sixty locker searches, a random inspection of an inmate's locker in his dorm, but quite often the job ends up being poorly

done or optional. The lockers are supposed to be searched for contraband, which can be, in addition to drugs and weapons, any unauthorized foods, too many clothes, tattoo equipment, cigarette lighters, and quite a long list of other items. Sometimes the Swing Officer only has time to open the locker door, glance inside, and close it. But given enough time and with any effort at all, he will probably write up more Rule Violations (RVs) as a result of locker searches than any other officer that week.

New intakes, on the other hand, can’t be shrugged off so easily. Four or five evenings a week around dinnertime the camp gets new intakes. These come from two sources, county jails and the other honor camp, but mostly from county jails. When the new inmate comes to camp he’s strip searched, eats dinner, goes over his medical history with the duty nurse, then the Swing Officer really goes to work. Each inmate is given two sets of camp uniforms, a pair of boots, a hard hat, a lock for his locker, bedding, toiletries, and rolling papers for tobacco if he smokes. Everything is numbered, examined, and checked off. All personal items he was allowed to bring to camp are listed and bagged, then the officer goes over the main camp rules, a long and detailed list in the *Inmate Rule Book*. If the inmate doesn’t speak English, which is common, and the officer isn’t bilingual, also common, then a trusted bilingual inmate does the translating, which invariably slows down an already laborious process.

Once the inmate has all his stuff – clothes, bedding, personal effects, and new rules to remember – he’s sent off to his assigned dorm and bunk. The officer then has a stack of paperwork to organize and include in each inmate's file. And, he’s probably nearing eleven PM, the end of his shift. If he’s done early because he only had a few new intakes, he helps out the night crew with hill coverage and formal counts.

Nights

The Night Crew, usually three or four officers and a Senior, do the bulk of the paperwork generated during the day. They also do random urine tests every evening and closely monitor activities in and around the dorms that are located on a slight incline, called *the hill*, about 50 yards from the Admin building where the Night Crew does its work and hangs out. After dinner, from six to ten PM, the inmates, except for those who go to night classes or church services, are free to watch TV, go to the rec room or hobby area, or lay on their *own* bed in their *own* dorm to read or write letters, or do nothing. With most of the officers in the staff quarters or gone home this is always a potentially dangerous time for settling old scores or starting new ones.

Since the camp has zero tolerance for fighting anyone caught at it will be “rolled up,” which means they are cuffed and chained and sent back to

county jail. Two officers have to accompany the re-classed inmate(s), which means that a Night Officer and usually one of the day shift officers staying over in quarters will be pulled in for a least two hours to take the offender(s) to central jail downtown San Diego, then drive back to camp. The inmates are confined to their dorms at a ten PM curfew, then lights out at eleven, and the night crew can begin to relax a bit.

By midnight, most of the paper work is done if it’s an efficient Night Crew, which leaves six hours of drinking coffee, counting inmates every hour while they sleep, making occasional security checks, walking the perimeter, and yawning a lot to stay awake. Frequently one of the night crew will bring in a couple of videos from home, always some violent action movie, and we can all see it again for the tenth time. When we’re hungry we can raid the bakery for cookies and refrigerators for milk in the mess hall. Occasionally, a courageous officer tries to cook something. Occasionally, it’s edible.

Town Trip

The Town Trip Officer drives a long, green bus with bars on the windows into town every morning with inmates who are going in for medical or dental appointments, with those who have Rule Violation hearings, with those who are going to court for additional charges or other modifications of their sentence, and with those who can’t stop smiling all the way into the city—the releases, the inmates who have served their time. Once the officer arrives with this bunch, he goes to what’s called the Holding Room, a large cinder block addition to the downtown Probation Supervision Office. From there the officer spends most of the day shuttling inmates out and back in a caged van to various locations throughout the city. In the afternoon, new intakes are brought in from one of the Sheriff's jails and processed. At about four or five PM the Town Trip Officer returns from his shuttle runs, loads up the bus with the new intakes and the inmates he brought with him in the morning, except for the releases, and heads back to camp.

*   *

Inmate Slang

and Other Useful Terms

- **The Big House**. A secure county jail or state prison where inmates do hard time. Nearly all honor camp inmates have done time in The Big House before coming to the work camp.
- **Brother**. Only a black inmate calls another black inmate a Brother, but it's tolerated when whites and Latinos call a black inmate a Brother indirectly (e.g., "Are the Brothers going to play basketball tonight?").
- **Buffed Up**. Someone who appears physically strong from a lot of weight lifting is said to be Buffed Up.
- **Cadillac**. A light metal tool for picking up litter, about three feet in length with a handle and a triggering device at one end that opens and closes a claw that grips litter at the other.
- **Candy Coach**. A term brought over from Juvenile Hall that is occasionally used in the camp to label an officer who is easy or "soft" on inmates. A common rationalization for why some officers become Candy Coaches is that when the tough, new officer discovers disciplining an inmate requires unpleasant confrontations and tiresome paperwork, this realization consciously or unconsciously encourages him to not notice minor rule violations when they occur.
- **Coyote**. Name of a guide who helps illegal aliens enter the U.S. We always have a lot of Coyote, human and canine, inside and outside of camp.
- **Dirt Bag**. Officer's slang for an especially obnoxious inmate. Some officers consider all inmates Dirt Bags.
- **Dog**. A term of friendship among white inmates only. For example, "Gimme a light, Dog." (Also see *Wood*.)
- **Ese** (sounds like "essay"). Latinos use this word almost as much as *Homes* and *Homie*. It's not a regular Spanish word, it's slang for *man*, as in "What up, Ese?" Blacks often call Latinos Eses, either to them or about them. Whites occasionally do too.
- **Gang Banger**. Slang for a member of a gang recognized and registered with the local police. Both the amount of violence and number of gangs in many cities have increased more than 1000% in the last fifteen years. Honor camps try to keep out known Gang Bangers because they are often violent and racially divisive.
- **High Profile**. An inmate that gets noticed and watched more carefully because he sticks out, is often loud and aggressive and pushes the rules to the limit. Always used negatively by staff.

¬ **Hood**. The neighborhood an inmate is from. Originally black slang it is sometimes used by whites and Latinos.

¬ **Homes, Homie, Homeboy**. Similar to Hood, most often used as a term of friendship to indicate the other person is from the same race, background, and/or culture. Homes and Homie are used constantly by Latinos in speaking to each other only. Blacks use Homeboy in speaking to other blacks only. Whites occasionally use any one of the three, but more commonly use *Dog* or *Wood*.

¬ **Juice, Juice Card**. To have influence or some connection that gets special favors or treatment from one in a position of authority. Used by inmates and staff. An inmate can have juice with an officer and an officer can have juice with a supervisor or director. If someone is "squeezing their Juice Card," they are working their connection.

¬ **Kicks**. When there is overcrowding in the jails the Superior Courts require the Sheriff give automatic reductions in the sentences of all well behaved inmates, generally ranging from five to ten days.

¬ **Lay-in**. A sick inmate who's required to stay on his bunk all day, except for trips to the duty nurse or toilet.

¬ **Lead Man**. Crew Bosses choose one inmate as Lead Man, a hard worker who takes initiative and is comfortable giving orders, usually a mature middle-aged man. The Lead Man gives direction and assignments to the other inmates while on crew with as much autonomy as the Crew Boss allows. For this leadership position he receives an additional 10 cents per day and gets the security of riding in the front cab of the crew truck with the Crew Boss and *Swamper*.

¬ **Lop**. A lazy worker. Term used by both officers and inmates. Everyone knows who the Lops are.

¬ **Mad Dogging** (aka., eye-fucking). A fixed stare of pure hate an inmate may direct at staff or other inmate or anyone that's pissed him off. Some inmates are especially good at Mad Dogging and may have practiced it for years.

¬ **"Man walking"**. A warning given for two very different reasons. For safety on crew when anyone is walking near an inmate using a potentially injurious tool such as a McLeod he's supposed to say, "Man walking," or just "walking," and the worker is supposed to stop using the tool until the walking person has passed. The other kind of warning is given by an inmate to other inmates when he sees an officer walking near enough to see or hear what they may not want the officer to see or hear.

¬ **Multiple Priors**. An inmate with numerous convictions, especially repeat offenders of a particular type of crime. It's not uncommon for an inmate to have 15-20 convictions for driving offenses such as speeding, recklessness, driving without a license, et cetera. Usually it

¬

- denotes multiple prior misdemeanors or felonies.
- **On the leg**. When an inmate shows an eagerness to please an officer. In other contexts it's known as sucking up or brown nosing. Inmates openly deride anyone who's on the leg, usually with such comments as, "Get off the leg," or "Get the officer a new can of 'Leg Off'."
- **On the Hill, Hill Coverage**. In camp, an officer is On the Hill when he's circulating among the inmates in and around the dorms or anywhere they are congregating. It refers to the fact that at this camp the dorms are located on a slight hill above Admin offices.
- **The Outs**. Anywhere in the whole world outside of camp, jail or prison.
- **Pruno**. An alcoholic beverage made secretly by an inmate(s) who mixes a large quantity of sugar with any fruits or fruit juices pilfered from the mess hall. The mixture is then stored in any large, sealed container until it ferments, usually in a week or two. A favorite hiding place is to bury it in the ground. I'm told the taste of Pruno is absolutely vile, but a good batch will definitely provide the intoxication desired.
- **Roll-up**. When an inmate demonstrates he's violent or otherwise unable to work well in an honor camp environment he's called to the Admin building under the pretext of counseling. Once there, he's led by an officer into a back room where three additional officers are waiting, quietly. When he enters the room he's told to put his hands up over his head and against the wall, feet back and spread apart. Two officers, one on each side, hold him firmly in place while a third locks a chain around his waist that has handcuffs attached. His hands are cuffed to the waist chain, the tops of his work boots are unlaced and turned down, and another pair of cuffs are placed on his ankles. It takes about a half hour for the transfer paperwork to be completed before the inmate is helped out to a caged van and driven to Central, the downtown San Diego central jail.
- **Rule Violation (RV).** In camp there are major and minor rule violations. Minor violations are usually written up as warnings (see *Warning Chrono*) until there are two or more of the same offense which may warrant an RV. Any officer observing a Rule Violation can write it up. Some write two or three a year, some write two or three a week, some don't write them at all (see *Candy Coach*). Getting an RV requires the inmate to go downtown to a hearing officer who determines the merit of the case and attaches an additional number of days the inmate has to serve onto his sentence. Additional days can range from one to sixty, depending on the severity of the violation and the severity of the hearing officer reviewing the file. All rules, major and minor, are specified in the required reading *Rule Book* given to
-

¬ each inmate on intake into camp.

¬ **Scullery**. Actually, Navy slang for the dish washing room or area of a kitchen (mess hall). A Scullery Sergeant is the inmate in charge of the scullery and scullery workers.

¬ **Shank**. A sticking weapon meant to penetrate deeply and injure or kill. Made in camp, jail, or prison from anything that can be given a sharp point. Screwdrivers stolen from maintenance then sharpened on concrete or stone are a favorite shank.

¬ **Shot out**. An expression inmates use to describe any person, place or thing that's old, broken, or worn out .

¬ **Snitch, Dry Snitch**. Any inmate who tells anyone in authority about the misbehavior of another inmate, often done for special favors in return. The act of snitching is often referred to as "dropping the dime," a reference to snitches on the street who call the police from a public telephone (back when such things were readily available in every city and phone calls cost a dime). Inside or out, anyone accused of being a snitch receives what's called the "mark of death," and will sooner or later will be caught inside or out and be severely beaten or killed. A Dry Snitch occurs when an informer deliberately talks about the misdeeds) of another loudly enough for a nearby officer to overhear. Unlike a regular Snitch, a Dry Snitch is much less likely to get the mark of death.

¬ **Strip Search**. Conducted whenever a new inmate comes to camp, after visits with family and friends at the visiting center, and randomly after coming back on crew. The procedure is as follows: the inmate or inmates (a group of as many as 20 inmates may be searched by one officer at one time) goes into a closed room with an officer and removes all his clothes; the officer then instructs him to "shampoo" his hair, run his fingers through it to make certain nothing is concealed therein; then he's instructed to raise his arms, wiggle his fingers, open his mouth and wiggle his tongue; next, he lifts his testicles ("huevos," the Spanish word for eggs is usually used); then he turns around and lifts his left foot, wiggling his toes, then the right foot, wiggling those toes, finally, he's instructed to bend over, spread his cheeks (butt cheeks), and cough. After this examination, the officer checks each piece of clothing just before the inmate puts them on one at a time.

¬ **Stores**. All the things an inmate can buy from the camp warehouse that stores and provides toiletries, tobacco, snacks, dry soups, writing paper, et cetera. The inmate can buy Stores with his daily wages plus any money he can get put on the books from home.

¬ **Strong-Arm**. Intimidation tactics of the "strong" preying on the weak. Strength either individually or in numbers is used to obtain the new or weaker inmate's stores, personal items, and/or favors, including sexual

¬

¬ favors. This practice is more common in the Big House than it is in honor camps.

¬ **Swamper** (aka, Swamp Thing). A hard worker selected by the Crew Boss who is a clean inmate and who has been cleared by medical to be free of TB, hepatitis, or other communicable diseases. The Swamper fetches and sharpens tools, carries canteens of water for the other inmates, prepares lunches from the food provided by the mess hall, and cleans the truck. For this position the Swamper earns an additional 5 cents a day and rides with the Lead Man in the front cab with the Crew Boss.

¬ **Tweaking**. Anyone high on drugs, especially methamphetamine, is said to be tweaking. The most trivial RV I ever heard about was written when an inmate asked an especially skinny officer if he tweaked (used meth) or if he was just naturally that skinny (this officer also had a reputation for writing more RVs than any other officer on our shift).

¬ **Warning Chrono**. “Chrono” means chronology, as in chronology of events. A warning is a minor rule violation written up and included in the inmate’s file. It can be anything from being noisy during the Count to giving a disrespectful response to an officer. Whether it’s a warning or an RV often depends on the officer involved (see *Tweaking*).

¬ **Wood**. A term of solidarity for white inmates, as in “Hey, Wood,” or “He’s a Wood.” The word is shortened for “peckerwood,” Southern slang for poor white trash. Peckerwood is actually an inversion of woodpecker, according to the dictionary, which very few Woods ever see until they come to camp. We have several. Only a white inmate calls another white inmate a Wood, but both blacks and Latinos refer indirectly to a white inmate as a Wood. White officers are never called Wood.

* * *

HAIKU

The haiku poet wars of the 1960s and 70s finally ended, and the traditionalists lost. It's been a long time since the early adopters of haiku in the West defined this Japanese art form with three lines of 5-7-5 syllables. The seasonal words and references (kigo) are no longer required. Today, the seasonal word lists slavishly followed by haiku writers for centuries have been set aside. There are those who still prefer the discipline of the old ways, but it is widely understood by both camps, modern and traditional, Japanese and Western, that great haiku can be written with and without such constraints.

Haiku is still a short, usually 3-line poem of about 12 syllables, more or less. Nature is still the favored topic, the present tense rules, most capital letters and punctuation are ignored, but even today rhyming and anthropomorphizing is still frowned upon. Just about everything else is acceptable. In some ways it is a liberating time for haiku writers; in other ways it's more difficult, even confusing for those who crave structure. It's a personal choice not unlike wearing a beard or being clean-shaven. The following haiku is of the modern sort, and I wear a beard.

Important Points

from American haiku master Lee Gurga, from his book, *Fresh Scent*:

- Haiku juxtaposes two or more images, and it is the interaction between these two images that creates a space in which the reader's emotions can grow.

- The manner in which the poet sequences the poem's images will tend to activate either an *intuitive* or an *analytical* response from the reader.

- "Haiku writing is another vehicle for entering the True Way [Zen]." Hiroaki Sato quoting the father of haiku, Bashō (1644-1694)

THE CAMP:

we stop and stare
lean wildcat and I
camp road

evening mist
and then the dark—
distant sound of rain

porch light moth orgy—
a rolling fog
covers the moon

laughing coyote—
dinner
in dark falsetto

all night
crickets and frogs—
my heater hums

swallows flying
vast continents of sky—
die! mosquitoes

broken bird nest
three sparrow babies
alone

gray clouds brown dirt
gray fence brown shirt
walking the hill

fat frog
motionless at my feet—
you go first

free food and great sex
searching, searching
springtime sparrows

midnight silence
in the mess hall—
milk and cookies

rigid lizard
bug-eyed, brown and black—
stop staring!

noisy poplar tree
shaking and shouting—
blackbirds

maximum speed
inches above the ground—
hunting swallow

code black
death threats and steel shanks—
winter sun

dawn
a wary quiet—
hooting owl

behind the mess hall
tattered crow
one leg, no tail

walking slowly—
housefly
on peanut butter

staff quarters
dozing, dozing
waiting to call home

black diamondback
rising to strike—
death by shovel

round edge hard
straight edge soft
half moon

behind Charlie dorm
forty Latinos
circle a Black man

counting counting
inmates in the dark
an arm, a leg, a fart

cozy housefly
sleeps on my wall—
the urge to kill

Latino inmates
sing folk songs on the porch—
it rained all day

Black inmate
raps profanity—
chain link fence

huddled together
thugs and petty thieves—
the falling snow

November night
moonlight
on the razor wire

ON CREW:

cold wet standing guard—
a snail
climbs aboard my boot

blue gum eucalypt
in a steady wind—
crow building sky nest

flaming scarlet
blossomed Bottlebrush—
bologna sandwich

suddenly!
white wings beat my heart—
snowy egret

standing in rain
guarding the world—
even my belt is tired

I whittle in the shade—
skinny mosquito
sings for its supper

mockingbird sings
on freeway light pole—
roar of rush hour

thumping McLeods—
dirt brown snake
shakes its rattle

three inmates
pass one butt—
stores tomorrow

abandoned barracks
circa World War 2
windows shot out

county road station—
gravel, diesel, trucks
government green

firing my Lead Man—
a rabbit nibbles
on cactus bud

crew sorts garbage
county dump
angry flies

gray and silent
column of eucalyptus—
a cold rain

strip-searching crew
shivering cold—
“spread your cheeks and cough!”

<>

coming home—
my wife
standing by the door

<<>>

Epilogue

Written in 2019. Today, Camp Barrett is empty and abandoned until San Diego County can figure out what to do with it. I left the camp in 1996 after 2 ½ years because it was being turned into a juvenile facility. If it had remained as an honor camp for adult men I would have stayed for the remainder of my working life. I had no higher ambition; I had never had a better job and didn't think I ever would. As it turned out, I was right. I liked everything about that job except my colleagues, and even they were not too difficult because we just left each other alone, mostly.

With considerable misgiving, I took the Deputy Probation Officer exam, passed it, and promoted. For the next 2 years, 3 months, 4 days, and 5 minutes (true fact) I was a Juvenile Investigator. Then, I was allowed to come back to Adult Probation. Juvenile Investigator was such a nasty, unpopular job that anyone who had the misfortune to promote into that position was required to be there for two years before they could put in for a transfer.

I became an Adult Investigator writing pre-sentence investigation reports for San Diego Superior Court at the Hall of Justice in downtown San Diego. After a year, I became a Court Officer, representing the Probation Department in Superior Court, also downtown. Eventually I promoted to Senior Deputy Probation Officer and was the Senior Court Officer for San Diego County Probation when I retired in 2004.

The Honor Camp is where I began the rest of my life with the Stoa.

<<<>>>