



Congratulations!

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A Touch of Class

Over 350 Inmates Accept Recognition and Diplomas

It looked just like any other graduation ceremony, except for the gate locking everyone in, the presence of correctional officers, the surrounding towers, the barbwire fencing and the uniform under the cap and gown! During the week of June 6th, 2011, Clark County School District (CCSD) held commencement ceremonies for inmates receiving their high school diplomas, GEDs, and for those graduating from vocational programs at Southern Desert Correctional (SDCC), High Desert State Prison (HDSP) and Florence McClure Women's Correctional Center (FMWCC).

CCSD Principals Robert Tarter and Margaret Froby facilitated the festivities. CCSD Board Members, John Cole and Chris Garvey, were the key note speakers. They applauded the graduates for their determination and the sacrifice they showed in such a difficult environment, for taking the first step toward beginning a new life and for reaching such an important milestone. While sharing their personal stories, both reiterated the importance of pursuing additional goals and lifelong learning. CCSD instructors and teaching staff were present, confirming the graduates' sense of accomplishment. CCSD Administrators, Executive Director Bradley Waldron, Director Robert Henry and Coordinator Jennifer Keiser presented the class of 2011. Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) Administrators past and present were in attendance, former Director Howard Skolnik and Warden Anthony Scillia, current Director James G. Cox, Deputy Director Brian Connett and Wardens', Brian Williams and Carolyn Miles, welcomed the families and friends, encouraged the graduates to continue their education and congratulated the students on behalf of NDOC.



THE TASSEL IS WORTH THE HASSLE!



CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES!



Over 350 graduates were recognized. One hundred and forty-two were awarded GEDs, 90 received their high school diploma and 129 obtained certificates of completion in the following vocational areas: Automotive Technology, Computer Business Applications, Construction and the Entrepreneurship Program.

Despite the surroundings, the spirits of the graduates were high, and their feeling of accomplishment and hope soared. Parents and children of the graduates clapped and cheered as the inmates, wearing maroon caps and gowns marched to their seats to the sounds of "Pomp and Circumstance." You could really see the pride in the men's faces at their graduation ceremonies. In the gymnasium at FMWCC, it was difficult to tell whether there were more tears or laughs. However there was no doubt there were more tears, when graduate representative Paulette Perry delivered the following speech:

It is my great privilege to stand before you today and welcome our family, friends, and faculty to join with us, the graduating class of 2011, as we celebrate our commencement ceremony.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to you all. We could not have come this far without your endless guidance, support, and encouragement.

Henrik Ibsen once said, "It is not by spectacular achievement that man can be transformed but by will." It can most certainly be said of myself and of the women who join me here today that we are women of extraordinary will, made stronger by our experience as students here on Smiley Road.

My own personal journey to this point has been nothing short of miraculous, and for those of you who have seen me through it all, my gratitude is immeasurable. I stumbled through the doors of FNUCC a very broken woman. I was angry, lost, and more than a little confused. Although a high school diploma was not my agenda, I reached the point that my life was no longer acceptable and I was ready to make a change. From that point forward, education became the bridge I used to cross over from self-destruction to self-assurance

Some of you may remember Mr. May. Joining his classroom was a pivotal moment for me. The atmosphere in his class was very calm and easy going, and although I still had no idea what it was that I was doing, I was just glad that I had someplace else that I could go.

From Mr. May to Mrs. Parks, my hunger for knowledge began to grow. I found that I could leave my troubles behind and explore the world through literature. From ancient Rome to vaudeville, I began to see the world on a much larger scale.

From Mrs. Parks to Mrs. Reveal, I continued to learn from the history of others. Theodore Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, and Wild Bill Hickok were some true trail blazers. All of them overcame the immense challenges before them and inspired me to do the same. Mrs. Lorenz presented opportunities to expand my horizons with today's technology.

And then came Mr. Rocenzka. Between radical expressions and the dreaded math proficiency, I'm surprised I have any friends or hair left at all. If I wasn't sniffing on my friends' shoulders, I was definitely pulling out my hair in frustration. Mr. Rocenzka, I will always remember you saying "I am not your prison teacher. I am a Clark County School District educator, and you are my student." I will continue to keep the 11th commandment and reduce all fractions to their lowest common denominator. And I will forever remember that there is a solution to each problem if I continue to evaluate the facts.

We welcome Jeff Schumaker and Mrs. Couch, the latest addition to our Education staff. We recognize your enthusiasm and look forward to seeing a lot more of you.



I AM THE MASTER OF MY FATE; I AM THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL.
-WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY



Finally, to Mrs. Froby and Ms. Arden, the glue that holds the education department together; your patience and dedication to our success have been invaluable.

Graduating is such a huge accomplishment. We should all be proud because it was not easy. And from today on, always remember that we have now become our own trail blazers. We have set a path for the students of tomorrow, and we have proven not only to ourselves but also to those in our lives who have challenged us that when we put our mind to accomplishing anything, we can do it.

Congratulations, class of 2011!

The graduation ceremony is also an opportunity for family and friends who may have never dreamed they would finally see this day and have their wish granted. Families and friends were able to visit with the graduates after the ceremony, probably the best graduation gift the inmates could ask for.

THE DREAM IS NOW A REALITY

Lovelock Correctional Center (LCC) will be honoring their graduates in August. Pershing County School District Director of Education, Dave Pollard, asked the Western Nevada College (WNC) graduates to share stories of their education journey. The following three essays were written by Mr. Gallo, Mr. Bolanos, and Mr. Grim. NDOC's Education Division sincerely appreciates the students' candor and reflection.

By: Ricardo Gallo-Inmate #: 23128

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over again while expecting a different result. Therefore, at one point in my life, I was literally insane. It took the shock of a prison sentence to cause me to stop and evaluate my life, in order to regain my sanity.

Education was the clear way for me to break a cycle that I believed indestructible. It took me over ten years at a rate of one and sometimes two classes per semester, depending on my finances, to eventually achieve what I am celebrating today. To the world, a simple Associate Degree with a Business Emphasis, to me one of the happiest days of my life. One that I am sharing with those whom I love while praying to never forget the joy that I feel.

Thank you to all who helped me to change my hardened heart to one full of hope for the future, which I only pray that God through the Pardons Board, will grant me one day soon.

By: Antonio Bolanos-Inmate #1039906

I never finished a degree on the street, though I'd attended three separate colleges. By transferring credits to Western Nevada College and with substantial help from inmate staff and Mr. Pollard, I was able to finish - FINALLY - an Associates Degree.

It's a great feeling of accomplishment, even under the circumstances, and I feel it to be one very necessary step towards reintegrating into society after so many years of incarceration. We need as many things to hold in esteem as we can get. "Prison is for punishment." A quote from a former governor of Arizona, and it seems to be a national sentiment. I for one hope it has been my permanent rehabilitation.

GRADUATION IS ONLY A CONCEPT. IN REAL LIFE EVERY DAY YOU GRADUATE. GRADUATION IS A PROCESS THAT GOES ON UNTIL THE LAST DAY OF YOUR LIFE. IF YOU CAN GRASP THAT, YOU'LL MAKE A DIFFERENCE. -ARIE PENCOVICI



By: CinQue Grim- Inmate #74007

Change is one of the most difficult tasks to deal with in life. When you grow up in an environment with little to offer, you become content on feeding into the idea that there's nothing out there for me. I had lived this way for a long time and it eventually led me to prison. A place with even less to offer, so I had thought.

Once I accepted where I was, I began to look at myself and I've often wondered what happened. I've blamed anyone and everyone, but the one who was truly responsible...me! At that moment I decided that I had to do something. Something for me and strive to make up for all the bad decisions I've made so far. An education was my goal from then on.

When I first started my journey towards getting an education, it wasn't easy. I wasn't sure how to start so the first step was receiving my G.E.D. certificate. At first I was happy, but then I felt as if I took the easy way out. I didn't like that so I aimed higher and studied as much as I could to earn my High School Diploma. In the process of doing that, I had been attending college classes. I wanted to absorb as much information as I could.

With every level of accomplishment I pushed myself even further. I had my G.E.D., my High School Diploma, and after that, I wanted to become a college graduate. ... That, for me, would be the best feeling of accomplishment that I could ask for. When that moment arrived I was proud. I've accomplished not only a goal, but a dream as well. A dream that entailed becoming a new person. It's a testament to all who wish to make a change in their lives. An education is the start to it all and those who truly crave that change will achieve it. Prison isn't a dead end if you take advantage of its programs. I'm an example of that.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my mother for the constant encouragement she gave and continues to give. Without her support I'd probably still be absent in drive. WNC, thank you for the opportunity to get an education at Lovelock Correctional Center. Without it I wouldn't be writing this essay. To all those who have helped me along the way, students, teachers, and other inmates, thank you for all the help you gave to me throughout my educational journey. You've all given a part of yourself to help me better myself.

World's Most Famous Prison

Alcatraz Island, sometimes informally referred to as simply Alcatraz or locally as the Rock, is a small island located in the middle of San Francisco Bay in California, United States. It served as a lighthouse, then a military fortification, then a military prison followed by a federal prison until 1963. It became a national recreation area in 1972 and received landmarking designations in 1976 and 1986. Today, the island is a historic site operated by the National Park Service as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and is open to tours.

ALCATRAZ-Questions & Answers

What was the average stay?

On average, the time of residence was about eight years. Men were never directly sentenced to Alcatraz and usually had to earn their way. There were only two men ever paroled directly from Alcatraz to the free world.



ALCATRAZ-Questions & Answers con't.

How big was the average cell?

Each cell in B & C block was 5 feet by 9 feet. Cells at Alcatraz had a small sink with cold running water, small sleeping cot, and a toilet. Most men could extend their arms and touch each wall within their cell. The cells in D Block (segregation) were more spacious, but still the least popular. In D-Block, inmates were confined to their cells 24-hours per days, with the exception of one visit per week to the recreation yard, and these visits were alone.



How many cells were there?

There were 336 cells in B & C Block. NPS states that there were originally 348, but 12 were removed when stairways were installed at the end of each cellblock. There were 36 segregation cells, and 6 solitary confinement cells (actually known as confinement chambers by many inmates) in D-Block. Two cells on the end of C-Block were used as restrooms for the guard staff. The cells in A-Block were only used a few times for (rare) short term lock-up periods when an inmate did not require full solitary confinement seclusion, but needed to be fully isolated from other inmates. Records indicate that Clarence Carnes, Sam Shockley and Miran Thompson were all imprisoned in A-Block (separated by multiple cell lengths) following the 1946 Riots and while standing trial for the deaths of two Alcatraz Guards from the 1946 Escape Attempt. Otherwise, A-Block was used for materials storage.



Were Alcatraz inmates allowed visitors?

Yes. Inmates were granted one visit per month and each visitation had to be approved directly by the Warden. No physical contact was allowed and rules dictated that inmates were not allowed to discuss current events, or any matters concerning prison life. Inmates talked with visitors via intercom and a correctional officer monitored the conversations during each the majority of the time (Alcatraz Captain Phil Bergen stated that they didn't always have time to monitor the conversations, but the vast majority were). Inappropriate conduct during visits would result in a loss of visiting and/or other privileges.

Where did the families of the guard staff live?

At any given time, there were about 300 civilians living on Alcatraz that included both women and children. The primary living areas for families were Building #64, three apartment buildings, one large duplex, and four large wooden houses for senior officers. Families enjoyed their own bowling alley, small convenience store, and soda fountain shop for the younger island residents. Families did most of their shopping on the mainland since the prison boat made twelve scheduled runs to the Van Ness Street Pier each day. The Warden lived in a large house adjacent to the cell house and actually used inmates with good conduct records for cleaning and cooking.

Do the inmates who were imprisoned at Alcatraz have anything good to say about the prison?

Actually, yes. Willie Radkay (he shared a cell next to Machine Gun Kelly), indicated that having your own cell was a great advantage over other federal prisons. By having your own cell, it reduced the chances of being sexually violated and the privacy aspect was also a cherished benefit. He also stated that the staff (the majority of the time) treated the inmates respectfully though they rarely spoke to one another. Furthermore, the food was the best within the entire prison system and considered his time at Alcatraz to be better than at any other penitentiary.

What did inmates dislike most about Alcatraz?

The common theme expressed by most inmates was the rule of silence which was discontinued in the late 1930's. In the earlier years of Alcatraz, inmates were not allowed to talk to one another except during meals and recreation periods. Some inmates commonly emptied out the water from their toilets and created a primitive communications system through the sewage piping. This rule was considered harsh and inmates were disciplined for even minor violations of this code. Inmates also state that the island was always cold. Most agree that cells on their higher tiers with window views were more popular since they tended to be warmer than the ground level cells.



Were executions performed at Alcatraz?

No. Alcatraz had no facilities for Capital Punishment and this process was usually left to State institutions. For Alcatraz, inmates who had been served a death sentence were transferred to San Quentin State Penitentiary for execution in the Gas Chamber.

How many people died while at Alcatraz?

There were eight people murdered by inmates on Alcatraz. Five men committed suicide, and fifteen died from natural illnesses. The Island also boasted it's own morgue but no autopsies were performed there. All deceased inmates were brought back to the mainland and released to the San Francisco County Coroner.

Was it true that inmates were locked in dungeons for punishment?

The cellhouse had been built on top of a 19th century fortress that was used by the military to protect the Bay. Below A-Block was a set of cells that were know as the Spanish Dungeon. These cells had been used primarily during the military prison era. In the late 1930's it is alleged that the dungeon cells were occasionally used for unmanageable inmates. Many correctional officers have agreed they had heard, or were aware that some extremely unmanageable inmates were handcuffed to bars in the dungeons for short periods of time. A-Block was used frequently as the segregation unit before D Block had undergone the transformation into a lock-down unit.

How many prisoners did Alcatraz have at any given time?

The highest number ever recorded was 302, and the lowest number 222. The average number of inmates during the 29 years of service was around 260. There were approximately 1545 total men imprisoned there and the NPS indicated that while 1,576 number were issued, over thirty convicts were returned to Alcatraz with different numbers issued.

How many people escaped?

The NPS records indicate that 36 prisoners were involved in various attempts. Two inmates actually successfully made it off the island but were quickly captured. Seven inmates were shot and killed trying to escape. Two drowned and 5 inmates have been unaccounted for presumed drowned. The most famous escape was that of Frank Morris and the Anglin Brothers. All three were successful in swimming off Alcatraz, but all three are believed to have drowned.

How many birds did Robert "Birdman of Alcatraz" Stroud keep while on Alcatraz?

None. Stroud had bred and studied birds at the Federal Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. Stroud was imprisoned at Alcatraz from 1942 until 1959. It was determined that Stroud was abusing his research privileges and sent to Alcatraz. Stroud was widely disliked by many fellow inmates and correctional officers.

MOVIE- Birdman of Alcatraz-1962 Plot

Robert Stroud (Lancaster) is imprisoned as a young man for committing a murder in Alaska. He is shown as a rebellious inmate, fighting against a rigid prison system: on his way to jail by train he breaks open the window to allow the suffocating inmates to breathe. His rebellious attitude puts him in conflict with Harvey Shoemaker (Malden), the warden of Leavenworth Prison. While in jail, Stroud learns that his mother (Ritter) tried to visit him but was denied and told to return later in the week. Outraged, he attacks a guard over the issue and the man is killed. Stroud is sentenced to death, but his mother runs a successful campaign and it is commuted to life in prison. The terms of the sentence require that he be kept in solitary confinement for the rest of his life. To break the monotony, Stroud adopts a sparrow as a pet. This starts a trend and he and the other convicts acquire birds, such as canaries, as gifts from the outside. Before long, Stroud has built up a collection of birds and cages. When they fall ill, he makes experiments and comes up with a cure. As the years pass, Stroud becomes an expert on bird diseases and even publishes a book on the subject. His writings are so impressive that a doctor describes him as a "genius". Stroud later meets bird-lover Stella Johnson (Field) and agrees to go into business, marketing his bird remedies. While in prison, he and Stella marry, but his mother disapproves and this causes a rift between mother and son. He is abruptly transferred to the federal penitentiary at Alcatraz (the "Rock"), a new maximum security institution where he is not permitted to keep birds. He is now growing elderly but still shows a rebellious side, writing a history of the U.S. penal system that is suppressed by Shoemaker, now warden of the Rock. Still at odds with authority, Stroud nevertheless manages to help stop a prison rebellion in 1946 by throwing out the guns acquired by the convicts. He then assures the authorities that they can now re-enter the premises without fear of being shot. Although Stroud has been a thorn in his side for decades, Shoemaker acknowledges that he has never lied to him and takes him at his word. Although constantly denied parole, Stroud is eventually transferred to another prison in Missouri after a petition campaign.

Why did Alcatraz close?

Primarily because of rising costs and deteriorating facilities. Operationally, Alcatraz was the most expensive prison of any state or federal institution. It was determined that other institutions could serve the same purpose for less cost.



"legally escape-read a book"
-NDOC DEPUTY DIRECTOR MCDANIEL



NEXT ISSUE:
WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE PRISON



"from cells to classrooms"