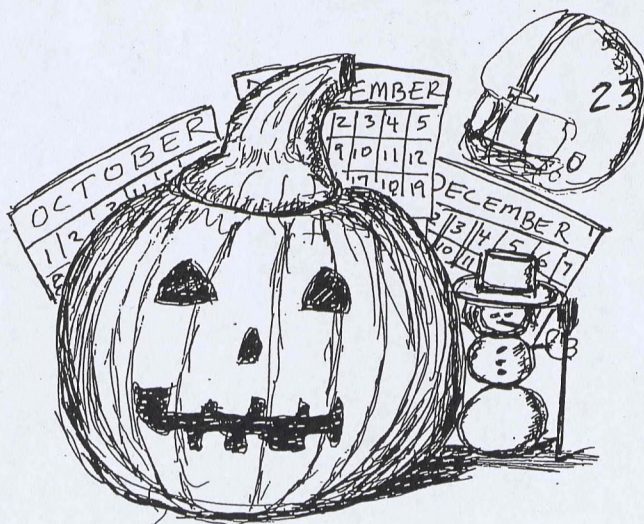


#30



DECEMBER 2015

KEVIN [REDACTED]
ELKTON-FSL
UPDATE LETTER 30

KEVIN [REDACTED]

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Kevin's Update Letter #30. If you're seeing this letter, you've probably received them in the past. There's almost no one getting this letter as their first letter, so you know what these are about. About 4.5 years ago, I wrote my first of these letters to a small handful of folks--family, friends, and fellow colleagues. It was handwritten and photocopied. Since then, it's evolved, and the recipient list has grown. Elkton prison is located in eastern Ohio, and the Cuyahoga river runs north of here in Cleveland. When I first arrived, I thought about our location and geography and thought of the REM song, "Cuyahoga." It became how I close my introductions.

"Let's put our heads together. Let's start a new country up.
Underneath the riverbed, we burned the river down.
This where we laughed and swam, hunted, danced and sang.
Take our picture here. Take a souvenir
Cuyahoga."

-REM, "Cuyahoga"

I haven't hunted, danced, or swam here though I have laughed and sang (and cried a few time too). I've also had plenty of pictures taken here. Since this is my last letter, I'll add another REM song lyric to that old one.

"It's the end of the world as we know it, and I FEEL FINE."

*Cuyahoga
Kevin ☺*

*THE END

Well, this is the last Update Letter from Elkton...I don't anticipate I'll ever be back here. "Number 30" seems like a nice round number to end with, so this is where I shall end. That round number combined with the fact that I'll be leaving soon, guarantees that I won't have the time to write another letter from here. There could be future letters from somewhere. We shall see.

A few people have asked if an inmate at Elkton will continue to send the letters to the public audience, and this answer is I doubt it. The mechanism has been honed and is in place, but I think most people don't have the same interest in writing letters (at least not these kinds of letters) that I have. They have their circle of friends and family with whom they talk with and to whom they write. They're happy to keep it at that. We all have our ways of "doing time." It just turned out that writing letters (and tutoring and softball) is sort of how I decided to do mine. I hope that you agree that it beats gambling and stealing.

When I get out, I know one of the rules to follow is about correspondence. Inmates are not supposed to be in touch with other inmates or felons, at least while we're on probation. At least that's my understanding. Still, you don't spend 5 years with guys 24/7/365 without making some close connections. There are men here and men who have passed through here with whom I'd like to stay in touch. I think I could continue to serve as a resource for and friend to some of them. That said, I'm not willing to piss off my probation officer (or theirs), violate, and come back to Elkton prison for it. Therefore, this might be my last letter to some of you for awhile. Maybe a parent, a friend, or your therapist who gets a future letter can share it with you. So, if that sounds like a "good bye and good luck," there's an element of that there

Not only is letter 30 a good time to be wrapping up, it's also a VERY good time to be leaving this place. Prison's never fun (and if it is, that's part of your problem...) Lately, though, Elkton-FSL has become not a nice place at all. Let me back up to where the last letter ended and share a little bit of what has happened since then. What LIFE ON THE COMPOUND has become. Well, awhile back there was the STINGER found in the laundry room over in HB. That was considered "hard contraband" and that caused all of H-unit's TVs to be shut off for a few days. Next, there was the WATER MAIN BREAK. For a full day we lost urinals, toilets, sinks, showers, drinking water, kitchen water....basically, if it involved water, these 600 men

didn't have it. The water main was fixed, but the water was not potable (and we can't boil water), so we were left to drink from bottled water (and it was rationed) for several days. No coffee, no tea, no Gatorade....

Several weeks later, a locksmith was on the compound, and, then later, a lock mechanism turned up missing from an interior door on the compound. We were recalled, and staff began a shakedown looking for the lock. They found it on top of the ice machine in G-unit downstairs. Since the staff couldn't determine who took the lock, the authorities shut down the G-unit TV room for an entire week. The episode was similar to one in our unit from a few weeks earlier. A staff member was drinking water from a water fountain when it began to vibrate. It stopped. It began to vibrate again. It stopped. The staff member shook the water fountain, and a cell phone fell to the floor. Ooohps. Since the water fountain is in a common area and they couldn't link the phone to anyone, my unit had its TV rooms locked up for awhile. (Yes, locking up TV rooms is a favorite punishment.)

Fast forward to the first week of November (last week.) Staff are allowed to smoke CIGARETTES in a "smoke shack" in front of our housing unit. [Staff smoking and us not having cigarettes is a separate conversation and debate.] There are receptacles for their mostly-finished cigarettes and butts. An inmate desperate for a cigarette ran out and grabbed a handful of these butts. The lieutenant on duty ran across the compound to catch him, but the inmate made it safely inside. That happened on a Saturday around noon. Now, Saturday's not normally a day that one would think to institute new policies, but that evening, we started having 10-minute moves. What this means is that the FSL now has a 10-minute move at the top of every hour. All day, every day. It's sort of like the class changes at a school at the end of each period. Not having these moves for the last several years represented a type of freedom, at least for me, that other prisons don't have and made my time here much more productive. For instance, if I needed mailing labels for the envelope that this letter arrived in, I'd zip over to the law library and print them out. Now, I have to wait for the move, run to the law library, hope the printer's free and clear, print them, and run back--all within 10 minutes. But now, take a book, because if you don't make it, you're stuck there for the next hour. Multiply and ditto that scenario into anything I want to do now. Without getting into a deep exegesis on the motivations and effectiveness of these moves, stopping the flow of contraband is one of the stated reasons for these moves. Still, as I watch 40 men stand on either side of a locked door waiting for a move to be announced, it strikes me that the surge of humanity that's about to flow past each other won't likely be (nor could hardly be) searched for contraband.

Anyway, as I write this, I have 44 days until halfway house, and I'll have to adapt (I will). Still, the 10-minute moves represent a psychic and motivational blow that I wasn't expecting. This place is becoming an even worse plan than just recently, a place I don't like, and will be happy to leave behind. It's a good time to be going even if it wasn't my time to be going.

And then there are the changes to the federal menu. I know the food is doubtlessly worse at county jails, but I'm not thrilled with what I see coming-- a lot more turkey everywhere, almost no pork, many more cold cuts (shredded bologna chef salad and, recently, bologna = "turkey ham"), and a new dinner: 2 pancakes, fried potatoes, Styrofoam cup of peanut butter, and 2 slice of bread. Huh? Again, it's a good time to be leaving.

Finally, on Dec. 23rd, I'll be off to halfway house. I don't know everything about the place, but a friend drove up to Waukegan and made a few phone calls. I have a few things to report, and I've begun to mentally fill in some of the gaps of what I don't know. The halfway house resides in a multistory building above the Sheriff's Dept. It appears to be more of a residential center (please, please, please) than just Andy Griffith and Barney Fife's jail (God no, God no, God no). If you want to visit me, it's by videoconference only (frown). I've been told that as soon as the halfway house and the BOP approve my job, I'll be able to start work. To that end, I'm trying to line that up now. A Metra (suburban commuter rail) train stop is only 4 blocks away. It's about an hour train commute into Chicago (take a book or a newspaper). There is a DMV office nearby which is a plus since my driver's license expired here. A nearby college has a GED program (I'll volunteer!?). A person at the halfway house shared that after 30 days there, you get a 12-hour pass. After the next 30 days, you earn another pass. By 100 days, many federal inmates are allowed to go home and finish their time on ankle bracelet. Hopefully, I'll be allowed to. I hear from other folks that halfway house can oddly be more restrictive than federal prison--smaller spaces, no compound, more counts, more breathalyzers. The good news of course is that you're allowed to wear real clothes, have a job, and have a cell phone. My only concerns are that, if the halfway house isn't well run, there could be violence, theft, or drugs. Like prison, I'm less concerned about what I'll do than what someone will do to me. Ditto walking to and from the train stations. That's weird huh? The criminal afraid of everyone else. As a related note, I've heard that my probation officer hasn't been assigned yet and, thus, no one has visited my future residence to approve it. That's as much as I know now (and some of that includes filling in the gaps of what I hear). I have a mental picture based on that. Anything more than that would be wild speculation, so I'll save it.

For here, though, I'm on a definite down slope. Everything I've collected here over the past few years is slated for a couple of dispositions: (1) sent home (2) given away (3) thrown away or (4) a very small amount will go out the door with me. These decision and executions will take up much of the last month here.

Meanwhile, over in GED, tutoring continues. The GED program within the BOP will finally convert to the computer test in March, and every student has essentially one more shot with the pencil-and-paper test until the computer test comes on-line. We've already seen the new preparation books they'll use to teach the computer test and a tutorial of the test on the computer. More difficult with more, different types of questions and obviously computer manipulation. I won't be involved in the change over, and it's just as well. In SPIN class, I've already begun to hand over the reins in running the class to Parson. He'll be a good instructor even if his music selection/accompaniment is questionable (Like Moody Blues much?)

As a professor "on the street," I was always motivated by praise (and constructive criticism) from students and colleagues. It was an important and different type of "peer review." I have recently taken the time to write a couple of brief letters to the warden telling him who his best staff are in 5 or 6 departments. I chose to speak highly of a few folks since I'm sure he hears plenty of bad news about his poorly performing staff. Maybe it'll reward good work, motivate others to "up their games," and encourage those 5 or 6 to continue to be model employees to others. After our softball game against the visiting church team (detailed in my last letter), I sent a letter to the staff member who approved and organized that game. He thought it was well written and sent it to the warden. The warden then forwarded it to the entire staff. That was flattering, and a couple of staff said something about it to me. I partially raise the incident to suggest that maybe when I wrote the warden asking for an audience about those 5 or 6 staff members that he already knew my name (hopefully for only good reasons...) Also Good News: The church softball team has been approved to come in and play against an FSL All-Star for the next several years.

Someone did a count and realized that there were about 25 people leaving our unit between October and just after the end of this year. That's a big turnover and part of the 6,000-plus inmates that are leaving due to the drug law changes that are taking place. There are a few men in HA unit who were here when I arrived and will be here when I leave. I feel bad for them: Stone, Feeney, Joe Hunter, Toler, Pease, Art/Shrek, and Treeter. Other than those, there's been lots of turnover here.

Meanwhile, back in Chicago, things are good. I have intentionally not talked much about my job plans here as to not jinx them and not prematurely talk about things in flux, but they involve friends. I hear folks at my old college are doing well. My old softball team in Chicago moved up a division and also played in some out-of-town tournaments in Milwaukee and Minneapolis. My friend Bruce reports that our friends in Chicago and around the country are good.

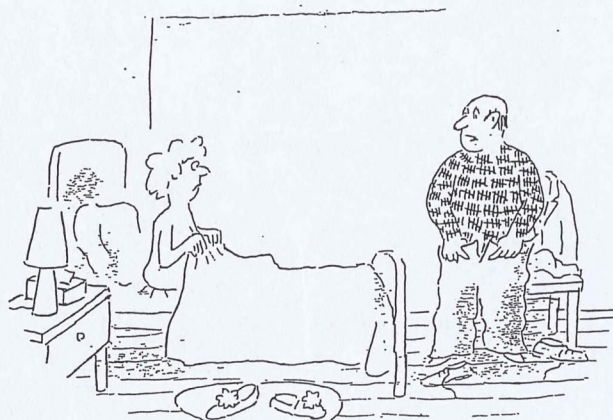
My parents are coming to drive me from Elkton to halfway house. That 9 hrs in the car will be our Christmas. My brothers and their families are doing well. Nieces and nephews are making good grades and doing well in extracurriculars and sports. My family in AL is good though the bittersweet news is that the home that my grandfather built where my mom was raised, and where we celebrated years and years of Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners is being sold. The last uncle and aunt who live there have some health issues and are moving to be closer to other family members. No one is moving in to the home, so it'll be sold. We'll always have the memories even if we won't have the house (Somebody should take some photos....)

That's it for LIFE ON THE COMPOUND. I hope you enjoy the other sections.

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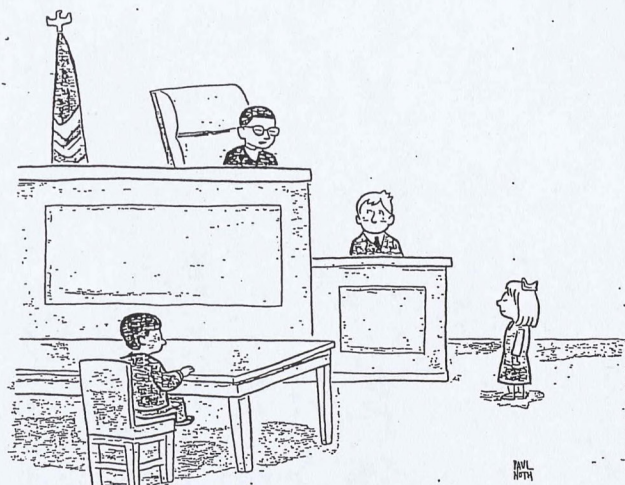
- QUOTES/READING- Sayings that inspire, humor, and irritate. My most recent reading.
- THE INMATE SURVEY (PART 2 OF 2)- Don't just take my word for it. What other inmates said in my unscientific poll.
- THE GANG WAS ALL HERE- Sketches of some of the men that I've spent the last few years with
- REFORM NEWS AND ARTICLE EXCERPTS,
- BLOTTER- People doing stupid stuff. Some folks being punished less than others

Enjoy, Kevin



"Those are prison tattoos."

S. GROSS



"The witness will confine his 'Knock knock' answers to 'Who's there?'"

PHIL WIT

THE INMATE SURVEY: PART 2 OF 2

- SOMETIMES INMATES SAY THE DUMBEST THINGS. I asked my respondents to share a nugget they'd heard
 "From a 70+ year old, 'When I get out, I'm going to find a 96 y.o woman, settle down, and have four kids.'" * "Is there anything Pacific that you wanted brought back [from the kitchen] * "Which is better, Kentucky Fried Chicken or KFC?" * Essentially, 'I've been down lots of years, so even though you don't know me, you owe me respect.' * "If fish be flesh and chicken is poetry. What be fish? That poetry too?" * "I will sell my meat for cookies." * Essentially that he loves it here and would stay forever if permitted. * In excusing the rape of a woman at the hands of an athlete: "She's in his house; she's a bitch; she's going to get f*cked." * That essentially they want to kick the warden's ass * "Chomo" * "I owned Wal-Mart." * Basically, "If prison had microwaves and conjugal visits, I would stay."
- STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES. What are the dumbest things you've witnessed in prison? (asterisks separate answers)
 Calling a fog count when there is no fog outside * Installing cameras and telling inmates that they don't work * People fighting over TV or seats (3) * Bragging about the crime that brought them to prison * A fight over a dominoes game * The amount of razor wire here and how little they give us to do * The arbitrary and inconsistent nature of the rules * people pushing through one side of double doors when the door on the other side is open * "The "stupid rules" the C.O.s enforce e.g. one laundry bag on the wall, nothing on your locker.....what the f*ck ever. * Census counts that are done every day that don't happen in the rec yard or outside rec so don't actually account for everyone. So they're useless (and we know it) but they're still done because it's "procedure." (4) * Dropping out of the SOMP program because you can't speak well * When medical, dental, or another dept pages someone who left weeks ago. So much for keeping track of people... * People practically bathing in the sink then the showers are free, open, and hot.
- RECIDIVISM FOR SOME CRIMES ARE >50%. WHY DO PRISONS FAIL? (asterisks separate individual responses)
 "It's human warehousing. There is no rehabilitation to it. * They do not help anyone. * There are no real rehabilitation or such. * Most don't offer re-entry programs that will actually serve a purpose. Unlike European prisons, US prisons want you back in prison to make money. * They don't address the problems correctly They take the side of "I didn't send you here." Instead of actually getting to the truth and trying to fix it. Not their fault though. * Nothing positive is accomplished here; it's all negative and is negative for all involved. The biggest victims are families and taxpayers. * Because you are a felon/ex-con for life, crime is never forgotten or forgiven in their eyes. * Men who take pride in doing time * Society that defines a person by the worse thing they've done. * Prisons are money makers, so little is done to keep you from coming back. * The US prison system hasn't really changed for centuries. Time to move into the 21st. Focus more on education/reform instead of isolation/punishment. * They fail because there are no programs or counseling. * No training, no preparing people for employment, basic warehousing. * Because (1) some people don't "get it" (2) people aren't prepared for life when they get out. * Because guys who really need to know how to live as a productive citizen after prison get no education or job training, so crime pays better than a real job. * No re-entry preparation. * When the BOP sees their job's "to keep people locked up" instead of educators * Prisons do not provide enough skills/programming for inmates to use when they re-enter society. Former prisoners need job skills for "livable wage" jobs to compete with, let's say, selling more drugs * The fail by placing people where you learn to be dishonest and to steal. * Probation is too strict, and in a lot of cases, criminals have no desire to change."

But prisons don't always do it wrong. I asked WHEN DOES A C.O. GET IT RIGHT? (asterisks separate responses)
 "The COs in Oklahoma who shackled me and took me to the airport treated us as normal people and not animals and actually engaged us in normal conversations, joked, etc * When a CO treats me with respect and not a piece of dirt to be walked over * The dentist and his staff are professional in skill and how they interact with inmates. * When they say "Good job" and "Thank you." * When I first arrived, the CO answered my questions, was helpful, and gave me an (extra) laundry bag. * An education CO that actually thinks her job is to insure that inmates have a chance to learn things. She does what is needed to make things happen. Ms. Stewart is an example of an employee who cares (2). * Nope * When I went for an operation, I was treated well. * When another inmate hits someone after changing a TV station, they took him to the SHU. * Still waiting for that one. * Holiday meals * providing meatless meal options * keeping inmates with similar offenses together * At least here, anyone who starts a fight has to go to another facility. * Friday visitation for anyone * CO admitted he overstepped and apologized to not only inmate but others involved. * When they do their jobs.

Beyond life in prison and regardless of how one feels about the experience, most agree that federal prison sentences can be pretty long. I asked about punishment. Was your sentence TOO MUCH, ABOUT RIGHT, or NOT ENOUGH? Too much (18), about right (0) and not enough (0). I asked BY ABOUT HOW MUCH? Responses varied 1 yr, 3 years (5), 3.5 yrs, 4 yrs (2), 5 yrs (3), 5.5 yrs. I asked HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU THINK WAS THE RIGHT SENTENCE FOR YOUR CRIME? Everyone thought between probation and one year.



Ultimately, everyone would have preferred not to have come to prison at all [at least I hope..]. I asked, LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE ELSE DOING WHAT YOU WERE DOING? HOW DO WE PREVENT THIS? "It's not worth the risk (5) * Look at what you'll lose * Let the public know severity of this crime (2) * go after the producers. * Tell the public about the low level of recidivism. * Stop hiding; talk to someone professionally; be accountable to someone. * Get help! Just stop! Destroy it all! Change! * There is no reward worth the risk that you are taking. We are easy to find, bust, prosecute, and jail. * Don't make excuses. Take ownership of your problems and fix them. * Stop hiding or you're going to prison. * Be aware of the laws and their consequences, however unjust they may be. * Stop these types of websites from existing. * Replace hard drive and stop peer-to-peer file sharing. * Open up to people you love about your problems. * Destroy all evidence. When they come, lawyer up. * The system doesn't care why you're doing this. * Get counseling.

QUOTES/BOOKS

BOOKS

The Girl on the Train (?Author?), Life After Life (Atkinson), The Stupidest Angel: A Heartwarming Tale of Christmas Terror (Christopher Moore), Tortilla Flats (John Steinbeck)

Inspiring Quotes:

- "There are no jobs on a dead planet." -- Bren Smith, founder of GreenWave, a non-profit that trains fishermen to be help farmers and winner of the Buckminster Fuller Institute for innovative solutions to urgent global problems
- "Become such as you are having learned what it is." --Atkinson in Life After Life
- "Where were you when I was hungry and you did not feed me or naked and you did not dress me or sick and you did not cater to me and in prison and you did not visit me?...When you did not do these things to the least of my brethren, you did NOT do this to me. --Jesus, The Bible
- "Whatever degrades another degrades me." --Walt Whitman
- "Mars will come to fear my botany powers." --Matt Damon in The Martian
- "I've been married three times. I know all about intimacy." --Jason Jurek, former Elktonite
- "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution." --Theodosius Dobhansky
- "It's about persistence." --excerpted from University of Chicago magazine, comparing learning math to body building
- "Culture is what makes you good. That was our whole approach from Day 1: Let's make our bed in the morning because that means that we're starting the day off and doing stuff the right way. Let's just do everything right. I tell our guys all the time, 'Everything matters. You get what you deserve in life. If you do things the right way...it's going to make you good.'" --UCal Berkeley's football coach Sonny Dykes on the culture of change in his program. The program he inherited had a 46% graduation rate, among the lowest of FBS schools. ("Cal Improved in Class, Then on Field", USA Today.)
- "The strength of this university is that is the No. 1 public university in the world. If that doesn't mean something when we're recruiting, we're not recruiting the right guy. It's that simple. If that doesn't right true, then we're wasting our time." --Dykes again on Cal recruiting. --Sonny Dykes again

Less-than-inspiring quotes:

- "It's not a punishment; it's a consequence." --Lieutenant at Elkton discussing why we were getting 10-minute moves returned. [Talk about a distinction without a difference]
- "Get up and do something productive in society." --Lieutenant and captain kicking the bunk to wake a sleeping inmate at 8 a.m. during a visit to the unit. [This inmate had been up at 4:30 to do his job in the housing unit and was napping. More pointedly, this inmate is a doctor (internal medicine) who has run a private practice and has raised children who are now in high school and college. I'm sure he'd be happy to leave here with an ankle bracelet and do something "productive in society," like practice medicine. Unfortunately, he's here, and his medical license has been revoked.

THE GANG WAS ALL HERETHE GANG WAS ALL HERE

- GERALD (SASQUATCH)- Gerald never really developed a nickname here in prison, but he could have been called any number of things. As an aside, Gerald is a 60-something man who is totally harmless and didn't need to be here. His numerous health problems (obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure) probably cost taxpayers \$100,000/year to incarcerate. When Gerald shaved with his shirt off, you realized that his body hair started on his cheeks and ended at his toes--on the front and back (shudder). He had a Santa Claus look when he wears his beard and a Fat Bastard (Austin Powers movies) appearance without beard. When I asked where he was from in rural N.C., he named the town. Told him I'd never heard of it. He produced the name of the nearby, larger town. Nope, still nothing. The nearest, even larger town? Nope never heard of that one either. Finally, we established that those burgs, hamlets and crossroads were near Greensboro. I introduced Gerald to the idea of putting black pepper on your salad. "Pepper on salad? How long you been doin' that, boy? Pepper on salad...pretty good, boy." Gerald recently transferred to the federal prison in Butner, NC for either physical or mental health reasons. Either way, he's closer to home.
- TOOL TIME- This guy from the FCI transferred down to the FSL a couple of years ago. Initially, I was told he was called Tool Time because of the resemblance to the burly, flannel wearing assistant on "Home Improvement." Oh really...Turns out he didn't LOOK like the assistant on "Home Improvement"; they just shared the SAME NAME. The Tool Time guy at Elkton was a total aluminum-foil hat wearing conspiracy theorist. He had all types of questionable stories and theories about this place and the justice system in general. He talked a lot more than he thought, so if he button-holed you at commissary, where he would just hang out to harangue a captive audience and beg for goodies, you could be in some serious trouble. Whenever I saw him coming, I either looked busy or ran the other way. He had been in prison for about 20 years for drugs (I'd guess used a lot, sold a lot). Rumor is that he was set to leave for halfway house, but he refused to get on the bus. Then the U.S. Marshals were called to take him to the county jail on violation. He violated even before he left. I think this is a case of being "institutionalized."
- INGLAT- What if you took actor Hugh Jackman and gave him hipster facial hair and a page boy/Renaissance Fair/Knights of the Roundtable haircut? Well, you'd have a pretty good idea what Inglat looked like. John was our softball team's very athletic, very fast, often ground-ball challenged right-center fielder. John was here for the same charge as me and was in the Army before his arrest. A little bit of impulse control and understanding-the-harms counseling would have gone a long way to help John and save you, the taxpayer, hundreds of thousands of dollars. Once I saw John at visitation with an attractive man in a cool shirt, hipster glasses and goatee, and designer jeans whom I just assumed must have been John's older boyfriend. Nope, John's married to a hottie wife, and that was John's father. But really, not much resemblance. I avoided that awkward faux pas by asking someone else John's story and not John. John went to the "Religious Program" at the prison in Milan, MI where he'll finish his sentence closer to his Grand Rapids home.
- LARRY- Larry is a 60-plus guy that had been here for the past several years and suffered from numerous health issues. Larry was known as "the guy with the Einstein hair..." He played organ at the Catholic services and was a top bocce player, but I didn't really know much about him since we travelled in different circles and he was very quiet. Larry's not really criminally minded and has been here WAY TOO LONG. He's another guy who's basically just killing time by being here and won't take too much away from this experience. He just received a transfer to a medical facility near Long Beach, CA. The facility is on a pier by the ocean (good) and is called Terminal Island (not good, not an inspiring name for a medical facility.)
- CARAMEL BOZO- There's a guy in the unit who brags that he's been fired from the kitchen at least 4 times. He's an incorrigible and profligate thief (and, for full-disclosure, I can't stand a thief...). One day recently, he's in the kitchen, and a big pan of boiled eggs comes out of the stove for Sunday breakfast. Bozo's waiting like a cheetah, ready to pounce. He moves in to steal a bunch of eggs (he already had a bunch packed away...). The egg cook tries to keep Bozo from the eggs, and a fight ensues. The cook wins the fight by using more force than Caramel Bozo. They're both packed off to the SHU. We thought Bozo was gone for good, but he comes back because he didn't throw a punch. He was just stealing....again. The guy fighting to save the eggs stays in the SHU. Bozo is back in the kitchen, emboldened more than ever, and hawking "block cheese", "fried fish", "boiled eggs", "hamburger meat", etc., etc. every day up-and-down the aisles in the unit. Somehow that he's here and the cook's gone doesn't seem quite right. Welcome to the upside-down and inside-out world of the BOP...
- DAVID from DUKE- David lived downstairs, but that didn't stop us from spending lots of time together in Education. He was a tutor for several years and that job drew on his life's history and talents. A native of New York City, David had studied theology

at Duke before moving to Atlanta where he taught and counseled high school students at several mid-tier private schools. He was always good for advice on colleges that I shared with nieces and nephews. While at Elkton, David continued his studies (religion, Hebrew) and jogged the track. David was divorced, pleasant, smart, a bit cynical, non-aggressive, and probably another guy who had no business being here. A few police knocking on his door would have made him piss his pants and begun the process of helping him straighten things out for this 50-something first-time offender.

- ◉ PUDGE-A short, thick African American guy from the East Coast (Baltimore?), Pudge was a nice, decent guy who always spoke when we passed. Pudge always seemed to be in good spirits in spite of being in prison. Despite his youth, he wasn't a complete "juvenile delinquent" here and was always quick to tell someone else to "tighten up" or "cut out that bull crap." He was generally quiet and did his time with lots of exercise, especially pull-ups and upper body work, either in the shower stalls or on the soccer goals. He had huge arms. He recently transferred to a "real" camp somewhere.
- ◉ JOSH - Just prior to his arrest, Josh was profiled in the Washington Post as the youngest principal in the state of Virginia. His subsequent arrest was all over the news (Fox, CNN, USA Today) and his profession, his precocious success, and recent notoriety made his relatively minor involvement in this material a federal case. His was one of those cases that federal prosecutors must salivate over. He joined me in GED tutoring for a couple of months (a year?). He had been married and has a young son, but Josh essentially, "came out" (with some struggle) during his time here. Gregarious, a bit OCD, hardworking, anxious, and facing 5 years in federal prison, Josh reminded me a little bit of myself. Josh was in my entrepreneurship program, but received an incident report ("shot") for running a store in the unit [read: For being an entrepreneur and stocking and reselling commissary goods in the unit at a mark-up and for convenience, he was kicked out of the entrepreneurship program...oh well...a bit ironic, but okay.] He's gone to halfway house now and will move to PA where he'll take over his family's farm. Very low odds (okay, zero) to reoffend. Really, a real waste of talent and potential.
- ◉ BLIND CHRIS- The blind, albino guy here on child pornography charges has departed from Elkton, briefly, but will return. He struggles a bit with depression and "belonging" issues. He quickly converted to Islam and was spending a lot of time with the Muslim guys. Then one day, he shows up at the C.O.'s office with an empty pill bottle and announces, "I just took all of these." The C.O. helps him throw up, and, then, they pack Chris off to the Special Housing Unit (SHU) where he'll be under suicide watch until they decide that he needs to come back to the FSL. p.s.- He's back.
- ◉ PAULIE- From somewhere in Connecticut, Paulie infused the unit with lots of ethnic Italian energy. A 50 year old, stout, fireplug of a man, Paulie could be counted on to be fun and boisterous, yet low-key when the time called for it. Paulie could channel his inner Good Fella/Soprano caricature when the moment or topic (Italian food, bocce, New York City, politics, racial tensions, etc.) called for it. We were here for the same crime, but didn't often discuss it other than to talk about the Program. Instead, we talked politics, cannolis, bocce, softball, pasta [heck, anything food related]. He was furry and always complained about how hot it was in the unit. Hopefully, now that he's served a fairly short sentence and moved through halfway house, he can enjoy the cooler weather of the Northeast with his children who are entering young adulthood. Probably near zero chance he re-offends.
- ◉ DUPONT- A native of Western Massachusetts, DuPont was here for what most guys at Elkton are here for. He was a soccer player/fan, and he spent most of his time here hanging with his buddy Ralph, watching TV [especially international soccer], playing bocce, and listening to his former cellie, Irwin, yammer on in the front cube. DuPont's most notable idiosyncrasy was that he'd bring bar-b-que sauce to almost any meal. He could be a bit sour/dour, but he was funny if he was in the mood to talk to you and you met him on the narrow range of topics he wanted to discuss. Often he'd simply tell me, "I don't have the energy for you right now.."
- ◉ HODGES- Hodges looks like a guy who might have fallen right out of a Key West bar or an 80's hair band and survived. He had thinning, blond, frizzy hair and crazy eyes. He was a softball player and coach, but he was built more like a fan than an athlete. He proudly wore a Brutus, the Ohio State Buckeye's mascot, tattoo on his calf and would defend the reputation of the Buckeyes against all-comers. He's gone to the Columbus halfway house.
- ◉ BATISTA- This light-skinned, Puerto Rican fellow was here on a 15 year charge. He was a very good shortstop on his softball team, and he coached our all-star softball team against the visiting church team. He told me that I was the best left-fielder on the compound, but he never spoke to me off the field. I don't know if he was just quiet or thought that my charge meant that we couldn't speak to one another on the compound. On a recent morning at medical, he blew up at the staff, and they became threatened. The staff member hit the alarm ("the deuces") on his radio, and Batista, according to witnesses, slapped the radio out of his hand. Batista was sent to the SHU and is likely gone from Elkton and maybe facing another charge for slapping the radio away (?).

"LIES" ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

"LIES"

Recently, there was a great 3-page article in an issue of the Kansas City Star that passed through the unit. It began above-the-fold on the front page and continued on two full pages inside the first section. The article was called "The Lie" (Oct. 25th, 2015), by Eric Adler. Unfortunately, you have to subscribe to access the article online. I share some of it here. What I really like is the thrust of the articles and some of the quotes and ideas that made it into a major metropolitan daily newspaper. You and I might know some of these things, but your typical Fred and Ethel in Kansas City probably doesn't.

The thrust of the "The Lie" was the lie told by the son about his father, Ernest Leap. After an ugly divorce, the father gained custody of his two sons. The mother later came forward and claimed that the older son confided to her that he had been sexually abused by his father. The father maintained his innocence but pleaded no contest to make the charge go away. Fast forward years later and along comes SORNA. This act requires the father to register on Missouri's sex offender registry and absorb all of the things that goes along with that. The son that made the initial claim (The Lie) has come forward to insist that he only made the accusation after hours of denials to his mother and only after she insisted he must have been molested. That son now lives with the father and is fighting to have his father pardoned and removed from the sex offender registry. Neither of the two sons maintains any contact with their mother.

Some of the things highlighted in the article (direct quotes)

• For the Fred and Ethels unfamiliar with the laws:

"Under SORNA, failing to register is a crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Offenders must also notify authorities when and where they move or take a job."

• Problems with the registry:

"The most common arguments against the registry is that they go too far, in that they publicly brand offenders with a felony scarlet letter for anywhere from 10 years to lifetime, long after offenders have completed the terms of their convictions."

• "Others say the registries cast too large a net, placing rapists on the same registry with those convicted of public urination or so called Romeo and Juliet crimes--consensual sex between underage teens that is prosecuted as statutory rape."

• A study about the residence restrictions, one of the most onerous challenges facing registrants:

"In July, the U.S. Dept. of Justice published a research brief on sex offender management...The Justice Dept. brief was absolute regarding residence restrictions. "The evidence is fairly clear that residence restrictions are not effective." the brief said. "In fact, research suggests that residence restrictions may actually increase offender risk by undermining offender stability and the ability of the offender to obtain housing, work, and family support. There is nothing to suggest this policy should be used at this time."

• Probably the best quote came from a Supreme Court case from Massachusetts which recently found residence restrictions unconstitutional.

"In August, Massachusetts Associate Justice Geraldine S. Hines likened sex offender living restrictions to some of America's darkest historical moments..."Except for incarceration of persons under the criminal law and the civil commitment of mentally ill or dangerous persons," Hines wrote, "The days are long since past when whole communities of persons, such as Native Americans and Japanese-Americans, may be lawfully banished from our midst." [Ed. note: WOW, POWERFUL, really like that]

• Another part of the article featured an examination of historical trope/canard that sex offenders "can't change" and that 80% go on to commit future sex crimes. A researcher, Mr. Ellman, sought out the historical roots of this belief:

"Looking deeper, Ellman tracked the 80% number to what he determined to be its original story, a 1986 story in the popular magazine Psychology Today. It stated that "most untreated sex offenders released from prison go on to commit more offenses. --indeed, as many as 80% do." But the story provided no studies, data, experts, or sources to support the statement." It's difficult to calculate a single percentage of sex offenders who do re-offend, Ellman said, But the number, he said, is not close to 80 percent and is lower than the re-offense rate for other felony crimes."

BLOTTER

◆ THE BLOTTER

↪ Andrew Stephen Lazetera, 28, from Cary, NC was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison and 15 years of supervised release for distribution and receipt of child pornography (Raleigh News and Observer). He was using peer-to-peer file sharing to share some of the 3,000 images that were discovered on his computer. Being federal prison where there's no parole and 15% Good Time credit, he'll serve 85% of this sentence...by my calculations that's 17 years. He has too much time to serve to be eligible to come to a satellite low/camp like Elkton-FSL, at least anytime soon.

And speaking of Elkton-FSL, several letters ago, I mentioned that my Education Dept boss here returned to work. She had been on leave to recover from a motorcycle accident that injured her and killed her husband. The woman at fault in the accident was driving while impaired and on a suspended license for a prior conviction. The driver who injured my boss and killed her husband was charged with aggravated vehicular manslaughter and sentenced to 18 months in jail. When I asked my boss why killing someone while intoxicated resulted in such a short sentence, she replied that it was the maximum sentence.

Look at pictures on a computer and go to prison for 20 years; kill someone with a car and go for 18 months. Yeah, I guess that feels like justice and makes sense...

↪ An inmate in the Floyd County Jail faces felony charges after a guard found tobacco in his cell hidden in a book. For having tobacco in his cell, Mark Fowler is facing felony charges of crossing guard lines with weapons, intoxicants or drugs (uhhh...tobacco is not exactly what this rule is for.) Pretty steep charge for a smoke.

↪ Meanwhile, R+B artist, the Weeknd, pleaded no contest to a battery charge after he punched a Las Vegas police officer in a scuffle. The charge was dismissed if he stays out of trouble, completes 50 hrs of community service, goes to counseling and pays \$1000 to a Las Vegas injured officers fund. [I suppose that it didn't hurt that he's a performer, and Las Vegas can't be perceived to punish its performers too much. What happens in Vegas, disappears in Vegas].

↪ Another set of sentences from the same newspaper (Feb. 23, 2013 Mt. Vernon News, [IL])

* Troy Martin, 32 and a sex offender, was convicted of his second failure to provide change of address offense. He was sentenced to 30 months in prison.

* Thomas A Dixon, 67, was convicted of gross sexual imposition for having sexual contact with a 9 year old girl in his apartment. He was sentenced to 30 months and registered as a Tier III sex offender.

* Bradlee C. Neitzelt, 21, was convicted of attempted abduction and sentenced to 60 days in jail and a 3 year term of supervision (17 years in prison if he violates)

* Bryan Lamb, 26 of Mt. Vernon, was convicted of aggravated assault for assaulting and seriously injuring a 48 y.o. man. Lamb was sentenced to a 3 year term of community supervision.

* Justin A. Carruthers, 30 of Fredricktown, was convicted of trafficking in heroin, hydrocodone, and oxycodone last March and April. He was sentenced to 60 days in jail and 3 year term of supervision

[Sell drugs, beat people, try to abduct them, and molest kids....but don't, for God's sake, forget to register a change of address if you're a sex offender. You'll go to prison for even longer than any of those other offenses!!! Astonishing! Let's be clear. I don't think these other crimes deserve longer sentences. I think 30 months in prison for failing to register is ABSURD and should be REDUCED!]

↪ From the Detroit News from earlier this year....Randall Overton of Wayne County Michigan faced up to 40 years in prison after facing charges of 1st degree criminal sexual assault for instructing hi 11-year old step daughter in the proper insertion of a Tampon

↪ From Buffalo News in early 2015: Jeweler Paul Blarr, 48, was sentenced to 23-69 years in prison for selling fake diamonds and stealing gems from his customers for nearly a decade. "His punishment was comparable to what has been meted out to some of the most violent killers in Western New York."..."What Mr. Blarr received in essence was a life sentence over earrings and pendants." defense attorney Charles J. Marchese said of his client. His thefts added up to nearly a million dollars, but unlike other white collar criminals who have stolen as much or more, his sentence surpasses theirs by decades.

↪ Back in April and in my adopted hometown, the Chicago Sun Times reported that four Joliet Central High School students faced child porn charges after they videotaped themselves having sex and posting it to the Internet. All four teens- a 15 year old girl and boys 16, 15, and 14 were arrested. The sex was consensual and the parents of one of the teens learned about the video and contacted the police [Ed. note- 3 guys and 1 girl? My money's on the girl's parents. It's always the girl's parents.] Crimes should generally have victims. Who are the victims here? The offenders victimized themselves?

- On that same page, a Chicago murder case was noted. 65 year old Larry Peters was arrested for shooting and killing his unarmed younger brother at their Englewood home. The younger brother had shouted at the shooter to be quiet. The older brother shot the younger, followed him outside, and shot him again after reloading the shotgun. Two thoughts: (1) I guess I better be careful who I tell to be quiet and (2) now I understand why they sell .25 cent earplugs in prison.

- A Hamilton County, IL man has been sentenced to 8.5 years in state prison for possession of child porn. Brandon Skelton was sentenced for felony possession of child porn. Skelton had been arrested for felony theft. He gave his cell phone to a friend to make some calls to arrange bond. While making those calls, the images were found on Skelton's phone. He will have to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

And while pictures on a cell phone will get you 8.5 years in an IL prison, sexual assault might not get you any time in PA...

- From an article "Sex Case Ends in Probation"... "An Erie man accused of sexually assaulting a young girl in the city over a nearly five year period was sentenced Wednesday to serve a probationary sentence under a deal hashed out between prosecutors and his lawyer." Joseph P. Glennon, 70, was ordered to serve a total of 10 years probation. Glennon will not be required to register as a sex offender. (Sept. 15, 2014, Erie Times News). [Even though 8.5 years in prison is sorta steep for child porn on a computer compared to probation for child rape in PA, maybe IL can afford those long prison sentences since the state coffers are brimming with so much money. Oh wait, Illinois is way past flat broke compared to Pennsylvania. Maybe imposing reactionary 8.5 year child porn prison sentences would be a place to start.]

- And I've always meant to bring up Rob Lowe, so I guess I better do it now in my last Update Letter before I lose the chance. Remember back in 1988 during the Democratic Convention in Atlanta, when Rob Lowe and another male friend shot a sex video with a 16 year old girl in a hotel room? It made the rounds; someone even overdubbed the song "You're Sixteen, You're Beautiful, and You're Mine" as a soundtrack. Since shooting this video was obviously "production of child pornography," where is his 15 year mandatory minimum federal sentence for production? If high school kids are being criminally charged for "selfies" on their cell phones, why did a MUCH OLDER Rob Lowe and his friend avoid charges for a SEX VIDEO with an UNDERAGE GIRL that was much more WIDELY circulated? Statute of Limitations? Assault Charges? Porn Charges? Registry? Surely the federal prosecutors who are constantly looking for high profile cases to get traction, publicity, and send a message of deterrence couldn't do much better than Rob Lowe.

- Meanwhile back in my adopted Chicago this month, a 9 year old boy was murdered (Should we just all it "assassinated"?) for what appears to be retaliation in a gang dispute involving the child's father. Yes, I know the tired refrain...drugs and gangs don't hurt people, and if you're a drug dealer or gang member, you have "clean paperwork" once you get to prison.....We all do know this right? [tongue planted firmly in cheek on that one.]

- In Toledo, a teen who robbed a woman at gunpoint and shot another woman while out of jail on bond for a burglary was sentenced to 13 years in prison. Omandre [who comes up with these names????!!] Randall, 17 plead guilty to a long list of felonies including aggravated robbery, felonious assault, burglary, and carrying a concealed weapon. At his sentencing, the teen's attorney told the court that Randall's father was incarcerated and said that "Omandre's acceptance for his father, Omandre's time with his father was conditioned upon Omandre living a life that was essentially a thug life. He would only be allowed to see his father...if he engaged in criminal behavior." [Let's hope sentencing reform doesn't let this father out..ever..and with fathers like this raising kids, I'm the one not being allowed around children? Bwah! Bwah! Bwah!.....]

Bang Bang Goes the Gun...Bang Bang Goes the Drum.

- Bryon Champ was arrested for a Chicago mass shooting that injured 13 people including a 4 year old boy who was shot in the face. The shooting happened at the Cornell Square Park on the city's Southwest Side. Champ had previously been convicted of unlawful use of a weapon by a felon in 2012 and was sentenced to "boot camp" at the Cook County Dept. of Corrections instead of jail time. [What's the appropriate response when a felon is arrested with a gun? <<snicker, shake head in amazement>>. It's not "boot camp." Felons with guns are usually going to use them! That's why they have them!]

- Finally, while some people go to "boot camp" instead of jail time for guns, some get probation for sexual assault, and other folks are over incarcerated for much less serious offenses, there are some people who don't even get to go home when their sentence is complete because they simply HAVE NO PLACE TO GO. In a recent decision from the state of New York, homeless shelters are now included with the 1000 feet restriction from where sex offenders can reside. As a result, dozens of sex offenders who have satisfied their sentences in NY state prisons are being held beyond their release dates. About 70 of the 100 sex offenders being held are being held are from New York City. These men have filed habeas corpus petitions to win their releases.

- That's All From Elkton..... ☺
Kevin