

FEB 19 "14"

The phone banks outside in the yard were often compromised by the weather. Too hot or cold. Deep puddles when it was wet. They stood in a corner of the mod building, in a spot where you could not see the fences surrounding the prison. This fact lent itself to the illusion that you could be anywhere.

That's what phones are for, right? A connection to another person and place. A chance to be private, alone having a conversation with a friend or loved one. These phones were relatively isolated. Much of the time they went unused.

This meant that they ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> in better repair than the phones inside. Both parties better able to hear each other. Not always the case when making a call on the block, where people were right on top of you. Outside of a few knuckle heads yelling to each other during movement, it was quiet.

The calls weren't necessarily so. Maybe you didn't get through. Or, the wrong person picked up and you got an earful. Sometimes the call got cut off for no reason. That was kind of bittersweet. You feel disappointed, then happy that you were relieved from the burden of small talk. Finally a little guilty for the relief you felt.

When it goes well, it's special. My son and I meet in the wires and chat.

x/feeds.

"hey buddy."

"hi."

He takes his time, warming up. The whole conversation is one word answers sometimes. He is watching T.V., distracted by events of greater importance. Games , chips, I really have no idea. The dialog turns. He becomes animated.

"How was your day?"

"Good."

"What <sup>about</sup> your birthday? Get any thing exciting?"

"I got a T.V.!"

"Wow, thats cool, what else is going on?"

"I'm moving upstairs to Nanny's old room. Out of the basement. I'll have more room, instead of that small one."

For the most part. the calls were more enjoyable in that setting. ~~ix~~ The yard. I made the majority of my calls to him on a weekend morning. It was nice to start my day off. The fresh air and quiet.

That connection is an important part of getting through my incarceration. I miss him more than ~~any~~ anything else.

When the time comes for me to see him again, I'll have fond memories of those phones despite all the aggravation ~~and joy~~ associated with them. They ~~were~~ are a blessing and a curse. On the one hand , the politics and hassle they represent are a cross that every prisoner has to bear.

But, that contact with the outside world is too precious to discount. Without those phones, prison would be an even more lonely place. Much more difficult to deal with. I'm glad we have those outside phones. Especially on the days when my son picks up and makes me smile.

There are all types of vans which transport prisoners back and forth to the jails. Big, rear-wheel duellies, like a party bus. Some party. More like the airport shuttle. Going nowhere. Also, the regular econoline. The kind with grated windows in the back doors. These are divided down the middle to ensure maximum discomfort.

D.O.C. Transport, "The Bus" that takes those unfortunate souls back and forth to court. And, once, to freedom. Such as it is.

These trips are the worst. From the first time, in cuffs and legchains, dreading the future and regretting the past, to last,(ditto.!) They want to let you know they are serious. Can't take a chance on someone running. Make an appearance or sit in the holding cell. Never to be brought in front of the judge. Never even told why you came in the first place.

The trip back can really bother you. Feeling offended. "Why leave in the first place?" Over time, learning to avoid the trips at all cost.

This means no trips to the hospital or on work crews. Some prisoners love to get away, for any reason at all. Seeing the "world" and interacting with regular people. But, not if you can't abide the returning.

Since I came to prison, these trips have come to pass less often. For instance, I have not left the grounds of my present incarceration since I arrived. May not, either, until I am released.

Only time will tell. As I have said, for the most part, we are kept in the dark. When it comes to movement outside the facility. Maybe to prevent escape. A helicopter called upon to pluck a con to life as a fugitive. Seems unlikely. But, Rules are rules.

In the meantime, here I sit. The sun rises and sets. Seasons change. "Can't stop the clock." The one you can always count on. A fact in my favor. That clock keeps ticking, no matter what.

When my time comes, will I have taken my last ride in one of those vans? I certainly hope that is the case. Don't want to imagine another trip in the back of any locked vehicle.