

There's a 'new view' at Rockview—and it succeeds

By EVE MARKOWITZ
Collegian Staff Writer

"On the front steps of the apartment building are two of the evening's victims. Wearing faded blue jeans and work shirts and appearing no more than sixteen years old, they lie sprawled on the pavement, covering their faces, as if to hide some tremendous guilt, or perhaps merely to shield themselves from the glare of street lights. The people who stroll or stagger by ignore the traumatized couple completely. Even stranger, the police patrol that passes by regularly also appears oblivious to the plight of these individuals. They are truly non-entities, human refuse, developing rigor mortis in the bowels of the city."

The above excerpt is proof that just because a guy ends up in prison he doesn't necessarily exempt English 3.

It is part of an essay written for the course by a participant in Project New View, and though it describes a city scene, it could just as easily describe the alienation most inmates say they feel in prison.

Since 1969, by way of Project New View, qualified inmates anywhere from 18 months to two and a half years away from parole have been able to attend classes on campus in order to earn their baccalaureate degrees.

In spite of the hassles of having to take required courses for their majors most of the participants in Project New View say that they are pleased with it.

"It really turned my life around. I feel things happening in a new direction," said Dave, 25, who is attending classes on campus for the first time this term.

"I'm getting an idea of how to become productive and benefit myself and society," he said.

Dave, convicted of burglary several years ago, said that Project New View is "the greatest thing that ever happened in my life."

"It's an incredible experience being back in the world that offers you a second chance when you let it down the first time. Through this program we really have reached some deeper understanding of the best and the worst."

Dave and six other inmates are studying on campus this term via New View. About 20 others are spending their first three terms in the program at Rockview itself, taking required courses taught by Penn State professors who commute there several evenings a week.

Jo Ann Farr, professor of psychology, taught a course at Rockview last summer. "I have never taught a more highly motivated group of students. There was no unmotivated student in the class, she said. "What I found onerous, though, was the tremendous competition for grades. I think they want very much out of there."

One reason for this may be the difficult study conditions at Rockview. While a study lounge is available, serious "booking" will inevitably be attempted in the cells.

According to Greg, 28, another inmate on campus this term, Rockview's "blocks" of 250 men each can be noisy.

"The TV's blasting," he said. "You're staring at your book and repeating in your head the standard deviation is, the standard deviation is. Someone's screaming at someone else across the hall, he's gonna get him the first chance he gets. And the bells—there are bells for everything. It's rough."

The participants in the program are good students despite the difficulties. An intricate screening process at Rockview allows very few people to participate.

"Out of 3,000 people, believe me it's hard to find 25 inmates

who qualify," said Dick Conaboy, a New View counselor.

"You'd be surprised at the number of illiterate people in prison—the 30 and 40-year-old men who can't read or write."

Conaboy coordinates the program's "Aftercare Office" in Boucke where inmates attending classes can sit and relax during the day. The inmates all have completed their three terms of requirements at Rockview and are now living together in Halfway House, a farm in the country. Halfway House residents are bused to campus each morning at 8 a.m. and are bused back in the evening around 5 p.m.

According to Conaboy, certain crimes exempt prisoners from being allowed to study on campus. Those convicted of first degree murder with minimum and maximum life sentences are disqualified.

"We try to stay away from people with hard drug or alcohol abuse crimes," Conaboy said. "We try to stay away from sexual offenders because of the nature of putting them on campus unguarded."

"First-time offenders normally would be your best bet

because they may have just gotten involved with emotions. If you get someone who's been arrested 20 or 30 times you don't want to pour an education into him because he'll probably end up back in prison."

Project New View's recidivism figures are impressive. Recidivism is the condition of inmates who end up back in jail after they have been released.

"Our recidivist rate is the lowest in the country," Conaboy said. Our rate is somewhere around nine per cent where most national figures show a 50 per cent recidivist rate."

Why would a prisoner decide to rack his brains with Math 61, the history of the Middle Ages or English 3 when he could sit back and make roadside furniture—which is what they manufacture at Rockview all day?

One reason is the prison salary. Top pay for an institutional job, according to Conaboy, is \$1.60 a day.

Ed, 42, another inmate serving time for burglary because "I just got mad," said, "The work assignments are primarily there to consume time. New View is an opportunity to be self



supporting. Whatever dollars society has to spend for this program is much less than what it has to pay to keep a guy in prison."

Ed said it costs the public just under \$11,000 to support a man in prison for one year.

One of the recurring controversies about Project New View arises from its funding. The men are given \$24 a week and \$120 a term for books and clothing. Conaboy said that since state funding has been reduced and there is no philanthropic money expected, the program is operating on a low budget. He added that many of the Rockview students are using veteran benefits and loans to finance their educations.

"Studying gives you an opportunity to take a good look. If you're picking up rocks in a field you don't take the time to take that look," Greg said.

Vegetating in prison isn't exactly the best preparation for joining the real world again, either, Greg said.

"What are you going to do if you make roadside furniture for 4 years and they let you out? Make roadside furniture?"

"When I got to prison I looked around and said this is a place I don't want to spend time in. I was going to make this time work for me. I'll never end up back in jail after this because they took something I can never get back—4 years of my life."

Tom, 21, a rehabilitation major with a 3.9 average serving rehabilitation experience" for him.

"I have a confession to make," he said. "When I first came into the program I was playing a lot of games. But I've become more serious. I see opportunities. I've come to see a distinct life in front of me. It's become a better life, I guess."

Bill Warnken, a graduate assistant in English who teaches English 1 and 3 at the prison, says he hears little complaining about "revelency" in terms of these courses which one usually can hear on campus.

"Revelency isn't so much of a question there as it is here. Many students have journals and diaries," Warnken said.

He mentioned Eldridge Cleaver's "Soul on Ice" in which Cleaver asks himself, "Why do I write?" and answers, "To save myself."

"They're not going to become best-selling novelists, but this can help them," Warnken said.

The itinerant teachers usually commented that Rockview classrooms were comfortable ones to teach in.

"All the students are male, so you don't have to watch your language," said Mike Steffy, a graduate assistant in anthropology.

Steffy recalled a unique discussion that arose in one of his anthropology courses at the prison.

"We were discussing the Yanomamo Indians of Venezuela, where the males, getting involved in shamanistic activities, take hallucinogenic snuff. So the fellows were interested in this and a number of them commented that they were in jail for doing what the Yanomamos did in public. They said that that's the place to go."

Project New View students are caught on to a special kind of excitement. It's an enthusiasm that may not enable them to forget the past, but it will definitely help them to learn from it.

Be it Venezuela or elsewhere, Project New View students are enthusiastic about, if not forgetting the past, learning from it to get somewhere.

"We have just made a mistake. We're not habitual criminals," Dave said. "We can just get it together if they give us a chance."

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Carefully checking customers' identification is a thankless job—but a necessary one, if the bar desires to keep its liquor license. Esther DelRosso, a waitress at the Rathskeller diligently eyes the "cards of two students. DelRosso says she has seen students try to pass off everything from British driver's licenses to library cards to the ace of spades as proof of age.

Photos by Rex Brien

Bearer of false I.D., beware of the bouncer's eye

By GEORGE OSGOOD
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Perhaps the most thankless job in State College belongs to those individuals called "carders," "proofers," "checkers," "bouncers" and a host of less-flattering names. They're the ones who guard the front doors in bars and check the identification of everyone who looks younger than Santa Claus.

They are called on to cull the under-21's from the crowd and return them to the mean streets of State College to go dry, defy the dorms' no-booze policy, or get quietly sloshed in the privacy of their own apartments (provided they can get the liquor).

For most, the ID checkers have all the appeal of a stop sign and the mercy of Genghis Khan. But they're just doing their job, and, unpleasant as that job is, it's necessary if a bar is to remain in business.

"I don't enjoy it at all," said Dean Phillips, a bartender-checker at the Phyrst and member of State College's Municipal Council. "I am strongly in favor of lowering the drinking age to 18, but until that comes about, 21 is the law and we have to abide by it."

Checking becomes such an onerous chore that most State College bars have a system of rotating shifts at the door. Each bartender works a one-half to two-hour shift, depending on the volume of business on a given night. All bars are very careful who they serve, because serving underage people can result in stiff fines and even revocation of the bar's liquor license if the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board discovers more than one violation in a relatively short period of time.

"If someone comes in with a fake ID or with no ID at all, he's asking the bartender and the checker to take two risks, one from the management and one from the PLCB," Phillips said. "All of the bartenders on duty are responsible, not just

the one who lets the underage person in."

By all indications there is a significant number of people who try to enter bars using phony identification. Peter Biesemeyer, who works at the Rathskeller, says that early in the term as many as a hundred persons are turned away on a Friday or Saturday night because of false identification, or because the person has no identification at all. On football weekends the total may be even higher, according to Biesemeyer.

Checking proof of age is a hard job, and the hardest part of it is telling a person that he or she can't get into a bar.

"A lot of people make it very tough on you," Phillips said. "They insult you and get very upset if you won't accept their obviously altered identification. We really try to be firm but polite."

Jim Dolphin, who sells beer and checks cards at the Brewery, agrees with Phillips. "It's tough sometimes, but we really try to be polite. We explain to people that we're just doing our job and we explain why we can't let them in," he says. "Sometimes people get really abusive but there's nothing we can do for them. There's no way the person is going to get in if we think an I.D. is false or if a person has 'forgotten' his I.D. It's too big a risk to take, even if you believe the person."

In most bars a PLCB card or other legitimate photo I.D. is necessary for admittance, but the types of I.D.s that people try to use are quite diverse.

"I've gotten some really weird stuff handed to me as proof of age," says Esther DelRosso, a waitress at the Rathskeller. "In the last year or so I've been shown British driver's licenses, Indian driver's licenses, high school I.D.s that people claim are four or five years old, birth certificates, library cards, and even the ace of spades a couple of times."

"I get cards from Polish clubs "that you have to be 21 to belong to," aviator's licenses, firearms registrations, and one time a girl showed me a picture I.D. that belonged to a friend of mine," she says.

Despite the diligence of the checkers, people still try. And undoubtedly, many of them get away with it. There are certain techniques that are better than others, and particular fake I.D.s that are of better quality than others. The best fake is the PLCB card of a friend with the same physical characteristics as the person using it. According to Dolphin, this is an almost foolproof method of getting into a bar.

The most common type of fake is the altered driver's license. Underage persons either erase or scrape off the original date of birth and type in a new one that makes them 21 or older. This is probably the easiest type of phony I.D. to create, but it also has its drawbacks.

"Erasures and scraped I.D.s are the easiest fakes to spot," Dolphin says. "You just hold the driver's license up to the light, and where the erasure or scrape is, the light shows through."

Another drawback to this gambit is that if the police discover an altered driver's license, they invariably prosecute the bearer. And that can get expensive. Some bars destroy obviously false I.D.s in the presence of the bearer, and if he or she refuses to allow the I.D. to be destroyed, the police are called in. All in all, a messy situation.

One common ploy is for a person over 21 to use his driver's license to go into a bar after passing his PLCB card to an underage companion.

"We get a lot of people trying to get in on someone else's cards," Phillips says. "One guy will come in and show a driver's license and a PSU student I.D. and the guy behind him will have a PLCB card with the same name on it. That

happens a lot, and we usually pick it up and ask them to leave."

Another standard trick is to get someone's PLCB card, slit the plastic covering, and put another picture over the original. Still another is to get the University to issue a document with the wrong birthdate on it, according to Dolphin. "We'll take college I.D.s as backup, but not that alone," he says. "Shields is too easy to fool."

If checkers are suspicious, they use a number of techniques to make sure the person presenting the I.D. is the same one to whom the I.D. was issued. A standard practice is to make the individual sign his or her name. More than a few people can't even correctly spell the name on the I.D. they present, much less match the signature, according to Dolphin.

"I also ask for addresses and zip codes and check to see if physical characteristics match," he says. "My favorite trick is to ask a person for his zodiac sign. I know all of the signs and the dates they correspond to, and people with borrowed ones usually don't think of checking on that. It usually catches them."

A consensus of the bartender-checkers asked said that there were probably more men than women with altered I.D.s, but that men usually got more abusive when turned away.

Checking I.D.s isn't the most pleasant pastime in the world, and all of the checkers said they disliked it. Even though visits by PLCB agents are rare, the threat that they will drop in is always present, so a tight door-check is necessary at all times.

"It's no fun, but it's our job," Phillips says. "It's the only way we can stay open and serve our legitimate customers. We have absolutely no choice in the matter. We don't try to get anyone in trouble, we just don't let underage people in, that's all. And that's the way it has to be until the laws are changed."