

Entry 12

As I've stated before, I have a hard time trying to figure out what to tell you about? What seems normal to me might be interesting to you. So, I'm going to explain some of the basic stuff that occurred in USP Lompoc while I was there.

I had told you about the different types of "hustles" that people had but I didn't tell you about the "store guys". A store guy is someone who runs a store within the living unit out of his cell. They usually operate on both cash in hand purchases (as I had explained, postage stamps were the currency), and offering you a line of credit until your next paycheck if they know you have a job and are good at paying your debts. How the store guys earn their money is by selling stuff for one and a half times its value (example, if something cost \$1.00 in the inmate store it would cost \$1.50 from a store guy). So, let's say you and your buddies decided you wanted to do a spread (a spread is what we call it when a few people get together and put in food items in order to make a meal for everyone involved to eat), and make nachos, but nobody had any Doritos for the nachos. Then you could go to one of the store guys to get the Doritos you need. You have to pay more for them that way but it's the convenience of being able to get what you need right then and there. Store guys are a black-market business within the prison but it's not something that the prison staff were really worried about as they knew it helped to have store guys as it kept people content to a point. There were a lot of things that were technically against the rules but were allowed to happen as it helped to keep things running smoothly within the prison.

One of the best prison hustles is being a tattoo artist. Once again, this is something that was against the rules but most CO's at USP Lompoc federal penitentiary would tell you that as long as they didn't see it being done, they didn't care. So, when a tattoo artist wanted to do work on someone they would get someone to "stand point" or to "run jigs", these are terms used for someone who stands out on the tier someplace watching for the CO's to make their rounds and do tier checks. When they see an officer making their rounds, it's their job as a jig or a point man to let the people who are tattooing know that the CO is coming so they can stop and stash everything until they are done doing their tied checks.

Another hustle that was very common was making hooch or pruno (both terms used for making homemade prison wine). But this is a hustle that you rolled the dice by doing. If you got caught making hooch, depending upon the officer who caught you, they would either make you pour it down the toilet while they watched and that would be the end of it, or they would take it and write the person a shot (a "shot" is what they call a disciplinary action) for manufacturing wine. If someone received a shot, they would most likely receive loss of good time and either store restrictions, phone restrictions or visiting restrictions for a certain period of time. When I first got there they didn't have moonshine stills going but by the time I left there were people making white lightning (moonshine) in every unit. The CO's wouldn't turn their heads when it came to the white lightning though. There were too many major fights, stabbings and riots that were triggered by people who were drunk on moonshine (there was a major riot between one of the biggest gangs in the prison and the CO's in my living unit one time due to white lightning. I will tell you about that later on though). So, when they found moonshine, someone was going to the bucket (solitary confinement).

Oh, I just thought of something else I can tell you about. On the following holidays, Memorial Day, Labor Day and the Fourth of July they would have a BBQ out on the recreational yard for the entire prison. Each living unit would come out one at a time and you would go down the line of servers and let them know what you wanted on your plate. There would be BBQ chicken, hamburgers and hot dogs, potato salad, watermelon, ice creme cups, a can of soda pop and a few other random things. Once you had your food you would head out on to the recreational yard and find a spot to sit down with your buddies to eat. They would also have the different prison bands playing music all day long on the recreational yard. Once you were out there you could stay out all day until 3:30 p.m. movement in from the yard if you wanted to. I can't remember which holiday they did it on, but one of those holidays was an all you can eat hamburger and hot dogs BBQ that was actually out on the recreational yard and you could keep going through the line to eat as much as you wanted to which was awesome!!!

Being in prison totally sucks but there are small things that happen here and there that make it more bearable. Such as here at the prison I'm now at they do different types of "fundraisers". They are currently doing a fundraiser where we were allowed to order the following if we wanted to,... Either an 8 piece fried chicken or a whole baked chicken (limit of two total), a dozen Krispy Kreme donuts (original glazed or chocolate glazed) and up to two 2 liter bottles of soda pop. We have already ordered and paid for our stuff and we will receive it the first weekend of next month. The money raised from the fundraiser is used to go to the local community to help the homeless shelters and children's shelters and stuff like that. So we get a treat that we normally wouldn't receive in here and organizations in the community benefit from the money that is raised.

That's it for now,... Till Next Time