

## The Hole

By Dan Tracy

While doing a one year bit in the Cheshire Correctional Center in Connecticut, circa 1962, I was thrown in the hole nine days for singing in my cell. I was 16 years old. The screw said I sang too loud – I disturbed the North Block, so he said. Fact is this goon hated life and himself. He took his anger and directed it against the inmates. There's one in every prison, guards who are as dysfunctional as the inmates whose lives are just as worthless. Maybe it's because their wives beat them or they realized they were in a dead end job, a life of futility and hopelessness. Unlike us who would eventually be released, the goons were incarcerated for the duration of their wretched lives. They were doomed. They had committed the ultimate crime – man's inhumanity to man.

The hole was a 6x9 foot concrete room painted puke green with a stainless steel sink and toilet built into the furthest wall from the cell door. To the right of the door a one inch piece of foam over a concrete slab was your bed. The ceiling had a one foot square skylight, your only way to determine night from day. If you fell asleep during the daylight then awoke to daylight, you couldn't be certain if an hour passed or if you slept through to the next day. I had this happen twice. I could only ride out my time blindly not knowing how much time had passed. Psychological chaos.

Silence and boredom were your enemies in the hole. Silence makes one think, forces you to acknowledge reality, which, of course no self respecting junkie wants to deal with. Escape was the only answer. My major escape was jerking off, spanking the monkey, or, as they say, rolling a cigar. But one can only choke one's chicken so many times. I beat my dick so frequently I no longer ejaculated sperm; which was ok with me since that meant less cum to clean up. Flogging one's log is a good thing – it passes time.

Nine days of nothing breeds boredom. To amuse myself I captured a beetle and named him Speedy Gonzales because he was quick on his feet. Speedy lived in a crack behind the toilet. Occasionally, Speedy made a futile attempt at running across the cell floor whereby I would block his path with a piece of foam I had torn off of the mattress. If Speedy ran to the left, I'd detour him with the foam barrier, if he ran to the right I'd block his escape path again. This lasted for hours before Speedy gave up. The little bastard was my prisoner. Now I had the power. I had become Speedy's goon. When my time was up I'd be released back into population. But for Speedy, well, I hadn't determined his fate yet.

Food in the hole was almost laughable if it had not been for the hunger pangs. Breakfast, always served at random times (done purposely, I'm sure) fucking up your sense of time, consisted of seven cornflakes floating on a half inch of milk in a plastic cup. About a half-hour later, Goon Hendricks brought a tube of toothpaste and brush. I'd eat half of the toothpaste to ward off hunger 'till the next meal of one slice of baloney on a slice of bread – not even a sandwich – and a half cup of Kool-aid. Finally, the late night meal – seven beans on a plate and a half cup of milk. Seven was not a lucky number in the hole, obviously.

I often wonder what determines ones behavior in life. What has more of an impact, genes or environment? I never knew my father (the dickhead impregnated my mother and took off) and my mother had enough problems of her own – she made the rounds of the local nuthouse and prison for reasons unknown to a five year old. I was on my own. With no guidance, no one to teach me right or wrong, no one to identify with, I assimilated the lives of people around me. I lived in the ghetto all my life. My mentors and heroes were thieves, junkies and whores. My selfish ways fit in with these outsiders. I easily learned the rules of the streets. Even today, 46 years later, I embrace my past. I'd do it all over again with relish. The 1960s were adventurous times. Times I yearn for. Times that are gone forever yet, live on in memory. I treasure my yesterdays but fear my tomorrows.

Every three days, one is allowed to shower. This is how you found out how many others were in the hole, if you listened to the sound of clinking keys and the sliding of the steel doors. Goon Hendricks would announce, "Shower time." Today there were three of us; Frankie the Shiv, Beer Can Jerry and myself. I caught a glimpse of them as I came back from my shower as each cell door had a 3x8 inch glass view hole. I was in cell 8, Frankie, 2, and Jerry in 5. I wasn't curious as to why they were here. Both had violent reputations.

Beer Can Jerry was the prison deviate; he ass-fucked the new, young fish, innocent kids sentenced for minor scrapes with the law. Jerry was a short man, perhaps 5 foot 2 inches but, had the muscled hulk of an ape. Few inmates tangled with this beast. Jerry worked on the rock pile swinging a ten-pound sledgehammer, effortlessly reducing huge, heavy boulders to dust. He could have been a likable guy if he wasn't the prison colon conquistador. No sphincter was safe around this animal. Dropping ones soap around Jerry was a no-no. He had a cock the diameter of a beer can.

I first met Jerry around 1959 at the Meriden School for Boys, a reform school for wayward kids. We worked together in the kitchen along side Mrs. Oak, the housemother. As Mrs. Oak leaned over the sink washing dishes, Jerry would pretend to drop a towel or dishcloth so he could get on all fours to look up Mrs. Oak's dress. His method of arousal, I suppose. That evening Jerry forced a young boy into a closet, slapped some cooking lard up the poor kids ass and buttfucked him.

Some years later I did a thirty day skid bit in the Bridgeport Correctional Center for a lousy joint I forgot about in my pocket as I was being frisked after a failed shoplifting attempt. Beer Can Jerry was in the same cage as me. The cage housed ten cells. I lived in cell 4, young Steve in 5 and Jerry in 6. All of the cells within this cage were open allowing the ten inmates to play cards or dominoes or just bullshit – anything to pass the time away. Late at night during lights out, Jerry raped Steve. I clearly heard Steve whimper, "It hurts." I'd hear a thump (Jerry whopping Steve upside his head), and then I'd hear the slapping of Jerry's balls against this innocent kids asscheeks. Although I felt sorry for this kid, I could not snitch on Jerry. It was the law of the inside. Dropping a dime on another inmate guaranteed retribution. There are too many ways to die behind bars.

Frankie the Shiv was no one to fuck with. Rub Frankie the wrong way and he'd bury a sharpened toothbrush in your eyeball. Frankie hailed from my hometown, Bridgeport Connecticut. Ten years ago Frankie owned a barber shop, a home and had a beautiful wife. As a barber he listened to his customers ramble on about politics, sports and women. One day a customer had bragged about a woman who couldn't keep her hands off of him. The customer described intimate details as Frankie listened and clipped hair.

"She goes crazy when I rim her," proclaimed the customer proudly, "but, most of all, she got her rocks off by holding a vibrator on her clit as I rubbed my cock across her tits."

"What's her name?" asked Frankie.

"Gina," said the customer.

The customer never saw it coming as Frankie's straight razor sliced across his throat, clean through his neck almost severing his spine. Since then Frankie's sanity was questionable.

My nine days ended as Goon Hendricks slid my cell door open, "Times up." He was a man of few words. I wedged Speedy between two pieces of foam and carried him back to population with me. Speedy helped me do my hole time, now it was payback time.

I decided Speedy was to be set free. He helped me keep my sanity; it was the least I could do for him.

There's a crack in the prison yard wall under Gun Tower 2. Separating the foam sandwich, I nudged Speedy with my finger, helping him along through the crack. I tried three times flicking my finger against him to encourage him to go. Speedy kept coming back. I couldn't understand why he shunned freedom. I made one last attempt, this time holding a piece of foam blocking his return. It looked like he caught on as he scuttled away. Suddenly he picked up speed and ran like hell. Just as he reached freedom on the other side of the wall, a praying mantis grabbed him, ripped off his head and devoured it. The mantis looked me straight in the eye, smiled, then strolled away; the carcass of Speedy locked in the mantis's claws. Oh, well...so much for freedom.

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