

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

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There are smiles in prison. I see them all the time. For every person I meet who is angry, bitter, defiant, I find another who isn't. I cherish chances to learn from those who learned to see the deeper meaning in their lives.

I was watching a volley ball game last night. One guy got angry when his team mate tried to give him some advice. He responded so harshly that the guy walked off the court rather than stay in the game with such an angry, defensive man. He kept up his belligerence and pretty soon everyone else walked off and left him standing alone on the court. They then started up a friendly game on the next court over which did not include him.

It never occurred to the angry guy that he was the problem. He held on to his anger, spewing threats as he walked away. I felt bad for him but at the same time I can see why no one wanted to play with him. There are enough problems in this prison without having to endure pointless animosity during rec and possibly a trip to seg.

I doubt if it was the volley ball game that was the real problem. The guy probably had other issues in his life which were overwhelming him and used the game to lash out. That doesn't make it right, but it puts it in perspective.

We are all at differing levels of spiritual evolution. We each grow as our experiences and capabilities permit. The angry young man has not yet taken the time to develop insights into his way of interacting with the world.

Perhaps last night, as he laid in his bunk before falling asleep, he replayed what happened on the volley ball court. Perhaps he let go of his anger just long enough to feel a little foolish for getting so upset over his team mate's comments. Perhaps he took another step along his path toward wisdom.