

A TYPICAL DAY IN PRISON FOR THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

5:30 a.m. appeared on the officers' clock in the control room and he pushed the buttons that unlocked all the doors, allowing them to spring open about six inches.

It's a time when the guys who like to prepare early get up, get dressed, make their bunks and then go out to watch the morning news. This is also a time when lazy guys such as myself decide that it's now time to go back to sleep. After all, I'm not going to get called out for breakfast for another 30 minutes to an hour and 30 minutes. The time depends upon what order the dorms are called out in.

I'm suddenly awoken by the officer over the intercom and half the guys yelling, "**Chow! Chow!**" My cellmate and I immediately jumped up and, while stumbling over each other, threw on our clothes, put on our shoes and tried to make our hair look half way decent.(otherwise known as parachuting) I rushed out of the quad still tying my shoes and buckling my belt to go pack into the sally port with about 55 other guys. It's so nice breathing in the carbon dioxide of other guys with morning breath.

The sally port is a room that encompasses the perimeter of the control room and is approximately 7 x 30 feet.

The waiting time in this room varies from 5 minutes to 10 minutes. It's a time of having to listen to guys yell and scream to each other while standing only three feet apart. The subjects can be anything from last night's game to someone being concerned about a growth he has noticed on his sack.

Although I hate to do any kind of talking under these circumstances, I leaned over and showing compassion and concern I offered my assurance and informed him, "It's called a penis."

When the door finally opened we all rushed out to the maze of walkways that usually have an officer at each corner informing us to stay single file within the yellow lines.

So here we all are dressed in the same blue outfits, with a white stripe down the side, staying in single file line all looking like a bunch of inmates heading to chow. Oh wait! That's what we are. My bad.

It's not a flawless trip. You've got guys yelling back and forth with friends from other dorms that are heading back and you have others skipping ahead or dropping back in line so they can eat with friends.

About halfway to the chow hall, I walked past a male officer who was just standing there looking for any kind of mistake regarding our appearances. He called me out of line and asked, "Inmate, when was the last time you had a haircut?" Taking almost 3 seconds to think over how far I could go with this without getting myself into trouble, I replied, "I'm sorry sir, I didn't write the date down." Accepting my smart-ass remark, but at the same time holding his ground, he asked, "Well, do you know when your going to get your next one?" I looked at my watch and informed him of the days date and he motioned for me to proceed.

Upon arriving to the chow hall, I was thankful to see that there was no line and my cellmate had waited so we could do some food trading. Food trading is something that is officially only to occur between guys at the same table, but many times officers are pretty cool about it and won't stop table-to-table trading.

So after getting my tray from the window I sat down at the table with my cellmate and two other guys and started to give my breakfast some flavor with the saltshaker. When I returned the saltshaker back to the center of the table, I committed one of the most horrific crimes in prison; I reached over the tray of someone I didn't know. That's right! I think my elbow might have gone almost a whole inch over the corner of his tray. Now, I wasn't aware that any of this had even happened until the guy started yelling, "What's your problem cracker? Reaching over my tray like that." Looking at him in total disbelief that he could even be worried about such a thing, I thought to myself, "Okay, I'm sure we're all going to survive here.

The thought to apologize crossed my mind, but there's one thing I've learned since I've been in prison and that is whether it's an officer or an inmate, no matter how much reasoning is behind your actions or how much sincerity is behind your apology, it will never be appreciated.