

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

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Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall . . .
Posting Photos Tells It All

People in the real world take mirrors for granted but in the land of the bizarre, real mirrors are few and far between.

In every cell in Stanley there is what is referred to as a mirror. It is a sheet of reflective metal measuring 10½ x 14 inches, strategically located above what passes for a sink in prison. In every cell I've been in at Stanley, the reflective metal is scratched and marred. I assume the metal plates get scratched during cell cleaning - which leads me to form one of two possible conclusions: either every person who ever cleaned a metal mirror in Stanley used an abrasive; or the metal surface is so delicate that cleaning it with a soft rag and liquid window cleaner damages it.

We are allowed to purchase plastic 4 x 6 inch mirrors. Most men buy one of these mirrors just so they can see what their face looks like. One thing we can't see is what the rest of our bodies look like.

The only exception to this is in "B-Building," where the chapel, school and library are located. In the prisoner bathroom in that building, there are 4 large mirrors placed over the sinks. These well-lighted mirrors are clear and well-made. We can actually see what we look like from the waist up.

When I was younger, I used to see old men who missed a spot while shaving and had a patch of stubble. I always vowed that "I'll never do that!" because I thought it looked slovenly and unkempt. Now, I have to laugh at myself because, often as not, when I go to B-Building and happen to look at myself in the mirror, I see where I missed a spot. Now I'm the old guy who has an unsightly patch of stubble. The combination of poor lighting in a cell and a small mirror makes doing a good job of shaving very difficult. In fact, it makes all personal grooming difficult.

All of these thoughts occurred to me one recent Saturday when I went to B-Building to take a photo for inclusion in a book on prisoner stories out of Wisconsin (prayforjusticeinwi.org). Since I needed a photo for that, I made an extra one to post in this blog. And since I was posting one photo, I decided to include photos from when I was in a work release center: 2008 when I was helping train dogs at Sangar Powers and 2010 when I was a van driver in Gordon. Five photos in all.



