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1-11

3/17/17

HELLO FRIENDS,

I wanted to share a few thoughts
written by other inmates. Perhaps there
is also a contribution by one of my
favorite writers/comedians, George Carlin. The
most of the writing was assembled
by inmates as part of a Faith Based
Curriculum called Quest.

Please feel free to 'Click & Forward'
and send these 'pearls' to others who
may be interested in the experience,
strength and hope shared by those of
us who happen to have found ourselves
'behind the wire'.

EXCELLENCE!
(UPWARD AND ONWARD!)

GARY



Outside the Box

A year in confinement passed slowly as a turtle. I got myself involved in an incident. After an investigation, I was confined to an extended stay in confinement.

The first couple of months were like living in a box. The walls seemed to move forward and back, depending on the mood I was in. I thought my situation unfair. That kind of thinking feeds bitterness; and the walls seemed to close in.

I signed up for anger management. I didn't think programs would help. But to get out of the cell for at least an hour once a week was a relief. After a year in confinement, I came up for release. But before considered for release there were two conditions: accept responsibility for my part in the incident; and submit to a psychological evaluation.

Neither condition appealed to me. I didn't think the incident was my fault and I didn't think I had a mental problem. At that time in my life I had made an important spiritual decision. Armed with my newfound Christian faith I decided to lay aside my old way of thinking.

I never trusted psychologists. They ask personal questions. They take notes while you discuss your personal life. They label you and file you away for future reference.

On the way to the psych call-out, I decided to let those thoughts pass.

The psychologist was a middle-aged lady, about five feet tall. She wore a purple blouse with purple slacks. She took notes with a purple pen on a purple pad.

After a casual introduction and small talk about our favorite color, her first question was, "Do you think its safe out there on the compound?" (I had always thought prison an unstable environment.) My first reaction was "Lady this is prison!" But that view was obvious; and old. Instead, I said, "Yes ma'am, I don't see where I would have a problem." It didn't sound like myself. It seemed to defy all common sense.

But back in the cell, as I thought about it, it made better sense than my first reaction. In fact, I had not lived on the compound. The day I arrived, I was escorted from receiving to confinement.

I felt relief! The walls moved back! After meeting the conditions, I was released from the box.

- Student, 2009

"Man gets what he intends"

- Student, 2009

"Each moment we can either add to the good of the world or subtract from it by the quality of what we are."

- Student, 2009

The Circle

The Circle

What you think, you create
 What you create, you become
 What you become, you express
 What you express, you experience
 What you experience, you are
 What you are, you think
 The Circle is complete!

Don't Be Afraid To Fail

You've failed many times, although you may not remember.
You fell down the first time you tried to walk.
You almost drowned the first time you tried to swim, didn't you?
Did you hit the ball the first time you swung the bat?
Heavy hitters, the one's who hit the most homeruns, also strike out alot.
R.H. Macy failed seven times before his store in New York caught on.
Babe Ruth struck out one thousand three hundred thirty times but he also hit seven hundred fourteen home runs.
Michael Jordan has shot from the three point line and missed three to one.
Don't worry about failure. Worry about the chances you miss when you don't even try.

Five Great Lessons

Some important lessons life teaches you...

1. First most important lesson – The cleaning woman:

During the second month of school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely, this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman but why would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade, "Absolutely," said the professor, "in your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello. I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

2. Second important lesson – Pickup in the rain:

One night, at 11:30 p.m. an older African American woman was standing on the side of an Alabama highway trying to endure a lashing rainstorm. Her car had broken down and she desperately needed a ride. Soaking wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young white man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in those conflict filled 1960s. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance and put her into a taxicab. She seemed to be in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him. Seven days went by and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console color TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached. It read: "Thank you very much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes, but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away. GOD bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others."

Sincerely,
Mrs. Nat King Cole

3. Third important lesson – Always remember those who serve you:

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a ten-year-old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked. "Fifty cents", replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied the coins in it. "Well, how much is a plain dish of ice cream?" he inquired. By now, more people were waiting for a table and the waitress was growing impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she brusquely replied. The little boy again counted his coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said. The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and left. When the waitress came back, she began to cry as she wiped down the table. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies – You see, he couldn't have the sundae, because he had to have enough left to leave her a tip.

4. Fourth important lesson – The obstacle in our path:

In ancient times, a king had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the

way. Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many of us never understand. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

5. Fifth important lesson – Giving when it counts:

Many years ago, when I worked as a volunteer at a hospital, I got to know a little girl name Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her..." As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?" Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her. You see, understanding and attitude, after all, are everything.

Work like you don't need the money,
Love like you've never been hurt,
And dance like you do when nobody's watching.

Reaching Your Potential

Desire
Decision
Direction
Determination
Develop Your Skills
Detach Yourself
(From Those Who Are Not Mentally,
Emotionally, or Spiritually Sound)
Discipline Your Appetite
Discipline Your Emotions
Discipline Your Moods
Discipline Your Tongue
Discipline Your Priorities

The Rules of Being Human

- * You will learn lessons. We are all enrolled in a full-time school called "life on planet earth." Every person or incident is your teacher
- * There are no mistakes – only lessons. "Failures are the stepping-stones to success."
- * A lesson is repeated until learned. It is presented in various forms until you learn it – then you go on to the next lesson.
- * If you don't learn easy lessons, they get harder. Pain is one way the universe gets your attention.
- * You will know you have learned a lesson when your actions change. Only action turns knowledge into wisdom.
- * "There" is no better than "Here." When "there" becomes "here" you will find another "there" that again looks better than "here".
- * Others are only mirrors. You can only love or hate something in another that reflects something you love or hate in yourself.
- * Your life is up to you. Life provides the canvas; you do the painting.
- * Your answers lie inside you. All you need to do is look, listen and trust.
- * You will tend to forget all of this.
- * You can remember this anytime you wish.

³ Excerpted from Dan Millan, *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior Series*

Please Hear What I Am Not Saying

Don't be fooled by me.
 Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
 I wear a mask,
 I wear a thousand masks,
 masks that I am afraid to take off,
 and none of them are me.
 Pretending is an art that is second nature with me,
 but don't be fooled;
 for God's sake don't be fooled.
 I give you the impression that I am secure,
 that all is sunny and unruffled within me as well as without;
 that confidence is my name and coolness my game;
 that the water is calm and I am in command; that I need no one.
 But don't believe me, please...
 my surface may seem smooth,
 but my surface is my mask,
 my ever-varying and ever-concealing mask.
 Beneath lies no smugness, no complacency.
 Beneath dwells the real me in confusion...
 in fear...
 in aloneness.
 But I hide this...
 I don't want anybody to know it.
 I panic at the thought of my weakness...
 and fear of being exposed.
 That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind...
 a nonchalant, sophisticated façade...
 to help me pretend...
 to shield me from the glance that knows.
 But such a glance is precisely my salvation...
 and I know it.
 That is, if it's followed by acceptance...
 if it's followed by LOVE.
 It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself...
 from my own self-built prison walls...
 from the barriers I so painstakingly erect.
 It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't assure myself...
 that I am really something.
 But I don't tell you this; I don't dare.
 I'm afraid to.
 I'm afraid your glance will not be followed by acceptance and love.
 I'm afraid you'll think less of me, that you'll laugh...
 and your laugh will kill me;
 I'm afraid that deep down I'm nothing,
 that I'm just no good and that you will see this and reject me.
 So, I play my game...
 my desperate, pretending game,
 with a façade of assurance without and a trembling child within.
 And so begins the parade of masks,
 the glittering but empty parade of masks.
 My life became a front.
 I idly chatter to you in suave tones of surface talk.
 I tell you everything that is nothing and nothing that is everything of what's crying inside of me.
 So when I'm going through my routine, do not be fooled by what I'm saying.
 Please listen carefully and try to hear what I am not saying...
 what I would like to be able to say...
 what for survival I need to say...
 but what I can't say.
 I dislike hiding, honestly.

I dislike the superficial game I am playing,
 the superficial phony.
 I'd like to be really genuine and spontaneous and me,
 but you've got to help me.
 You've got to hold out your hand...
 even when that's the last thing I seem to want or need.
 Only you can wipe away from my eyes the blank stare of the breathing dead.
 Only you can call me into aliveness.
 Each time you're kind...
 and gentle...
 and encouraging,
 Each time you try to understand because you really care...
 my heart begins to grow wings...
 very small wings...
 very feeble wings...
 but wings.
 With your sensitivity and compassion and your power of understanding,
 you can breathe life into me.
 I want you to know that...
 I want you to know how important you are to me.
 How you can be the creator of the person that is me...
 if you choose to.

Please Choose!

You alone can break down the wall behind which I tremble;
 You alone can remove the mask;
 You alone can release me from my lonely prison.
 Do not pass me by.
 Please do not pass me by.
 It will not be easy for you.
 My long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.
 The nearer you approach me, the more blindly I might strike back.
 It's irrational, but despite what books say about a person, I am irrational.
 I fight against the very thing I cry out for.
 But I am told that love is stronger than strong walls, and in this lies hope.

My Only Hope!

Please try to beat down my wall with firm hands, but with gentle hands...for a child is very sensitive.
 Who am I, you may wonder?
 I am someone you know very well.

FOR I AM EVERY MAN YOU MEET...
 I AM EVERY WOMAN YOU MEET...
 I AM RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU!

Antigone

Excerpt from the Greek Play by Sophocles

....Now don't, please
 be quite so single-minded, self-involved,
 or assume that the world is wrong and you are right.
 Whoever thinks that he alone possesses intelligence,
 the gift of eloquence, he and no one else,
 and character too...such men, I tell you,
 spread them open – you will find them empty. No
 it's no disgrace for a man, even a wise man,
 to learn many things and not be too rigid.

You've seen trees by a raging winter torrent,
 now many sway with the flood and salvage every twig,
 but not the stubborn – they're ripped out, roots and all.
 Bend or break. The same when a man is sailing:
 haul your sheets too taut, but never give an inch,
 you'll capsize, to the rest of the voyage
 keel up and the rowing-benches under.
 Oh, give away. Relax your anger – change!
 I'm young, I know, but let me offer this:
 it would be best by far, I admit,
 if a man were born infallible, right by nature.
 If not – and things don't often go that way,
 it's best to learn from those with good advice.

A Safe Place

In a safe place, people are kind.
 Sarcasm, fighting, backbiting and name-calling are an exception.
 Kindness, consideration and forgiveness are the usual way of life.
 In a safe place there is laughter.
 Real laughter that comes from sharing meaningful work and pleasure.
 In a safe place, there are rules.
 Rules are few and fair and are made by the people who live and work there.
 In a safe place, people listen to one another.
 They care about one another and show that they do.
 We all need a safe place somewhere in our lives.
 We can't go search for a safe place if we have
 never had one in our houses or schools.
 We all need a safe place to find comfort,
 courage and confidence.

Things to Remember

Our presence is a gift to the world.
 You are unique and one of a kind.
 Your life can be what you want it to be
 Take the days-just one at a time
 Count your blessings, not your troubles
 You will make it through whatever comes along.
 Within you are so many answers.
 Understand, have courage, be strong.
 Do not put limits on yourself.
 So many dreams are waiting to be realized.
 Decisions are too important to leave to chance.
 Reach for your peak, your goal, and your prize.
 Nothing wastes more energy than worrying.
 The longer one carries a problem, the heavier it gets.
 Do not take things too seriously.
 Live a life of serenity, not a life of regrets.
 Remember that a little love goes a long way.
 Remember that a lot goes forever.
 Remember that friendship is a wise investment.
 Life's treasures are people...together.
 Realize that nothing is ever too late.
 Do ordinary things in an extraordinary way.

¹ "Antigone" from Three Theban Plays by Sophocles, translated by Robert Fagles (Viking Penguin, 1982)

² A Safe Place, Excerpted from a handprinted poster inside Lloyd Radar Youthful Offender Center, Oklahoma

Promise Yourself...

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind,
 To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet,
 To make all your friends feel that there is something in them,
 To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true,
 To think only of the best, to work only for the best and expect only the best,
 To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own,
 To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future,
 To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile,
 To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others,
 To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

The Paradox of Our Time

By George Carlin

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life.

We've added years to life, not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've split the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication.

There are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw-away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose to change life's direction...or not!

The Invitation

By Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living
 I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.
 It doesn't interest me how old you are
 I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dreams,
 for the adventure of being alive.
 It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon,
 I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow,
 If you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed
 from fear of further pain.
 I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own,
 If you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you
 To the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be
 Careful, realistic, or to remember the limitations of being human.
 It doesn't interest me if the story you're telling me is true.
 I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself;
 If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul.
 I want to know if you can be faithful and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it is not pretty every day,
 And if you can source your life from God's presence.
 I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine,
 And still stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes!"
 It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have.
 I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair,
 Weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done for the children.
 It doesn't interest me who you are, how you came to be here.
 I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.
 It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied.
 I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.
 I want to know if you can be alone with yourself,
 And if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

Life

Life isn't about keeping score. It's not about how many friends you have, or how accepted you are. It isn't about who you're dating, who you used to date, how many people you've dated, or if you haven't been with anyone at all. It isn't about who you have kissed; it's not about sex.

It isn't about who your family is, how much money they have, what kind of car you drive or what school you're going to. It is not about how beautiful or ugly you are. It isn't about what clothes you wear, what shoes you have on, or what kind of music you listen to. It isn't about whether your hair is blonde, red, black, or brown, or if your skin is too light or too dark. It isn't about what grades you get, how smart you are, or how popular you are. It isn't about what clubs you belong to, or how good you are at your sport, or how good you look on your resume.

But, life is about who you love and who you hurt. It's about who you make happy or unhappy on purpose. It's about keeping or betraying trust. It's about whether you use friendship as sanctity or as a weapon. It's about starting rumors and contributing to petty gossip. It's about what judgments you pass and who your judgments are spread to. It's about jealousy, fear, ignorance and revenge. It's about carrying inner love or hate, and letting love or hate grow and spread.

But most of all it is about using your life to touch or to poison other people's hearts in such a way that could have never occurred alone. And only you can choose how to use your life, and how those hearts will be affected.

To Daddy

There are little eyes upon you,
 And they're watching night and day,
 There are little ears that quickly
 Take in every word you say,
 There are little hands all eager
 To do anything you do,
 And a little boy who's dreaming
 Of the day he'll be like you.
 You're the little fellow's idol,
 You're the wisest of the wise,
 In his little mind about you,
 No suspicions ever rise,
 He believes in you devoutly,
 Holds that all you say and do,
 He will say and do, in your way
 When he's grown up like you.
 There's a wide-eyed little fellow
 Who believes you're always right,
 And his ears are always open,
 And he watches day and night,
 You are setting an example
 Every day, in all you do,
 For the little boy who's waiting
 To grow up to be like you.

* Marsh Creek Detention Center, Cecile Ray: Deuce Program, 1990

Airport Cookies

A woman was waiting at an airport one night,
With several long hours before her flight.
She hunted for a book in the airport shop,
Bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop.
She was engrossed in her book but happened to see
That the man beside her, as bald as can be,
Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag in between
Which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene.
She munched cookies, and watched the clock
As this gutsy cookie thief diminished she stock!
She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by,
Thinking... "If I wasn't so nice, I'd blacken his eye!"
With each cookie she took, he took one too!
And when only one was left, she wondered what he'd do.
With a smile on his face, and a nervous laugh,
He took the last cookie and broke it in half.
He offered her half, as he ate the other,
She snatched it from him and thought, "Oh, brother!"
"This guy has some nerve, and he's also rude,
Why, he didn't even show any gratitude!"
She had never known when she had been so galled,
And sighed with relief when he flight was called.
She gathered her belongings and headed to the gate,
Refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate.
She boarded the plane, and sank in her seat,
Then sought her book, which was almost complete.
As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise,
There was her bag of cookies, in front of her eyes!
"If mine are here," she moaned with despair,
"Then the others were his, and he tried to share!"
Too late to apologize, she realized with grief,
That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief.