

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

August 6, 2017

A Spirit-Crushing Prison

As I was walking back to my cell after a visit last week, I was thinking about how nice it would be if instead I was going out of the prison to my waiting motorcycle. I contemplated the joy I would feel as I started the engine and roared off to live my life as a free man.

It was then that a second thought occurred to me: it is very hard to visualize any other existence than the one I'm currently experiencing in Stanley. It feels like I have always been here and always will be. Release from prison seems an impossible dream, like becoming a billionaire or the first person to land on Mars - something wonderful that could never come to pass.

It made me wonder, what is it about Stanley that has so crushed my spirit to make me lose the ability to imagine my freedom? Is it the miserable conditions I have endured for years? The arbitrary way I was sent here? Or the impossibility of getting a fair parole or prison classification decision since Walker became governor?

I don't know. I keep waiting for something to change, something good to happen. Something to show me that tomorrow will not equal yesterday, that justice and fair play still exists in Wisconsin.

I guess it's time to change my outlook, to focus on a better, brighter future, to visualize the life I deserve. No more allowing my situation to crush my spirit.