



# George Yefchak

## NJACA Corrections Quarterly



Volume 3, Number 1

Spring/Summer 2009

**Our Mission:** To shape public policy and provide information, training, and networking opportunities, thereby promoting professional growth and organizational effectiveness in New Jersey's criminal/juvenile justice system.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

To quote a famous little blond girl in a scary movie, "They're back." It's been a while since we published our last newsletter and hopefully you won't have to wait as long for our next one. Believe me, it's a sin of omission rather than commission. One of the major problems with an organization that is run by an all volunteer board is that you can not hold them to the same standards as a paid employee.

As you will note from this newsletter, there have been some changes in our leadership. Several of our long time board members have decided that retirement is more attractive then working, lucky them, unlucky us. Good luck to Cindy, Marge and Bob. The newsletter will introduce both our newest board members and the new slate of officers.

As we are all aware, recent changes in the government's approach to involvement in professional organizations has had a serious impact on the way NJACA does its business and provides services to our membership and our colleagues. The old days of annual conferences that attract several hundred people may not be dead, but it is certainly in hibernation. The board began a discussion at our March meeting on what we can do to keep our members interested and provide them with the kinds of activities that make them want to stay involved. If you have any suggestions you can snail mail them to our post office box or send me an email at [jhemm@njaconline.org](mailto:jhemm@njaconline.org).

We hope to continue some one-day trainings that provide value to our membership and are in preliminary planning to hold some sort of annual meeting that would be held in the Trenton area at the end of our workday so folks could attend. More on that later.

If you are wondering about the blond girl reference think Drew Barrymore at about 5 or 6.

*~ Jim Hemm, NJACA President*

### Editor's Note: American Life in Poetry



Readers of this issue of the **George Yefchak NJACA Corrections Quarterly** will be introduced to a new standing column entitled *American Life in Poetry*. This special feature is being provided to us by The Poetry Foundation. We will also share with our readers a brief history of this weekly newspaper column, which is celebrating its fourth anniversary this year. Each new issue of the **Quarterly** will generally contain several *American Life in Poetry* features.

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### Congratulations to the following new Board members...

**Ralph Frentz**

Corporate Director: Assessment & Research, *CEC*

**Kim Guadagno**

Monmouth County Sheriff

**Pat McKernan**

Chief Operating Officer, *Volunteers of America*

**Mark O'Sullivan**

Research Scientist, *State Parole Board*

**Michael Osterman**

Research Scientist, *State Parole Board*

**Matthew Sheridan**

Executive Assistant, *Juvenile Justice Commission*

**Donald Weinbaum**

Executive Director, *Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ*

### Welcome New NJ-ACA Executive Board Members

**President**  
Jim Hemm

**1st Vice President**  
David Wolfsgruber

**2nd Vice President**  
Richard Marazo

**Treasurer**  
Don Weinbaum

**Recording Secretary**  
Celeste Bettino

**Corresponding Secretary**  
Sherry Sandler



### George Yefchak NJACA Corrections Quarterly

Editors: Dr. Matthew Sheridan & Steve Troyanovich

Questions, comments, and suggestions for future newsletter content can be e-mailed to [matt.sheridan@njjc.org](mailto:matt.sheridan@njjc.org)

### Congratulations to the following members who retained their seats on the Board...

<b>Thomas Flanagan:</b>	Director, Juvenile Parole & Transitional Services, <i>JJC</i>
<b>Gary Hilton:</b>	President, <i>Paige Plus LLC</i>
<b>Roger Lichtman:</b>	Registered Architect, <i>Lichtman Associates, P.C.</i>
<b>Robert Murray:</b>	Administrator & Division Chief, <i>Hudson County DOC &amp; JDC</i>
<b>John Piercy:</b>	Assistant Social Work Supervisor, <i>NJ DOC</i>
<b>William Plantier:</b>	Northeast Regional Director, <i>Community Education Centers</i>
<b>Christine Simone-Dill:</b>	Executive Assistant, Office of External Affairs, <i>NJ DOC</i>
<b>Steve Troyanovich:</b>	Education Program Specialist, <i>JJC</i>
<b>Dave Wolfsgruber:</b>	Assistant Director, Community Program Division, <i>NJ State Parole Board</i>

### CONGRATULATIONS!

### FATHER JEFF



Father Jeff Putthoff, SJ, the founder and Executive Director of Hopeworks 'N Camden, a youth technology project in Camden that utilizes website design and development, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and other technology innovations to work with youth from ages 14-23, recently received The Msgr. Michael Doyle and Msgr. Robert McDermott Award for Parish and Community Ministry.

This award is based upon a series of criteria including: belief in people and community, belief that poor people and poor communities matter and must have a place, has spoken truth to power, and has combined analysis, prayer and contemplation with social action in the tradition of Michael Doyle and Robert McDermott.



Those who have been privileged to know Father Jeff and his work can certainly attest to his fitting the

criteria indicated above. However, it is perhaps the final criteria that best describes this tremendously unique and creative individual:

***Has ingeniously nurtured, organized, and developed people and organizations to change unjust social structures which marginalize people and communities.***

If you work with at-risk or incarcerated youth, you are encouraged to learn more about Father Jeff's remarkable program: Hopeworks 'N Camden. Additional information may be found on their website: <http://www.hopeworks.org/>.



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# NJACA: A wealth of Talent, Credentials, and Expertise

## About our Board Members...

### Thomas Flanagan

Mr. Flanagan was confirmed as Deputy Executive Director of the JJC in July, 2003. Prior to his appointment to this position, Mr. Flanagan served as the Chief of the JJC's Office of Investigations.

Mr. Flanagan's career in law enforcement began with the Trenton Police Department as an Identification Officer. In 1977, he joined the New Jersey Attorney General's Office in the Division of Criminal Justice as the Administrator of Investigations. Throughout his 22 years at the Division of Criminal Justice, Mr. Flanagan was assigned to a number of units including Medical Fraud, Organized Crime, Official Corruption, Environmental Prosecutions, Internal Investigations, and Institutional Child Abuse, where he investigated claims of child abuse in hospitals, day care centers and detention facilities.

While serving in the Institutional Child Abuse Unit, he conducted the first child abuse investigation and prosecution in the State of New Jersey, which resulted in a sentence. Mr. Flanagan is also credited with establishing an Internal Affairs Unit with the Division of Motor Vehicles; developed training courses for Environmental Crime Training for NJ Police Officers, as well as for the Federal Law Enforcement in Georgia.

In 1998, Mr. Flanagan joined the JJC as its first Chief Investigator. In this position, he established investigative policies, directed investigative activities, and evaluated complaints and allegations of criminal and administrative violations.

Mr. Flanagan has been involved with the Mercer County area fire departments and emergency medical services since 1970. He has held the position of interior fire fighter for 20 years on the Board of Fire Commissioners. He holds many certifications in the field of emergency medical services and police instruction, and has received several awards of commendation from the Trenton Police Department.

Mr. Flanagan graduated from Trenton State College in 1976 with a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Criminal Justice. He also attended a program of study for administrators at Rider University and completed a program of study at Rutgers University in Labor Management Relations.

Thomas Flanagan is married and the proud father of a daughter and a son.

### Ralph Fretz, Ph.D.

Ralph Fretz, Ph.D., is a Licensed Psychologist who is employed as the Corporate Director of Assessment and Research for Community Education Centers. Dr. Fretz's earned a Ph.D. from Seton Hall School of Professional Psychology.

Dr. Fretz's professional experience includes State Hospitals, Mental Health Clinics, Child Study Teams, and Correctional Treatment Services. Dr. Fretz is a national and international presenter. His publications include outcome research articles with the most recent publication listed in the March/April 2008 edition of *Corrections Compendium*. Dr. Fretz has attained the level of Master trainer for the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) and the LS/CMI.

### Kim Guadagno, Monmouth County Sheriff

Sheriff Kim Guadagno is the Chief Executive of a 695 member, \$60 million agency encompassing a law enforcement division, a 1,328-bed maximum security correctional facility, a youth detention center and a police communications/ 9-1-1 emergency dispatch center. The Monmouth County Sheriff's Office achieved the unprecedented, "Grand Slam" achievement of national accreditation in four major areas of operation. It is the only agency of 3,088 across the United States to earn this distinction.

Sheriff Kim Guadagno was a former Assistant United States Attorney and Assistant Attorney General. As Deputy Director of the Division of Criminal Justice, Kim supervised a staff of approximately 300 prosecutors and investigators. As an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Kim was the Deputy Chief of the Corruption Unit and was twice honored with the U.S. Department Of Justice's highest award for Superior Performance.

### James A. Hemm

James A. Hemm has worked for the New Jersey Association on Correction since June of 1968. The Association provides services to people impacted by the criminal justice system which includes offenders, people living with HIV/AIDS and victims of Domestic

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### NJACA...

Violence. Jim has held several positions at the Association and became Executive Director in January 1984. Jim holds both a BA and EdM from Rutgers University.

Jim has been involved with several professional organization having served as a Regional Vice President and President, 1985-87 of the International Halfway House Association, a founding member and of the Coalition of Community Correction Providers New Jersey, board member and past Treasurer of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Correctional Association, and Treasurer of the New Jersey Community Action Association. In addition, he serves on the Board of Hyacinth Foundation and Volunteers of American Delaware Valley.

Jim is a 1995 fellow of Leadership New Jersey and has been recognized for his long term work in Community Corrections by Volunteers of America, 1996 Maud Booth Award, and the International Community Corrections Association, 2006 Margaret Mead Award. In addition, in 2008 he was recognized by Offender Aid Restoration, Inc-Newark with a life time achievement award and by the Center for Non-Profits with the Judith Trachtenberg Award.

### Gary J. Hilton

Mr. Hilton's distinguished career in Corrections has spanned over 37 years. He is a proven leader, with strong operations and executive management skills. Mr. Hilton has served as an expert witness, trainer, lecturer and consultant to a wide range of public, judicial and private entities, both nationally and abroad. He has also provided technical consultation and training services on behalf of the National Institute of Corrections.

In April of 1998, Mr. Hilton concluded a 33-year career with the New Jersey Department of Corrections, having served as Warden of the State's maximum security prison, Superintendent of the adult prison for women, and for over 17 years as Assistant Commissioner for Operations, Chief of Staff and Acting Commissioner.

Prior to his retirement from public service in July 2002, Mr. Hilton was Director of Corrections and Youth Services for Monmouth County, New Jersey. During his tenure, he spearheaded the successful national accreditation of the central facility. Mr. Hilton is a charter member of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Correctional Association

and served as the organization's President for several years.

He has overseen more than \$850 million in facility construction and renovations. He has also been the recipient of numerous awards and commendations from various professional and governmental organizations. Currently, Mr. Hilton is founder and president of Paige Plus LLC, a comprehensive correctional service and consulting company.

### Roger Lichtman

Mr. Lichtman, a registered architect, is no stranger to the criminal justice design process. Prior to establishing *The Lichtman Associates, P.C.* in Princeton, New Jersey in 1992, Mr. Lichtman was associated with three nationally known design firms. His professional experience, in over twenty-five years of dedication to the criminal justice design field, encompasses all aspects of correctional facility planning and design, on both new construction and renovation/rehabilitation projects.

Mr. Lichtman has presented over thirty lectures and has authored numerous articles on secure design and construction. In addition to working throughout the country, most recently, Mr. Lichtman directed a team that worked on Saipan, CNMI to assist in the development of a criminal justice system. This included the planning, design and construction of a jail, prison, juvenile facility and immigration facility as well as police holding facilities on several outlying islands.

In addition to being a registered architect in numerous states, Mr. Lichtman is also NCARB Certified and has served as chairman of the American Institute of Architects, Committee on Architecture for Justice. He has also served on the Board of NJACA and is a member of the American Jail Association.

### Pat McKernan

Pat McKernan is a Chief Operating Officer for Volunteers of America Delaware Valley. Pat has been with Volunteers of America since 1996 and supervises all correctional and domestic violence programs. Pat has been a social worker for 17 years in the City of Camden. She is President of the Coalition of Community Corrections Providers of New Jersey. Pat is a licensed Social Worker who received her Bachelor of Arts from Trenton State College and her Masters in Social Work from Rutgers University.

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Robert F. Murray, CPM

Bob Murray currently holds the dual position of Division Chief of Hudson County's Department of Corrections and Administrator of the County's Juvenile Detention Center. His career in corrections began 30 years ago as a correction officer at the Middlesex County Correction Center, then moving to the rank of Sergeant and Provisional Training Lieutenant. In 1990 he accepted a position as a transition coordinator for the Hudson County Department of Public Safety, Jail Division. In 1991 he was appointed Assistant Warden of the New Hudson County Correction Center until his promotion in 1995 as Administrator of the County Juvenile Center. Under Bob's administration, the Hudson County Juvenile Detention Center was the first Juvenile Detention Center in New Jersey to receive and maintain accreditation by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care and the American Corrections Association. Bob has served as a consultant for the National Institute of Corrections, the National Academy of Corrections, and the US Department of Justice as a Master Trainer in interpersonal communications. Bob has also consulted on jail and detention construction projects across the country and is a Certified Public Manager.

Mark A. O’Sullivan

Mark A. O’Sullivan’s experience spans the criminal justice (courts, corrections, and parole) and community mental health arenas. His focus has been on pre-sentence offender evaluation; inmate mental health services; program development and evaluation; staff development and training; pre-employment corrections and parole officer evaluation; sexually violent predator evaluation; practice and policy development; pre-parole mental health evaluation and risk assessment; RFP development and proposal evaluation; contract compliance; and mentally ill offender reentry issues.

Appointments have included the Professional Counselor Examiners Committee (Department of Law and Public Safety); the Governor’s Task Force on Mental Health (Parole Board Liaison); the Mental Health and Corrections Project Advisory Committee (Greater Trenton Behavioral HealthCare); and the Best Practices Committee for Sexually Violent Predators (Department of Human Services).

Mark earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology, and has completed doctoral coursework in Psychology and Organizational Systems. He is licensed as a Professional Counselor in the State of New Jersey and as a Psychologist in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Michael Ostermann

Mr. Ostermann is currently a research scientist in the Office of Policy and Planning at the New Jersey State Parole Board. He began working at the Board in 2005. Michael leads the Board's research efforts and acts as the Board’s data and evaluation coordinator for both the Governor's Another Chance Initiative under the Safe Streets and Neighborhoods Anti-Crime Plan as well as the Government Efficiency and Reform Committee. He also acts as a part time faculty member at The College of New Jersey where he teaches a research methods and statistics course within the Department of Criminology. Michael recently completed an evaluation of the efficacy of the State Parole Board's Day Reporting and Halfway Back Programs, the fruits of which have been accepted for publication in a peer reviewed academic journal.

Michael obtained his Master of Arts degree from the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University in 2005, for which he was awarded the title of Richard J. Hughes Scholar. This award recognizes the graduating Master of Arts student who holds the highest academic standing. Michael is continuing his education at Rutgers and expects to complete his Doctorate in May of 2009.

John W. Piercy, III. CCO

Mr. Piercy has been in the profession of Corrections for the past eight years. He began his career as a Corrections Officer at the Riverside Regional Jail in Hopewell, VA, graduating first in his Academy class. Within two years, he was promoted to the title of Work Release Coordinator, responsible for the overall management and operations of the Work, Education, and Rehabilitative Release Program. He held this position for three years, until he was promoted to the Training and Accreditation Department, responsible for scheduling and coordinating training activities for all Jail staff. Mr. Piercy earned his Certified Corrections Professional certification through the American Correctional Association in 2002. While at Riverside, he was a member of the Riverside Regional Jail Industries

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and Expansion Committees, and Accreditation Team, and was also a 2003 Superintendent’s Outstanding Achievement Recognition Recipient.

In 2006, Mr. Piercy relocated to the New Jersey Department of Corrections as a Social Worker 2 at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility in Yardville, NJ. That year, he received the New Jersey American Correctional Association *Best in the Business Award*. A year later, he was promoted to the title of Assistant Social Work Supervisor, responsible for the coordination of the Successful Transition and Reentry Series (S.T.A.R.S.) program.

Mr. Piercy is a member of the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Correctional Association, having been elected to this post in 2006. He is also a member of the American Correctional Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, Willingboro Lodge #38, and the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. Mr. Piercy has also been recognized in the 2006 edition of the Empire Who’s Who of Executives and Professionals, the 2001 edition of the International Who’s Who of Public Service, the 1998 edition of the International Who’s Who of Professional Management, and the 1998 edition of the Outstanding Young Men of America.

Mr. Piercy earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia State University, and is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice from Ashworth University.

William Plantier

Mr. Plantier began his career as a Social Worker in 1973 at the then Rahway State Prison. After running the Outpatient Department at Menlo Park Diagnostic, he left to take a position at the Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center when it opened in 1976. He rose through the ranks there, making Assistant Superintendent in 1984 and Administrator in 1990, a position he held for ten years. In 2000, he was appointed to the position as Director in the Division of Operations for the NJ Department of Corrections. William is currently the North East Regional Director for Community Education Centers.

Matthew J. Sheridan, Ed.D.

Dr. Sheridan has over 37 years of progressively responsible experience in the criminal justice field. Core areas of expertise include administration in

Juvenile Justice, corrections, correctional education, the courts, parole and probation. Management experience includes institutions, community residential and day treatment, and private providers. He has designed training curriculum that prepares staff for tasks related to direct service and that respond to identified need when improvement is warranted. He has shown expertise in improving operational proficiency by bringing systems into compliance with state and federal standards. Matt emphasizes staff continuing education for personal growth and better job performance and utilizing evidence based research on risk assessment to improve correctional effectiveness and successful re-entry.

Awards:

1991 Recipient of the Alfred Vuocola Award in Juvenile Justice, New Jersey Chapter- American Correctional Association

Inducted into the Academy of Child and Youth Care Professionals

Membership in professional organizations includes:

1986 - Present New Jersey Association on Corrections, Vice President Board of Directors

1990 - Present American Correctional Association

1990 – Present New Jersey Chapter - American Correctional Association, Editor of newsletter

1991 - Present Brookdale Community College Criminal Justice Advisory Committee

1994 - Present New Jersey Association of Criminal Justice Educators, Board of Directors

1995 - Present Inter-Association Child Care Conference, Board of Directors

1998 – Present International Community Corrections Association

Christine Simone-Dill

Ms. Simone-Dill currently holds the position of Executive Assistant/Supervisor of the Litigation Unit, Department of Corrections. She has served as a member of the Board of Directors of NJACA for over 18 years. Ms. Dill has been involved in numerous NJACA activities including the Annual Conference and the Annual Forum. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Middle

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NJACA...

Atlantic States Correctional Association and the Mercer County College Criminal Justice Advisory Board. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in criminal justice from the College of New Jersey and a Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Jersey City State College.

Steve Troyanovich

Mr. Troyanovich is currently the Education Program Specialist for the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission’s Office of Education. He has also served as the Juvenile Justice Commission’s Director of Education. Steve has a varied correctional background given his 29 + years of experience within the New Jersey criminal justice system. He is presently a member of the NJACA Board of Directors and is also the editor of the George Yefchak NJACA Corrections Quarterly. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism and a Master’s Degree in Corrections. In addition to current NJACA duties, he has worked on ACA accreditation standards and literacy projects. He remains committed to making the NJACA an organization of vigorous divergent viewpoints in service to both the individual and the community.

Donald Weinbaum

Mr. Weinbaum has been involved with community corrections and criminal justice programs for more than 10 years and with health and behavioral health services for 30 years. He is currently Executive Director of The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc., which operates a statewide prevention, advocacy and treatment network for persons with gambling problems, including those involved with the correctional system. Mr. Weinbaum retired from NJ State government in 2008, following a 27 year career. He served as Chief of Fiscal and Administrative Services for the NJ State Parole Board from 2005-2008 and held a number of progressive leadership positions within the

Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Division of Addiction Services, starting in 1980. In the mid 1990s, he served as Acting Director of Treatment & Rehabilitation and then helped establish and became Coordinator of the Office of Criminal Justice and Block Grant Planning. In this position, he had oversight responsibility for DHSS residential and reentry initiatives for juvenile offenders, adult inmates and parolees, court-referred individuals, and other specialized populations. He also played a lead role in establishing the statewide Drug Court treatment network, working closely with the Judiciary and Department of Law & Public Safety.

Mr. Weinbaum received his Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Cornell University and an MBA in Health Care Administration from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. He is a Licensed Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor and is certified as a Criminal Justice Counselor.

Dave Wolfsgruber

Mr. Wolfsgruber currently holds the position of Assistant Director of the Community Programs Division of the New Jersey State Parole Board. Mr. Wolfsgruber began his career with the New Jersey State Parole Board in 1985 and served in a variety of administrative support positions while attending the College of New Jersey, where he obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Law and Justice with a minor in Psychology. Mr. Wolfsgruber began his professional career as an Administrative Assistant with the Revocation Unit and was named Deputy Chief and then Chief of the Revocation Unit in 2000 prior to being assigned to the Community Programs Division in 2005. In 2003, Mr. Wolfsgruber achieved the designation of Certified Public Manager in the State of New Jersey. With respect to NJACA’s Annual Conference, Mr. Wolfsgruber has served as Conference Co-Chair of the Exhibits Committee for ten years and served on the Conference Planning Committee for five years. Mr. Wolfsgruber has been a member of the NJACA Board of Directors since 2003.

*“If you think its expensive to hire a professional to do your job, wait until you hire an amateur.”*

— Paul Neal "Red" Adair  
George Yefchak NJACA Corrections Quarterly

# When Prison, Ignorance and Higher Education Converge as a re-entry issue

While researching higher education for criminal justice staff, the following lead from Yahoo! ANSWERS caught my attention.

Can you earn a Ph.D. degree in prison?

Someone told me that you can get a free Ph.D degree while serving time in prison. I find this hard to believe because an armed robber gets a 10 year sentence, he gets an all expense paid trip to earn a doctorate? Doesn't seem right. Anyone know any de-tails?



Hello Nic. I can only speak for the state of Ohio, where I work. We had a program of pell grants that ended in 1996 that allowed certain inmates to get up to a 4 year degree only in sev-eral different fields. That ended and we currently have a max of a 2 year (bachelors degree) avail-able with a selection list that has been highly modified and is very selective. In the state of Ohio (and to the best of my personal knowledge no other state either) ever offered full Doctorates to any inmates while incarcerated. The philosophy at the time period was that if a man bettered himself with an education, it would help reduce the recidivism rate, but it proved false and the outcry over the public burden of the costs involved reduced the entire program down to where it is now almost nonexistent.

I hope this helps and you can find it useful.

Source: 19 years as a Corrections Officer in a max prison

Putting aside the poor grammar, run on sentence, poor punctuation and a response that ignores 25 years of evidence based practices, some effort, if only preaching to the choir, must be made to clarify the issues.

**...if ex-convicts return to society no better educated than when they went into prison then why should we expect anything other than re-offending?**

Yahoo seems to be a popular search engine, the shame is that it does not have to accept responsibility for answers to its questions. Even without the “what works” movement that provided us with evidence based practices, it had been accepted that the one variable that positively impacted on recidivism was education. For the lesser well informed, our nation’s prisons that now confine one in every 1000 Americans, hold about two and a half million convicts.



About 700,000 will be released this year and they will be released unprepared to assume the rigors of life in society.

70% of prison convicts are functionally illiterate. Another study suggests that the majority of convicts suffer from mental illness. Two questions should put this in perspective. First, if ex-convicts return to society no better educated than when they went into prison then why should we expect anything other than re-offending? Second, if ex-convicts return to society without having their mental health issues addressed then why should we expect a re-adjustment to society? Quite frankly we can no longer afford to continue to operate

prisons as they have been for the past 30 years. A conservative estimate of the national cost of prisons is in excess of 100 billion dollars. California provides the better example of the bankrupt practices of wholesale incarceration. California represents what will potentially be every other state’s problem unless there is meaningful change. California can no longer afford to pay its vendors, threatens furloughs and layoffs as well not paying the salaries of its workers. It’s beginning to sound an awful lot like New Jersey.



AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY



NATURE POEMS IN A  
POST-NATURAL AGE

Poet Gary Snyder thinks the landscape of contemporary poetry should include wildflowers . . . and highway fast food joints.

By John Felstiner  
Poetry Foundation Media Services

One of the original voices of the Beat Generation, Gary Snyder, has been publishing poems for over 50 years. In addition to writing poems, Snyder has had a firm commitment to sustainability, a concern that is echoed in both his poems and essays.

**John Felstiner:** *Do you remember some moment in your recent or remote past when you got the connection between poetry and environmental consciousness, where you felt it as a kind of absolute truth?*  
**Gary Snyder:** I grew up with it. Beginning when I was four years old, five years old, in the countryside, in a wooded landscape north of Seattle, back in the days when kids weren't programmed. We just ran loose around the family dairy farm and went through the gap in the fence and right back into the woods. I felt as welcome and as much at home in the forest, second-growth forest growing back, as I did anyplace else, and I was comforted by it. I was always easy being alone. And if I went with a friend, that was fine too.

**JF:** *How would one distinguish an environmental poem from what is sometimes called an ecological poem?*  
**GS:** Look at the words. "Environment" means the surroundings. The surroundings can include an oil refinery, can include all of Los Angeles and the I-5 strip. That's the environment too, whatever surrounds us.

**JF:** *So there's an "us" in "environment."*  
**GS:** Everything surrounds everything else. Yes. What is "ecological"? Etymologically, the "household of nature" is what's being called up. "Ecological" refers to the systems of biological nature, which include energy, and mineral and chemical transformations and pathways. "The environment" is used more commonly to also include human and

technological productions. And it's not an absolute, hard and fast separation. . . .

**JF:** *Have you written poems that could be qualified as one way or the other, or as both together-- environmental and ecological?*  
**GS:** The best example is in this little book right here, *Danger on Peaks*.

"In the Santa Clarita Valley": That is the first valley north of the San Fernando Valley on Interstate 5. There's a little river there, and it has become almost entirely suburban development now. Here's the poem:

*Like skinny wildweed flowers  
sticking up  
hexagonal "Denny's" sign  
starry "Carl's"  
loopy "McDonald's"  
eight-petaled yellow "Shell"  
blue-and-white "Mobil" with a big  
red "O"  
growing in the asphalt riparian zone  
by the soft roar of the flow  
of Interstate 5.*

This is playing with the possibility that we might look at the human, physical, made environment as if it were natural environment.

**JF:** *So we move from "Mobil" into a "riparian zone."*  
**GS:** Yeah.

**JF:** And hear that word "flow" for the highway.  
**GS:** Right, it's ironic. I comment when I read this in meetings, that this is to help prepare us for a post-natural age. For writing nature poems in a post-natural age

**JF:** *We were speaking of (William Carlos) Williams' "It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there." In 1950 or so he took his Western tour, and he came to Reed, where you were with your poet friends. Is there anything specific you remember about that*

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Nature poems...

*event?*  
**GS:** What stayed with me was how he said ultimately the poet, the artist, brings to society and to the world "conviviality." That surprised me and stayed with me: conviviality.

He said art is about conviviality. I saw instantly that this goes past the idea of the solitary, romantic, lonely artist suffering for his art, which I never trusted. And the acknowledgment that artists have a role in society, which is to contribute to the community -- to the heart of the community.

Take Williams' statement that people "die for lack of what is found there," I think this means lack of open-heartedness, lack of sweetness and tenderness to each other. But then a little later I saw that meaning also as ecological, that openness not just for the human community but for the natural community; it's for our immediate neighborhood of all the other species, all of us passing through time. I get angered when the bears eat my apples right off the tree. But I can say well, okay, they got to them first; they must

have enjoyed them.  
*John Felstiner's translations and critical work have been widely published and awarded. He teaches at Stanford. John's newest book, So Much Depends, dealing with poetry and environmental urgency,*



Scholars and poets around the world consider dissident poet Huang Xiang the Whitman of China, but his work is still banned there.

by Susan Hutton  
POETRY FOUNDATION SYNDICATE

It's a warm, windy day in the Mexican War Streets district of Pittsburgh, and I am looking for the house where the exiled Chinese poet Huang Xiang has been settled for nearly two years. The street is so narrow

that it might easily be mistaken for an alley. Finally I find what I've heard described: a house with Huang Xiang's poetry painted on its brown clapboard exterior in vast, spidery characters. Some of the characters are almost six feet tall.

Huang Xiang is a Chinese poet who is sponsored by the Pittsburgh branch of the North American Network of Cities of Asylum (NANCA), an organization that seeks to aid and defend writers who are persecuted in their home countries. Founded in 2003 by Russell Banks, Wole Soyinka, and Salman Rushdie, NANCA was born out of the International Parliament of Writers. Huang Xiang began his residency in Pittsburgh in 2004 and writes from the house he refers to as "Poet's House, Dream Nest."

The ancient Chinese poets wrote on walls and in caves, and carved their words in stone. "I want to preserve and expand this Chinese tradition," he says, referring to the poems painted on his house, "where the poem is on the street, on the stones, in the gardens. I want to beautify every corner."

Born in 1941 in the Chinese province of Hunan, Huang Xiang is a compact, well-kept man who meets me at the door in a white pressed shirt. Nothing about his appearance betrays the 12 years he spent in Chinese prisons and labor camps. He was first arrested in 1959 for leaving one province without official permission and seeking employment in another. For this he was sentenced to four years in laogai, a reform camp similar to the Russian gulag. In 1965 he was arrested for engaging in counterrevolutionary activities--primarily writing, reading, and discussing issues related to human rights--and was sentenced to three years of hard labor in laogai and forbidden to read or write. By the time he was 25, he'd served more than seven years in laogai. His writings were banned in China for 40 years.

Though he avoided prison for the next decade, he was officially forbidden to write. He continued to do so anyway, secretly; his rooms were regularly searched, and any discovered writing was confiscated. Out of necessity, he made it a habit to commit his poems to memory, sometimes reciting them privately for a small circle of friends.

In 1978 Huang Xiang traveled 1,500 miles to Beijing to post his poems in huge character posters on what became known as the Democracy Wall. His act sparked the Democracy Wall Movement, in which dissidents posted news and ideas on a wall in the Xidan district of Beijing Over a six-month period, Huang Xiang returned to Beijing on three separate occasions to post more poems, to advocate for

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Correction Officers From Whence You Came

By: Matthew J. Sheridan, Ed.D.

(The following is a condensed version of a longer article being prepared for publication)

The Nightkeeper’s Reports 1882 (1954). State Prison Southern Michigan Spectator.



The Nightkeeper’s Reports 1882 may be the first book published in a prison. It is the daily anecdotal duty report of the prison Nightkeeper, John H. Purvis, to the Warden. Warden William H. Bannon writing in 1957 described Purvis’ journal entries as “penned in a neat Spencerian script.”

The Nightkeeper Reports provide us with examples of the penology of the 1800’s. Without preserved works such as The Nightkeeper’s Reports, that trace “the antics, misbehaviors, pathos, and human frailties that he observed during his nocturnal duties,” we would have precious little with which to compare penological practices as they existed then with what we have today. There are few official records from the earliest period of prison history and any records provided by staff are more scarce. The scarcest of all, however, are convict accounts and on this score, Bannon informs us that during the time of Purvis all reading material was prohibited and only one letter per week allowed.

Warden Bannon thoughtfully introduced us to the practices of the 1950’s as they evolved from the time of Purvis. He tells us, “it is in these reports of Nightkeeper Purvis to Warden General William Humphrey, that we catch a glimpse behind the scenes of prison life that was never intended for the naked public eye.” The Nightkeeper’s Reports fill in gaps of prison history helping us understand prison practices, failings, and the why and how they evolved to their current status.

Warden Bannon tells us that some of the history of Purvis cannot be reported simply because such records were not kept. For example, Purvis was elevated to the rank of Captain, but there is no record to show when that occurred. What we are told about Purvis is that he was a veteran of the Civil War who survived no less than seven bullet wounds and one bayonet stabbing before beginning his more than 3 decades as the prison nightkeeper.

The reports are Purvis’ observations of the confined, the interactions between keeper and kept, and of the disciplinary measures, both officially and



unofficially sanctioned. We get a sense of the keeper’s frustrations when policy and rule are not clearly stated for the keeper to follow. These are anecdotal and often humorous entries that address escapes, searches and the plans for escape. Purvis records not only the information received from convicts about such events but his impressions of the value of the content of the offered information.

The Nightkeeper’s reports help us to understand that even though it is 1882, almost one hundred years after the birth of the prison, it is still coping with establishing the manner in which a prison should operate. The prison process is informal. Rule violations were responded to swiftly and with brutality and meted out in four degrees:

- 1. Suspension of writing privileges
- 2. Whipping on the bare flesh with a leather bat\*
- 3. Solitary confinement
- 4. Solitary confinement and hanging up. (hanging up was accomplished by chaining an offender by his wrists at a height sufficient to prevent his feet from touching the floor)

\*The leather bat was a wide leather strap that broke the skin and left heavy scaring.

While these represent the officially imposed permissible sanctions, we learn from the Nightkeeper of other penalties imposed and some without official sanction:

- ◆ Forced fast for 48 hours
- ◆ Solitary, no light, reading or correspondence\*
- ◆ Water treatments – high pressure hose and buckets of cold water
- ◆ Bread and water diet

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- ◆ Ball and chain
- ◆ The iron hat (This device sounds like the branks and was used for same purpose - to keep someone quiet and to teach them to obey the rule of silence)

\*Oil lamps were used to light the cells. Oil was distributed periodically to fill the lamps. Someone would come around each evening to light the lamps. At times, the oil supply would run out and the Nightkeeper thinks the men should be more frugal in their use of their lamps to provide themselves with light.

These punishments would be meted out as the keepers would see fit to enforce the rules, reaffirm their authority, and even to serve as pre-emptive strikes so that the convicts would know their place before beginning to act out. He provides us with several examples his threats illustrating how far he would go should an offender continue to violate the rules.

The Nightkeeper describes the convicts telling us that some were literate and possessed more than a rudimentary education seeking to express themselves with what Purves refers to as “scientific indulgence.”

“This is as crazy a notion as I’ve run onto (sp) since I’ve dealt with convicts. Toombs and his crony, life Costello, are working on a project they call “radiant energy.” Toombs swears,

and like a sea captain, that he can prove that electricity and light travel in waves; that they’re related, and that if we will give him a piece of crystal and some fine wire to make contact with these alleged waves – he’ll pick up voices. Something should be done, said Toombs, for a man with my ability to look into the future. So I chalked him in for the night and shall leave word to have his head gone over by the doctor, first thing tomorrow.”

Summary Much correctional history is unclear because of a lack of documentation and a dearth of objective investigation. Finding books, such as The Nightkeepers Reports 1882, provides us with the daily impressions of an individual working on the inside, a view that is never seen by most due to the hidden and restrictive environment of prison. Works such as this lead us to wonder why the prison environment has remained basically unchanged throughout its history. We begin to realize that there has been little change in correctional operations despite overwhelming evidence of its failure. Even though older writings are relatively scarce, there are a sufficiently known numbers of documents to demonstrate a continuity of behavior and control in prisons that does little to affect behavioral change. While corporal punishment has been formally eliminated it has been replaced by more subtle but equally damaging restrictions as prisons seek to maintain their required levels of custody and control.

The Nightkeeper’s reports help us to understand that even though it is 1882, almost one hundred years after the birth of the prison, it is still coping with establishing the manner in which a prison should operate.



American Life in Poetry Celebrates Fourth Anniversary Free Column Restores Poetry’s Place in Newspapers

CHICAGO — The Poetry Foundation is pleased to announce the fourth anniversary of American Life in Poetry, the free newspaper column featuring a weekly poem selected and briefly introduced by former U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser. Running regularly in over 75 papers, including the Seattle Times and the Des Moines Register, with a circulation of upwards of four million, American Life in Poetry has earned a following of “astonished and thrilled readers with fanatic devotion,” says Nancy Cook Senn, editor at the Shawnee News Star (Okla.).

Over the last four years the column has featured nearly 200 poets, including current U.S. Poet Laureate Kay Ryan, Pulitzer Prize winner Yusef Komunyakaa, various poets representing large and small regions of the country, and several young poets from public school writing programs. The column not only promotes contemporary poetry to a larger audience but also restores poetry’s traditional place in newspapers.

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democracy and human rights, and to criticize Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution. Arrests and imprisonments followed for decades until 1996, when Huang Xiang discovered he'd again been named the leader of a counterrevolutionary clique because of his literary pursuits. Fearing another arrest, he and his wife, Zhang Ling, fled China and were granted asylum in the United States in February 1997.

Huang Xiang is widely regarded as China's Walt Whitman. His poetry ranges widely in subject matter, touching on politics, philosophy, love, the beauty of the rural provinces, spiritual life, and his beloved literary ancestors--Wang Wei, Li Bai, and Du Fu in particular. There is a quality of feeling in his poems that is consistently, essentially human. Take, for example, the closing lines of his poem "Dry Bones"

After millions of years,  
Millions of years in the layered earth  
A future anthropologist  
Geologist  
Or archeologist  
When digging up my dead bones  
Will, please, under this same burning  
sun  
Raise up these remains of water and  
air, and  
Seek out the Man.

He wrote this poem when he was 27 years old. It's a striking thing by itself, but it is even more striking when one considers the context in which it was written. Millions died as the People's Republic gained power, and their stories were lost forever. Even as a young man, Huang Xiang was determined to keep his story alive even as his persecuted body became mere "remains."

It is moving to see his house, covered in characters as it is, as an echo of the act of the young man who traveled to Beijing in order to post his poems, holding a bucket of flour paste in front of a growing crowd of sympathizers who linked arms to protect him. Like the poems on the Democracy Wall, the house poems are public objects of art.

"When I posted my poems on the Democracy Wall, a

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WAY OUT OF AFRICA

Nigerian poet and novelist Chris Abani, once  
a political prisoner, finds peace and  
inspiration in L.A.

by Charles Mudede  
POETRY FOUNDATION SYNDICATE

Readers in the West have been taught to understand African writers in one way: Africans as heroes. And heroes can do only one thing: overcome enormous obstacles. But despite the political persecution that poet and novelist Chris Abani suffered in Nigeria during the '80s, he is not a hero, and the subjects in his books should not be read as heroes. They are humans.

Chris Abani was born in 1966 to an English mother and a Nigerian father They'd met at Oxford as students, married, and moved to Nigeria to raise their children. At 16, Abani published his first novel, a thriller called *Masters of the Board*. At 18, the content of that book got him in big trouble with the government, which believed the thriller's plot (the fictional takeover of Nigeria by neo-Nazis) to be the blueprint for a real coup attempt by General Mamman Vasta. Abani was arrested and imprisoned for six months. Soon after his release, he was arrested a second time for participating in antigovernment guerrilla theater and was sent to Kiri Kiri maximum security prison.

Few misfortunes can be worse than winding up in Kiri Kiri, which is known for blurring the line between political prisoners, criminal prisoners, and homeless prisoners. During his one-year stay, Abani was routinely tortured, confined in cells not fit for any kind of animal, and surrounded by the smell and threat of death.

In 1991, Abani was put on death row for his anticorruption play "Song of a Broken Flute." But he was released in the wake of international pressure (and, probably, bribes). In 1999 he moved to the United States for "political and personal reasons," and eventually entered the USC doctorate program in creative writing and literature. Abani presently lives in Los Angeles, learning, teaching, and practicing the art of the English language. "I do not believe in easy answers to difficult questions on say identity or politics or race or gender," he writes in another email, "and I certainly don't believe

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in the role of the poet as polemic educator. I do however believe in an engaged literature, one that takes into account the role of the writer as compassionate human being in the world."

His first major work of poetry, *Kalakuta Republic*, involves his imprisonment in Kiri Kiri. The artist is beaten, threatened at gunpoint, and confined to cells that are tiny and lightless; and yet he continues to do what got him in trouble in the first place: write poetry. From a poem called "Jacob's Ladder":

Release, alive, from Kiri Kiri  
is rare.

They hand you what is left of  
your personal belongings

in a polythene bag. Everything  
they did not want.

You step out and stand in the  
sun thawing like a side of beef

from a freezer. Yet you are afraid  
to proceed more than a few

steps from the gate. Convinced you  
will be shot in the back.

Something greater than heroism, which is always one-sided and essentially inhuman, is at work. This "something else" is easier to see if one reads Abani's third and most recent collection of poetry, *Dog Woman*, which has very little to do with Africa. Instead, it is inspired by the Spanish artist Paula Rego, the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and the 19th-century French poet Charles Baudelaire. What *Dog Woman* makes evident is that Abani is not a poet who is limited to his African experience; he is first and foremost a stylist and should be read in that way.

From the poem "Unholy Woman": "It makes sense that Jesus, the new man of 2,000 years ago / Was a carpenter / You need that craft, the precision of measurement, angles of angels. . . ."

If writers and poets have  
any role, it is this one: to  
not limit in any way the  
ability of their  
imagination to engage the  
world.

The same is true for Abani, a 21st century African poet: it's about craft, sentence structures, the breaks in words, the music in words, the look of words, the echoes in words.

"At the end of the day, none of my books, including the new one due from Copper Canyon Press this fall [*Hands Washing Water*] are directly African," writes Abani in conclusion. "They are human, they represent the limitless way in which my imagination can and does engage with the world. I don't engage as an African. Nobody does. We all engage as individuals. I engage as Chris Abani. . . If writers and poets have any role, it is this one: to not limit in any way the ability of their imagination to engage the world."



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**American Life...**  
"The age-old tradition of clipping poems from the paper and mailing them to friends, or pasting them in scrapbooks, or posting them on the refrigerator is thriving, and an abundance of our readers have expressed their appreciation for what we give them each week," said Kooser. "Poetry is definitely alive and well in America."  
Lin C. Parker, design editor of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, has said, "The best day of the week is the one when Ted Kooser's column arrives. His poetry selections have teeth. These poems bite, they savor, they speak simple truths that bring clarity and insight to the world around us." Both Kooser and the Poetry Foundation look forward to the column's continued growth. As the current economy limits available space in print, editors may consider offering American Life in Poetry to their readers, free of charge, through their online editions. **Register to receive American Life in Poetry, and explore the column archive, at [www.americanlifeinpoetry.org](http://www.americanlifeinpoetry.org)**

**About the Poetry Foundation**  
The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine and one of the largest literary organizations in the world, exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org).

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## Meet the JJC Executive Director, Veleria N. Lawson



**Veleria Lawson,**  
**JJC Executive Director**

Veleria N. Lawson was nominated by Governor Jon S. Corzine to serve as Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission and was confirmed by the Senate on March 4, 2008.

Prior to joining the JJC, Mrs. Lawson served as an associate member of the New Jersey State Parole Board. She was appointed to that position in January 2004 and assigned to the juvenile panel where she worked directly with the Juvenile Justice Commission and its programs to rehabilitate juvenile offenders. She also worked with government and community groups to help ensure juvenile offenders have access to programs and support designed to aid in their successful reentry into society.

A licensed clinical social worker, Mrs. Lawson also has worked during her extensive career as a school social worker in Middletown and Lakewood and at the Arthur Brisbane Child Treatment Center in Wall Township. She was a school social worker for more than 19 years for the Middletown Board of Education, serving on child study teams. She had similar responsibilities as a child study team member for the Lakewood Township Board of Education for four years before working in Middletown.

Mrs. Lawson started her career in New Jersey in January 1974 as a social worker at the University of Medicine and Dentistry in Newark, providing clinical services to clients with psychosocial problems. Mrs. Lawson, who lives in Manalapan, received a bachelor of arts in sociology from Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1972, and earned a masters degree in social work in 1973 from the Howard University School of Social Work in Washington, D.C.

As the Executive Director of the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJJ), Mrs. Lawson directs the state agency responsible for providing juvenile rehabilitation and parole services. Established in 1995, the JJC serves to coordinate services and policies affecting delinquent youth throughout the State. From prevention to parole, the JJC is a partner in the entire juvenile justice system, working with communities to help redirect the lives of young people. The JJC operates four secure facilities, fifteen residential community homes and six day programs. It also oversees educational instruction and ensures compliance with state regulations at the county operated detention centers.

In the few months that Mrs. Lawson has been at the helm of the JJC, she has examined existing policies and procedures with a focus on efficiency and outcomes. In particular, changes are taking place in the areas of classification, step-up/step down units, reentry and



**The NJ Juvenile Justice Commission...**  
**Realizing Potential and Changing Futures**

## Shields Named Executive Director of NJ State Parole Board Top Administrator for NJ’s Lead Agency for Ex-Prisoner Reentry, and for Sex Offender Supervision

TRENTON - Chairman Peter J. Barnes announced the appointment of Joseph M. Shields as Executive Director of the New Jersey State Parole Board, the State’s lead agency focusing on the re-entry of ex-prisoners back into society as law-abiding citizens, and the supervision of 15,000 offenders statewide.

Shields, a Clayton, New Jersey resident, is responsible for developing policies and strategies for the State Parole Board and its civilian and sworn law enforcement staff; for administering the agency’s \$98 million budget; and for oversight of all agency operations. Shields also continues to serve as a member of Attorney General’s task force charged with implementing and monitoring Governor Corzine’s Crime Plan. In addition, Shields serves as a member of the Government Efficiency and Reform (GEAR) Commission, created by Governor Corzine to evaluate the budget, structure and organization of New Jersey’s government.

Shields began his tenure at the State Parole Board in May 2006, as Deputy Executive Director. He took on his current role in an acting capacity in February 2007. He previously worked as Special Assistant to Governor Corzine’s Chief of Staff; as a Confidential Aide to now-Chief Justice Stuart Rabner during Governor-Elect Corzine’s transition; as a political consultant for more than 20 local, state and national officials and campaigns; and served as Political/Organizing Director for SEIU Local 36 in Philadelphia.

Shields worked through law school, earning a Juris Doctor degree at Temple University’s Beasley School of Law-Evening Division in May 2005. He earned his Bachelor’s Degree at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Public Affairs and Citizenship in 1993, majoring in Political Science and Public Policy, with a minor in History.

“Joe Shields is an invaluable asset to me and the State Parole Board not just because of his proven experience in law, management and policy, but because of his real commitment to take on tough assignments that meet parole’s ultimate purpose: making New Jersey safer,” Barnes said. “I know I speak for our sworn parole officers and our civilian staff when I say we’re all proud to have him in our leading role.”

The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) is New Jersey’s lead reentry agency, and works to ensure ex-prisoners return to society as law-abiding citizens. As required by law, appointed Parole Board Members and staff conduct more than 20,000 hearings per year, solicit input from victims and decide parole matters. SPB staff of 405 sworn parole officers supervise more than 15,000 offenders statewide, and make up one of the largest police agencies in New Jersey.

Under Barnes’ and Shields’ leadership, New Jersey’s parole officers are moving to a more intensive focus on intelligence-sharing partnerships with the FBI, U.S. Marshals Task Force and other agencies, and on sex offender supervision, street gang suppression, criminal investigations and homeland security. In addition, SPB is New Jersey’s primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. Finally, SPB’s Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit and private agencies to connect ex-prisoners with vocational, mental health and related services, targeted to break the cycle and risk of crime.



*...we’re all proud to have him  
in our leading role.*

# JACKIE LEVEN SAID...

## WHO IS JACKIE LEVEN???

*I am not I  
I am this one walking beside me*  
--- Jackie Leven

By: Steve Trojanovich



**Jackie Leven Said** (Cooking Vinyl, 2005) is the name of a collaborative album done with Ian Rankin, Scottish crime writer best known for his Inspector Rebus novels. Moreover, it is likely that few readers of this article have ever heard of Jackie Leven or are familiar with any aspect of his work.

Jackie Leven is usually described as a Scottish songwriter and folk musician. However, he is far more than merely what is conveyed by that description. As one critic recently pointed out, Leven is in danger of

becoming a living Scottish national treasure.

Born in Fife, Scotland Leven was forced to leave his childhood home at an early age as the result of becoming the subject of a local gang vendetta and issues with the police in northern England.

He is clearly one of the most prolific and powerful songwriters working in Europe today. Known also to have a very commanding stage presence when performing, his name for the most part remains unknown outside of Europe.

Leven made his debut into the music industry in the late 1960s and later formed the critically acclaimed band, Doll by Doll in 1978. It was at this juncture in his career that he honed his songwriter skills.

Doll by Doll was a band proverbially outside its own time. Although highly praised, the band never found a sustaining audience. The dark power of the Leven lyrics was in marked contrast to the fashionable unserious music of the day.

In 1984 he was the victim of a brutal and unprovoked attack in the street while working on his first solo release. This attack left him unable to speak for almost two years. As a result of not being able to sing, he lost his record contract. It was during this period that he turned to heroin and became an addict. He eventually cured himself in a nontraditional manner via the use of acupuncture and psychic healing. His experiences led him to form the CORE Trust, a treatment foundation that utilizes a holistic approach in dealing with addiction.

To this day, the CORE Trust operates a treatment center in the heart of London, treating all forms of addiction. It remains the United Kingdom's only fully holistic service for the healing of addictions. Jackie Leven has been their manager, chair of Trustees, and is currently the patron, having had a good working relationship with the late Princess of Wales who had a keen interest in the Trust.



Since 1994 Jackie Leven has released fifteen official albums as well as a series of limited edition releases of fancub-only live albums. He has also released albums under the names "Sir Vincent Lone" and "John St. Field".

His newest album is **Lovers at the Gun Club** (Cooking Vinyl, 2008). Several of his albums are scheduled to be reissued within the next few months and a new Sir Vincent Lone recording (**Troubadour Heart**) is scheduled for release this March.

His John St Field recording , **Control** (Vinyl Cooking, 1971), is also scheduled to

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### Jackie...

be reissued in March.

On February 16, 2009, **The Haunted Year: Winter: Men In Prison & Munich Blues** was released by Cooking Vinyl. This double CD is the first in a series of four double CDs to be released from previous recordings available originally only through the now defunct Jackie Leven fan club called The Haunted Valley.

**Men In Prison** was a live solo performance at Bergen Prison in Norway. In his opening remarks to the prisoners, Leven spoke about his drug use, prison time, and heroin addiction.

A signature characteristic of a Jackie Leven album is the inclusion of poetry interspersed throughout the work. His recordings have included poetry by James Wright, Kenneth Patchen, e.e. cummings, William Butler Yeats, Robert Bly, Antonio Machado, Rumi, Pablo Neruda, Osip Mandelstam, Rainer Maria Rilke, Rolf Jacobsen and others.

His lyrics have been described as possessing a brave poetic beauty filled with nocturnal tapestries and devastating emotional transference. There is an uncompromising quality to his work combined with a stark confidence. He has carved out his own musical path and identity from the underbelly of the concrete jungle to the plaintive, untamed Celtic melancholy of the Highlands.

Leven recordings recommended for initial listening include: **Fairytales For Hardmen** (Cooking Vinyl, 1997), **Night Lilies** (Cooking Vinyl, 1998), **Defending Ancient Springs** (Cooking Vinyl, 2000), **Creatures of Light and Darkness** (Cooking Vinyl, 2000), **For Peace Comes Dropping Slow** (Cooking Vinyl, 2004), and **Oh What a Blow That Phantom Dealt Me !** (Cooking Vinyl, 2007).

Readers wanting to learn more about Jackie Leven and his work are referred to the following websites: [www.jackieleven.co.uk](http://www.jackieleven.co.uk), [www.myspace.com/thejackieleven](http://www.myspace.com/thejackieleven), [www.mmacve.mistral.co.uk/jackie.html](http://www.mmacve.mistral.co.uk/jackie.html).

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### Writing...

huge crowd gathered. It was very risky, and the consequences were dear. Here, on the house, it was not risky. It was safe. The first time it was an act of rebellion; this time it is an expression of art. And if the two are combined, it reflects my pursuit of spiritual, artistic freedom."

This is his ultimate aim, he says, leaning forward intently. "I want to write my poems on the sky," he says, "so everyone can read them."

Later, reviewing my notes, I recognized the line. It comes from the poem for which he is best known: "Song of the Torches." The translation I have reads: "It seemed to me that there was nobody else in the church, nor / In the city, nor in the whole world. The sky was my paper, / And I was holding an immense brush to write on it."

"I want to write my poems  
on the sky," he says, "so  
everyone can read them."

Susan Hutton's first book of poems is On the Vanishing of Large Creatures. She lives in Ann Arbor.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Huang Xiang has recently moved to New York City.

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