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A SURVEY OF THE RECREATIONAL PROGRAM IN THE  
TEXAS PRISON SYSTEM

THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Problem and Its Purposes

The problem of this study is an investigation of the recreational program provided for inmates of the Texas Prison System. The purposes of the study were to determine the type and extent of recreational activities which are made available to the men and women who live Behind the Walls and to make recommendations based on the findings of the investigation.

#### Definition of Terms

In order to clarify the meaning of certain terms used frequently in the development of this problem, the following definitions are included:

1. The Texas Prison System is interpreted as meaning all of the twelve units which house the inmate population of the penitentiary. Their names and locations are as follows: Huntsville Unit, Huntsville, Texas; Goree State Farm, Huntsville, Texas; Eastham State Farm, Weldon, Texas; Ramsey State Farm, Otey, Texas; Harlem State Farm, Camp One, and Camp Two, Richmond, Texas; Wynne State Farm, Huntsville, Texas; Central State Farm, Sugar Land, Texas; Clemens State Farm, Brazoria, Texas; Darrington State Farm, Sandy Point, Texas; Retrieve State Farm, Snipe, Texas; Ferguson State Farm, Madison County, Texas; and Blue Ridge State Farm, Houston, Texas.

2. The term "recreation program" includes sports, musical activities, and radio broadcasts; the rodeo, library reading, crafts, and motion pictures.

#### Sources of Data

Only secondary sources of data were utilized in developing the problem considered in this study. These sources included mimeographed reports of existent recreational activities; various issues of The Echo, an inmate-published bi-weekly newspaper; official souvenir programs of the Prison's annual rodeo; the Texas Prison System Manual, a mimeographed copy of "Program of Prisoner Rehabilitation for the Present and Future in the Texas Prison System," a handbook of the prison's general and special rules and regulations; and the American Prison Association's Manual of Suggested Standards for a State Correctional System.

#### Method of Procedure

As a background for the study, much material on the Texas Prison System was read. After obtaining general information on the entire penal system, a special investigation was made of data related to the Prison's recreational activities and facilities. When the necessary information was obtained, it was analyzed and organized into chapters.

#### Significance of the Study

In 1947, Austin McCormick, a noted penal authority, described the Texas Prison System as the worst institution

of its kind in the entire United States.<sup>1</sup> The accusation roused Governor Beauford Jester to action. In cooperation with the Prison Board, he made an intensive study of the situation and recommended a definite plan for rehabilitation. In January, 1948, O. B. Ellis was employed as General Manager of the Texas Prison System. He immediately cooperated in an effort to renovate the physical plant and provide a more effective rehabilitation program.<sup>2</sup> During the past thirty months, this plan has been carried to the people through the press and over the air. The General Manager and members of the Prison Board have traveled over the state, explaining the importance of prison reform at civic meetings, schools, and churches of both city and hamlet. It is believed that the success attending these efforts will pay off for years to come, not only in more valuable physical property for the state, but also in reclaimed human beings. Many improvements already have been accomplished. Among them is the recreational program provided for both men and women. This phase of the program is highly significant as a rehabilitation medium. Through its activities and facilities, inmates may be led to develop attitudes, habits, and skills which will aid them to become adjusted in the free world when they leave the Walls. Since approximately ninety-seven per cent of those who are incarcerated will eventually serve their time or be paroled, it seems that any problem involved in their rehabilitation would be considered significant.

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<sup>1</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1950.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

The importance of the problem of rehabilitation through recreation is heightened when consideration is given to the fact that crime has increased in Texas during 1949-1950, and a large number of convicted men and women are continuously being received into the prison. Colonel Homer Garrison, Junior, director of the Department of Public Safety, said recently that the crime picture in Texas is critical. In a special report on Texas crime made to Governor Allan Shivers, he reported that a survey of state crime for 1949 showed an over-all increase. The rate for all offenses jumped 9.9 per cent in 1949 over 1948. Robbery increased 19.3 per cent; auto theft 18.5 per cent; criminal assault 16.9 per cent. Murder and homicide were up 2.2 per cent, and criminal assault 2.7 per cent in cities, but the same offense was up 24.6 per cent in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> O. B. Ellis, general manager of the Texas Prison System, has predicted that the population of the prison system will surpass 6,900 by the first of 1951.<sup>4</sup>

The task of rehabilitating these incoming prisoners is the objective of the Texas Prison System. There was a time when the task merely was to confine them or to punish them, and the responsibility of one or both of these actions was placed upon the manager or the warden. It might be added here that of all the prison officials in United States

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<sup>3</sup>The Echo, April 7, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 5, 1950, p. 1.

history, the cruelest and most intensely hated probably was Elam Lynds who built Sing Sing and alternately managed it and New York's Auburn penitentiary between 1817 and 1845. Lynds introduced the complete silence rule, the shaved heads, striped suit, lock step, ball and chain, and a dozen forms of torture, including the Spanish crib which permanently crippled every person "treated" in it. He was a sadistic savage, and he made his guards, like himself, carry a rawhide whip and use it ruthlessly. One convict was given 6,000 lashes in a single week. Such floggings resulted in a number of suicides among the prisoners. Many also went insane or died from their injuries. The first of his victims was a woman, who was beaten to death at Auburn. When these inhuman acts forced Lynds to resign from one prison, his political influence would have him returned to the other. After twenty-eight years, he was fired and barred from prison work because the public would no longer stand for his inhuman brutality.<sup>5</sup>

Today, prison officials know that many inmates can be rehabilitated, and that recreation is a valuable agency in the process. Scores of men have left the Walls and readjusted themselves in society. Many men who have not as yet been released, have been "re-built," as is evidenced in the following open letter to parents from an inmate:

Dear Mon and Dad:-

In an unending line, your children are filing through this, and other reformatory entrances. In a ceaseless panorama of heartbreaking foolishness,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1950, p. 2.

your "kids" are jumping onto the road leading to crime, with seeming nonchalance on their part, and very little resistance on yours. They don't seem to realize that the road has only one ending--here with us.

We who are already paying for our foolishness can tell them, and you, just how crazy they are for bartering their freedom for walls and bars, for an insignificant "fling" with someone's car or billfold. We know, for we have learned the hard way.

We wonder if your children can grasp the idea of what prison means? What it is to have to view the world through steel bars, from behind gray stone walls? To be living, not on your time and plans, but on a master plan made for thousands?

We, behind these barriers, think not, Mom and Dad. Your children are apparently living in an imaginary world, made up of fanciful dreams of being a "big shot"--in a world where our foolish exploits are played up so much in the paper, over the radio and on the screen, that their childish imagination can hardly help but associate itself with us. Until they reach maturity, children naturally trend to mentally blend into whatever they read, see or hear. This in itself is alright, but you, the parents, fail to give your children enough, or any, useful objects to occupy their imaginations in the right way and to place the seeming "glory" of our misdeeds out of their heads.

Well, we see your children when they reach here. We see them strutting around as we did once, like miniature Dillingers. If they were not so pathetic, it would be comical. When they too begin to see how silly they were, it is much too late for them. It is always too late when you trade your individualism for a number. We can do nothing for those of your children already here, except to try and see that they do not repeat their mistakes. The biggest majority of them won't.

You ask "what can we do to prevent all this?" Well, we here can offer no "sure-fire" cure for your children. All we can do is to beg you to really become "Mom and Dad" to your boy or girl. Come out of your shells of indifference and really show them that they are bigger "big-shots" to you by just being themselves. If you have to, take them to the woodshed for a session with the "hickory stick" occasionally. Above all, get it into their heads that a life of crime leads only to here--where we are. Impress on them that the only way to do things is the honest way.

If you are successful, and we know you will be, then we here inside the Walls will feel that maybe our being here has helped to keep YOUR child from joining us.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., February 17, 1950, p. 2.



The sentiment of the preceding letter emphasizes the obligation of society in general and the prison in particular to help inmates prepare themselves for living outside the Walls. Since recreation is valuable in the rehabilitation process, the present problem related to the prison's recreation program appears significant.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TEXAS PRISON SYSTEM

#### Organization of the Prison and Developments Between 1847-1950

Early developments.--The Texas Prison System at Huntsville, Texas, was opened in 1847.<sup>1</sup> According to the following reports, conditions were not very favorable for rehabilitation during the first one hundred years of operation:

...until 1947 the State of Texas continued to hide a last ghastly skeleton in her closet, the Texas Prison System.

In that year, Austin McCormick, noted penal authority, flatly termed the Texas prison "The worst in the United States." Dr. Carl M. Rosenquist, eminent Texas University sociologist, charged that "Texas has been penny wise and dollar foolish" in dealing with the matter.

Previous to 1947, there had been many inquiries, reports, surveys and half-hearted investigations of the Prison System, while periodically various members of the Texas press made sensational charges and advocated sweeping reform. But, Texas' eyes were blind and her ears were deaf. She felt no pain nor shame over a situation so vile as to arouse the scorn of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

Modernization.--In 1947 a governor, who will long be remembered for his foresight and humanitarian principles, took office and at the same time a new Prison Board composed of high-minded, out-standing business and professional men recognized the serious state of prison affairs. After

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<sup>1</sup>American Prison Association, Compilers, State and National Correctional Institutions of the United States of America, England, and Canada, July, 1946, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, Dallas, Texas 1950.

intensive study, the new Prison Board recommended a definite plan, now known as the Five-Point Program, for the rehabilitation of the Texas Prison System. This plan called for improved living conditions for inmates, better pay and adequate housing for the Prison's employees, modernized and mechanized farming operations, legislation that would allow the Prison's industries to show a profit, and more emphasis on inmate rehabilitation. The late Governor Jester backed the Prison Board program because he believed that prison modernization was a duty and obligation of the people of Texas. He asked the Legislature to cooperate, and much favorable legislation followed.

The year 1947 was notable in still another respect, for late that year O. B. Ellis was employed as General Manager of the Texas Prison System. He assumed his position on January 1, 1948. Using the Five-Point Program of the Prison Board as a statement of policy, the board and Mr. Ellis worked as a team to draw up a feasible plan of operation, which later became known as the "Ellis Plan." Governor Beauford H. Jester did not live to see the completion of the prison reform program, but his successor, Governor Allan Shivers, became the new champion of prison modernization, as is shown by the following published letter to his constituents:

**CITIZENS OF TEXAS:**

The Texas Prison System has embarked on a program of progress which should inspire a feeling of pride among all Texans.

The Prison Board and the General Manager are spending wisely and economically the money voted by the

Legislature for the reconstruction of the system. I am impressed by the job they are doing. All Texas should be proud of the improvements that have been made.

The new buildings that are being erected, and the new policies that have been put into effect will eventually bring the prison system up to date and make it a model penal institution.

The Ellis Plan is working. The able, visionary and courageous men who are members of the present Prison Board are co-operating to the utmost. The staff is earnest and competent.

It will continue to be my policy to support this program for the betterment of the Texas Prison System.

Allan Shivers  
Governor of Texas<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the modernization program, new homes have been erected for use of the Prison's personnel. Playgrounds enclosed by detention fences have been erected at all units of the Prison System. The million-dollar cell-block building at Huntsville is rapidly taking shape. New laundry equipment has been installed, and new sanitary water systems are in operation. The most modern craftwork shop in any American prison has been erected at Huntsville. Another one has been installed at the Central Unit and others are planned for various other units.

The vast farm system has been modernized. Men ride to work and back to the farms in tractor-drawn trailer trains, whereas before they trudged for miles in the broiling sun each day. Tractors are being used instead of mules for farming, and blooded cattle are replacing the scrawny range stock once raised. At the same time, well diversified crops cover much formerly unproductive land.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

A new system of classification has been inaugurated whereby men and women are placed in work for which each is suited. Those on the farms are being given instruction in modern methods and the use of the latest machinery and techniques. On the industrial side, there is the chance to learn printing, shoe making, garment making, sheet metal work, welding, auto mechanics, tractor mechanics, broom making, canning, meat packing, metal stamping and textile manufacture. In the construction trade, a man can learn to be a carpenter, electrician, steel worker, brick mason, painter, plumber, plasterer or tool-room attendant. Others can learn bookkeeping, baking, cooking, drafting, machine-shop practice, laboratory work, and music. There are assignments for all who wish to take advantage of the opportunities offered, and an even more enriched program of rehabilitation will gradually be put into operation.<sup>4</sup>

Governor Allan Shivers made his first inspection of the penitentiary in March, 1950, and he made the following statement:

It seems to me that the Prison Board and the General Manager are spending the money which the legislature voted wisely and economically...I am proud of the job they are doing. The morale of the prisoners seemed good.<sup>5</sup>

On this tour the Governor saw the new buildings that are being erected with convict labor. Of special interest was

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>The Echo, March 21, 1950, p. 1.

the maximum security building which has been called a prison within a prison. It has been constructed to house 541 incorrigibles. In addition, he saw the industrial building which will combine the machine shop, automobile license plant and other industries. He examined the ancient machinery in the textile line, which was second-hand when it was bought in 1902. All of this machinery will be replaced with \$490,000 worth of modern equipment. The Governor visited the hospital and psychopathic ward but declined to go through the death house, where five men were waiting execution.

At a regular session of the Prison Board on May 1, 1950, Manager O. B. Ellis reported that the Texas Prison System has reached a point where it is practically self-sustaining. Income in 1949 was \$1,875,000, which left a surplus at the year's end--for the first time in the history of the institution. The tag plant alone is now earning more than \$100,000 a year, while agriculture operations look brighter than ever. Already several thousand dollars worth of excess vegetables have been sold from the 1950 crop and a full two-year supply has been canned and placed in storage. A request for \$8,500 for steak-tenderizing equipment was approved by the Prison Board in 1950.

In the course of his report, Ellis pointed out that Texas taxpayers are getting off very lightly in the operation of the prison. Only two states in the Union spend less per man: Mississippi and Alabama. Texas spends about \$310 per year per inmate. Many states spend more than \$1,000

per man, while Connecticut tops the list with \$1,468 spent on each prisoner in custody.

Among other things reported and approved at the regular session of the Board were a new soil conservation project at Darrington; the use of some Earl Sellers stock and equipment at the Dallas rodeo; salary adjustments for construction foreman; building of two duplexes at Eastham; building of one duplex at Wynne; building of one duplex at Ramsey; building of one duplex at Ferguson; building of one duplex at Central; building of guard's dormitory at Ramsey; building of a calf barn at Wynne; and easements on roads and ditches at Ramsey and Harlem. Each of these improvements will mean much to the inmates who are housed in the various units.<sup>6</sup>

The Farms.--The main prison unit at Huntsville is the center of administration and industry and is also the site of the prison stadium, where the Prison's rodeo is held annually in October. Permanent records on each inmate are kept at this unit, and executive officers of the prison system have their offices there. New inmates entering the Prison System are brought first to Huntsville for classification and assignment to a permanent farm. Also business offices which do the purchasing, accounting, and auditing for the entire System are located there.

At Huntsville, all Texas automobile license plates are manufactured by the convicts, a major industry in itself.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., May 3, 1950, p. 1.

Efficient, well-equipped printing, machine, maintenance, and tin shops are maintained. A textile mill turns out material for clothing for the prisoners and shoes are made. However, a major portion of the prison's operation is carried on at eleven farms, scattered over a wide area of Texas, as shown in Figure 1.\*

The need of providing a job for every prisoner who is able to work requires no proof from those who have had experience in the operation of correctional institutions. They know that prisoners can and will work well in a properly planned and administered program, and that it is a great and needless waste of the taxpayers' money not to permit them to engage in work that is productive and has training, as well.

Agricultural employment, as a means of furnishing vocational training to trustworthy prisoners, employing and conditioning inmates nearing parole and economizing in the cost of maintaining correctional and other state institutions, has been given careful consideration in the Texas Prison System. The Prison System contains 73,000 acres, and 24,000 acres are incultivation. A proved insect control program is carried out, according to the recommendations of the agricultural specialists, and as a result, the Prison has kept insect damage at a minimum.<sup>7</sup>

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\*Photostatic copy from Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1949.

<sup>7</sup>Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 7, 1950, p. 8.



**EASTHAM STATE FARM**

MADISONVILLE

TRINITY

**WYNNE STATE FARM**

CATTLE

DAIRY

SHEEP

**HUNTSVILLE**

ADMINISTRATION  
INDUSTRIES  
PRISON  
STADIUM

**PRISON**

TEXTILE MILL

MACHINE SHOP

TIN SHOP

TAG PLANT

PRINT SHOP

**GOREE STATE FARM**

CHICKENS

**HARLEM STATE FARM**

BRICK KILNS

UNIT NO. TWO

**CENTRAL STATE FARM**

SUGAR LAND

BLUE RIDGE STATE FARM

HOUSTON

RICHMOND

UNIT NO. ONE

**DARRINGTON STATE FARM**

SUGAR CANE

RICE FIELD DARRINGTON

PRISON BOWL  
Texas  
**Prison System**

D. HAUSER 1949

**RAMSEY STATE FARM**

CATTLE UNIT NO. ONE

ANGLETON



West COLUMBIA

BRAZORIA

**RETRIEVE STATE FARM**

VEGETABLES

COTTON

COTTON

**CLEMENS STATE FARM**

COTTON GINNING ON ALL FARMS

CATTLE

Mechanical equipment, conservation measures, better drainage, and selection of the proper varieties of seed for the prison farms have been very beneficial to the Prison System. The improvement program has been under way a little over one year, but the progress has been remarkable. The soil on the Prison farms is fertile and is considered to be among the best land in East Texas. Its cultivation is directed by W. B. Frieson, who is a former county agent and a graduate of the Texas Agriculture and Mechanical College. The Prison wardens work their crops under his direction and follow scientific practices.

The livestock program on the farms has been improved steadily. The hog production is centered at Eastham Farm, where modern brick farrowing houses have been built. The pigs are removed to the various other farms for feeding.

Beef production is centered at one unit, although some beef cattle are raised on all the farms. Approximately 8,400 beef cattle are owned by the Prison System, and over a thousand of these are on one farm.

A large part of the 1950 farm program has been the production of truck crops to feed the prisoners. Practically all vegetables are grown, and it appears that the Prison System will produce enough potatoes to meet the 1950 needs. Approximately five hundred acres of Irish potatoes and similar acreage of sweet potatoes were cultivated during 1950. However, the largest crop was one thousand acres of blackeyed peas. Almost four hundred acres of sweet corn

were raised. Millions of tomato plants were produced on the various farms; hence tomatoes are used in many dishes prepared in the prison kitchen. The canning plant at Central Farm Number 2 operated on a twenty-four hour basis during the tomato season in 1950. Melons, rice, and sugar cane also are raised on most of the farms.

The System's biggest money crop is cotton, and the 1950 allotment was over seven thousand acres. Alfalfa is a big hay crop, and approximately thirteen hundred acres were planted this year. Over three hundred acres were planted in corn, and over fifteen hundred acres were used for raising legumes.

The Prison farm operations are done by 121 tractors. Many of the drivers make "good time" by driving these trucks at night and on Sunday. Approximately five hundred mules also are used in the farm operation where the use of the tractor is not practical.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the many thousands head of range cattle raised in the system each year, large dairy herds are maintained on each of the farm units. Approximately 2,500 head of dairy cattle furnish an abundant supply of milk and butter for the tables the year around. A sweet potato dehydrator has been designed and constructed in the mechanical department at the Huntsville Unit. The machine will be used to dehydrate sweet potatoes grown in the System. After

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

shredding and dehydration, the finished product will be put to a new use, that of supplying a large portion of the feed for the many thousands of head of cattle raised each year. Livestock has become an important cog in the System's "live at home" program, and the herds are given every attention. Four prison farms were converted into livestock units in 1944, and the herds ranging the pasturelands in the System are valued in excess of a half-million dollars. Meats that supply the tables at all units are processed in the packing plant at Sugarland.<sup>9</sup>

On the eleven farms combined, the following vocational opportunities and work experiences are available: shoe shop, carpenter shop, print shop, machine shop, tin shop, garment factory, textile mill, cannery, meat packing plant, brick kilns, sugar mill, cotton gins, dairies, and car-license plant.<sup>10</sup> The following comment written by an inmate, for the prison newspaper, explains an interesting operation related to the production of licenses for Texas cars:

Many of you have worked at the Tag Plant and seen the big oven there where the license plates are baked at 250 degrees. You might be surprised to know how many times the plates "ride" from one end of the oven to the other. A little asking around developed a lively discussion, and a wide difference of opinion. Two times, many thought. Three, a few believed. One was sure of four trips. And it was amazing to even some old timers not closely connected at the plant to learn that the plates make seven trips through the oven before they emerge, ready to be boxed for shipment. Credit

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<sup>9</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1945.

<sup>10</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1949.

goes here to Dorman Norwood, foreman of the Sacking Department, for the one right answer, later confirmed by Boss Blagrave--which makes the answer official. The catch to this operation is a hidden track near the top that a very few, it appears, know exists. This long ride given the plates allows them about an hour and fifteen minutes to bake--almost long enough for baked potatoes, one hundred tag planter observed.<sup>11</sup>

The preceding data relative to the farm units of the Texas Prison System are general in nature. Specific information on each farm is contained in the succeeding discussions.<sup>12</sup>

Blue Ridge State Farm.--The Blue Ridge State Farm, a 4,506-acre agricultural unit for Mexican prisoners, is located fifteen miles southeast of Houston on the San Antonio highway. About 3,490 acres of this tract have been cultivated, a sizeable portion of which was given over to gardening. The Blue Ridge Farm is one of the units in the System that is not equipped with a modern fire-proof building. However, the present structure is fairly adequate in caring for the needs of the inmates, and they are made as comfortable as is possible under the circumstances. Ordinarily, the average daily inmate population at the Blue Ridge State Farm is 350. There is a single camp here, reserved through the prison's Bureau of Classification, for first-term Mexican prisoners only.

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<sup>11</sup>The Echo, June 5, 1950, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>Data on each farm was obtained from the Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1945.

The Clemens State Farm.--Located near Brazoira on the Texas Gulf, this farm is reserved for all first-term Negro prisoners over twenty-five years of age, all of whom are listed by the Bureau of Classification as possessing good rehabilitation possibilities. The consolidation of Camps 1, 2, and 3 on the Clemens State Farm a few years ago has proven to be a wise move in every way. More especially so from a financial standpoint, since substantial savings have been brought about in maintenance upkeep. Over eight thousand acres of exceedingly fertile bottom-land and lush pasture comprise the Clemens State Farm. More than five thousand acres are under cultivation, producing, as at other agricultural units, cotton, corn, cane and such feedstuffs as are necessary to the upkeep of the unit's livestock.

The average daily inmate population at this unit is about 360. Approximately twenty-five per cent of the prisoners on this farm are trustees, all of whom are engaged in modern agricultural activities.

Central State Farm.--The Central State Farm, located at Sugarland, Texas, is an agricultural unit for white and colored prisoners. Camp Number 1 houses only Negroes, while Camps Number 2 and 3 are for white prisoners. The average daily population is about 470. This unit's 5,203 acres, (4,350 of which are incultivation), produces cotton, corn, feedstuffs and vegetables. Most of these vegetables are taken to the canning plant at the State Farm Industries, or to the new unit of this group, where they are processed for use

throughout the system. In one year this plant canned more than 600,000 gallons of vegetables. The packing plant, also located here, annually slaughters and processes enough cattle and hogs each year to meet the System's demands for meat and furnishes much of the pork products consumed by other state institutions.

Darrington State Farm.--The Darrington State Farm, one of the Prison System's three Negro units, located thirty miles south of Houston, is strictly an agricultural unit and includes a total of 6,770 acres of fertile gulf coast prairie. At one time this farm produced enough rice to supply the entire System and many other state institutions. The annual harvest consists of an average of 1,700 barrels of Nira and 3,100 barrels of early prolific rough rice. This unit, comprised of one camp, is reserved for Negro first-offenders, with good prospects of rehabilitation, who are between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five. This reservation is in connection with the Prison System's modern program of inmate classification and segregation.

Eastham State Farm.--Situating in a remote spot in the Trinity River bottoms near Weldon, Texas, the Eastham State Farm, made up of 12,970 acres of river bottom farm and pasture land, is the second largest unit in the Prison System. Cotton was the chief product of the 8,299 acres in cultivation until this unit was made into a livestock farm. Corn, feedstuff and vegetables are grown in abundance. Since so much pasture is available here, the Eastham makes an ideal place

for raising livestock and a considerable part of the system's range cattle is produced here now. The average daily inmate population of Eastham averages only about 125. This count comprises what is known as the "Maximum Custodial Group." In this connection the Eastham unit is ideally situated. It is miles from a highway, and an inmate attempting to escape must penetrate thousands of acres of jungle-like country before reaching the outside world.

Ferguson State Farm.--The Ferguson State Farm is located on the west side of the Trinity River in Madison County, directly across the river from the Eastham State Farm. A ferry connects the two farms. This unit's 4,344 acres was at one time a part of the Eastham Farm, but was made into a separate unit. Like the Eastham farm, this unit is strictly a livestock farm. All of its fertile cultivated acres of the past has been turned into grazing lands, and several hundred head of range cattle are to be found in its pastures. Many large barns for storage of feed are on this unit. The average daily population at the Ferguson Farm is about 150 trusties. They look after the feeding of livestock and perform such other duties as are assigned to them by the manager.

Goree State Farm.--This farm is located near Huntsville, and its population is all women. The inmates grow vegetables, raise chickens, have a dairy, and maintain a garment factory. This unit is the home of the Goree Girl's musical organization, which contributes much to the prison's radio broadcast.



Wynne State Farm.--This unit is located three miles west of the main prison at Huntsville and includes 1,913 acres of farm and pasture land. Some corn and other feedstuffs are grown here, but most of the cultivated land is made into a garden. This is the extent of activities at this camp, strictly an agricultural unit, even though the average daily inmate population is three hundred. This number is explained by the fact that all prisoners who are physically unfit for ordinary farm or industrial work are transferred to this unit. The Prison System's Tuberculosis Ward is housed in two of the wings of the new building recently constructed here. An average of between sixty and seventy tuberculosis prisoners are given an approved treatment. This unit has an advantage in its location as it is near the main prison, where the System's competent medical staff is headquartered.

#### Administration of the Prison

The Texas Prison Board.--The organization and administrative practices of the Texas Prison System were provided by an Act of the Fortieth Legislature. This Act created the Texas Prison Board and made provision for a general manager who was responsible for central administration. In House Bill Number 59, the duties of the Texas Prison Board were set forth. It was stated that this agency was to manage and conduct the prison in such a manner as would be consistent with the operation of a modern prison system. It was the objective to make the prison system self-sustaining; to provide humane

treatment for inmates; and to carry on the program for the welfare of those within the Walls. This Act also contained a provision which said that all prisoners should be worked within the prison walls and upon farms owned or leased by the state. In no event should the labor be sold to any contractor to work on farms elsewhere.

Moreover, the Texas Prison Board was composed of nine members, who were appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Such appointments were to be made bi-annually, on or before February 15. The term of office of each member is six years but appointments were made so that the term of three members expires every two years. Vacancies occurring in the Board are filled by appointments of the governor for the unexpired term. The members of the Texas Prison Board draw no salaries, but each member is entitled to ten dollars per day and expenses when engaged in the discharge of his official duties.<sup>13</sup>

The present nine-member Board<sup>14</sup> represents various sections of the State. Names and addresses of the members are as follows:

- (1) W. C. Windsor, Chairman, Tyler, Texas
- (2) Bronson Morgan, Vice-Chairman, Jasper, Texas
- (3) T. R. Havins, Secretary, Brownwood, Texas
- (4) H. H. Coffield, Huntsville, Texas

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<sup>13</sup>Texas Prison System Manual, mimeographed, pp. 9-10.

<sup>14</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1950.

- (5) French M. Robertson, Huntsville, Texas
- (6) B. A. Stufflebeme, Grand Prairie, Texas
- (7) Warren S. Bellous, Houston, Texas
- (8) Henry S. Paulus, Yoakum, Texas
- (9) W. W. Cordwell, Luling, Texas

General Manager.---According to the house bill Number 59, the Prison Board employs a general manager of the entire Prison System. It is his duty to carry out the policies of the Board, and he has sole charge of the prison. His salary is not to exceed eight thousand a year; however, he is furnished a house and all necessary traveling expenses incurred in his official business. The manager, with the consent of the Board, has the power to prescribe reasonable rules and regulations governing humane treatment and discipline of the inmates.

Applications for employment within the prison system in various capacities are reviewed every ninety days by the Prison Service Committee which is composed of the general manager and two employees appointed by him. Employees may be dismissed for incompetency, misconduct, violation of a rule or regulation of the department or of the provisions of any order or orders, neglect of duty, intoxication while in uniform or on duty, conduct unbecoming an officer, making a false official statement, and conviction in a court having criminal jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Texas Prison System Manual, pp. 14, 49-50.

The warden.---Under the jurisdiction of the Texas Prison System, the warden is the chief executive officer of a special unit. He is responsible for the proper administration of his unit. He carries out plans promulgated by the general manager and is responsible for prompt execution of orders or instructions from both the general manager and the assistant general manager. In addition, he is responsible for the custody, treatment, training, and discipline of all inmates in his unit, and for the assignment of duties to employees within the institution over which he has charge. He also organizes a classification committee of not less than three members, of which he is chairman, whose purpose is to make an individual study of each inmate committed to the warden's unit and to recommend a special program of custody, discipline, assignment, and rehabilitation.<sup>16</sup>

Administrative offices.---The organization of the administrative offices include the following divisions: (1) Administration, (2) Agriculture and Livestock, (3) Records and Identification, (4) Classification and Segregation, (5) Medicine, (6) Welfare, and (7) Accounting and Auditing.<sup>17</sup>

The Division of Administration assumes the responsibility of the Prison's entire program from an administrative standpoint. The Division of Accounting and Auditing has charge of all the accounting of the entire prison system. The

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-25.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

Division of Classification and Segregation obtains the life history of each prisoner upon arrival, separates and classifies inmates, and supervises the classification committees at the various institutions of the Texas Prison System. The Division of Medicine is responsible for the health of all inmates; makes inspections of each prison at regular intervals relative to sanitation, food, and medical attention; and supervises the hospital at the Huntsville Receiving Station, the dental department, and the laboratory. The Division of Records and Identification is responsible for duties connected with records, time served, commutation of time, and discharges. The Division of Welfare correlates the educational program, library, religious activities, and recreation of the Prison. The Division of Agriculture and Livestock supervises the farms and their production.<sup>18</sup>

#### Rules and Regulations

Classifications.--The manager of the Prison System has the duty of making suitable provision and regulation for the safe transportation of prisoners from counties where they are sentenced. The transportation is paid by the state and in no instance is it permissible to carry the prisoner direct from the county jail to the state farm. He is first carried to the receiving station. In addition to obtaining the life history of each prisoner when he arrives, the Division of Classification and Segregation supervises the classification

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-34.

committee. All prisoners admitted to the Huntsville Receiving Station are summoned to this committee where a detailed case history is made, and where each inmate is classified for inside segregation purposes. Segregation classification includes the following:

(1) The rehabilitative group is composed of those inmates whose life history indicates that they have had favorable community and family background, legitimate occupational records, little experience in criminal activity, and whose general psychological situations indicate that they are good prospects for wholeomse adjustment. This rehabilitative group is divided into 1A and 1B classes. Prisoners under twenty-five years of age are placed in the first class, and all of them over that age comprise the latter.

(2) The Intermediate Group, is composed of inmates whose life history indicates experience in criminal practice, and whose case history indicates that they are doubtful, although not hopeless, prospects for adjustment. Members of this group, who are under twenty-five years of age, are placed in 2A classification, while older members are classified as 2B.

(3) A third group, which is called the 2C, includes inmates whose life histories indicate persistent or habitual offenders. This group has no age division.

(4) The fourth group, which is identified as 3 Group, is made up of those who have indicated by their past behavior that they are dangerous and vicious and have little regard for human life. Members include those who have been leaders in escapes.

(5) In addition to the preceding groupings, there are classifications which take care of the feeble-minded, drug addicts, and homosexuals. For segregation purposes the mental age of 10.6 years is regarded as the upper border of feeble-mindedness.<sup>19</sup>

Disciplinary procedures and penalties.--All officers are required to report infractions of rules and regulations. Each inmate is given a hearing before the warden or assistant warden, and if he is found guilty, he is dealt with in accordance to the seriousness and frequency of the infraction. Penalties include reprimand or warning, loss of privileges, loss of "good time," confinement to cell, placement in segregation, placement in hand cuffs, and placement in solitary confinement.<sup>20</sup>

The State Disciplinary Committee, composed of the warden at Huntsville, a chaplain, a psychologist, and a representative of the Classification and Segregation Committee, reviews all cases of violations and recommends time forfeiture of each prisoner to the general manager.<sup>21</sup>

Violations of the prison rules include the following acts:

1. Any act or acts definable as felonies or misdemeanors in this State are considered as violations of the rules.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54.

2. Use, possession, or dealing in narcotics, marihuana, alcohol, other intoxicants, other drugs, etc.
3. Escape; attempt to escape; aiding another to escape or to attempt to escape.
4. Fighting. Possession of weapon suitable for offense or defense.
5. Sexual malpractices.
6. Mutiny, Insubordination. (Refusal to take treatment for communicable disease as directed by physician in charge shall be considered mutiny). Agitating or inciting mutiny or other misconduct.
7. Creating unnecessary noise. Indecent or vulgar language or conduct.
8. Laziness. Refusing or failing to perform duty or work assigned and failing to obey orders or instructions.
9. Damaging, defacing or disposing of property of state or other individuals.
10. Inflictions or injuries on self.
11. Conversing or communicating with civilians, (except for visits and correspondence permitted by the warden and under his inspection letters to, or interviews with the members of the Prison Board and general manager excepted, and except that the Governor and all members of the executive and judicial departments, and members of the Legislature shall be admitted into the prison, camps or other places where prisoners are kept working, at all proper hours for the purpose of observing the conduct thereof, and may hold conversation with the prisoners apart from all prison officials). Publication of any article or letter or giving any interview which may be used in the preparation of any article without the permission of the general manager.
12. Having in possession more than five (\$5.00) dollars. When an inmate is found to have more than five dollars, in his possession, the excess shall be declared contraband and shall be confiscated by the warden. Contraband shall be confiscated and disposed of by the warden.
13. Possession or use of wearing apparel not approved by the warden.



14. Not maintaining respectful attitude at all times toward guards and employees.<sup>22</sup>

The law governing the commutation of time for a prisoner's good conduct, industry, and obedience are said to be very generous in comparison with regulations in other states. Upon admission to prison, each inmate is placed in Class I. This means that as long as he maintains good conduct, industriousness, and obedience, he will receive twenty days per month reduction from the end of his term. Misconduct, lack of industriousness, and disobedience may result of his being placed in a lower grade. Inmates who are in Group II receive ten days per month "good time." If an inmate is classified in Group III, he receives no "good time." Infractions of the rules may result in the forfeiture of all or part of the accumulated "good time."

Correspondence.--The following instructions regarding correspondence have been issued to the inmates of the Texas Prison System:

1. You may have up to five persons on your correspondence list. During quarantine period, you may correspond with two persons, selecting two with whom you are most closely related by blood, marriage or other ties. Such selection should be restricted to members of the family unless unusual circumstances indicate otherwise. All the persons on your list are subject to approval. Do not correspond with anyone else on the list until you are notified that such correspondence has been approved. If you want to make any changes in your correspondence list take it up with the Warden.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-87.

2. You are allowed three outgoing letters a week. Stationery is to be purchased from the commissary, and this is the only form to be used.
3. Your letters should be limited to one sheet of paper using both sides. Be sure that the envelope is addressed correctly and that the address corresponds with that shown on the records in the mail office. It is important that you notify the mail office of any change in address of any of your correspondents.
4. If you have any urgent private business or legal matters, discuss them first with the assistant warden. He will explain to you the procedures for sending out Special Purpose letters. Telegrams must be approved by the Warden and are authorized only under the most unusual circumstances. When approved, a telegram must be sent collect or paid for by you. No telephone conversations will be permitted.
5. Write your letters clearly and legibly so that they can be easily read and understood. This will help the mail officer pass on your letter quickly. Letters must be written in English, unless you have been given permission to correspond in a foreign language.
6. It is expected that you will confine your correspondence to matters of personal interest to your friends and relatives. Do not discuss other inmates or institutional personnel and refrain from ordinary institutional gossip or rumors. If, for some reason your letter is rejected, you will be notified and told why.
7. You may write uncensored letters directly to the Members of the Texas Prison Board, and the general manager. A special mail box is furnished for this purpose. Letters placed in this box are not subject to inspection at the institution. Before writing to any official through the Prisoner's Mail Box, you should first discuss your problem or question, with the warden or other institutional official.
8. One package per month may be received by you through the mail. The following articles may be received: belts, garters, gloves, handkerchiefs, pajamas, shoes (not sport), slippers, shorts (white), socks, suspenders, thread, undershirts (athletic), underwear, union suits, washcloths, sweatshirts, candies, cookies, combs, dental floss, foot powder, hair

brushes, mirrors, mouth wash, plate powder, soap boxes, soaps, checker boards, checkers, dominoes, fountain pens, pencils, ink, stamps, stamped envelopes, post cards, portraits, and snapshots.

9. Inmates may receive money orders from those appearing on the mailing list and money orders or cash from those appearing on the visiting list and other sources approved by the warden. No money is to be received directly by the inmate, but such money must be given to the institutional authorities for deposit to the inmate's account.<sup>23</sup>

Visitation.--Inmates are allowed two visits per month on Sundays from people who are on an approved list. Visitors, who may not exceed more than two adults per visit, cannot bring in packages, mail, magazines or other items, and they cannot remain longer than two hours. An employee of the prison is present at all times during each visit.<sup>24</sup>

An Individual's daily routine.--A prisoner's day includes three divisions: ten hours for work; eight hours for rest and sleep; and six hours for leisure time. The following description of the daily routine was written for the prison paper by an inmate:

Whistle Number 1 lets loose its blast at the awful hour of five A.M., to wake or warn you that work is not far away. This whistle sounds often like it's right outside your window, then again can hardly be heard if the wind is unfavorable or the weather stormy.

Whistle Number 2, at the odd hour of six, means you'd better be up, even if breakfast doesn't interest you, as your work day now is just around the corner.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 90-92.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

These two whistles, then, that many believe are blown to wake and start them off, oddly enough are not within the walls but at a sawmill a mile a mile away! That fact many, it was discovered, would argue; yet M. W. Frazer, who blows the power plant Number 3 at 6:40, confirmed the fact that this whistle kept "normal hours."<sup>25</sup>

After the evening meal, the main recreation period begins. For some, it is the library; for others, it is a ball game or perhaps an orchestra rehearsal. For all, it is a rest from ten hours of labor. When the signal is given to retire, each inmate must immediately prepare for bed. Quickly he must turn out the light and retire. If he becomes ill, or for other necessary reasons needs to call the night official, he must do so in a quiet and proper manner.

#### Medical Department

A recent report from the medical director shows that approximately four hundred inmates were benefited by the prosthetic aids furnished through the medical department during a period of sixty days. Data show that 248 pairs of new glasses were furnished and twenty-three pairs of glasses were repaired. One abdominal support was purchased. In the dental department, seventy-nine complete plates and twenty-seven partial plates were supplied to inmates, while plates repaired totaled eighteen.<sup>26</sup> At a meeting of the Texas

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<sup>25</sup>The Echo, May 17, 1950, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Medical Report of M. D. Hanson, M.D., April 27, 1950.

Prison Board, May 1, 1950, a \$1,500 supplement to the \$7,500 fund already spent, was approved for extra medical and dental aid, to be used for glasses, teeth, and prosthetic appliances.<sup>27</sup>

### Religious Activities

The religious side of prison life is not neglected in the units of the Prison System. Regular religious services are held, and all inmates are encouraged to attend the services. Four chaplains are employed to conduct services and do personal counseling. When the Texas Prison Board met in regular session at the Walls on May 1, 1950, approval was given to plans for employing a full-time negro pastor for the lower farms.<sup>28</sup>

The following report contains an explanation of religious activities inside the wall:

Reverend B. C. Anderson, Protestant Chaplain of the Northern Units, reports that the revival which has just been completed at the Walls and Goree Units was the most successful service of this type ever held here. Much work was put in the preparation of the revival and approximately three hundred people committed themselves to live a better life.

Religious literature has been distributed to the various units by the Chaplain. A group of college students have visited Wynne and Goree and held religious services there several times during the past sixty days. A Bible Class has been organized at Eastham Farm. This class is taught every Sunday as a form of religious worship and is attended by many of the inmates. Religious services are held every Sunday on Goree and Wynne Farms and at the Walls.

The Chaplains reserve two days a week for interviewing new men who arrive at Huntsville. The rules and regulations are discussed and the Chaplains

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<sup>27</sup>The Echo, May 3, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

explain the necessity of obeying them and urge and new men to cooperate with prison officials. The Chaplains help the men with their personal problems and help create a feeling of confidence in the men. They feel that their personal contact with inmates is the most effective part of their work.<sup>29</sup>

Prison Group Number 1, Alcoholics Anonymous, celebrated their second anniversary on Sunday, June 25th, 1950, and in observance they held an open meeting in the Prison's chapel. A large audience attended, including outside Alcoholics Anonymous' members from about eighty towns throughout the state. Each Sunday afternoon from 1:00 to 3:00 o'clock, a group of men gather in the Educational Building and learn more about this new way of life that has come to mean so much to them. They extend an invitation to each inmate who would like to visit.<sup>30</sup>

#### Education

Education, including the teaching of elementary and advanced subjects to prisoners whose fitness for productive employment is obviously impaired by lack of education, is now recognized as not only being one of the most important direct media of rehabilitative treatment, but also as a means of improving the chances of his complete rehabilitation. The program of education in each institution of the Texas Prison System is planned in accordance with the general capacities, interests and needs of its inmate population and offers each prisoner the education and training that he

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<sup>29</sup>A. C. Turner, Rehabilitation Report, March 1, 1950, p.2.

<sup>30</sup>The Echo, May 17, 1950, p. 1.

needs, can profit by, and is capable of achieving. From a bi-monthly report on rehabilitation, dated March 1, 1950, it was found that the educational director reported that 373 inmates who entered the Prison System during the previous sixty days were given the new Stanford Achievement Test in order to determine their educational levels. The results showed that 26.1 per cent were illiterate; 59.2 per cent were of grade-school level; and 14.7 per cent of high-school level or higher. The same report showed that the enrollment in the education department was 955. Among this group, 357 were compulsory illiterates; 138 were enrolled in correspondence courses; five were taking National Correspondence School courses; and 424 were taking part in the on-the-job training program. The remainder were enrolled in Bible courses, barber school, special subjects, and typing. Ninety-one illiterates in the compulsory courses took the required examination and were promoted out of these classes. Two students who were enrolled in correspondence courses received their diplomas. Three others completed these courses, and another three lacked only final examinations.<sup>31</sup>

The Department of Education conducts interviews with each of the inmates who enter the Texas Prison System. From these primary interviews upon admittance, a comprehensive history of the inmate's background is obtained. After these interviews, the department administers the Stanford

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<sup>31</sup>Bi-monthly Report on Rehabilitation, March 1, 1950, A. D. Turner, Director.

Achievement Tests, and the results provide the basis for the inmate's educational file while in the system.

Elementary school subjects are available at all units, and English is compulsory for illiterates. Some high-school course are available, and many special correspondence course are offered at no cost to the inmate. The Tractor School, other trade schools, and on-the-job training courses offer practical knowledge and skill as well as theory.

The enrollment in the seventeen evening schools of the system is divided into three categories: academic, vocational, and special subjects. Selected courses of study of the International Correspondence School are available to students who possess the proper requisites in the vocational department. Participation in these courses have appeared to be highly effective and have been a definite asset to the general educational program of the system. Over thirty different courses are available to the inmates, and each of them normally would cost from \$100 to \$300. The courses include commercial courses, ocean navigation, welder, foundry, sheet metal, practical electricity, air conditioning, and refrigeration.

The establishment of vocational classes in all units of the prison system as a part of the job-working program makes it possible for the inmates to receive instruction related to their employment. For instance, if an inmate has shown aptitude and a desire to become a machinist, he may be assigned to the mechanical department as an



apprentice-machinist and may enroll in a machinist course, which is conducted after work hours. Such an arrangement enables him to obtain practical experience during his work assignment, while he is learning the theory in the classroom.

From the Extension Service Department of the Texas Agriculture and Mechanical College, the Prison System has procured courses in agriculture, poultry, and animal husbandry, which permits the inmate to understand the theory, as he carries out daily task assigned to him. The inmate, who realizes the value of these courses, and who tries to accomplish something through participation in them, often finds that his work loses some of the elements of drudgery, which so often are connected with enforced labor.

The visual aids program in the Texas Prison System is one of the most important aids used in the educational program. Frequently the inmates find charts and diagrams difficult to understand, but he can work the actual operations of mechanical devices, and this often hastens a fuller understanding of the problem.<sup>32</sup>

#### Prison Publication

The Echo is a standard, seven-column, bi-weekly newspaper which is written, edited and printed entirely by inmates, with little official guidance. This paper is one of the leading penal publications in the United States and

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<sup>32</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, 1944.

is considered as ambassador of good will from the Texas Prison System.

The Echo is one of the most important sources of information and communication in the prison system. It contains the voice of the inmates, announcements by the general manager, parole questions and answers, and other articles of interest. The paper is published at the Huntsville Unit Print Shop, and over six thousand copies are distributed among the inmates. Approximately two hundred copies are exchanged for other prison publications outside of Texas.

#### Job Placement

Interest in the job placement program of the Texas Prison System has increased considerably since the development of a plan of contacting each inmate in the rehabilitative group who is to be released within a period of ninety days. During January, and February, 1950, approximately fifty inmates made application for job placement through the job procurement program. Nine cases were presented over the KPRC radio broadcast, and six were forwarded to the Placement Committees of the Rotary Clubs of Houston and Beaumont. Such procedures will continue as long as inmates make applications for job placement. The goal of the Texas Prison System is to send men back to the free world well-adjusted and well-trained.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Rehabilitation Report, March 1, 1950, A. C. Turner, Director.

## CHAPTER III

### RECREATION PROGRAM OF THE PRISON

#### Administration

The recreational policies and program of the Texas prison system are formulated by the Recreational and Vocational Prison Board Committee. This group is composed of the Prison manager, chairman of the Agriculture Committee, chairman of the Construction Committee, and chairman of the Welfare Committee.<sup>1</sup>

The general manager of the Prison, with the approval of the Prison Board, employs a recreational director who supervises recreational activities which are compatible with the general rules and regulations of the Texas Prison System. The following excerpts from a long and detailed letter written to two recreational officers by A. C. Turner, Director of Rehabilitation, explains the duties of these directors and the scope of the Prison's recreational program:

In our recent conversation regarding your recreational work, you will recall that I mentioned directing a letter to each of you, setting out your program with your duties and responsibilities. I have just submitted to the General Manager and Chairman of the Inmate Committee of the Prison Board proposals of expansion and improvement of the present rehabilitation program.

The General Manager has instructed me to see to it that the proposed recreational activities were immediately put into effect. The management states emphatically

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<sup>1</sup>Texas Prison System, General and Special Rules and Regulations for the Operation, Management and Control of the Texas Prison System, p. 53.

that we are no longer concerned with a program that uses its recreational officers primarily for showing the movie scheduled as planned, but he expects them to direct, supervise and plan all recreational activities in each of their sectors. He holds that this position is a full time job with important responsibility attached and he expects the personnel to do a commendable job.

.....  
 The E & R budget now provides funds ample to furnish equipment necessary to carry on this program. Anticipate your needs in advance and submit requisition necessary to carry out your program.

"The ideal recreational program in prison would afford exercise and planned activities for all. We need DIRECTED recreation and it is urged that PLANNED, SUPERVISED recreational activities be instituted at each unit on Saturday afternoons as long as this period is not used for the work program. This is an ideal use of leisure time for large groups and is a definite morale builder. Miscellaneous entertainment should be supplied at each of the units comparable to the Huntsville Unit's present program."

.....  
 Recreation should be afforded on a PLANNED BASIS that would not conflict with the time required for work. This would call for a revision of your present working hours. As stated in the beginning, the recreational officers have a full time job with the responsibility of doing this work during certain hours. The success of your work depends on your working WITH the inmates during their leisure hours. This means that Saturday afternoons, Sundays, lunch hours and evening periods give you the opportunity to do a constructive job by personally working with them. I suggest that you rearrange your work so that you can follow through with this idea.

We are not trying to say that you should work seven days per week for fourteen to sixteen hours a day, but we are saying that you can arrange your program to be with the inmates during their leisure hours and still have the hours that are expected of prison employees. Arrange your schedule so that you will take off one day each week but make it the day most convenient to you for this kind of set-up. Inclement weather offers an ideal opportunity to spend some time with the inmates on your various units, encourage and promote interest in the recreational program, counsel on general welfare work, and make a survey of the needs of the men on the units in this program.

Tension increases to the point of hostilities when inmates are in close confinement for long periods of time. This sometimes results in fights, stabbings, and other disciplinary problems because there must be

some outlet to expand energies. When men are held in the buildings for days during long rainy seasons, cold weather, etc., YOU could talk with the men, FIND OUT WHAT THEY WANT in the form of recreation, and let them have a hand in organizing and developing ways to "expand their energies" that YOU could sponsor. A vigorous recreational program will result if YOU are active in promoting it, and the inmates 'sold'.

. . . . .  
 In summary, the purpose of this letter is to give you a definite understanding of the recreational program expected of us by the management. He has said to me that if this program was REALLY CARRIED OUT it would be valuable to the whole prison system; and if it wasn't he expected me to see to it that we made changes necessary to carry it out.

The only way this can be done is for you to regulate your present hours of work to concur with inmates' leisure hours. While it is part of my work to correlate the various activities and to help with the supervision, it is definitely your responsibility to promote, encourage and plan a required program on each of the units that will be consistent with the general policy indicated in this letter.

I am sure the Wardens of every unit will cooperate with you to the fullest extent and offer their assistance in carrying out the program approved by the General Manager. To make your work easier and so that the Wardens will have this information, I am sending a copy of this letter to each of them.<sup>2</sup>

#### Scope of the Program

The purpose of this chapter is to present a survey of recreational activities which are available to the inmates of the Texas Prison System. In the succeeding discussions, consideration is given to the following phases of the program: (1) philosophy of recreation for inmates; (2) musical activities and radio; (3) the prison rodeo; (4) athletics, including sports, indoor and outdoor physical-exercise activities, and social games; (5) library; (6) crafts; and (7) motion pictures.

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<sup>2</sup>Letter from A. C. Turner, Rehabilitation Director, to Dr. T. R. Havins, Secretary of Texas Prison Board, January 7, 1950.

### Recreation for Inmates

Rehabilitation of the inmates of the Texas Prison System, to enable them to return to the ranks of society as useful citizens, is one of the primary functions of the prison system, and recreation is one important means of effecting rehabilitation. After a prisoner has spent ten hours at work, he has six hours each day which is termed his leisure hours. Assuming that he has spent his ten hours profitably in a self-improvement attitude, it is the leisure time that can make or break him. The phrase "idleness breeds trouble" might have been coined in prison, for no where else is it so true. Therefore, providing the facilities and activities that will contribute to a worthwhile use of this time is a partial solution to a successful correctional program. The goal is to provide a recreational program that is broad enough to furnish leisure time participation for each inmate, regardless of his mental or physical condition.<sup>3</sup>

### Musical Activities

The music department of the Texas Prison System is one of the outstanding areas of the recreational program. Inmates who have musical talent and interest may participate in any or all of the activities, provided their conduct has not resulted in forfeiture of privileges.

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<sup>3</sup>Letter of recommendations relative to rehabilitation from A. C. Turner, Director of Rehabilitation, to Dr. T. R. Havins, secretary of Texas Prison Board, January 7, 1950.

James C. Dean resigned as Musical Director, effective February 1, 1950, and was succeeded by T. V. Jenkins, a student at Sam Houston Teacher's College. Practice periods are held every day at the Walls, and instruction classes are held for interested inmates who want to learn more about music. Musical equipment has been distributed to the various units where it is needed and requested. String bands have been organized at the various units, and much interest is shown in this activity. Auditions are held in the Walls, and if an inmate meets the requirements of the musical department, he is given a part-time job in the Walls where he can practice and become a member of the radio group.<sup>4</sup>

The following quotation from an inmate's editorial in the prison newspaper describes the musical opportunities made available to prisoners:

The classes are under way again for students, and for members already in the orchestra. Mr. Jenkins has started classes in percussion, reeds, brasses, harmony and theory, and in arranging. This includes anyone, and about the only real specification for entering any of these classes is the desire to learn. It is hoped that present band members going home will be replaced by these students. At present, there are about twenty of them, all told. Classes in percussion, reeds, and brass are during the noon hour, five days a week; theory and harmony on Monday night; and arranging on Thursday night.

The new director has already cast an eye towards the coming rodeo season, and built a tentative line-up for a desired military band. If anyone on any farm is capable, or has had any experience in playing in bands, write a letter to Mr. T. V. Jenkins, Music Director at

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<sup>4</sup>Mimeographed Report of the Music Department, Texas State Prison, March 1, 1950.

the Walls, and you'll certainly be considered. We need flutes, piccolos, horns, baritone horns, snare drummers and others.

Our new Show Group has been in steady rehearsal, and is certainly promising to be the very best thing that has happened around here for a long time in that line. Instrumentation consists of voicing two lead guitars, a trumpet, tenor saxophone and violin as a unit, and the results have been surprisingly good. It is a well-rehearsed show, and should be approved by all.<sup>5</sup>

The Girl's string band from the women's unit of the prison is probably the most unique group of women in this part of the country. Dressed in Western Style, they entertain thousands of spectators at each performance of the rodeo. In addition, they are regular performers on the Prison's radio broadcast.<sup>6</sup>

The Hillbillies, dressed in true mountain style, entertain guests at the Prison's rodeo. In addition, they are heard on each of the Prison's radio programs. This band made its appearance in 1944, and since that time has become a favorite of many listeners.<sup>7</sup>

The Rhythmic Stringsters play all types of music adapted to string instruments from "hoe-downs" to semi-classical numbers. They were organized when the radio program first started and have performed successfully ever since. While there have been many changes in the group since it was organized, two members played in the band for more than six years.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The Echo, March 21, 1950, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir, October 9-29, 1944.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



One of the most important phases of the music program in the Prison is the weekly all-inmate radio broadcast, "Thirty Minutes Behind Prison Walls," which is heard every Saturday evening between 6:00-6:30 o'clock. These broadcasts are presented by the Texas Penal System and the Rotary Club of Houston. They are an integral part of the Prison System's rehabilitation program. The programs were started about a year ago and, in conjunction with the Rotary Club, have helped obtain jobs for many prison inmates after they have served their terms. The broadcast program was cited for outstanding public service by the Alfred I. DuPont Radio Award Foundation in 1950.<sup>9</sup>

No full-time jobs are available on the broadcast staff. The members, who are inmates, do their work on the program, including rehearsals, after the close of their day's assignments in the Prison's industries. The members of the broadcast staff receive training and practical experience, which not only gives them a fine background of manuscript knowledge, but also enables them to understand the mechanics of radio production.

The broadcast was suspended in February, 1950, for remodeling the auditorium. Both the stage and the auditorium proper were acoustically treated with special materials. The entire area was re-wired in order to provide an improved lighting system. The stage was made to resemble a huge

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<sup>9</sup>The Echo, April 7, 1950, p. 1.

shell and was lined with a special acoustic plaster. In order to make the auditorium surfaces more sound-absorbent, and to eliminate distorted reception, acoustic drapes were hung from the ceiling. The following editorial in the prison newspaper, written by an inmate, describes the suspension of the broadcast, and the activities carried on in preparation for resuming the program:

Everyone is enjoying a temporary vacation from meeting the broadcast each Tuesday night. Reason as given by officials from KPRS and from the front office are that the National Broadcasting Company wanted to use the 1:00 p. m. spot on Sundays for a new coast-to-coast program that is being plugged. Naturally, on a network, those things come first. At this particular time, the only other available vacancy in air time would be at 10:30 or 11:00 p. m. during the week, which would be of little value for our broadcast. So it was decided to suspend the broadcast until April 1st, at which time we will resume at the old time of 6:00 to 6:30 on Saturday nights.

During the interim, the time is proving valuable towards rehearsing new numbers, and in getting the stage and auditorium reconditioned for broadcast purposes. At the present, the quality of sound being reproduced tends to make the listeners think that we are in a barn. A shell will project the sound in the right direction, and drapes hung strategically throughout the auditorium will combine to give our show a more professional sound after reproduction of the transcription.<sup>10</sup>

On Tuesday night, March 28, 1950, recording of the broadcast program was resumed in the Prison Auditorium at Huntsville, after a lay-off of about five weeks. Time for presentation of the program on the air was changed from 1:00 o'clock on Sunday to 6:00 o'clock on Saturday evening.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The Echo, March 21, 1950, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>The Echo, April 7, 1950, p. 1.

Inmates of one more unit in the far-flung organization of the Texas Prison System witnessed the weekly all-inmate show Tuesday night, May 16, when the entire broadcast group journeyed to the Wynne State Farm to record the broadcast for Sunday, May 21. This was the third time that the broadcast had been given from one of the State Prison farms.<sup>12</sup>

Prisoners who participate in the music program are permitted to furnish entertainment for various units within the prison system and to groups outside the Prison. On April 15th, 1950, members of the broadcast group presented a benefit performance before several hundred spectators in the Beaumont City Auditorium. Approximately thirty performers took part in the show. The group included all of the prison orchestra, the Stringsters, the Goree Girl's String Band and the colored quartette, as well as several individual performers.<sup>13</sup>

The Wynne Farm Show Troupe journeyed to the Wallison Friday night, March 31, 1950, to present their popular variety program to the inmates of the Huntsville unit. The troupe, consisting of about twenty performers, presented their show before several hundred inmates in the Prison's auditorium. The following quotation contains an inmate's description of the program:

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<sup>12</sup>The Echo, May 17, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>The Echo, May 3, 1950, p. 1.

The program opened with a touch reminiscent of the old-fashioned minstrel show days, with the entire cast lined up across the state singing, "Come Along." Following this, several humorous skits were presented, along with a number of vocals, novelty tunes and instrumentals. It would be difficult to single out one performer as above the others, because each one seemed to do his part in helping to make the show the success that it was. Judging from the response among the inmate audience, the show was very well received, and the time and effort that must have gone into its preparation was much appreciated.

The broadcast orchestra played several opening and closing selections, while the inmates were entering and leaving the auditorium.<sup>14</sup>

The reaction of another inmate to the presentation of a musical show is portrayed in the following news item which was printed in the prison's newspaper:

Under the capable direction of our new Head School teacher, Robert J. Weidner, a musical show was recently held by all. There was the largest turn out of any show ever held here, and I must say that the boys were not disappointed, for the show has definite audience appeal, just about everything but if I were to single out one performer above all others it would be a little crippled colored lad who somehow made such wonderful music come from a thirty-five cent mouth organ. The group singing was excellent, as were some of the skits, particularly the one written for a 375 pound boy, who was dressed in grass skirts and proceeded to shake all over the stage. This act really brought the house down. Captain Sexton is to be highly commended for his foresight and cooperation in giving this group encouragement and it is hoped by the inmates that they may have more of the same in the not too distant future.<sup>15</sup>

The music library contains 15,000 tunes, cross-indexed and filed

by the music librarian, who plays the trombone in the broadcast orchestra. Large steel filing cabinets house

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<sup>14</sup>The Echo, April 7, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>The Echo, May 3, 1950.

thousands of orchestrations and other music material used in the music department.<sup>16</sup>

Further insight into the prison's musical activities is furnished by the following bi-monthly report of the music department which was made to the director of rehabilitation on May 1, 1950:

- March 1st Broadcast activities were discontinued for the month of March. Reasons for this were that the National Broadcasting Company had a public service program which they were plugging and the station needed the time at 1:30 p. m. on Sunday afternoon that we were using. Rather than broadcast our show late at night on some week-day, it was thought best to discontinue the show until April 1.
- March 8 Several members of the orchestra went to Goree State Farm to rehearse with the mixed sextette that sings on the program. This was under the direction of Mr. Charles Lindsey, vocal instructor.
- March 15 Several members of the orchestra went to Goree State Farm, including members of the Stringsters. Rehearsal was had under the direction of Mr. Lindsey for the sextette and then the Stringsters rehearsed under Captain Striklin, with the Goree Girls String Band, for trips that were scheduled outside.
- March 17 The Stringsters and the Goree Girls String Band made a trip to Cameron Texas to play a performance for Farm Bureau day and Anniversary Day there. The show was a success and we were immediately invited to appear there again next year. Under the sponsorship of the Catholic Church, the entire program was a success.
- March 22 Men of the orchestra and of the Stringsters were called to Goree tonight to rehearse with the Sextette and with the Girls String Band in preparation for a trip to Beaumont on Saturday, April 15th.

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<sup>16</sup>The Echo, April 7, 1950, p. 1.

March 28

Broadcast dates for transcription were resumed today, the first actual broadcast to be heard on Saturday, April 1st over Station KPRC at 6:00 to 6:30 p. m. Until further notice this will be regular broadcast time over this station. The entire organization, orchestra, Stringsters, Negro quartette, and Warden Stricklin's Goree Girls, both sextette and string band participated, to put over a show that was satisfactory from every angle.

April 4

The entire broadcast organization, including the orchestra, the Western group, the negro quartette and the Goree girls sextette joined together in making a satisfactory recording of this week's show.

An announcement was made by Mr. Frank Partin of Station KPRC that our program had been entered in competition with others throughout the nation for the DuPont Award for public service programs. Results given this month placed our program in third place over the entire country. It is also noted that the two programs that came in ahead of us were on nationwide hook-ups and that in local stations, our program was first.

April 5

Members of the sextette and the Stringsters went to Goree State Farm tonight to rehearse under Mr. Lindsey (the vocal sextette) and under Captain Stricklin (the string band).

April 8

This date saw the dance orchestra making its first appearance in the outside this year. They went, eighteen strong, to Center, Texas, where they played at the County Fair Grounds for a dance sponsored by the American Legion there. This dance was a success and the orchestra was highly regarded there with everyone expressing the wish that we might return again next year. The orchestra and all personnel were served a large and satisfying chicken dinner while on the trip and a good time was had by all.

April 11

The entire musical organization, including the orchestra, the stringsters, the sextette from Goree and the Negro quartette, joined together in making this broadcast one-half hour of good, solid entertainment. After the broadcast there was a one-hour floor show for the inmates in which everyone, including the Goree Girls String Band under the leadership of Captain Stricklin, participated.

- April 12           Members of the sextette and those who perform with the Goree Girls String Band went to Goree tonight for rehearsal under Mr. Lindsey and Warden Stricklin.
- April 15           This date was one to be remembered by the Music Department and every other department for the good that it has done us all. The entire music department, orchestra, string band, negro quartette, vocalists, tap dancer, the Goree Girls and all went to Beaumont, Texas, to perform. The show was from 1:30 p. m. to 4:00 p. m. and broadcast in its entirety over KRIC of Beaumont. It was a benefit program sponsored by the Cashan Grotto of that city, with proceeds going to the Widow's and Children of Firemen and Policemen. From letters we have received since the program, it is evident that we were a hit, and they say they will do everything in their power to have us return there again next year. The entire group was treated to a barbecue dinner and a good time was had by all who participated.
- April 18           Members of the broadcast, which included the orchestra, the stringsters, the Goree Girls sextette and the negro quartette joined together in making this broadcast a good one.
- April 19           Members of the sextette and the stringsters went to Goree State Farm tonight to rehearse with the sextette under the directorship of Mr. Charles Lindsey and with the girls string band.
- April 25           All members of the broadcast joined together in making this broadcast one of the best that we have had in some time. Another floor show was played for the inmates with all members and the girls string band participating.<sup>17</sup>

From the preceding data it is concluded that musical activities are a significant factor in the rehabilitation program of the Texas Prison System. Moreover, they are valuable recreational media and contribute to the adjustment and development of the inmates who participate in the program.

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<sup>17</sup>Bi-monthly Report of the Music Department to A. C. Turner, Director of Rehabilitation, May 1, 1950.

### The Prison Rodeo

The prison rodeo is now in its nineteenth season. It was the brainchild of W. W. Waid, a former Huntsville warden, and Lee Simmons, who was then General Manager of the Prison System. In the fall of 1931, this great annual charity event had its beginning in a fenced-off field before small but enthusiastic crowds. At that time Albert Moore was placed in charge of the rodeo and has continued to be supervisor until the present time.

The main purpose of the rodeo is to raise funds for the inmates' education and recreation. Money for such necessary phases of the prison rehabilitation program has never been provided by the state. The Education and Recreation Fund pays for eyeglasses, false teeth, magazines, newspapers, text books and similar items. Rodeo time, therefore, is a most important time of the year for the inmates, as well as for prison officials, and society as a whole.

In 1946, construction was started on a modern brick and concrete stadium adjacent to the prison at Huntsville. Built to seat 40,000, the stadium is the largest ever designed primarily for rodeo use. Brick for the structure was made in the prison kilns at Harlem State Farm, and labor was furnished by inmates of the Huntsville unit. Supervisory salaries and outside purchases of material were bought with the prisoners' own money out of the Education and Recreation Fund.



The real show of the rodeo is put on by prisoners, with music furnished by prison musicians. Each contestant is paid a small amount of "day money," and also has the opportunity to pick up prize money offered for the best performance in each night's events. Some of the inmate contestants are former rodeo performers; some were ranch hands on the outside; but a few of them never saw a rodeo before. Rodeo tryouts are open to all inmates of the Texas Prison System, but no man is allowed in the arena unless he is perfect physical condition. The following comments contain a description of several performances:

Certain events are standard with all rodeos, but Texas Prison Rodeos are famous for a number of hair-raisers that you will not see elsewhere for the very good reason that no professional rodeo performer would risk his neck taking part in them. For example, there is the hilarious, yet quite dangerous Mad Scramble. Ten chutes are opened simultaneously, spewing forth ten mad Brahman bulls, each intent on tossing and tramping its rider. Occasionally, the event is given an added touch of madness by turning out the ten riders mounted willy-nilly on a comical assortment of beasts: bulls, mules, bareback and saddle broncs and longhorn steers. So keep your eyes open and hold onto your hats. Anything can happen and most likely will. It is the rowdiest, roughest, ruggedest rodeo in captivity--and we do mean captivity. But you will just have to see for yourself. You ain't seen nothing like it.<sup>18</sup>

For the first time in history, the Prison's rodeo was staged outside of the Prison stadium, when a performance was held in Dallas, Texas, June 3-10, 1950. The State Fair picnic pavilion was transformed into a miniature prison, and an adjacent restaurant was taken over by the prison system

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<sup>18</sup> Prison Rodeo, Official Souvenir Program, Dallas, March 10, 1950.

for the rodeo. A high fence, topped with barbed wire, enclosed the pavilion, and four guard towers were built at the corners of the fence. A wire-enclosed runway led from the pavilion to the rodeo arena. A cavalcade of trucks brought the prisoners to Dallas from Huntsville. The trucks were escorted by a dozen highway patrol cars and twenty prison guards.

Approximately two hundred prisoners participated, and eighty per cent of the net proceeds were placed in the Prison's Education and Recreation Fund. The significance of this phase of the recreational program is emphasized in the following report on the use of the 1949 rodeo proceeds:

Out of \$50,000 made on the rodeo in 1949, \$17,886 went for educational supplies which included band instruments, books, newspapers, magazines and a tractor school which teaches inmates modern farm methods and care and maintenance of farm equipment.

Recreational activities--movies weekly at each of the farm units, baseball, volleyball, softball, football and other game equipment--took \$16,000.

More than 600 inmates were supplied artificial limbs, hearing aids, false teeth or eyeglasses at a cost of \$9,000.

A total of \$2,500 was spent for chaplain travel to the various prison units and for religious literature.<sup>19</sup>

Nationally recognized as a unique idea in entertainment as well as in sociology, the prison rodeo each year has received favorable publicity throughout the country. National magazines have featured it in stories and pictures. Radio network commentators have described it to their listeners. Top newsreel cameramen have covered it year after year.

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<sup>19</sup>The Dallas Morning News, May 28, 1950, p. 9.

From the standpoint of publicity, the great show staged each year by the State's outcasts from society has become a valuable asset.

### Physical Education Activities

Physical leisure-time activities for prisoners are vital to the rehabilitation program and play an important role in making life more interesting to the average inmate. Two athletic directors arrange and supervise these activities within the Prison System. The program is divided into team sports, individual indoor and outdoor physical activities, and social games. Each of these phases of the program is described in the succeeding discussions.

Team sports.--Inmates participate in baseball, boxing, softball, volleyball, and tennis.<sup>20</sup> Baseball appears to create more interest than the other sports, because of the pennant race which is open to each unit of the Prison System. The following schedule for 1950, along with the means of transportation, was released in the prison newspaper on March 21, 1950:

April 15

Black Tigers (Walls) at Harlem 1, transfer truck 1.  
Central 2 at Wynne; transfer truck Number 1.  
Harlem 2 at Eastham; Harlem truck.  
Ramsey Construction at Darrington; Ramsey truck.  
Central 1 at Clemens; Central truck.

April 22

Ramsey 2 at Retrieve; Ramsey truck.  
Clemens at Ramsey Construction; Clemens truck.

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<sup>20</sup> Mimeographed Bi-monthly Recreational Report, Texas Prison System, May 1, 1950.

Darrington at Central 1; Central truck.  
 Harlem 1 at Walls (Tigers); transfer truck Number 1.  
 Eastham at Central 2; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Wynne at Harlem 2; transfer truck Number 1.

April 29

Retrieve at Ramsey 1; Retrieve truck.  
 Darrington at Clemens; Clemens truck.  
 Ramsey Construction at Central 1; Ramsey truck.  
 Wynne at Eastham; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Central 2 at Harlem 2; Central truck.

May 6

Central 1 at Ramsey; Central truck.  
 Clemens at Ramsey 2; Clemens truck.  
 Retrieve at Darrington; Retrieve truck.  
 Harlem 2 at Walls (Black Tigers); transfer truck Number 2.  
 Eastham at Harlem 1; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Tigers (Walls) at Wynne; transfer truck Number 1.

May 13

Eastham at Walls (Tigers); transfer truck Number 1.  
 Black Tigers (Walls) at Central 2; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Clemens at Retrieve; Clemens truck.  
 Ramsey 2 at Central 1; Ramsey truck.

May 20

Darrington at Ramsey 1; Ramsey truck.  
 Retrieve at Central 1; Retrieve truck.  
 Tigers (Walls) at Harlem 2; transfer truck Number 1.  
 Central 2 at Harlem 1; Central truck.  
 Wynne at Walls (Black Tigers); transfer truck Number 2.

May 27

Central 2 at Walls (Tigers); transfer truck Number 1.  
 Harlem 1 at Wynne; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Black Tigers (Walls) at Eastham; Huntsville truck.  
 Ramsey Construction at Retrieve; Retrieve truck.  
 Ramsey 2 at Darrington; Ramsey truck.  
 Ramsey 1 at Clemens; Ramsey truck.

June 3

Darrington at Ramsey Construction; Ramsey truck.  
 Clemens at Central 1; Clemens truck.  
 Harlem 1 at Walls (Black Tigers); transfer truck Number 2.  
 Wynne at Central 2; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Eastham at Harlem 2; transfer truck Number 1.

June 10

Retrieve at Ramsey 2; Retrieve truck.  
 Central at Darrington; Central truck.  
 Ramsey Construction at Clemens; Ramsey truck.  
 Tigers (Walls) at Harlem 1; transfer truck Number 1.  
 Harlem 2 at Wynne; transfer truck Number 1.  
 Central 2 at Eastham; transfer truck Number 2.

June 17

Ramsey 1 at Retrieve; Ramsey truck.  
 Central 1 at Ramsey Construction; Central truck.  
 Clemens at Darrington; Clemens truck.  
 Harlem 2 at Central 2; Harlem truck.  
 Eastham at Wynne; transfer truck Number 2.

June 24

Wynne at Walls (Tigers); transfer truck Number 1.  
 Harlem at Eastham; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Black Tigers (Walls) at Harlem 2; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Darrington at Retrieve; Retrieve truck.  
 Ramsey 2 at Clemens; Ramsey truck.  
 Ramsey 1 at Central 1; Ramsey truck.

July 1

Central 2 at Walls (Black Tigers); transfer truck Number 2.  
 Tigers (Walls) at Eastham; Transfer truck Number 1.  
 Central 1 at Ramsey 2; Central truck.  
 Retrieve at Clemens; Retrieve truck.

July 8

Central 1 at Retrieve; Central truck.  
 Ramsey 1 at Darrington; Ramsey truck.  
 Harlem 2 at Walls (Tigers); transfer truck Number 1.  
 Harlem 1 at Central 2; Harlem truck.  
 Black Tigers (Walls) at Wynne; transfer truck Number 2.

July 15

Tigers (Walls) at Central 2; transfer truck Number 1.  
 Wynne at Harlem 1; transfer truck Number 2.  
 Eastham at Walls (Black Tigers); Huntsville truck.  
 Clemens at Ramsey 1; Clemens truck.  
 Darrington at Ramsey 2; Ramsey truck.  
 Retrieve at Ramsey Construction; Retrieve truck.<sup>21</sup>

The first practice for the 1950 Texas Prison Baseball Season League was held April 1. Each inmate who wished to try out for a team was encouraged to report to the team manager. All ball players were given an opportunity to demonstrate their ability, and final selection for positions was made April 15.

Two afternoons each week are allowed for baseball. Throughout the season, Wednesday and Saturday are designated

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<sup>21</sup>The Echo, March, 21, 1950, p. 4.

as baseball days. Exhibition games are allowed for Sunday afternoon with approval of the warden.

The baseball season includes a fourteen-week pennant race. All but two teams entered this race for the pennant in 1950, which marked the second season for the league, which was formed in 1949 with fourteen ball groups as members. Because of the tremendous liability involved when some of the northern units play the southern teams, which are located miles apart, the loop is divided into two divisions. Units situated south of the United States Highway 90A play in the southern division, and those north of the highway comprise the northern division. This setup places the following farms in the southern division: Central 1; Ramsey 1 Hardhitters; Ramsey 2 Monarchs; Darrington Devils; Retrieve Snippers; Ramsey Builders; and the Clemens Cats. The northern division consists of Eastham Buffs; Wynne Wobblers; Walls Tigers; Walls Black Tigers; Central 2 Cubs; Harlem 1 Red Socks; and Harlem 2. Teams in each division were scheduled to play a whole series with each other club in the division, and each was scheduled to draw two open dates during the fourteen-week season. The two teams with the highest percentage of games won in each division are privileged to play a three-game series to determine the division pennant winner. After the pennant playoff, the winners will meet in a three-game title series for the championship of Texas Prison League.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

Announcement was made that the rules which governed former ball games were destined to prevail during 1950, with a few changes. The more important provisions adopted for 1950 included the one dealing with infractions. For instance, an escape by any member of a baseball group during the season of the sport can bring suspension of the entire ball club for the remaining season.<sup>23</sup>

Individual physical activities.--Inmates participate in horseshoe pitching, washer pitching, and bar-bell exercises. These activities make up the physical recreation program of prisoners who do not participate in the team games as well as some who do participate in more strenuous activities. The inmates of the women's farm have a garden club and receive much physical exercise and recreation from tending their flowers. The following editorial describes this innovation in prison recreation:

A garden club organized six months ago among the inmates of the Goree State Farm for Women has recently won national recognition at the annual meeting of the Garden Clubs of America. The nation-wide organization, meeting at Richmond, Virginia, made the award in recognition of the rehabilitation project--believed to be the first of its kind in the country--undertaken at the women's unit of the Texas Prison System.

A. C. Turner, Director of Rehabilitation, says that the project was organized by Mrs. W. C. Windsor, wife of the chairman of the Texas Prison Board. Mrs. Windsor, of Tyler, is also state president of the Texas Garden Clubs, Incorporated.

The garden club is composed of about thirty girls, and Mrs. B. C. Striklin, matron of the Goree State Farm, states that they all are very much interested in their

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

project. The genial matron of the women's unit says that, in addition to the rehabilitation role the club is playing, the garden clubbers have greatly improved on the appearance of the unit.

The national award was presented two weeks ago at the state convention of the Texas Garden Clubs, Incorporated, in Tyler. Favors distributed among guests at the convention were the handiwork of the prison inmates, and were in the form of hand-painted sachet bags. The girls made 600 of the hand-painted articles as part of their garden project.

The Garden Clubbers also received recognition for their achievement by way of newspaper publicity recently--they were featured in one of a series of articles published in the Houston Press last week. The feature story was run in a series of four articles, and was written by Margaret Davis, Press staff writer.

In order to gather material for her story of women behind the bars, Miss Davis went directly to the Goree State Farm, interviewed officials and inmates, and took several pictures of the girls at work and play. In her story, Miss Davis included several of the girls' case histories, told of the rehabilitation processes they are now going through, and of their future plans and hopes.<sup>24</sup>

Data in the preceding discussions emphasize the value of physical activity in the rehabilitation program. Although many of the activities are simple, each one plays a part in the inmates' leisure-time adjustment.

Social games.--Playing cards, dominoes, checkers, and other facilities for participation in social games are provided in each unit of the Texas Prison System. These activities afford entertainment and indoor recreation for all inmates who choose to participate. They are especially valuable, from a social standpoint, to prisoners who do not participate in team sports, because they afford opportunities for cooperation, harmony, and companionship.

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<sup>24</sup>The Echo, June 5, 1950, p. 1.



## Crafts

The rehabilitation director of the Texas Prison System recommends that crafts should be encouraged and sponsored, because when an inmate is creating something with his hands, he is probably regaining some degree of self-confidence. Moreover, he is employed in a worthwhile recreational activity which provides money with which he can buy small luxuries. Establishment of craft shops on each unit of the prison system is the goal of the rehabilitation director, along with the establishment of a suitable sales room for these items. The Huntsville unit has a model plan with a new modern craft shop already completed. If each unit of the Prison System could carry on this program, on a scale comparable to its population, the Director of Rehabilitation believes that morale would be improved. Such a procedure would demand proper supervision, regulated hours, and facilities furnished by the prison, with tools and materials furnished by the inmates, but it would produce desirable results.<sup>25</sup>

Handicraft work, or "piddling," as the inmates call it, enables all who care to participate, to develop new skills and to earn at the same time. Leather work is a favorite with the convict hobbyists, who tool fine belts, handbags, bill-folds, cowboy boots and other items in exacting detail, finished with the touch of master craftsmen. All of the other items on sale at the craft-work concession, including

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<sup>25</sup>Letter of Recommendation from A. C. Turner, Rehabilitation Director, to the Texas Prison Board, January 7, 1950.

metal specialities, plastic novelties, jewelry and other articles, are hand-made by prison craftsmen. The new hobby shop at the Huntsville unit is one of the finest of its type anywhere. All tools, machines and materials are bought by the inmates themselves with their own money, and money from the sale of all articles is placed in the owner's bank account.

### Library

The necessity of providing books for prisoners was recognized long before most other aids to rehabilitation were admitted within prison walls. By the turn of the century, there were few correctional institutions that did not have some sort of library, usually established and replenished with books discarded by public libraries and well-meaning citizens. But it is only in comparatively recent years that the difference between books and a library has been recognized, and the full value of an institutional library understood.

Considerable emphasis and importance are given to the establishment and functioning of an adequate library in the Texas Prison System as a recreational feature as well as an educational facility.

During January and February, 1950, the librarian reported that 3665 fiction books were read by the inmates; eighty-three non-fiction books were checked out; and eighty-seven vocational books were consulted. During the two-months period, 221 new

volumes were added to the library. The Huntsville Unit contains 6,005 books. An additional 2,344 books have been distributed to the other units and eighty-four of these were sent to the tuberculosis ward at Wynne Farm.<sup>26</sup>

Data on the library program of the prison system are contained in the following excerpt:

Under the direction of the General Manager, the Educational Director of the Texas Prison System shall supervise the Prison Libraries, with the Chaplains acting as civilian librarians of their particular sectors.

The library at the Walls, which serves a greater number of men than those at other camps, shall be known as the Main Library and shall be stationary, with the exception of reference books, which shall be subject to call by other units of the Prison System.

The Goree Farm Library shall be stationary, and shall be equipped with books especially selected for the use of the women inmates.

The Library at Central Farm Camp 3 shall be stationary, and shall consist of at least fifty books. Other books shall be added when necessary.

A traveling Library shall be established at each of the following units: Wynne; Eastham Numbers 1, 2, and 3 (Camp Ferguson); Central Number 2 and 4 (State Farm Industries); Harlem Number 1 and 2; Retrieve Farm; and the Construction Crew Unit. Each camp shall receive an equal number of books. These books shall remain at each camp for a period of six months. This period shall be subject to change by the General Manager to meet existing conditions.

A sufficient number of old but serviceable books shall be selected from each white camp and equally divided among the negro camps, forming a traveling library, which shall operate on the same basis as the white traveling library.

Suitable reading material shall be selected for the Mexican camps.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Bi-monthly Report of the Prison Librarian and the Rehabilitation Director, March 1, 1950.

<sup>27</sup>General and Special Rules and Regulations for the Operation, Management and Control of the Texas Prison System, March, 1939. Texas Prison System.

As in practically all libraries, certain rules and regulations are enforced in the prison library. Borrower's rules include the following:

The library shall be for the use of inmates only. Inmates shall be permitted to check out books in compliance with the rules governing the use of the library.

A borrower must sign a request card and present it to the librarian for books.

No books shall be kept over one week, unless special permission is given. Inmates violating this rule shall be deprived of library privileges for a period of thirty days.

An inmate defacing, destroying, or losing books shall be deprived of the use of the library until the books have been replaced by the inmate, or his privileges have been restored by the Educational Director of the Texas Prison System, with the approval of the General Manager.

No inmate shall receive more than one book, other than technical books, at one time.

An inmate transferred from one unit to another, whose library privileges have been revoked, will not have access to the library until his library privileges are restored by the Educational Director, with the approval of the General Manager.

The library is for the use of the inmates of the Texas Prison System.

Inmates whose library privileges have not been withdrawn may borrow books by complying with the rules governing the library. Borrowers must use name and number.

When sections of books are exchanged, the librarian (Supervising Chaplain) is asked to make a careful inspection of each case.

A list of books and their condition will accompany each case.

A report of all books lost or withdrawn shall be filled with the library chairman so that replacements may be made, if deemed advisable.

All inmates who do not have access to the library shall be furnished with a book list from which to select books.

These rules are subject to change at any time, with the consent of the Board.

The librarians are instructed to place a copy of these rules in each library unit.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Increased interest in the library facilities is shown by the additional number of books being used by the prisoners every month. With the purchase of new and better books, and a better rotation system, every inmate should benefit through the libraries over the system.

### Motion Pictures

Inmates are allowed to attend the Prison's motion pictures which are shown once each week. Films are presented at each unit of the Prison System and are a source of recreation to practically all inmates. The following description of a film's reception was written by an inmate and published in the Prison's bi-weekly newspaper:

Inmates who attend the prison broadcast presentation tonight were given a special treat after the half-hour show, in the form of a showing of the 1949 World Series moving pictures. Altogether, two reels were shown, the other one displaying the science of the Third-to-First Base combination.

Immediately after the prison broadcast, Mr. T. V. Jenkins, the New Prison Music Director, stepped to the microphone and explained to the inmate audience that in place of a floor show, which is usually presented after each broadcast, moving pictures were to be shown covering the 1949 World Series. While the motion picture machine was being set up, Mr. Jenkins and the orchestra gave out with a fast-moving instrumental, and the string group presented their version of the current Western novelty tune, "Rag Mop."

The first movie covered highlights of all five games played in last year's series between the Yankees and Dodgers, and showed some fine shots of many of the famous player's of both teams, such as DiMaggio, Henrich, Page, Newcombe, Brown, Rizzuto, and numerous others.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>The Echo, February 17, 1950, p. 1.

The motion picture is used as an instructional aid as well as a recreational facility. In both capacities, this audio-visual aid contributes to the rehabilitation of inmates in the Texas Prison System.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The problem of this study was a survey of the recreational program provided for inmates of the Texas Prison System, which is composed of the following twelve units: Huntsville Unit, Huntsville, Texas; Gorse State Farm, Huntsville, Texas; Eastham State Farm, Camp One and Camp Two, Richmond, Texas; Wynne State Farm, Huntsville, Texas; Central State Farm, Sugar Land, Texas; Clemens State Farm, Brazoria, Texas; Darrington State Farm, Sandy Point, Texas; Retrieve State Farm, Shipe, Texas; Ferguson State Farm, Madison County, Texas; and Blue Ridge State Farm, Houston, Texas.

The purpose of the study was to determine the type and extent of recreational activities provided by the penal institution and to make recommendations based on the findings.

A review of literature, which was comprised largely of various editions of the Prison's bi-weekly newspaper, prison manual of rules and regulations, mimeographed reports of the rehabilitation director and his assistants, and souvenir programs of the annual Prison rodeo, revealed that the foundations for the organization and administration of the Texas Prison System were provided by an Act of the Fortieth Legislature, and that the Prison was opened at Huntsville,

Texas, in 1847. The Act created the Prison Board of nine members and designated central administration through a general manager.

Administrative units of the Prison System include Divisions of Welfare, Medicine, Accounting and Audit, Records and Identifications, Classification and Segregation, Agriculture and Livestock, and wardens for each of the twelve units. These divisional committees assume responsibility for administration of their respective areas, and together they cooperate with the general manager in carrying on the Prison's program of rehabilitation.

In 1947 a revision of the Prison program was effected, which resulted in modernization of the physical plant and of the rehabilitation program in general. This revision is expected to result in a more effective plan for helping the inmates to be better prepared for returning to free society.

An inmate's day includes three divisions: ten hours of work, six hours of leisure time, and eight hours of rest and sleep. His work assignment is determined upon arrival through an analysis of his case history, a physical examination, and the administration of various scientific tests. His leisure time is his own, and he is free to choose his activities.

Various educational opportunities are provided for all inmates who wish to improve themselves, but no courses are compulsory except English for illiterates. Library facilities are available to all prisoners, and books are provided for use in connection with vocational and technical training, as well as for recreational reading.



The Medicine Division takes care of the physical health of each inmate, and chaplains supervise the religious activities in the Prison. In addition, they give individual counsel and advice to prisoners who need such services. They also cooperate with the Alcoholic Anonymous group which functions inside the Walls.

The Agriculture and Livestock Division provides on-the-job training for inmates, and produces food for the entire Prison System. This division cooperates with other administrative units which provide shoe shops, tin shops, gins, textile mill, broom factory, brick plant, cannery, meat packing plant, dairy, car-license plant, print shop, and sugar cane mill; together they make the Texas Prison System self-sustaining.

The recreational program is administered by the Division of Welfare and supervised by the Director of Rehabilitation through recreational directors. The major activities, which are open to all inmates of good behavior, include competitive sports, such as baseball, volleyball, boxing, tennis, and softball; individual physical activities, such as horseshoe pitching and washer pitching; social games, such as checkers, cards, and dominoes; recreational reading; an annual rodeo; musical activities, including a weekly radio broadcast; crafts; and motion pictures.

### Conclusions

An analysis of data relative to the recreational program of the Texas Prison System leads to the following conclusions:

1. An effort is being made by the State, the General Manager, the Rehabilitation Director and his assistants to meet the rehabilitation needs of the inmates, including physical, spiritual, and recreational, and the administration is as democratic as a penal institution can afford.

2. Several competitive team games are provided which should be conducive to socialization.

3. A few individual physical activities provide physical recreation for everyone, especially for those who do not participate in the more strenuous types of physical activities.

4. Social games, which are made available for all, should provide companionship and entertainment that contribute to rehabilitation.

5. Musical activities provide opportunities for enjoyable leisure time hours and train the participants in a vocation which could be advantageous when they leave the Walls. In addition, the weekly broadcast is a medium of connection between the inmates and the public.

6. The annual rodeo provides physical activity and entertainment for the inmates and increases the funds which are used to carry on and extend the recreational program. In addition, the rodeo is a connecting link of publicity between the Prison and the public.

7. Since one of the most effective tools of rehabilitation is education, the academic-vocational training offered to inmates and the library facilities should contribute much to the inmate's reclamation.

8. The Echo, a bi-weekly newspaper which is written and published solely by inmates, is a moral builder and a publicity vehicle for the Prison System.

9. The opportunity afforded the inmates to engage in crafts provides for a wise use of leisure time, spending money for the inmate-participants, and training in skills which can be valuable in vocational life.

10. The weekly motion pictures provide entertainment, and the educational films are media for the inmates self-development and enlightenment.

#### Recommendations

An analysis of data available on the recreational program offered to inmates of the Texas Prison System led the investigator to make the following recommendations, most of which have been suggested previously by the Director of Rehabilitation:<sup>1</sup>

1. The Prison System needs more directed recreation, and it is suggested that planned, supervised recreational activities be instituted at each unit on Saturday afternoons as long as this period is not used for the work program.

This is an ideal use of leisure time for large groups and is a definite morale builder.

2. Miscellaneous entertainment should be supplied at each of the units comparable to the Huntsville unit's present program. Minstrel shows should be staged under the direction of the recreational officers.

3. Musical groups should be encouraged by these officers. The present program of music is directed by a part-time college student who gives music instruction, directs the prison band, and supervises all rehearsals for the prison radio program. He also issues musical supplies and equipment as requested by the other units necessary to provide small unit string groups. Ultimately, a full time director of music should be employed along with one assistant, so that all prison units could be encouraged and supplied with the necessary instructions, time and instruments to promote a well-rounded, all-prison-system musical program and a continuation of the weekly broadcast.

4. Inter-unit boxing tournaments might be staged.

5. More effort should be directed toward the distribution of indoor games, such as dominoes, checkers, and playing cards.

6. At the present time, weekly movies are the best ever shown in the Prison System and should be kept at this high level.

7. The prison baseball league should be continued and improved.

8. Steps should be taken to encourage unit stage shows. These might be shown at other units as an incentive.

9. With completion of cyclone fences at the various units, volleyball courts, horseshoe games, and shuffle boards can be provided within the enclosed grounds. The goal should be to provide a recreational program that is broad

enough to furnish leisure-time participation for each inmate, regardless of his mental or physical condition.

10. The Echo staff members should be given quarters separate and apart from the Prison's print shop. They could be moved to one of the rooms in the Educational building, or a room offering some semblance of privacy could be installed within the printing department.

11. The American Prison Association points out that a good library spends about one dollar per man per year on its library operations, and the Texas Prison System should use this figure as a minimum requirement. At present, Farm Units are slighted, but when the school rooms are renovated and put to use as "studys," those libraries will compare with the Huntsville operation. A library of at least five hundred volumes in each unit is proposed. The unit libraries, housed in the "study," would utilize the head school teacher as librarian. It would be his duty to keep his library filled with current popular fiction as fast as the inmates need it. The bulk of each library should be composed of the type of material that would re-tate from unit to unit as it is read. The other part would consist of a standing collection of classics and reference books covering trades, crafts, and other subjects in which the inmates might be interested.

12. Deterioration of unit libraries is partially due to the lack of proper supervision, poor location of the

library, and crowded conditions. It is proposed that the chief librarian should distribute and pick up the books at each unit, visiting, supervising and inspecting the unit libraries each week. At the time he could pro-rate and distribute newspapers and magazines. This seems to be a much better plan than having the responsibility divided with the recreational officers as it is at present. The librarian knows standard library procedure, proper classification and cataloging of books. He is better prepared to sell the library to the inmates, and he has the requirements for making proper reports and distribution.

13. A permanent craftwork display and salesroom should be constructed at the Huntsville Prison that would be able to place all of the Prison System's craft work in stock. This would give farm-unit inmates an equal opportunity with Huntsville inmates to dispose of their craftmanships. There is a need for a definite policy on the sale of craft work which will clarify the legal requirements now in force.

14. The annual rodeo should be continued and always should be carried on in a way which will benefit the inmates.

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