

Caron II

continued from page 7

university graduates, professional people. These people would not be there to crack the whip, they would be there to help. And no uniforms, just civilian clothes."

"If they had a problem then they would call in the guards. The criminologists and sociologists shouldn't have to do that kind of dirty work."

"And if a prisoner tries to escape, then the guards can blow him away. That's part of the game."

Roger has already seen many changes in the prison system, from the late 50's, when he was first incarcerated, to the present day. "Nowadays, rehabilitation is totally different. In the 50's and 60's it was physical deprivation. The idea was that if prison was hard enough people wouldn't want to go back to prison again. We now know that that doesn't work."

"Now the punishment is a form of red tape. With these open-ended sentences you don't know when you'll get out. When I first went to prison, I knew to the day when I would get out. Now the indeterminate sentence is a club over the inmate's head that the guards can use. If the guard doesn't like your face he can fix it so that you serve an extra six months. Easy as that."

Roger finds that prisoners themselves have changed. "New prisoners know a lot more. They keep up with what's going on in the world. They know their rights and they demand them. They're very much up to date."

Roger, unfortunately, is not so up-to-date. Roger still has problems adjusting to the outside world.

"In jail the whole idea was that you forgot your day when you went to bed. Now on the outside world I'm expected to analyze my day, and remember the faces I've seen, the things I've done."

The lecturing has also not been easy. Roger finds that the only way he can handle the strain of lecturing is to split himself up. "Go-boy goes out to lecture, Roger stays at home."

"It's a heck of a balancing act."

Roger doesn't allow his family or friends to come and listen to him speak, or for that matter, even allow himself to read his own book. "I'm the only author in the whole world who's never read his own book. I have the hard cover, the paperback, the French version, none of which that I've read."

Roger finds that speaking comes relatively easy. "I'm not into formality. I use no notes, nothing, right off the top of my head. When I start talking seriously I'll pack it in. I don't sweat it out."

It may come easy, but not that easy. "Everytime I talk about jail, I relive it. It took me 15 years of working everyday to write Go-boy, and my second novel Bingo has taken me six years. That makes 21 years that I've been writing about prison. Then I go out and speak about prisons."

But will Roger ever stop writing about prisons?

"No, you have to write what you know about. It would be stupid of me not to utilize my experiences from the past."

Roger is also looking forward to the movie version Go-boy which should start filming soon. "It's going to be a multi-million dollar affair. The producers are hoping for a Canadian Rocky."

The film is being financed by the CFDC, the NFB, McLean-Hunters, and Manitou productions.

"The producers don't talk about it much, at one time they were talking about Martin Sheen. It should be a big film."

"They're hoping for Johnny Cash to sing the title song: The Ballad of Go-Boy."

No matter how successful Go-boy makes Roger, he'll always be haunted by what it stands for: "Go-Boy is like a tombstone. All the guys in that book are dead."

Roger Caron wears a silver chain on one of his wrists. The clasp of that chain is a tiny little padlock.

The chain is indicative of the real prison Roger Caron was locked away in for 24 years. As he puts it "it was the prison within the prison."

Prison, after all, is just a matter of degrees.



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