



ALCATRAZ



**BUREAU OF PRISONS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
WASHINGTON**

The United States Penitentiary Alcatraz Island

The United States Penitentiary at Alcatraz Island is the Federal Government's maximum security prison. Its buildings and towers, surmounting twelve acres of solid rock rising steeply above the waters of San Francisco Bay, at times appear like an ancient forbidding fortress; at times like a gigantic battleship moored in the swirling cross-current a mile and a half from the mainland. From the city's hills and bridges; from ships passing through the Golden Gate; from every point of vantage, travelers from far and near gaze at the fabled isle and wonder...

Too frequently, the fog-shrouded institution is pictured as the Western Hemisphere's "Devil's Island", the point of no return for federal prisoners, dedicated to making punishment more severe. But before we relate its twentieth century mission as a penitentiary and explain the part it plays in the Federal Prison System, we might briefly outline the early history of Alcatraz.

While Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin and other committee members of the American Congress were completing the first draft of the Declaration of Independence and preparing to sign the document in Philadelphia, a Spanish brigantine dropped anchor on the windward side of the island, at that time unnamed and uncharted. A helmeted conquistador, Lt. Juan Manuel de Ayala, and a party of his crew rowed ashore and took possession of the island in the name of Spain. Lt. de Ayala wrote the bleak promontory into his map as the "Isle de Los Alcatrazes" (Isle of the Pelicans) because of the great number of those birds he found living there.

**Historic
Island**

Nothing was done on or to Alcatraz, so far as records reveal, for nearly 70 years. Then, in 1846, just three years before the gold rush, Alcatraz was granted to one Julian Workman by Pio Pico, the last Mexican Governor of California. The new owner was issued the grant on the condition that he would establish "a light which may give protection on dark nights to the ships and smaller vessels which may pass there." But there is no recorded evidence that Workman made any effort to fulfill this obligation. His heirs later conveyed the island to the United States Government, in whose possession it was when California became a state in 1850.



Vines and trees grown in earth brought from the mainland help to soften the rugged contours carved by nature in one of her more austere moods

Those who have seen the beautiful San Francisco Bay, with this little island midway across the opening known throughout the world as the Golden Gate, can readily appreciate its strategic importance in the early fortifications around San Francisco. It remained a highly fortified spot from 1854 to the end of the century, when it became an Army prison, known as the Pacific Branch of the United States Military Prison, later to be known as the Disciplinary Barracks. During the Indian wars many Indian chiefs were confined there. The most interesting of these was Iaete-na, an Apache and a friend of the great Geronimo. He was tried by a jury of his tribe for fomenting a disturbance on the San Carlos Reservation and was sentenced by them to confinement for three years.

As the size of the Army decreased and military activities on the West Coast and in the Pacific area declined, the continued maintenance of a disciplinary barracks on Alcatraz became unnecessary. Consequently, the institution was declared surplus to the needs of the War Department.

**Need for New
Kind of Prison**

About the same time the country was shocked and frightened by a series of kidnappings, bank robberies, and other atrocious

crimes. As a result, the Congress passed a number of new laws giving the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other federal law enforcement agencies jurisdiction over a whole series of offenses previously under the exclusive jurisdiction of the states. Under the leadership of the then Attorney General, Homer Cummings, there was a vigorous drive to apprehend and severely punish the gangsters, racketeers, and desperadoes who were escaping state prosecution. It was decided that a component part of the campaign should be the establishment of a special institution of maximum security and minimum privileges for the confinement of such ruthless individuals.

Another and perhaps more important factor influencing the Department of Justice to take over the island prison was the need for an institution to relieve the overcrowding then existing in other federal prisons and also to provide another link in the Federal Government's prison system.

Three years previously, on May 27, 1930, the Congress had authorized the establishment of a Bureau of Prisons in the Department of Justice. The legislation provided for several new institutions and carried the following clause:

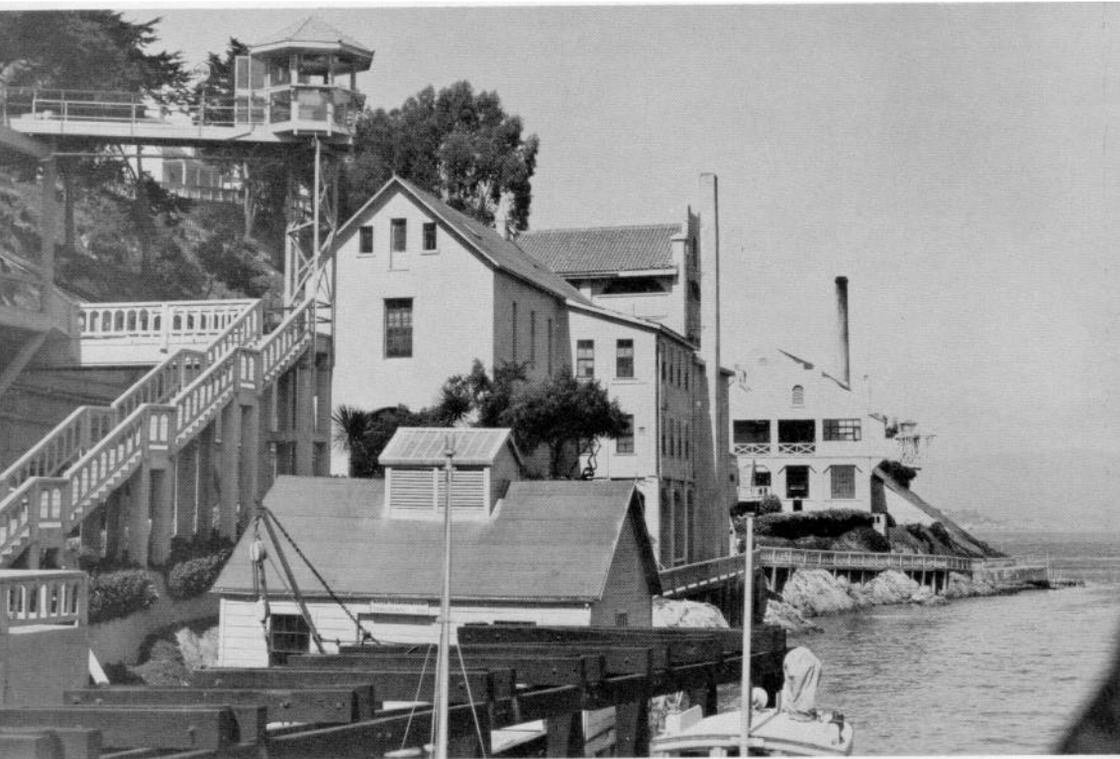
**A Classified
Prison System**

"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress that the said institutions be so planned and limited in size as to facilitate the development of an integrated Federal Penal and Correctional System which will assure the proper classification and segregation of federal prisoners according to their character, the nature of the crime they have committed, their mental condition and such other factors as should be taken into consideration in providing an individualized system of discipline, care, and treatment of the persons committed to such institutions."

In pursuance of this mandate the Bureau of Prisons began the establishment and construction of a group of specialized institutions for the housing and treatment of the many different types of offenders committed to its custody.

The need to provide for that, fortunately, small number of prisoners who do not readily accustom themselves to the discipline of the ordinary penitentiary or avail themselves of the opportunities for training and self-improvement had long been recognized. Some prisoners just cannot resist the temptation to try to escape and continually plot to that end. Agitators, perplexing problem cases, "big shots," disturbers, and still others of an incurable disposition to disobey rules cannot be handled in the ordinary prison without restricting the program and maintaining such a severe degree of custody that the more constructive measures are largely thwarted. Such men, all guilty of serious crimes, who make difficult the maintenance of

discipline and retard the efforts to rehabilitate the greater percentage of our prison population, require special facilities and a special regimen. The Attorney General saw the possibilities of Alcatraz as an answer to the need for an institution to care for these individuals and, accordingly, the prison was taken over formally in June, 1934.



A tower overlooks the dock

The establishment of Alcatraz Prison, contrary to general belief, was not primarily or solely to make punishment more severe. Rather, it was for the purpose of making possible better treatment for the majority of prisoners confined in federal prisons and to give them greater opportunity for reformation. This is just one more evidence that the Department of Justice does not propose to permit a small number of prisoners to defeat its more important objective of rehabilitating those who show inclination to self-improvement and who are apparently susceptible to reformatory treatment.

The chief administrative officer at Alcatraz is, of course, the warden, who is the local representative of the Director of the Bureau of Prisons and who is responsible for the economical and

efficient management of the institution. An associate warden acts as his deputy in matters which concern security, the safe-keeping of the inmates, and the operation of the institution. Assisting these executives are the heads of the various departments such as custodial, fiscal, medical, classification, education, food service, and plant maintenance.

The correctional officers comprise the largest group of employees. These men are in continuous direct contact with inmates on their work assignments, in quarters, at meal time, and during their leisure hour activities. To be an officer at Alcatraz carries with it a badge of confidence and trustworthiness unequaled in the Federal Prison Service. The Bureau of Prisons recruits its officers through the United States Civil Service, and they must qualify for their jobs through organized training classes. They are responsible **not** only for custody, but also for carrying out plans developed for corrective treatment and the modification of the attitudes of prisoners toward society. Substantial progress has been made by the Bureau of Prisons and its Director, Mr. James V. Bennett, to professionalize prison work and elevate all levels of the field of penology to a height commensurate with the goal of rehabilitating the federal offender.

The Men who Supervise the Prisoners

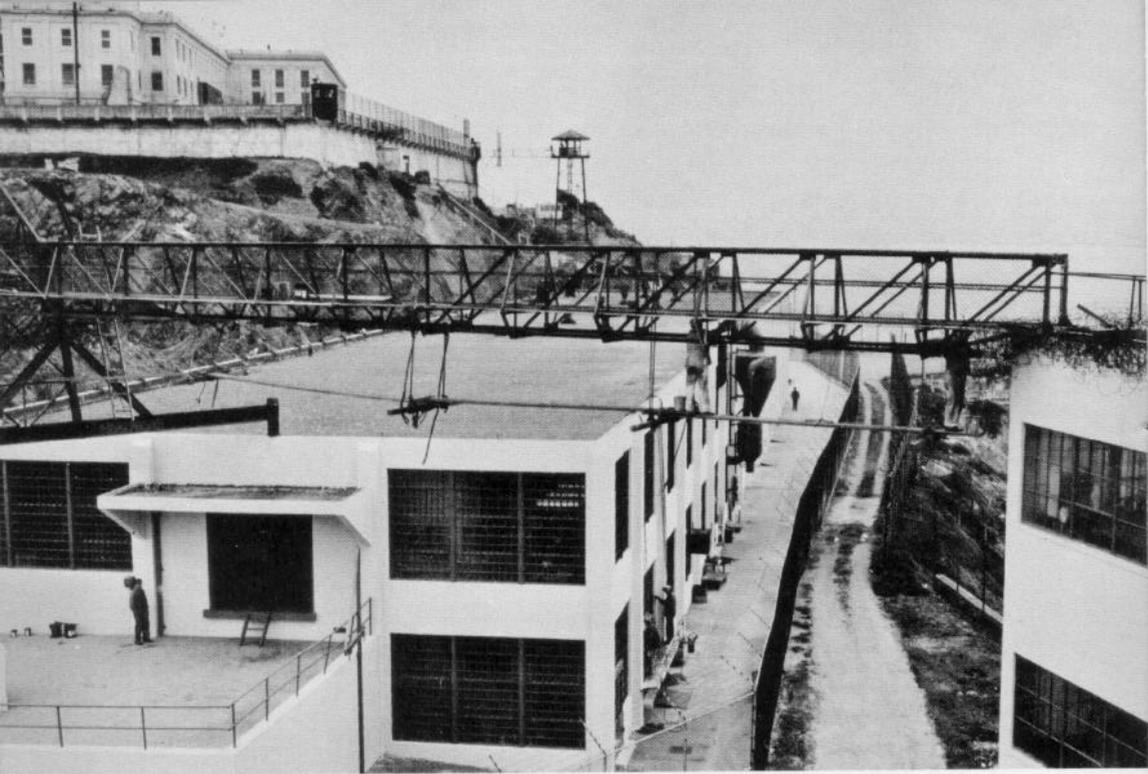
All employees of the Federal Prison Service work a **40-hour** week of five 8-hour days, with two consecutive days off. In addition to instructing, counseling, and maintaining custody of prisoners, correctional officers also act as foremen over groups of prisoners assigned to maintenance and construction work in and about the prison reservation.

About one-third of the employees at Alcatraz and their families live on the south end of the island. Clustered about the parade ground that once resounded to the smart cadence of drilling troops are small bungalows, apartment buildings, and bachelor quarters. Playgrounds comparable to those in city parks are provided for the recreation of children. Alcatraz has no educational facilities, however, and all school children must board launches in the morning and commute to schools in San Francisco.

Commitment or transfer to Alcatraz Island as a prisoner is by no means a permanent exile. Alcatraz inmates are accorded the same rights to apply for parole consideration as others incarcerated elsewhere. The United States Board of Parole conducts hearings at the Island quarterly, and any inmate who is deemed suitable for parole is transferred to another institution for further study and treatment.

A Way Out

Certain privileges allowed at other institutions, such as the use of a commissary and daily newspapers, are not accorded at Alcatraz. Incentive is created for the individual to develop a



Front of new Industry building where men are engaged in productive employment.

sound adjustment, adhere to the established program, and regain the forfeited privileges and other opportunities prevalent elsewhere in the Federal Prison System. A convincing record of good behavior, the consistent display of an attitude of understanding of his problems and predicament, and a genuine interest in rehabilitation, all are factors analyzed in considering the transfer of an inmate from Alcatraz to some institution of less strict regimen and discipline. These men have earned their way into Alcatraz; they can and frequently do earn their way out. Not a single member of the group originally transferred to Alcatraz still remains there, notwithstanding that several of them had life sentences. In these instances, adjustment to institutional life improved to such an extent that the men could be returned to other institutions. From its opening in 1934 to June 30, 1960, the institution received 1460 prisoners. Of this number, 835 were retransferred to other institutions, 219 were conditionally released, and 74 returned to the free community with their sentences expired. (See Table No. 1, Page 21.)

**Records of
Violence**

A recent analysis of offenses committed by inmates indicated the following variety: murder, bank robbery, kidnaping, post office robbery, rape, transporting stolen automobiles, armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, white slavery, espionage etc. In addition to 19 "lifers," 15 men at Alcatraz, on June 30,

1960, had sentences of from 45 to 199 years. (See Table No. 2, Page 22.)

It is, of course, too much to hope that dealing with such a group, violence, desperate and clever escape attempts, and the like, could be avoided. Hardened and disgruntled prisoners, as well as the maladjusted sociopaths, crave freedom and relief from restraint, and sometimes actively resist authority during confinement. Many completely lose their poise, even with their fellow prisoners, and fights, assaults, and stabbings occur. Eight prisoners have been killed in altercations between inmates since the institution was established. In each instance the slayer received an additional sentence.

Alaska's gold rush spawned many a desperado, but none more callous of human life than Jack, who, at the age of 19, in a quarrel over the favors of a prostitute, shot and killed a bartender. At the McNeil Island Penitentiary, where he was committed to serve a 12-year sentence for this offense, he soon assaulted and severely wounded another inmate with a knife. He received only a six-month sentence for this, but was transferred to the Leavenworth Penitentiary for more secure custody. It was not long until his murderous nature again asserted itself. He knifed an officer to death in the prison dining room in the presence of 1200 other inmates. For this crime, he was three times tried and each time sentenced to death, but the President commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. Jack boasted that he had made five other daggers, one of which, he said, had been used in the murder of a fellow inmate. There was considerable evidence that he had been plotting an organized mutiny and murder of prison officials as part of a general escape plan and, because of his homicidal tendencies, he was placed in segregation. Later, murderous weapons were found in his possession and he was transferred to Alcatraz. It is still necessary to keep him in segregation.

Typical Case History

Every prisoner creates his own unique problems for the administration. The notorious Al Capone, for instance, was once an inmate at Alcatraz. He was transferred there from Atlanta Penitentiary because his conduct at the latter place was, in the opinion of the prison officials, detrimental to the program instituted for the benefit of the majority of the inmates. He had abused the privileges which are extended to the inmates as an integral part of an over-all reformatory program and had endeavored to capitalize on them by trying to get officers to work for him. In other words, he sought to carry on his rackets from inside the prison. Oddly enough, although Capone had a long and notorious criminal record, he had served only one short term in prison prior to running afoul of the Federal Government. Upon his commitment to Alcatraz, it was necessary to admonish him several times. For, like most inmates when they first arrive there, he found the

"Scarface" Al Capone

discipline more rigorous than any to which he had been accustomed in other prisons. After his initial tenseness had passed, however, Capone made an average adjustment in his work and behavior. He had suffered from a serious infectious disease prior to his commitment, but he resisted treatment, claiming that he was cured. Despite this claim his condition grew progressively more acute and he was hospitalized for prolonged periods from time to time. He appeared to benefit from treatment and, when examined at the expiration of his sentence, he was reported to be in good physical condition. Approximately seven years after his release from prison, Capone died at his home in Florida.

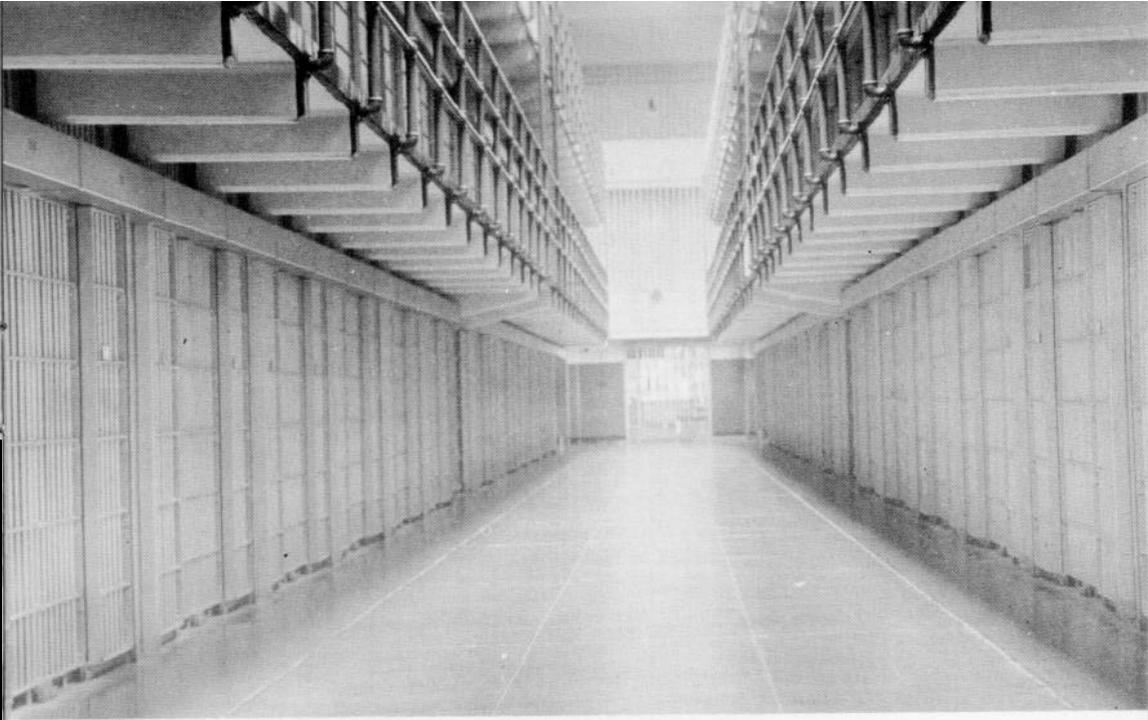
**Some Prefer
Alcatraz**

There are, or have been, many other equally notorious prisoners at Alcatraz. Perhaps surprisingly, many long term prisoners apply for that institution or resist transfer from there because, among other considerations, they feel that it is a certain protection for them. Where surveillance and discipline are less strict, certain "big shot" prisoners, or those known to have outside connections and gangster associates, may be subjected to irresistible pressure from other inmates to participate in irregularities, in serious infractions of the rules, or in actual escape attempts. To avoid such involvements, which might result in the forfeiture of their good conduct credits, many prefer to serve a part or all of their time at Alcatraz.

**Some Rebel at
Confinement**

Some prisoners, on the other hand, are just unable to "do time" and rebel at confinement no matter where it may be. They seem unable to reconcile themselves to the inevitability of paying the price for the crimes they have committed. Such a one, perhaps, was the Alcatraz inmate who wrote the letter from which the following is an excerpt:

"Maybe you have asked yourself how can a man of even ordinary intelligence put up with this kind of life day in, day out, week after week, month after month, year after year. To put it another way, what is this life of mine like? You might wonder whence do I draw sufficient courage to endure it. To begin with these words seem written in fire on the walls of my cell, 'Nothing can be worth this!' No one knows what it is like to suffer from the intellectual atrophy, the pernicious mental scurvy that comes of long privation of all the things that make life real, because even the analogy of thirst cannot possibly give you an inkling of what it is like to be tortured by the absence of everything that makes life worth living. A prisoner cannot keep from being haunted by a vision of life as it used to be when it was real and lovely. At such times I pay with a sense of overwhelming melancholy my tribute to life as it once was."



Main Cell Block—Alcatraz Island Prison

Some additional glimpse of Alcatraz inmates and of what they are like may be gathered from the description of escape attempts later on in these pages.

To understand how Alcatraz operates and what the daily life of the prison is like, it should be remembered that a classification committee, composed of institutional officers, including the warden and his immediate associates, the chief medical officer, and the chaplains, is charged with the responsibility of determining the program for each inmate. The group assists in the placement of prisoners in appropriate job assignments in prison industries or in maintenance details. Interviewed at the time of his arrival, the inmate's special aptitudes are weighed and his potentials in other occupational fields determined by testing and other clinical procedures. The prisoner's attitudes toward self-discipline and work, his ethical standards, leisure time interests, educational level, are other factors taken into consideration by the committee. Medical officers, psychiatrists, and supervisors who observe the man at work, at play, and in the housing unit, report their impressions from month to month, thus keeping the classification committee informed of his progress. The committee recommends retransfer when, in the over-all analysis, it is believed the prisoner will be able to conform to the regimen at other penitentiaries.

Classification of Prisoners

**Work is
Essential**

Alcatraz, in common with other institutions throughout the Federal Prison System, carries out a program of constructive work activity for all inmates who are physically qualified. All employment other than that needed for the maintenance of the prison is under the jurisdiction of Federal Prison Industries, Incorporated. Men assigned to the various shops receive modest wages, as well as certain reductions in sentence over and beyond that regularly awarded for proper conduct and good behavior in the prison.

Industrial units in operation on the island include a glove factory, clothing factory, a brush shop, and furniture factory. The shops and factories perform contract services for the armed forces. The Alcatraz branch of Prison Industries has been awarded numerous commendations for its contribution to national defense during World War II and the fighting in Korea.

Prisoners are not forced to participate in the industrial program at Alcatraz. However, all prisoners in work status are required to work on assigned tasks. A large percentage prefer assignments in industries and usually volunteer immediately after arriving at the institution. Other than the therapeutic value offered by gainful employment in prison, the inmates are zealous to earn the wages paid and make regular contributions to their dependents or accumulate savings for use following release.

**For the Leisure
Hours**

While the present-day regimen of the island is strict and is not characterized by indulgences, many facilities are provided to stimulate morale and to promote self-advancement. These activities are scheduled to occupy the otherwise idle hours in the evenings and on Sundays and holidays. Educational as well as entertainment films, are shown regularly. The Alcatraz library, consisting of approximately 15,000 volumes of fiction and non-fiction, is up-to-date and provides one of the major activities of the institution. It is an interesting but not surprising fact that the inmates at Alcatraz read more than do most people on the outside, the average library circulation being approximately 75 to 80 books a year for each inmate. Moreover, these men read more serious literature than does the ordinary person in the community. Philosophers such as Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, etc., are especially popular and their books have a wide circulation. Advanced mathematics and physics texts, too, are in great demand, as are other types of literature having to do with the more profound aspects of our culture. The latest magazines and periodicals are furnished and enable men to keep abreast of current events in the free community.



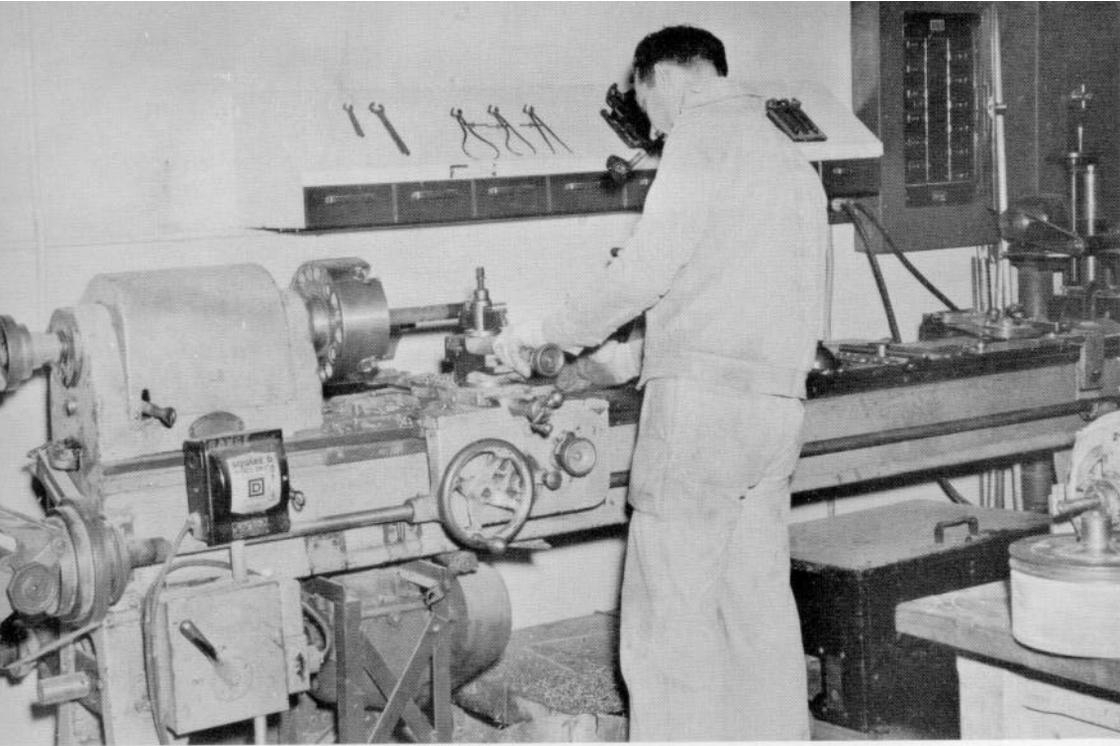
The Classification committee interviews an inmate.

Musical instruments are supplied for those who wish to use them. An extensive sports program is vigorously fostered. Softball and handball enthusiasts compete each week end on the recreation field. Inmates of a more sedentary nature may play chess, dominoes, checkers, or bridge.

For those interested in really improving their time, extension correspondence courses are available through the courtesy and cooperation of the University of California, Pennsylvania State College, and the International Correspondence School. Because of space limitations and the essential restrictions of maximum custody, classroom activity is not possible. However, inmate students show keen interest in education and enroll in a variety of subjects ranging from differential calculus to foreign languages to English and engineering. Art, too, is a popular outlet; approximately twenty per cent of the population do some painting in oils or in pastels. Exhibitions of their work have been displayed in the San Francisco area and in Washington, D. C.

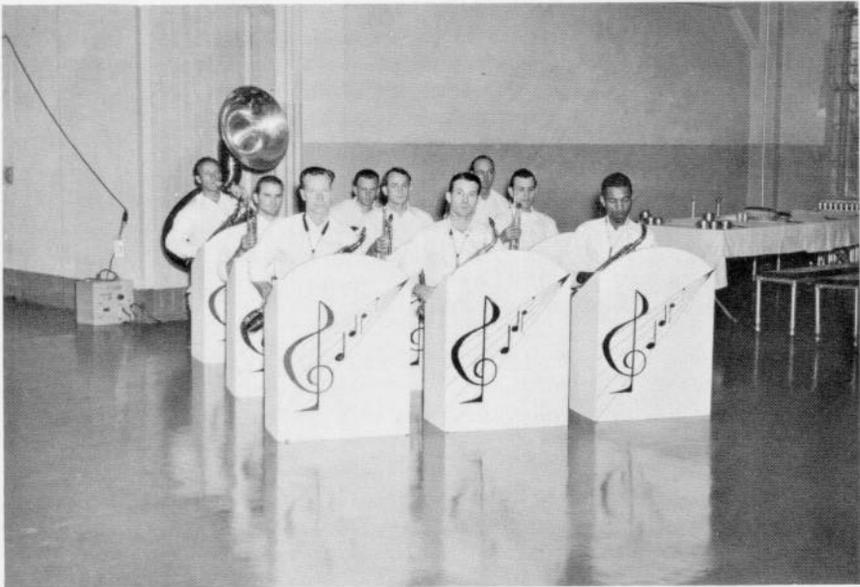
**For Health of
Mind and Body**

Religious services are conducted weekly, and the men are given opportunities for spiritual guidance. Protestant and Catholic chaplains visit the institution during the week and conduct services on Sunday. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Catholic clergy and welfare organizations, and the Jewish Committee for Personal Service cooperate most generously with the institutional authorities in helping to bring to bear those moral and spiritual forces so necessary in effecting the inner changes essential to rehabilitation.



In many institution assignments, men learn useful skills. Here an inmate trains in the machine shop.

The institution orchestra provides opportunity for wholesome recreation.





Everyone who sets foot on Alcatraz must get there by water. Here the passenger boat is on its way to the mainland.

The U. S. Public Health Service provides medical facilities and staff for Alcatraz, as well as for other federal penitentiaries and correctional institutions. The **Alcatraz** hospital, adjacent to the main cell house, is equipped with modern x-ray and physical therapy apparatus, operating theater, laboratories, and dental unit, and contains wards and individual rooms for the treatment and convalescence of inmate patients. It has been certified by the American College of Surgeons and compares favorably with the up-to-date hospitals and clinics in the free community.

The medical staff includes a chief medical officer and highly trained technicians, all career personnel of the Public Health Service. Specialists from the Marine Hospital in San Francisco also are available for consultation and to augment the permanent local staff. Three San Francisco psychiatrists are employed to counsel and treat Alcatraz inmates and they visit the island frequently in the performance of their duties. Inmates whose mental disorders indicate psychotic trends or continuing deterioration are transferred to the Medical Center at Springfield, Missouri.

The main cell house at Alcatraz consists of 336 cells, five feet wide by nine feet deep, each with a sliding grille door controlled from a locking device at the end of the cell block.

**The Living
Quarters**



MEAL TIME

Cell equipment consists of a wall bunk with cotton mattress and the necessary blankets, a little work table, a toilet and wash basin, and a shelf for the prisoner's personal belongings such as books, pictures, and the like.

In addition a "special treatment," unit, called D block, is **walled** off from the rest of the institution for the housing of those few prisoners who must be kept locked in their cells at all times except for certain periods of exercise in the yard. In this unit some of the cell doors are operated electrically but are controlled by the cell house officer and the officer in the gun gallery working together. When a door is to be opened, the cell house officer pushes the appropriate button in his control box and then signals to the officer in the gallery. The latter then presses an electric button in his control box, which opens the door.

A Prisoner's Day

The prisoners at Alcatraz are awakened on week days at **6:30** a. m. They are given time to wash and dress, following which they go to the main dining room for their breakfast. On returning to their cells after breakfast, they are counted, and those assigned to work in the shops proceed to their jobs. The cells of others, detailed to maintenance tasks about the institution, are then unlocked, and the men are escorted to their particular assignments. At 11:30 a. m., the gong sounds for dinner and the men return to the cell house where they are again counted. After a few minutes for washing and clean-

ing up, they have their noon meal. They then return to their cells for a short rest period. Work is resumed at 1:00 p. m. Supper is at 5:00 p. m., following which the men are returned to their cells, counted, and locked in for the night.

This program is varied on week ends and holidays by giving those in good standing an opportunity to exercise in the yard or participate in other institutional activities.

The security of the institution has been maintained through several daring but futile attempts to escape from "The Rock," for which seven inmates have paid with their lives and in which the lives of three officers have been tragically sacrificed.

Escape Attempts

The names of Cole and Roe, two of the country's most desperate criminals are generally associated in the public mind as the convicts who challenged Alcatraz's reputation as escape proof. Serving lengthy sentences for bank robbery and kidnaping, these two inmates cut the bars in a shop where they were employed and, during the brief absence of an officer, jumped into the water below. Fog at the time shrouded the entire coast and the treacherous currents prevalent around Alcatraz Island were churned into foamy masses by ground swells. The reckless bid for freedom was ratioed as virtually 1000 to 1. Official evidence, gathered through the years, indicates that the two prisoners drowned in the icy waters of San Francisco Bay on that December 16, 1937, and that their bodies were swept into the open sea.

Of all the attempts to escape from Alcatraz, the one that came nearest to succeeding occurred when a prisoner boarded the Army boat, General Frank Coxe, and rode to Fort McDowell on Angel Island, a distance of about two miles. This prisoner's work assignment was on the dock. He was always close by when incoming laundry from Army posts was given a preliminary shakeout and was near enough to pick up and pilfer, piece by piece, the garments necessary to outfit a technical sergeant. On the morning of July 31, 1945, he arrived at his assignment on the dock apparently determined to wait no longer to make his bid for freedom. Alert, and taking advantage of every opportunity to work undetected, he managed to get his Army clothes out of hiding, slip behind a building and put them on, and then pull his prison coveralls on over them. He then went calmly about his tasks until the Army boat docked. He was counted in the line-up as the boat came in and, when the officer turned away to handle the gangplank, he dropped down under the wharf, pulled off his prison clothing, put on an overseas cap, and stepped over to the open side of the freight deck. Soon the boat pulled away from the wharf. The prisoner's absence was immediately detected and the alarm sent to the control center. Army authorities at Angel Island were notified at once

A More Cunning Escape Attempt



Special Treatment or "D" Block

and, when the boat docked there, the prisoner was placed under arrest. It was a bold attempt for which he was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury and sentenced to three years to run consecutively with his original 25-year sentence for Post Office Assault. This was probably the shortest period anyone ever served in the U. S. Army.

The Big Blast-out Attempt

The term "Blast-out" is prison slang for an escape attempt involving the use of firearms, the capture of hostages, and perhaps bloodshed. Almost every prison has had at least one such incident. Alcatraz has had two. Back in 1939, two prisoners tried to capture one of the gun towers but were frustrated by the alertness of the officers. The second attempt, which had more far-reaching consequences, occurred on the 2nd of May in 1946. The ringleader was a notorious bank robber named Cretzer, murderer of a United States Marshal and admitted perpetrator of some nine daylight bank robberies. Cretzer went to Alcatraz from McNeil Island Prison following an escape attempt in which he and another prisoner had captured a dump truck and, using its uptitled body as a shield, had driven head-long amidst a hail of gunfire through the gate. The two were retaken some 60 hours later, hiding in the dense undergrowth of that 5,000-acre island.

Cretzer's principal collaborator in the Alcatraz revolt was a prisoner named Coy—also a bank robber, with a record of



Baseball game in recreation yard



Handball game in recreation yard

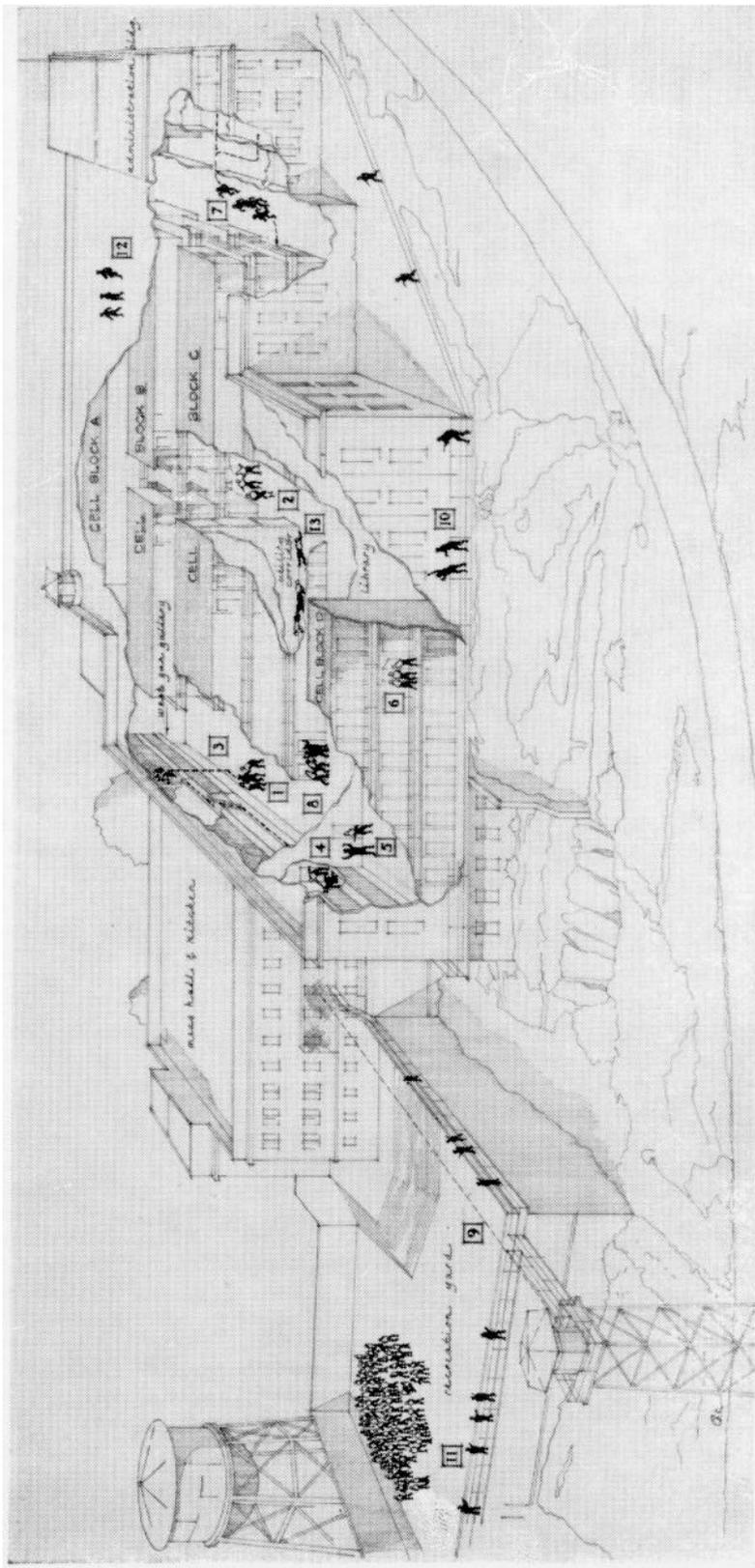
escapes from several prisons, who had bragged, sullenly and defiantly, that no prison could ever hold him. Five others joined in the desperate and ill-fated plot, which apparently had been carefully worked out over a period of months. Success depended upon capturing the firearms of the officer who, from a heavily barred cage, guarded and kept order in the cell block. This was accomplished by means of a diabolically clever device made from toilet fixtures and fashioned in such a manner that it could be used as a bar-spreader.

The drawing on page 19, showing the cross section of the institution, with the accompanying explanation, describes the sequence of events in this daring escape attempt. Had Officer Miller not managed to hide the key to the door leading to the outer part of the institution, and had he not refused, despite being beaten and later shot, to reveal its whereabouts so that the prisoners could get outside and capture hostages as they had planned, the story might have ended very differently. The murder of some of the captured officers was apparently the result of this frustration and a determination on the part of the culprits to eliminate witnesses. The patrol of the swift waters about the island by vessels of the U. S. Coast Guard and the presence of U. S. Marines who were called in for assistance added emphasis to the grimness and the tragedy of the occasion. When the last shot had been fired and the crisis had ended, the toll was found to be two officers and three prisoners dead and a number of officers seriously wounded. A heavy price to pay, but Alcatraz remained impregnable.

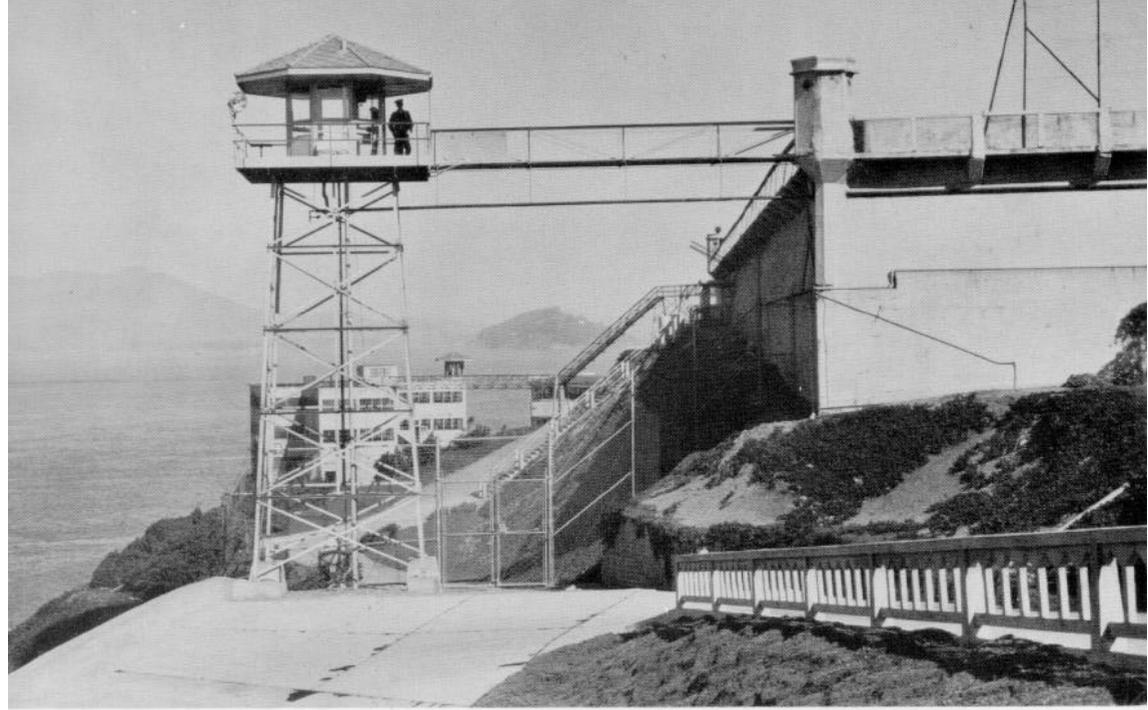
The Legal Route

Not all Alcatraz offenders have tried to leave the island by desperate escape methods, for many have sought to gain their freedom through legal means by way of the federal courts. An examination of the records indicates that over 1,850 petitions, appeals, motions, writs of mandamus, and other processes of law have been filed and decided upon by federal courts since the prison at Alcatraz has been under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. Most of the petitioners apply for a writ of habeas corpus. This great writ has been relied upon for centuries to test the legality of imprisonment, deprivation of personal liberties, etc., and is the resort of imprisoned persons seeking to be restored to liberty by asserting they are illegally deprived of that liberty. In addition to those who seek release by this means, many prisoners address the court in the form of motions to correct, reduce, or vacate sentences. Some of these efforts are meritorious and successful. A number of appeals have been taken to the Supreme Court of the United States from denials in lower courts. Many of these actions are wishful, frivolous, reckless, or desperate attempts to secure privileges not allowed in the prison; to compel the warden to do something; to prevent the warden from doing something; to protest prison regulations; to gain time credits forfeited or not allowed;

ALCATRAZ REVOLT



1. Coy and Hubbard slug and capture cell house officer Miller and take his keys. 2. Hubbard releases Cretzer, Carnes, and Thompson. 3. Hubbard and Coy monkey climb cage protecting armed officer Burch as he passes from "D" block and thus gain access by spreading bars. 4. Coy slugs armed officer Burch as he passes from "D" block and thus gain access by spreading bars. 5. With rifle, Coy retained, he forces officer to open door between "D" block and the main cell house. 6. Cretzer pushes in with pistol and liberates thirty of worst prisoners segregated in "D" block. 7. Reserve officers on duty in administration building having been advised Officer Miller did not answer his call, enter main cell house to investigate. 8. They are captured and locked in cell where they were later shot by Cretzer. 9. Coy then attempts to shoot tower officer. 10. Officers run to rear entrance and this, plus Officer Miller's hiding of outside door keys, blocks escape from main cell house. 11. Other prisoners not participating in revolt are herded into recreation yard where they are guarded by Marines until prisoners in cell house are subdued. 12. Officers break through roof and drop grenades and bombs, finally dislodging Coy, Cretzer, and Hubbard from pipe tunnel where they were driven by officers after gun battle to regain west gun gallery. 13. Found dead in utilities corridor.



A continuous sentinel

or to gain public attention for some alleged grievance. One prisoner, for instance, in his attempt to force the warden to permit newspapers to come into the institution, carried this action clear to the Supreme Court without success. Of course, the petitions that have any semblance of merit receive the close scrutiny of the judges, but of the 1,700 petitions, only a few have been granted. Eleven inmates were released after consideration on habeas corpus; others were decided favorably but instead of full release were remanded to the trial court for further action; two motions for vacating sentences resulted in immediate freedom, and thirty motions were granted which reduced excessive sentences but did not grant immediate release.

**A Continuing
Responsibility**

Alcatraz, once a citadel on which batteries and troops waited in readiness to repulse the invaders of the nation, has a similar but a double mission today—that of protecting society from those who prey upon it and of rehabilitating those individuals, when it can, and restoring them to useful citizenship. That it has fulfilled this latter function is attested by the fact that a number of those who have gone out of Alcatraz to the free community have since made outstanding records for themselves. Thus does Alcatraz occupy an essential place in the intricate network of correctional agencies designed to help preserve the peace and the liberties of all citizens of these United States.

Table 1

**U. S. PENITENTIARY, ALCATRAZ ISLAND, CALIFORNIA
SENTENCED PRISONERS RECEIVED AND DISCHARGED, YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 1935 to 1960**

Year	Population beginning of year	Total received	Transferred from other institutions	Other prisoners received (a)	Total discharged	Transferred to other institutions	Sentence expired	Conditionally released	Died (b)	By court order	Population end of year
1960	264	49	46	3	59	43	5	8	1	2	254
1959	288	62	54	8	86	66	2	15	2	1	264
1958	271	77	66	11	60	44	1	12	2	1	288
1957	277	42	31	11	48	30	2	9	2(c)	5	271
1956	297	74	60	14	94	70	5	18	1	-	277
1955	293	53	43	10	49	39	3	7	-	-	297
1954	255	95	75	20	57	39	4	10	-	4	293
1953	227	82	81	1	54	39	1	13	-	1	255
1952	230	33	33	-	36	23	1	11	1	1	227
1951	232	49	48	1	51	39	-	8	3	-	230
1950	222	59	58	1	49	40	1	7	1	-	232
1949	240	25	24	1	43	20	1	18	2	2	222
1948	248	30	30	-	38	17	3	17	1	-	240
1947	276	44	44	-	72	52	1	15	-	4	248
1946	274	40	39	1	38	23	1	6	6	2	276
1945	229	65	64	1	20	14	1	5	-	-	274
1944	248	29	29	-	48	27	4	13	2	2	229
1943	261	26	25	1	39	19	5	9	2	4	248
1942	282	40	40	-	61	47	3	8	2	1	261
1941	290	5	5	-	13	3	3	5	1	1	282
1940	288	71	71	-	69	58	1	8	-	2	290
1939	298	36	36	-	46	32	7	4	1	2	288
1938	302	51	50	1	55	36	6	6	5	2	298
1937	261	81	81	-	40	20	8	8	-	4	302
1936	242	65	65	-	46	33	5	-	3	5	261
1935	(d)	247	245	2	5	-	4	-	-	1	242

- (a) 66 prisoners received from court, 1 violator of parole and 16 of conditional release, 1 prisoner who had escaped from another institution, 2 prisoners briefly at large on the island, and 1 other.
- (b) Includes 1 in 1943 and 2 in 1938 presumed to have been killed by gunfire or drowned in attempting to escape. Also includes 1 drowned attempting escape, 1959.
- (c) Includes 1 prisoner at large on island, captured within 24 hours.
- (d) Alcatraz opened as a Bureau of Prisons institution in June 1934.

Table 2

**PRISONERS CONFINED IN U. S. PENITENTIARY ALCATRAZ
June 30, 1960
Offenses and Length of Sentences**

Offense	Total	Length of Sentence in Years							Average Sentence (In years)*
		2 1/2 under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 45	45 and over*	Life*	
All Offenses	254	3	23	32	52	110	15	19	22.9
Drug offenses									
Narcotics	20	-	5	4	3	7	1	-	17.4
Marihuana	4	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	9.8
Forgery	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	10.0
Homicide**	8	-	-	1	-	-	3	4	41.0
Kidnaping	19	-	1	2	4	5	2	5	28.0
Larceny - theft									
Trans. stolen motor vehicle	10	-	3	4	3	-	-	-	10.9
Other	3	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	15.0
Robbery	95	-	2	7	23	60	3	-	22.7
Other Federal	18	1	6	3	5	2	-	1	13.5
Military court-martial cases	30	-	-	5	2	21	2	-	25.6
Homicide	16	-	-	-	-	14	2	-	31.1
Rape	5	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	24.2
Other	9	-	-	5	2	2	-	-	16.7
Government Reservation, etc. c	45	2	3	4	9	14	4	9	27.3
Homicide	14	-	-	-	1	4	1	8	38.2
Robbery	19	-	3	4	5	6	1	-	19.3
Rape	5	-	-	-	-	4	-	1	36.5
Other	7	2	-	-	3	-	2	-	20.9

* Life sentences and sentences of more than 45 years are counted as 45 years when computing average sentences.

** Killing of federal official.

Race		Type of Commitment	
Total	254	Total	254
White	183	Federal civil cts...	189
Negro	64	State courts	2
Other	7	Municipal court,	
		D. C.	33
		Military	30