



COLLEGE GUILD

Spring 2016 Newsletter

*RESPECT
REDUCES
RECIDIVISM*

RELEASE!

..... **After the Storm** by Jerry Zell

To be released from prison is like being set adrift on the ocean. Our life boats come in various sizes and states of preparation, but no matter our circumstances, nothing can prepare us for the immensity of the task ahead - a transition back into the society that found it necessary to shut us away.

This challenge is significantly different from those one encounters behind bars. Polite society does not get in one's face, overtly threatening health and welfare. Instead, it tries to offer solutions, provide services, and other tools to aid in one's success. But even with these programs, obstacles and rejections remain a factor in the ex-offender's quest for re-entry into society.

I thought I had equipped my lifeboat well: I left prison with my fines, restitutions, court costs and attorney fees all paid; I established community contacts in the city that I chose for my relocation; I trained myself and others in the skills required to pursue a successful job search; and I even managed to save a

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..... **120 Miles/Hour** By Nicholas D. Seidel

The probability of returning to the Department of Corrections within the first six months of freedom is astronomical. The actual figure of recidivism based on a one-year timespan is even higher, but I like those odds. I gamble to win! The payout for me this time is larger than anything I have ever encountered before. I am about to cross over these first two mile-stones and I am going to do so with spring in my step.

The reality is that an inmate with an out date has one of two options. He will either get out as an older version of himself and nothing more, or he will walk through the gate as a smarter, stronger, wiser and more prepared person than the one who was picked up by the police. I guarantee one of those things is going to happen. What a prisoner does each day will determine his outcome.

My resume when I entered the Illinois Department of Corrections included motor vehicle theft, forgery, burglary and unlawful use of a weapon by a felon.

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Finally Home

by Ruben Eric Gonzales

The anticipation that builds when one is getting released from a state or federal prison is indescribable to say the least. Multiple thoughts and scenarios race through your mind wondering how it is going to be and what is next in your life, especially for those of us like me who have been incarcerated for a decade or more.

Behind those concrete and steel walls, time seems to slow or even stand still in the minds of the incarcerated. Most times we fail to realize that our loved ones and friends change over time, whether it's just them growing into their own or changing their whole lives, we're not there to see this. Not to

mention, we don't see our own growth. We tend to see ourselves as being the way we were when we first got into the system, no matter how many years have passed us by. Before we know it a year turns into five, then five into ten, yet, we still see ourselves and our loved ones as being the same. It's not until we get home that we fully understand the changes that have happened.

I was released on February 5, 2016 after doing 14+ years flat and I have gotten to see firsthand the changes that I've mentioned. The life I'm in now is in stark contrast to being behind those walls.

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From the Administrator's Desk

We are overwhelmed with gratitude for our growing number of volunteers, community partners, donors, and political leaders backing up College Guild and those whom we serve. Senators Angus King and Susan Collins, along with Sean Addie, a director at the U.S. Department of Education, have written glowing letters of support for College Guild. High-ranking leaders in Maine government such as Senator Katz and Department of Corrections Commissioner Fitzpatrick have also bestowed us with positive attention as we seek to become more connected and well-funded.

We've grown into a second office space, which is working wonders to keep operations flowing smoothly. We were recently joined by an assistant grant writer; she is paid by the U.S. Government for on-the-job training while she helps us. CG is working to establish a multi purpose data base that will allow for the growth needed to minimize our waiting list. A summer intern will be helping implement this much needed resource. In addition, Bowdoin College is funding a summer intern whose focus will be reviewing and improving our current courses as well as writing one of her own.

Bowdoin College's McKeen Center has awarded College Guild one of their prestigious Common Good Grants. It will be used for an event this fall to which the public and the Bowdoin community will be invited.

College Guild was privileged to speak at Bates College's Martin Luther King Day event which helped us in our efforts to establish a growing campus club of volunteers. We also presented at the esteemed Bates College Symposium for Criminal Justice and Rehabilitation. Bowdoin students and CG co-sponsored an event at Bowdoin which drew a full house, a screening and discussion about juvenile criminal justice in Maine. Finally, plans are in the works for an exhibit in the community featuring art and poetry by prisoners. It's been a very busy, productive Spring!

Donations have been made in memory of:

Barbara Cady

June Snow

Fritz Kempner

Alex Severance

Clement Biddle

Kathie Biddle

Susie Moran

Marjorie Holland

Donations have been made in honor of:

Nancy Simboli

Julie Zimmerman

CG CLUBS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Bowdoin College has been involved with College Guild since its onset, at first only through a few individual volunteers donating their time. Involvement has increased over the years to the point that Bowdoin has a College Guild Club on campus, with over 40 members. In addition, students serve on the Board of Directors, orient other students to be readers and educate their peers about criminal justice issues.

Now, CG is delighted to welcome the first **Bates College** students as readers. With administrative backing, several students are already working on developing a College Guild Club on the Bates campus. Two Bates students have even come forward to join the Board of Directors! Recent events on both campuses have been open to students from both colleges. The Boston University Prison Education Dept. has also expressed an interest in developing an on-campus CG Club.

Hundreds of college students have been or will be part of College Guild. They will carry with them their entire lives the understanding that society can only be helped by treating prisoners as people worthy of education.

As of this printing, College Guild has 474 students currently taking courses with 472 on the waiting list. College Guild keeps 147 much valued volunteers busy as readers, office assistants, and board members.

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small but significant sum of money to tide me through the first lean month. I was proud of myself for preparing so well.

In fact, I was even extended a job offer my second week out, a position with a nationally recognized tech company, one that I have desired to be a part of for years. But three weeks later that company rescinded its offer. This was based on a review by their headquarters personnel many states away, people who have never met me and know little about me except that I have a questionable background.

Since then, I have met rejection after rejection in the course of my job search. I have watched younger, less skilled men with whom I shared my imprisonment receive instant employment on production lines while I was politely turned away from the same jobs. I have sat through interviews for skilled positions that have soured as soon as the employer learned about my criminal background. I have gradually learned that a combination of age, skill-base, and derogatory background have formed an almost tangible barrier to my progression.

As my "one lean month" enters into lean month number three, I find myself mildly frustrated, but still pushing for success. I recall the lives of my heroes - authors like Jack London - who worked many seemingly insignificant jobs, then turned their experiences into stories rich with flavor and life. I remind myself that experience trumps the moment, that it is more important to give to my community than it is to receive. And I remember the most important lesson that College Guild had to offer me: It is entirely my choice to actuate hope or to resign myself to defeat.



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College Guild was one of the things that helped turn my energies in the right direction.

In fact, prison was the most valuable thing that's ever happened to me. It made me a better man, giving me the opportunity to improve the parts of myself that I liked, while working on those I didn't.

I learned how to budget my time. I learned stress management and social skills. I read hundreds upon hundreds of books, and wrote books and letters to family, friends and businesses. I kept up on my exercise routine. Most importantly, I pursued my education to the best of my ability.

After four years, earning two College Guild certificates, five paralegal certificates and five machinist certificates, I signed my release papers and hit the streets. Thanks to networking while in the penitentiary, I landed an internship with legal aid where I am now a paralegal in good standing. I have enrolled in college as well, and my grades are high enough to put me on the dean's list. I'm moving at 120 miles/hour, but I'm moving at 120 miles/hour in the right direction this time.

To my brothers and sisters without a release date, I offer you this: your life is not over!!! You are valuable, important contributors to society—we need you! You are our think tank and you have the capacity to make our world better from exactly where you are. My prayers are with you all.



Finally Home continued from page 1

I have to constantly remind myself that I am not in prison anymore and can't act certain ways out here, whether it be the inability to control my environment or the way that I talk to people. I'm always analyzing everything, some would say over-analyzing.

I'm not sure how long it takes to fully shed the prison mentality, however I do feel a huge difference in just the two months I've been out. I am surrounded by people who love and care about me and have been a tremendous help along the way, people who believe in me, including the volunteers at College Guild who have given me this opportunity to let my voice be heard. I think this has been the most important factor in my transition. I am able to laugh more than I have in a very long time and I feel really relaxed. Although I know it won't be an easy road ahead, I am confident that everything will be all right and I won't end up being a recidivism statistic.

Poetry Club

I break out of the cage of dullness
And travel the freedom forest of ideas
Exploring the river phrases
Climbing the tree of punctuation

It feels like a vacation
Not actually leaving the cage
Just imagery creating freedom

Fighting the lion obstacles
Of ignorance and deceit
Overcoming time and holding
The leash of creativity and
Imagination

Ultimately reaching the top
Of the mountain and thanking
The eagle of poetry as new
Ideas hatch in the nest beside me.

Ruben R.

A good education does so many things on so many levels. Education elevates you, builds confidence, keeps you relevant. Education gives you a platform. It's empowering. Education provides a way to escape the confines of bad situations, opens doors and demands respect. Were it not for the slaves educating themselves, would they have continued to allow others to dehumanize them? Education is my new weapon of choice.

Ivan A.

I lay in my bunk, listening to the sounds of the other inmates sleeping. Scott's still awake. Nose in a book as usual. Ochoa has his curtain up. Probably asleep already. The lights have been out for ten minutes now. I can feel my bunkie's eyes staring up from below. He doesn't sleep much.

Vince F.

The Beast

Like the sure footed panther
it leaps across the terrain with purpose.
Its deep throated growl
can be heard as it draws near.
In a flash it passes,
its color a momentary contrast
to the dullness of the path.
Leaves and dirt
drift slowly in its wake.
The tail lights' glow recedes.

Alan H.

the light of a candle
is just romantic arson
wax dripping like syrupy
sands of time

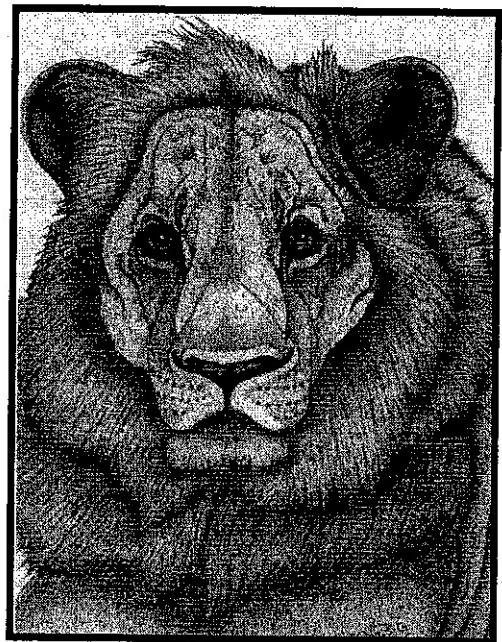
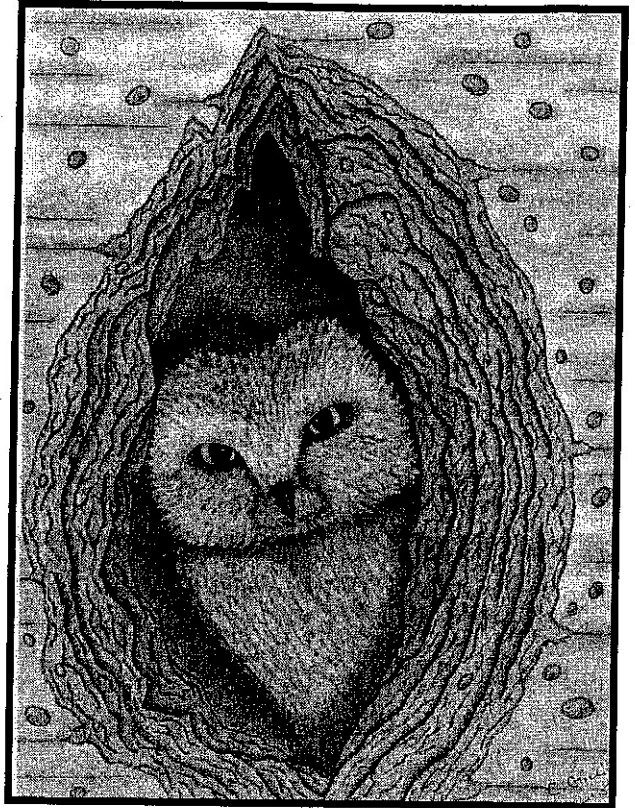
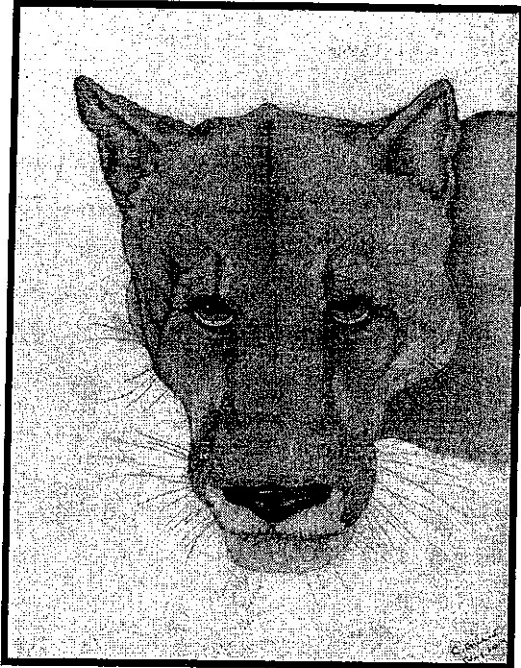
casting shadows over
love that turns to doubt
the burning wick just
a burning fuse

to an incendiary heartbreak
a long road strewn with
landmines dressed up
as rose petals

looking at you through
the demilitarized zone that
is the line of discontent separating
anniversary from divorce

Dan G.

Chris G.'s Art Gallery



This just in from our London Bureau: BEBEBEEP BEBEBEBEEP BEEEBEEP BEEEPBEBEBEEP

It seems that one of the world's oldest professions, (no, not "THE" oldest, just ONE of the oldest), is now one of the most hazardous occupations. It has been reported all across Britain that SWEEPS are being ingested by their charges. For some inexplicable reason, 27 chimney sweeps over the past 6 days have been found to have been devoured by the objects of their concerns, leaving only congeries of hair, bones and clothing discovered in fireplaces. Scientists and authorities are baffled and at a loss to explain these carnivorous chimneys. The Prime Minister has ordered that all chimneys are to be blocked up, above and below, until further investigations can be conducted. The American ex-Vice President and environmentalist, Al Gore, has issued a statement asserting that these occurrences are part of nature's protests against the burning of fossil fuels and warns that kitchen ranges may be the next to retaliate.

Robert H.

It's looking kind of gloomy. Dark clouds are gathering. Looks like a storm's coming. Here comes the thunder. Wow! It's really crashing! Oh I hate it when the storm rages like this. What could be the cause? Oh, I forgot to do the dishes. That's why she's so mad.

Gabriel R.

Grey canyon walls reach up from flows channeled between. Movement ebbs, then speeds up again, a constant pulse of life. Honking calls punctuate the air warning danger to those who step wrong in a steel river. A spring morning in NYC's concrete jungle.

Rick G.

It's time for her to change the color of her hair again. Like clockwork every year. Same color. Never changes. She has been doing this ever since she was a little sapling knee high to the ground. She can't hardly stand for her feet to be dry. She should have been a fish. Her waist is really getting bigger. She loves her dear birds who sleep with her every night. My son swings from her arms and she doesn't even mind the rope burns. Her hair will fall out in the fall and I will happily pile it up for my kids to play in. She does so much for my family. I can't count all the cookouts she has gracefully shaded.

William A.

As a prisoner, the lyrics of Johnny Cash's song, "Folsom Prison Blues", are touching and real. To hear a train pass by or to watch the contrail of a jet high overhead means that some people are leaving to somewhere, while I am stuck here going nowhere but crazy. That hollow, haunting whistle reflects the emptiness of heart and soul, and the lights fading into the distance are like our concrete-bound lives, becoming fainter and fainter.

Even the song of a whippoorwill can cause a prisoner to weep; and the click of a phone being hung up on the other end can be the loneliest sound in the world.

Dan S.

Fish Eyes

by Gabriel R.

Purple waves rain over the ship's bow
 washing away the remains of fish
 from the nets

The fisherman faces into the stinging spray and froth
 giving heed to neither
 as he hauls on a line
 prying loose the sea's contents
 with muscle strain
 with aching joints and bones
 his feet planted firmly upon the rolling deck
 his body swaying with the swelling sea

Holds full of ice
 full to bursting
 with sleek scaled bodies,
 fish eyes that will never glimpse the depths again

*As fast as I came
 I left without a trace
 fun for a moment
 leaving you with
 only memories
 of our short
 time together.
 I am a
 wave.*

by William T.

Graffiti

THEY WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

I HAVE TO LURK IN THE SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT.
 IT IS AT THIS TIME I SEEK MY OPPORTUNITY.

THE CAN IS MY WEAPON,

MY PROTECTION,

THE CAN.

THEY WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

YOU CALL ME A CRIMINAL,

I DESTROY THE CITY.

I MAR WITH BEAUTY AND CREATIVITY.

THEY SEEK TO STRIKE MY HAND.

THEY WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

WHEN THE NEW LIGHT COMES,

TOGETHER THEY WILL STAND.

THEY ARE OVERWHELMED

BY THE CREATIONS

OF MY HANDS!

BUT THEN NIGHT ARRIVES AGAIN AND....

THEY'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

by Jacob H.

haiku

*rhythmic staccato
 will bounce and flow and sashay
 across the paper*

By Carla W.

A Sense of Honor

by Ken K. CG Thank You Committee member

Dear College Guild,

Being locked away in a prison leaves a person with a deep sense of being worthless to those on the outside, a feeling of being nothing more than a burden to society as well as the ones we love. It's bothersome knowing there is hardly anything we can do (other than time) to repay our debts. It's even more bothersome not being able to give back to the ones who provide things who don't have to, such as kindness towards people like myself, whom most of the world has long forgotten.

It is so important to me that College Guild as well as its donors be constantly reminded that they are truly appreciated.

Being a part of CG's Thank You Committee has provided a sense of honor in a place where none is given. It has also given me an important life skill: Being able to express gratitude while doing something good, positive and productive for someone else.

There is no greater feeling that can be experienced from within the walls of a prison than the feeling of making someone's day a little brighter on the outside. The donors of College Guild as well as all those who are affiliated should always have a good warm feeling in their hearts for what they do because they truly deserve it. Bless you for all the opportunities you give.

Most Respectfully Yours, Ken K.

OUR MISSION

To stimulate in prisoners
an interest in life long learning
by providing a selection of free
correspondence courses.



Artist: Matt Matteo

Frontiers of Justice, Vol. 3: The Crime Zone ©2000

PLEASE HELP US!

___ My donation of \$100 enables one prisoner to participate in College Guild courses for one year.

___ My donation of \$47 buys 100 first class stamps.

___ My donation of \$20 provides free dictionaries to two prisoners.

___ My additional donation of \$ ___ helps us to continue offering the respect that can change prisoners' lives.

Donors who give \$100 or more will receive a personal letter of thanks (via CG) from one of our students.

contact us at collegeguild@gmail.com

College Guild can now accept donations via PayPal. Just go to our web page and choose the donate button.

___ Please send me more information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Many thanks on behalf of College Guild volunteers and student-prisoners for your generosity!

Your donation is tax-deductible.

For more information go to www.collegeguild.org