

AUG 12 1974

What It's Like at Lompoc Prison

'Home' of Watergate Figures

By William Moore
Chronicle Correspondent
Lompoc,
Santa Barbara county

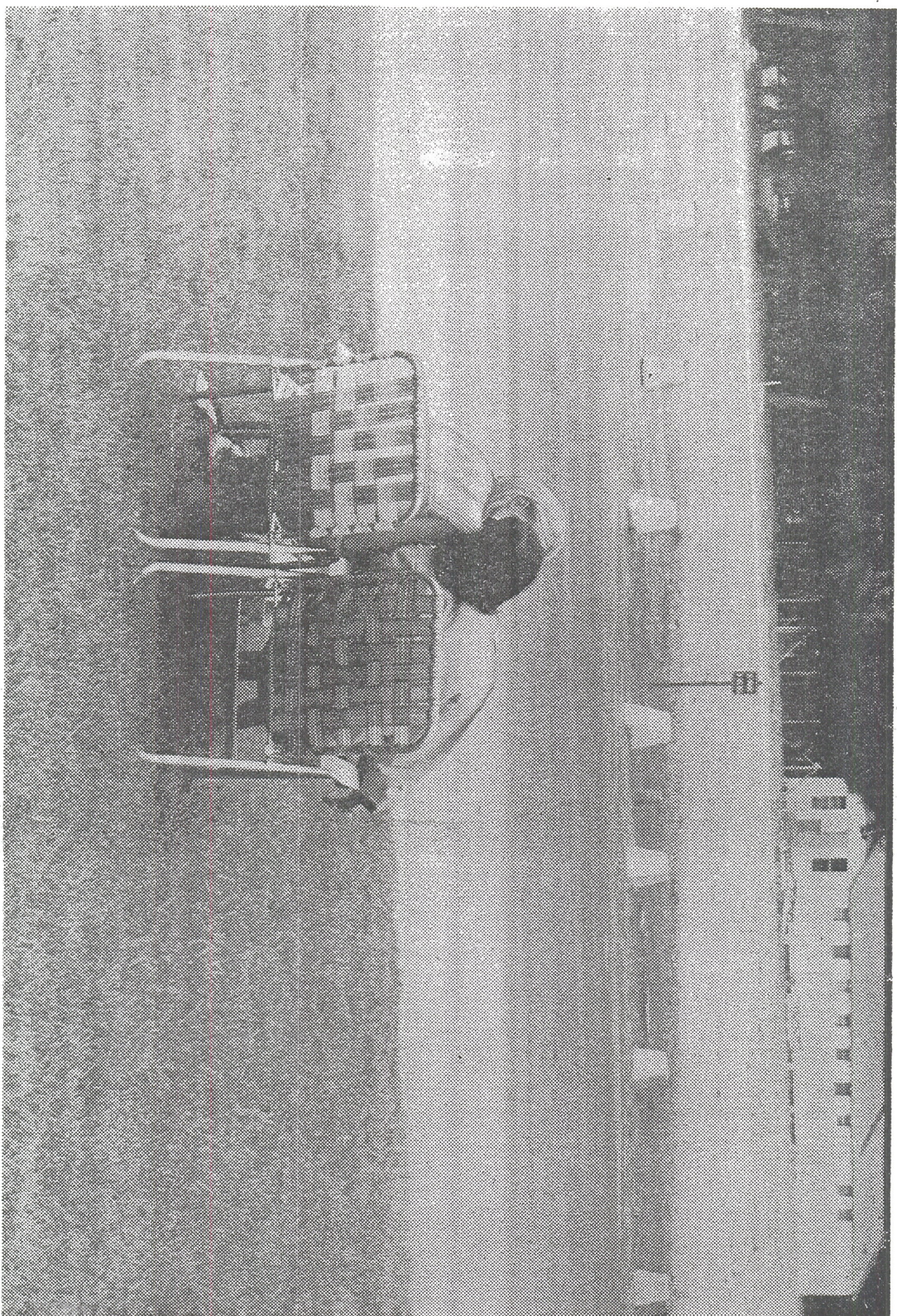
Francis Ranger, administrator of the federal minimum security prison camp here, took a deep, contemplative puff on a cigaret and declared solemnly: "Our prime purpose is protecting society to fulfill the mandate of the courts."

Ranger, whose facility has become home for several Watergate figures, was speaking as he stood alongside a driving range on the spacious grounds.

Nearby, a group of inmate duffers whacked away at golf balls, while a few others ambled up to the putting green.

There was a gentle breeze, creating ripples in the bright petunias and eucalyptus trees that dot the landscape.

"We're not that big a country club, you know," said Ranger, adamantly. "Maybe, though, we're more comfortable than most pris-



An inmate and a visitor at the Lompoc prison camp in Santa Barbara county

Photos by Peter Breinig

ons."

Like the two other minimum security U.S. camps that have attracted attention because of their Watergate inhabitants, Lompoc, indeed, is no ordinary prison.

It has no walls, fences, bars, no locks on any of the doors. Inmates are allowed to roam freely around the grounds, which are located in the scenic Santa Ynez Valley about 130 miles northwest of Los Angeles.

Smoking dope and guzzling booze are, potentially, not uncommon pastimes in the more remote reaches of the premises.

Visitors are allowed on weekend days and Monday, Thursday and Friday afternoons. Many of them picnic with the inmates on the verdant lawns, and the frequent kissing and caressing are not frowned on by the authorities.

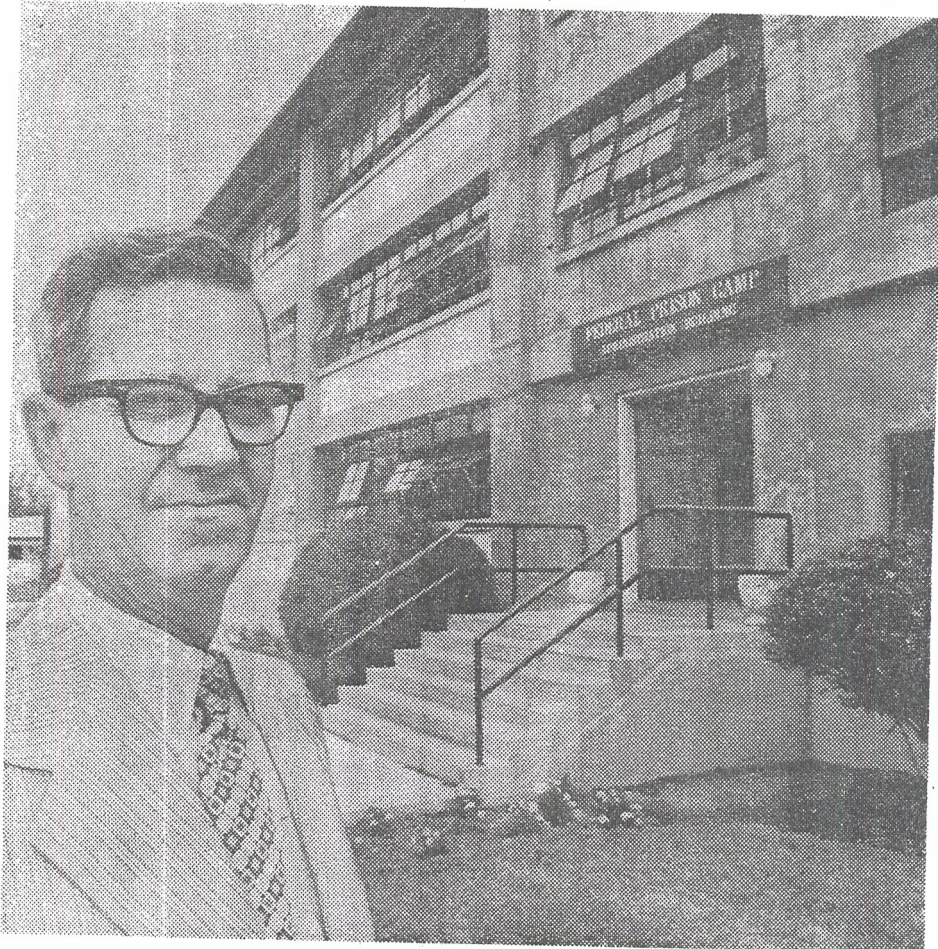
Although conjugal visits are not permitted at the camp, many inmates are allowed three-day furloughs (not including travel time) to visit their homes every 90 days.

In addition to the small golf course, the camp also features tennis courts, (with

lights) a gymnasium, handball courts, volleyball courts and a weight-lifting room.

The camp accepts no prisoners who have a history of violence, firearms violations or sex violations, according to Ranger. Most of the 362 inmates are narcotics offenders, many of them in their 20s, and appear to come from white middle-class backgrounds.

It all stands in stark contrast to the population at the nearby, predominantly black medium-security federal prison. That Lompoc facility is surrounded by big



LOMPOC ADMINISTRATOR FRANCIS RANGER
'We're not that big a country club'

barbwire-topped fences and sentry towers.

"The atmosphere around the camp has been getting more uptight what with all the publicity over the Watergate people," grumbled one minimum security inmate.

He was referring, in particular, to the arrival a week ago Friday of Herbert W. Kalmbach, Richard Nixon's one time personal attorney, who is serving a six-to-18-month term at Lompoc for his role in illegal fundraising activities for the 1972 presidential re-election campaign.

Donald Segretti, the attorney who indulged in political sabotage for that campaign, and Herbert Porter, the scheduling director for the Committee to Re-elect the President, have already served short terms at Lompoc.

And John Dean, former presidential counsel, is expected to arrive soon at the camp to serve his sentence for participating in the Watergate coverup.

"We used to be able to smoke pot and hashish all over the camp grounds, and the authorities never hassled us unless we were indiscreet," an inmate said. "Now there has been a bit of a crackdown, and we have to be a lot more furtive about it."

Another inmate said camp officials "went through the ceiling" when Segretti — quoted in a national magazine — revealed how many people hid their dope stashes, pipes and liquor bottles grounds known as Hippie in a wooded area on the Hill.

"At one point, the officials were even discussing the possibility of cutting down the trees in that area, but



HERBERT KALMBACH
'Pretty good guy'

better judgment prevailed," the inmate said.

"Mercifully, there are a lot of gopher holes around here where you can hide just about anything," another inmate said.

Some inmates felt resentful toward Kalmbach when he first arrived.

"Like the other Watergate types, he got a super-light sentence," said a young narcotics offender. "And we had much longer sentences for things we did not consider nearly as serious. My God, the Watergate men committed crimes against the people."

There was resentment, too, when U.S. marshals were spotted carrying Kalmbach's suitcases into his dor-

mitory. "Hell, no one did that for me," an inmate said.

But since then, Kalmbach has turned out to be "a pretty good guy, polite to us and all that," he added.

Kalmbach himself has refused to talk to the press. Ranger said he has been assigned, during the camp's regular weekday 8 to 4 working hours, to a small construction crew that is rebuilding part of the facility's sewage treatment plant.

"He requested outdoor work," Ranger said.

He said Kalmbach was "growing disillusioned by the system — he told me he no longer sees the FBI and other authorities on the pedestal he once did."

"Kalmbach acts like he's kind of sad," said an inmate who has seen him often. "When Nixon announced his resignation, Kalmbach and a few others were listening to it on a radio in the dormitory. Kalmbach was very, very quiet for a long time afterward."

"No matter how you look at it," said another inmate, "this place is still a prison, even if there are no bars. Kalmbach, like all of us, can't feel very happy in this type of setting."

"He's getting more like us every day. For instance, he can't stand the food either. So instead of going to chow, he eats peanut butter and granola in his dorm."

