

Serving Time With Jeb And Egil

By Robert R. Warner, Jr.
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I MET Jeb the day he arrived at Allenwood Federal Prison Camp in Pennsylvania and we quickly became friends.

Jeb Stuart Magruder is, or was, a well-to-do member of the Establishment. I am a member of the counter-culture, a Presbyterian minister who had lived underground, at subsistence level, for the last three years.

Jeb conspired "to obstruct justice and defraud the United States." I burned down a Reserve Officers Training Corps building in Honolulu in 1971 as an act of war resistance.

We would seem to be worlds apart, maybe even enemies, yet our lives have come together as fellow inmates here.

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THE EVENING of June 4 found me eating dinner with Jeb, together with Egil Krogh Jr. and Peter Matwsewitch, a young draft resister from New York City. We made an incongruous foursome.

Peter was doubly tired from laboring on the farm all day with Bud Krogh — they are good friends — but Bud still looked fresh. His ten miles of running a day obviously made the difference. I often spent about four of those miles on the road with him myself before he was released.

Jeb looked a bit bedraggled himself that first day. He appeared anxious and uncertain, the way most of us feel coming into the "joint" for the first time.

Our talk ran fast for a few minutes, and my own tension and ambivalence toward him began to dissolve in the surprising interplay between us. We continued to build bridges since then and to open up to each other across great barriers of experience, life-style and political commitment.

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ONE OF the most difficult things about prison is the separation and hardship that prison life imposes upon families. Bud knows about these and Jeb, too. We have talked about them often.

My most cherished moments are the times my family comes to visit, overcoming that separation for a few precious hours. I stand near my dormitory above the parking lot and wave to them as they drive in. Somehow my wife Nancy manages to lug our new baby, Hopi, and several armfuls of diapers, clothes and food up the steps to the visiting patio.

When I arrive, Sunshine shouts "Daddy" and jumps into my arms to be hugged and kissed. Then off he runs to play with the other prisoners' children and their toys. Sometimes one of Bud Krogh's sons patiently kept Sunshine entertained for hours.

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MY FRIENDS on the outside keep asking me how I feel about these guys Krogh and Magruder who share my status here at Allenwood. Remember, I am told, these are the people who did everything they could to destroy the antiwar movement. And you are in prison largely because of them.

On reflection, I must admit, I have felt at least vaguely satisfied whenever another of Richard Nixon's men finally "gets what he deserves." Each time somehow seems to even the score a bit. And I cannot lightly ignore the war crimes of the Nixon (and Johnson) era, in which my Allenwood friends participated, at least indirectly.

However, as I have come to know both Bud and Jeb I have found them, contrary to my earlier skepticism, to be men of great openness and sensitivity to other people. They also had their sincere political commitments. Their questioning stance and efforts at ethical reappraisal have been remarkable.

No, my earnest friends on the outside, I have no feelings of hate or revenge to speak of concerning these men. As far as I am concerned, the present and the future count for more than the past. And they ache for their families just as the rest of us do here. We are different, yes, but you see in many ways we are both on the same side now. We are oppressed by prison and the attitude of vengeance it represents.

The Rev. Robert R. Warner Jr. is serving six months at Allenwood; three years of his sentence were suspended.