

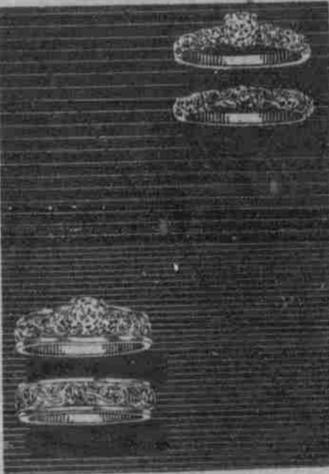
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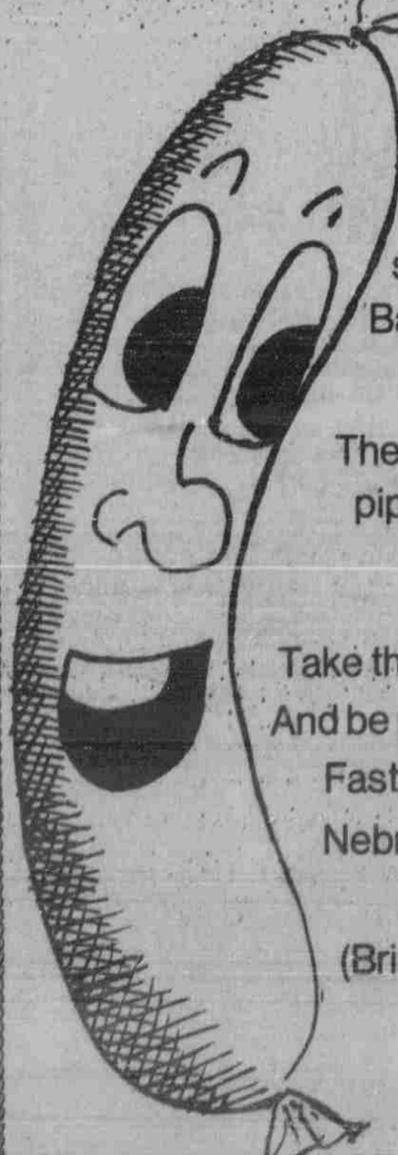
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Women/Speak

Prison life described

By Mary Shackleton
 Life at the Nebraska Center for Women in York in many ways is like a college residence hall in the 60s, according to Sally Johnson, a prisoner at the center.

Johnson and two other prisoners from York, Teresa Anderson and JoAnne Dixon, spoke on "Women in Prisons" at Women/Speak '74 Wednesday.

Anderson explained when a woman enters the center, she goes through a three-week orientation program. The woman is segregated from other prisoners for 10 days. She can't send or receive mail, her meals are brought to her and her laundry is done for her. Rings, personal belongings and hair rollers are taken away from the prisoner, she said.

The prisoner stays in segregated living quarters for about 35 days. Then she is moved to a pretrustee dormitory where she is given her belongings and is allowed to stay up late two nights a week. Prisoners sleep in individual rooms, which have green, wire mesh doors that are locked nightly by supervisors.

Trustee dorms not locked

If a prisoner continues behaving well, she earns the privilege to live in a trustee dorm where the front doors are never locked. The rooms in that dorm are wooden and there the prisoners are responsible for getting themselves up in the morning, she said.

There are 63 women now in the center, which has capacity for 74. It costs \$13-\$15 daily to keep a woman there.

The youngest woman is 18 and oldest is 45, Johnson said. The average age of prisoners is 24.

Prisoners are given opportunities to be on work release; finish high school requirements for a diploma; attend movies, skate and swim in York; organize a fashion show, talk with UNL law college students about legal problems, attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, learn to play the piano, and attend church regularly and take free university classes from a group that comes to the center from Concordia College.

Nine prisoners work in Omaha and six work in York, Anderson said.

Children may visit

Prisoners' children—girls from one to 15 and boys from one to 10—can visit them for as long as a week, Dixon, the other speaker, said.

Women work in the kitchen, yard, sewing factory, administration office, library and furnace room, Anderson said. Pay ranges from about 70 cents per day to \$1.75, she said. Most women work about nine hours daily.

Prisoners at York, unlike most other prisons, are allowed to wear and sew their own clothes, make-up and wigs, Dixon said.

Prison 'not fun'

Although Anderson, Dixon and Johnson agreed that York was better than most other prisons in the United States, Johnson emphasized that prison is "not a lot of fun."

Anderson, who was a portrait photographer before entering prison, said she would like to see more vocational skills taught at the center.

Dixon said she thinks the prison should establish a counseling program for the prisoners' families to help them understand what prison does to a person.

"People either come out of prison better or worse. They never come out the same," she said.

daily nebraskan

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