

PRISON BREAKS 3

The larger than life story of Mark DeFriest, an infamous prison escape artist - the "Houdini of Florida" - whose notoriety and struggle with mental illness threaten his quest to be freed after 31 years behind bars.



Animation from the Florida State Hospital escape sequence

Mark DeFriest's life is living history. At age 19, his original sentence was for a nonviolent property crime, but because of additional punishment for escapes, he has spent his entire adult life behind bars. DeFriest has survived 31 years in prison, most of it in longterm solitary confinement in a custom cell above the electric chair at Florida State Prison. He has been raped, beaten, shot and basically left for dead, but he has somehow lived to tell the tale. When he was sent to prison in 1981, five out of six doctors declared that he was mentally incompetent to be sentenced. They warned the judges that Mark couldn't learn better behavior and needed treatment. Instead, he was allowed to plead guilty, even at one point to a Life Sentence.

DeFriest zapped by judge, zipped away to state pen

Mark Corwin DeFriest — who made at least six “zip guns” during his stay in the Bay County Jail — was hustled from his solitary confinement cell to state prison Friday after receiving consecutive sentences of three years to life and 15 years

Art Surber

• STATE EDITOR

on charges of burglary with assault and attempted escape.

his arrest, and was charged in several escape plots using “zip guns” made from materials found in and around his cell.

Investigators said DeFriest used foil from toothpaste tubes, paper and plumbing to construct the six “zip guns” — the basis for the contraband charges against him.

Jail officials charged that the last “zip gun” DeFriest constructed was used during an Aug. 2 escape attempt involving DeFriest and two other inmates.

The three prisoners opened the metal door of a plumbing access chamber and crawled across a jail ceiling into a sixth floor hallway, where they confronted a

The documentary brings this story to life. True to the psychiatrists' expectations, Mark has amassed an astonishing number of disciplinary reports in prison for things like possession of escape paraphernalia, but also for behavioral violations like telling the guards his name was James Bond. "He's a little bit crazy, a little bit manipulative, but not really a bad person", as his former lawyer puts it. Apparently that point was lost on the system, as Mark has always been held with the worst of the worst. In a solitary cell, his talent for mechanics and escape turned inward, and what ensued was unexpected: art, letters, creativity.

Bars and chains can't hold the Houdini of the DOC

By **CYNTHIA BARNETT**
Sun staff writer

STARKE — Florida State Prison inmate 073061 has earned his nickname: Houdini.

Mark C. DeFriest has escaped from county jails, a medium-security prison and the state mental hospital at Chattahoochee. And he's come close to freedom from a federal prison and Florida State Prison.

He can make keys to almost anything — including prison doors — with little more than a toothbrush handle or a scrap of aluminum. He can get out of handcuffs — even without his homemade keys. He can make zip guns and other weapons, which he engraves with the numbers "007." He can pick a lock. He once told a judge who had just sentenced him to 45 more years for escape, "I'll send you a postcard from Bermuda."

But "escape artist" is just one facet of the man who may be the highest security risk in Florida's prison system. He's also a publisher, drug dealer, businessman, poet and self-declared "prison hermit for world peace" — all within the walls of the state's most heavily guarded institution.

"I am going to spend the next 20 years of my life on close management, no matter what I do or how I act, so it really doesn't matter if I continue my covert operations," DeFriest said in a series of written interviews with The Sun. "Since I am bored to death in solitary confinement and have nothing better to do, I may as well continue on my merry way and screw

them if they can't take a joke."

DeFriest, a 30-year-old New York native, has an eighth-grade education and an IQ of about 130, which is high but not genius level. There is little in his prison record or his known background that explains his extraordinary aptitude for beating the system.

He is such an escape risk that prison officials can't give him access to media interviews and the other types of visitation typical inmates are allowed. He lives in a cell built specially to prevent him from escaping or making the countless types of trouble documented in his thick prison file.

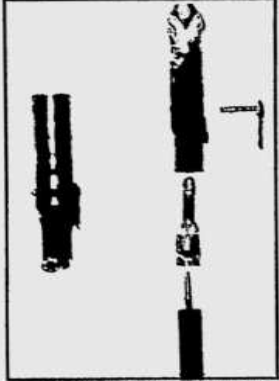
He can't even have a toothbrush — he's used them too many times to make keys to get him in and out of his cell. He's made keys out of other materials that allowed him free roam of his wing, enabling him to visit fellow inmates for late-night sexual encounters and drug smoking, according to court depositions.

DeFriest got in trouble for keys most recently in May, when he pleaded guilty to possessing contraband found in a 6-inch long tube hidden in his rectum. The tube's contents included an aluminum prison key with interchangeable teeth, \$2,010 in cash, six homemade handcuff keys, seven hacksaw blades, 34 razor blades, gold jewelry, stamps, drill bits, solder and homemade padlock keys.

The prison key, which fits various doors within FSP, exactly replicated codes to the Foldger-Adams key system used at the prison.

"If he knew all the patterns, he could have proba-

See ESCAPER on page 5A



TIMOTHY O. DAVIS/The Jacksonville Sun

A zip-gun made by Mark DeFriest. The gun holds one .22-caliber bullet and is fired when a nail on a rubber band is released and strikes the rear of the shell.



TIMOTHY O. DAVIS/The Jacksonville Sun

Prison officials say inmate Mark C. DeFriest is such a big security risk that outsiders aren't allowed close enough to take a photograph. Above is a picture of a picture, along with some contraband DeFriest has smuggled into Florida State Prison mounted in the background.

ESCAPER

Continued from page 1A
bly walked out of the institution, with the exception of the last gate," FSP Investigator Brian Gross said.

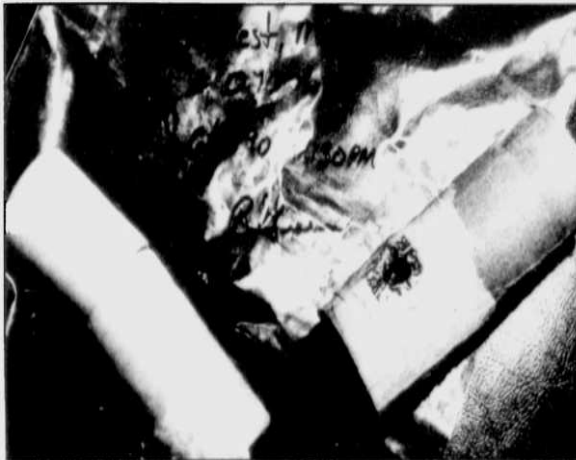
In his correspondence with The Sun, DeFrist said he did know the patterns and still does — he has them memorized. He sent the newspaper a copy of 20 key codes used within the prison, codes that could get him out of the wing he's in now, and other parts of the institution, if he ever again had the opportunity to make keys. DeFrist said he figured out the codes after bribing a still-employed FSP officer into letting him print impressions of his keys.

Why would DeFrist admit to such a security breach?

"He loves to brag — that's just the way he is," Gross said.

DeFrist once challenged prison officials to find several items of contraband hidden in his solitary-confinement cell on Q-wing, the most secure part of the prison. After several unsuccessful searches, DeFrist showed officials a tiny slit over his cell door. With a long piece of wire, he fished out a sack that contained tooth-brush handles formed into his cell key.

"We wouldn't have found it other-



Inmate Mark DeFrist most recently pleaded guilty to inmate possession of contraband after prison officials, with the help of a metal detector and X-ray machine, found a 6-inch-long tube, at left, inside DeFrist's rectum. Among the items in the tube were \$2,010 in cash, \$19 in stamps, gold jewelry, an aluminum prison key with interchangeable teeth, hacksaw blades, razor blades, drill bits, solder and homemade handcuff keys. At right is a crack pipe used by and confiscated from DeFrist in prison in a separate incident.

management meal" (a nutritional but unappetizing loaf) for a few days as a punishment, people sent him brownies, jars of peanut butter, candy and gum. Prison officials later learned DeFrist had stolen a copy of the memorandum putting him on the loaf and had sent it off to be reproduced with a word change that made the order appear permanent.

His most innovative mail finagling was the production of a 32-page newsletter called "Inner Journeys." The publication focused on "world peace" and "world healing meditation." It also documented the "hell" of solitary confinement. It preached the spirituality to be gained from writing to prisoners, the horizon expansion that comes from helping the incarcerated.

DeFrist had set up throughout the country a treasurer, a publisher, a printer and various bank accounts so donations to the newsletter could be kept in his name without prison officials finding out (it's illegal to operate a business from prison).

In one essay, DeFrist described his cell and its proximity to Florida's electric chair. He wrote, "I am forced to hear, through the air vent, the pleas for help and the somber cries of those souls leaving their earthly bodies through prolonged electrocution."

From this newsletter and various

"The persecution, depersonalization and humiliation I suffer is compounded by the frustration of doing life on close management in solitary confinement," DeFrist said. "My contempt for the tyranny of prison officials has no bounds. To me, any act or action is justifiable."



75%

secure part of the prison. After several unsuccessful searches, DeFrist showed officials a tiny slit over his cell door. With a long piece of wire, he fished out a sack that contained tooth-brush handles formed into his cell key.

"We wouldn't have found it otherwise — but he likes to brag that he can beat the administration anytime," Gross said.

DeFrist said beating the administration can be done with one word: money.

"The money involved in cocaine sales would corrupt a saint," DeFrist said, adding he's made a quarter million dollars dealing drugs at FSP. "The monthly salary of a Florida State Prison guard is insufficient incentive in my opinion to keep them from participating."

DeFrist has used correctional officers to smuggle everything from drugs to guns into the prison, according to court files.

In 1984, several of his "horses" (corrupt prison guards) went to prison themselves after DeFrist lured them into a notorious, though failed, escape attempt from FSP.

The plot involved Ted Bundy, who

Inmate Mark DeFrist most recently pleaded guilty to inmate possession of contraband after prison officials, with the help of a metal detector and X-ray machine, found a 6-inch-long tube, at left, inside DeFrist's rectum. Among the items in the tube were \$2,010 in cash, \$19 in stamps, gold jewelry, an aluminum prison key with interchangeable teeth, hacksaw blades, razor blades, drill bits, solder and homemade handcuff keys. At right is a crack pipe used by and confiscated from DeFrist in prison in a separate incident.

was then on Death Row and had earned his own reputation as an escape artist after escaping confinement twice in other states. But Bundy wasn't the brains behind the plot — that was DeFrist's role. He was the one who got guards to smuggle guns, hacksaw blades, bullets and various other tools to DeFrist and other inmates.

In a court deposition for that case, DeFrist testified, "My plan was simply to take control of Q-wing one night and saw out the bottom floor. . . . What I wanted to do was take control of the wing with firearms and go through all the grill gates downstairs, and saw the window out."

When asked how he could have gotten through the tall fences filled with razor wire that surround the prison, DeFrist answered, "Well,

the razor wire is not so much of a deterrent as it looks. I've went flying through that stuff quite a few times. It doesn't really slow you down."

DeFrist was dubbed "Houdini" a decade ago in Tallahassee, where he sawed through the bars of his jail cell, climbed down knotted bed sheets, hauled himself over a chain-link fence and escaped in a truck-tractor taken from near the Leon County Jail. When he returned there later when facing criminal charges on the escape, DeFrist managed to reduce his handcuffs to scrap metal while on special watch in the jail's super-secure "Bundy cell," where the notorious Ted was once housed.

DeFrist could be a free man today had he not committed so many crimes while incarcerated. He originally was sentenced to four years in prison at age 20 for a weapons

charge in Pinellas County. But since then, he's been convicted of escapes, burglaries and so many counts of possessing contraband that he hasn't even begun to serve most of his sentences.

He's also lost much of his gain time for crimes that weren't worth the security risk of transporting him outside of prison for court appearances, including numerous counts of destruction and mail violations.

DeFrist has mastered the U.S. Postal system as stealthily as he's mastered the art of escape. He buys mailing lists from religious publications and mass-produces letters that have gotten him hundreds of pen-pals and thousands of dollars.

In the winter, he writes that he is cold. People send blankets and money for winter underwear. When he once was put on the prison's "special

in one essay, DeFrist described his cell and its proximity to Florida's electric chair. He wrote, "I am forced to hear, through the air vent, the pleas for help and the somber cries of those souls leaving their earthly bodies through prolonged electrocution."

From this newsletter and various other mail-outs, prison officials estimate DeFrist has collected thousands of dollars that he's hidden in various bank accounts.

DeFrist said he returned \$15,000 to people all over the world after officials shut down his newsletter.

"I don't steal from my friends or turn on people who trust me, so I didn't accept the money," he said. "I make most of the money I need to finance my operations from drugs — since 1982, I have made about a quarter of a million dollars selling cocaine and marijuana. Most is now in stocks and bonds and money-market accounts."

Meanwhile, DeFrist files for indigence in his court cases and receives the services of a state-paid public defender. But he has no remorse for manipulating the state's criminal justice system.



THOMAS O. DAVIS/The Gainesville Sun
A folding knife produced by DeFrist. Because the knife folds it is more easily concealed on the body.

In May, DeFriest pleaded guilty to possessing contraband, including a key with interchangeable teeth that could be used to open doors throughout the maximum security prison. He received another year in prison.

Prison officials describe DeFriest, transferred from Polk Correctional Center after guards found a homemade handgun in his possession, as one of the most escape-prone inmates in Florida State Prison, the state's only maximum security prison for men.

"He's a problem — there's no question about that. He is a very security-minded individual," said Tom Barton, the prison's superintendent.

DeFriest, who has an IQ of 130, has been responsible for "extraordinary breaches" of the prison's security system, said Barton, who confirmed that a special cell was built for him but refused to describe the cell or even say where it is located in the prison.

DeFriest was charged with possession of contraband, including 20 \$100 bills, six homemade handcuff keys, seven hacksaw blades, 34 razor blades and the aluminum key with interchangeable plastic teeth, which could be removed to correspond with various prison locks.

Some of the items were discovered with a metal detector during a strip search in June 1989. The items were in a container hidden in DeFriest's rectum, according to court documents.



Clown in a Straitjacket, Mark's self portrait (see reward)

Prisoner escapes over wall



David Keys

A prisoner used tin snips, rope and a grappling hook to escape from Pentridge Jail at the weekend.

Police yesterday described the man David Keys, 26, as "potentially dangerous".

"He had served 11 months of a seven-year term for the armed robbery of a Fitzroy bank.

Warders noticed him missing from the prison's A division at the 8 am roll call yesterday.

Police said he sawed two iron bars from a window to escape from his cell.

He then used tin snips to cut through a cyclone wire fence to get into the prison's farming area.

"We believe he scaled the wall, using the rope and grappling hook near an unmanned guard tower," a detective said yesterday.

"The grappling hook was apparently made in the prison work-

shop." The equipment was found later near the prison wall.

Keys, heavily tattooed, is of medium build, 172 cm with sallow complexion, brown hair and green eyes.

The State shadow Minister for social welfare, Mr. Eddy, last night made a new call for an inquiry into Pentridge security.

"The easy manner in which this latest prisoner escaped, is just another in a long list of knifings, killings, bombings and escapes," he said.

WARDERS WITNESS DARING ESCAPE

FROM PENTRIDGE- MELBOURNE.

In one of the most sensational breaks in the history of Pentridge Gaol, Maxwell Karl Skinner, 26, scaled the 20 foot wall of the remand section In full view of armed warders this afternoon and escaped.

His escape immediately brought into operation one of the biggest police manhunts for many years.

Hundreds of armed police, in wireless cars, scores of motor cyclists and police on foot scour- ed large areas of Carlton this afternoon.

Skinner was exercising In the remand section of Pentridge under the supervision of armed warders. He was dressed in civilian clothes, preparatory to appearing in the City Court to- morrow morning.

Skinner suddenly broke free from the line of prisoners, scaled the 20 foot inner wall without the aid of a rope, and ran across a section of the prison farm.

Warders fired several shots at him, but missed.

He then climbed to the top of the 12-foot outer wall, beside an unoccupied sentry box, and dropped into the street outside.

Police have been told conflicting reports as to Skinners movements after escaping.

It is believed that he stole a push bicycle or motor cycle, or got on a tram or bus near the gaol.

One report said he was seen alighting from a tram in Carlton and was heading for Melbourne General Cemetery. Every available wireless car, mobile patrolman and traffic police was immediately organised, and within minutes had cordoned off the cemetery, where it was thought Skinner was hiding.

Police were posted at every entrance, and squads on foot searched the thickly-wooded cemetery, which has many ideal place for the fugitive. Skinner is already notorious for his escapes from custody, he previously escaped from Castle- main Reformatory, Fitzroy Watchhouse and Richmond Watchhouse.

Warders are mystified as to how Skinner clambered over the wall.

Real Prison Escapes That Shouldn't Have Been Possible



5. Choi Gap-bok Squeezed Through a Food Slot



Picture every movie cell door you've ever seen. You know how they've always got that food slot at the bottom, the tiny rectangle guards slide the food trays through? If you need help, it's about 6 inches tall (that is, the length of a dollar bill) and about 17 inches wide.

Now imagine crawling through that slot.

Because a guy actually did this. His name was [Choi Gap-bok](#) and at the ripe old age of 50, he was arrested by South Korean police on suspicion of burglary. Gap-bok had been in and out of jail throughout his life, and somewhere along the way he picked up doing yoga. We don't know if he practiced yoga specifically with this in mind or if it just happened to come in handy, but either way, he decided it was time to use the 23 years of stretchy practice he had under his belt to slip right the fuck out of his prison cell.

He asked his guards for his special "skin ointment," and [they gave it to him](#), then [went off to sleep](#). After all, when an old man asks for lotion and privacy you don't fucking hang around outside the door. What's the old guy gonna do, lube himself up and squeeze through his food slot?

Yep. It can totally be done, as the below video demonstrates (especially if you're not a huge guy -- Choi was 5-foot-4-inches). If you can get your head through it, everything else from your shoulders to ribs kind of compress -- he was able to squeeze all of his parts through in 30 seconds. It's really just a matter of body control and *really, really not wanting to be in jail*.

Why did he escape? Because he wanted to prove his innocence, and obviously breaking out of prison is [the best way to do that](#). He was caught six days later and put in a cell with [a smaller food slot](#), so now, not only can he not escape, but he almost certainly won't get a turkey at Thanksgiving.

4. Jack Sheppard Becomes a Prison Escape Celebrity

If you were alive in 18th century London you'd know who [Jack Sheppard](#) was. A small-time thief, he became notorious for his awesome escapes. And we're not exaggerating here -- crowds would actually go to his trials just hoping he'd dazzle them. For instance, have you ever seen a movie or TV show where somebody busts out by tying a bunch of bedsheets together into a rope? Well, Jack Sheppard most likely invented that.

Granted, he didn't have a window to drop out of, so he first [smashed through his cell's ceiling](#) and then dropped his rope of sheets over from the prison roof. Breaking ceilings is noisy work, so there was a crowd gathered when he hit the bottom. He quickly pulled a Bugs Bunny, telling everyone "[He's over there!](#)" and then ran off with the cops in hot pursuit. So, yeah, he was something of a showman.

When he got caught again, he and his wife, Lyon, were thrown in a cell together. They broke a bar off the window and then pulled the "bedsheets-ropes" trick again and ran off. So when he was arrested again shortly thereafter, he was locked in a strong-room, stuck in leg irons and chained to the floor. The guards, not enjoying his wacky escapes that, oh, by the way made them look like assholes, put [even more chains on him](#).

This [did not deter Sheppard](#). First, he found a nail and bent it to create a lock pick for his handcuffs. Then, using his chains, he wrenched free an iron bar from the chimney (which was ironically installed to prevent prisoners from escaping) and then used that bar as a tool to break through the ceiling. All told, he ended up breaking through six barred doors, jumping to an adjacent house's roof, sneaking inside without waking anyone up and then running off into the night.

When he finally died, it was with a third of London's total population attending his hanging. Ultimately, his fame was his undoing -- the thick crowd actually prevented his friends from taking his recently hung body to a doctor to be revived. Because even in death he had an escape plan.

3. Frank Abagnale Convinces His Guard He's a Prison Inspector

If you don't recognize the name, [Frank Abagnale is the renowned con-man](#) Leo DiCaprio played in *Catch Me If You Can*. He's done bank fraud, impersonated pilots, teachers, doctors, and even lawyers, all using outlandish techniques that you wouldn't even think would work in a cartoon. But maybe none compares to the absolutely ridiculous way he conned himself out of prison.

After being sentenced to 12 years for various forgeries, Abagnale had fantastic luck in 1971 when the U.S. Marshal transporting him forgot the detention commitment papers. No, this didn't mean he got to go free -- not yet -- but it did give Abagnale an opening to subtly convince the guards that [he was actually an undercover prison inspector pretending to be an inmate](#). You know, here's a clean, well-spoken, educated guy who just happens to be missing his documents? It had "The bosses sent this guy to spy on us" written all over it, and Abagnale played it up for all it was worth. This meant the guards treated him far better than any other inmate (since they thought he was there to investigate conditions in the prison) -- Abagnale got better food and privileges than anyone else.

But this article is about prison escapes, and it was right around then that Abagnale decided to go ahead and just bullshit his way right out the front door. He called a friend of his, Jean Sebring, who had been visited by the FBI agent in charge of Abagnale's case, Joe Shea, when he was pursuing Abagnale. She doctored the business card Shea left her, then pretended to be a freelance magazine writer doing an expose on prisons and used that to also get the business card of a prison inspector. She visited Abagnale, posing as his fiance, and slipped him both cards.

Abagnale then told the guard that he was, in fact, an undercover inspector just like they thought. He gave them the prison inspector business card as proof, and then told them it was imperative he speak to the FBI immediately. The guards slapped each other on the back and bragged about how smart they were to not be fooled by the government's obvious ploy. Abagnale gave them the other card (the one for the supposed FBI agent), and they dialed the number on it. Abagnale's friend picked up at a phone booth, pretending to be an FBI operator.

She said she needed to meet with Abagnale right outside of the detention center, and, of course, the guards had no problem with this because A) They thought they were talking to the FBI and B) They thought Abagnale was a federal inspector. Of course, it was just Abagnale's friend waiting in a car, and the guards watched as their prisoner just walked out and drove off into the sunset, laughing his ass off

Steven Jay Russell



[Polunsky Unit](#), where Russell is located

Steven Jay Russell (born September 14, 1957) is a [U.S. con artist](#) known for escaping from [prison](#) multiple times. A film about his life and crimes was produced in 2009, named *I Love You Phillip Morris*.

In 2011, his crimes were featured on the TV show *I Almost Got Away with It* in the episode "Got a Boyfriend to Support." A documentary about his crimes was aired on TV in 2005 *On The Run* episode "King of Cons" on Discovery Channel.

Biography

Russell claimed his life of crime started in the early 1990s when he was fired from his job as an executive of a food service company after his employers found out he was gay. He was later arrested for fraud for faking a slip-and-fall accident, and was sentenced to six months in prison. After serving four weeks in the Harris County jail, Russell escaped on May 12, 1992, by using a spare set of civilian clothes and a walkie talkie to impersonate a guard. He later went to take care of his boyfriend Jimmy Cambell who was dying of AIDS; Cambell died three weeks after Russell was re-arrested and sent back to Harris County jail.

While in prison Russell met Phillip Morris, whom he quickly fell in love with. The two were later released from prison, and wanting to give Morris a glamorous lifestyle, Russell managed to get a job as the chief financial officer of the North American Medical Management Company (NAMM). He then started embezzling funds, stealing \$800,000 before the activity was detected and Russell and Morris were arrested. Sent back to the Harris County jail, Russell, considered a flight risk, had his bail set at \$950,000, but later made his next escape by calling the Harris County Records Office, pretending to be a judge, and lowering his bail from \$950,000 to \$45,000 before posting the reduced bail. He was later tracked down via trap-and-trace phonecalls when he called his friends asking for money. He was arrested in a hotel room in West Palm Beach, Florida one week after his second escape.

Russell was sentenced to 40 years in prison for the NAMM fraud and was sent to the Maximum Security Estelle Unit in Huntsville, Texas. Russell concocted a new escape after he began collecting green highlighter markers and a spare prison uniform and used his cell toilet to dye the uniform green to look like doctor's scrubs. He then walked out of the front door and hiked away from the prison to a house where he convinced a man to give him a ride into town. He then took a taxi to Houston. After tracking down Morris, on bail awaiting trial for his involvement in the NAMM case, he convinced him to run with him and the two fled to [Biloxi, Mississippi](#), making money in casinos, where Russell was later identified and arrested by a U.S Marshal. Morris was also quickly found and arrested.

He was sent back to a maximum security prison in Texas to serve an additional and cumulative 45-year sentence. From here, Russell made his most inventive escape ever; he used acting and laxatives to fake the

symptoms of AIDS, and a prison typewriter to fake his medical records to show him as HIV positive, being granted a special-needs parole to a nursing home to die. He then called the prison and parole board, posing as a doctor and AIDS specialist, asking for prisoners interested in an experimental treatment, and volunteered. Once out of Texas, he then sent death certificates to the prison and parole board stating he had died.

While out on the run, Russell (determined to get Morris out of prison) managed to make up an attorney's bar card. He then called the Estelle Unit where Morris was serving his time, posing as a judge, and issued a bench warrant to have Morris moved to a Dallas prison so he could visit him disguised as his attorney Jean Louis without being recognized. U.S. Marshals visited the prison to find Russell already gone. He then dropped off the radar for a period of time.

On March 20, 1998, Russell posed as a millionaire from [Virginia](#) in an attempt to legitimize a \$75,000 loan from [NationsBank](#) in [Dallas](#); when bank officials became suspicious and alerted the police, Russell feigned a [heart attack](#) and was transported to hospital. While in the hospital, Russell was placed under guard by [FBI](#) agents; however, Russell managed to impersonate an FBI agent on his [cell phone](#) and convinced those guarding him that he was no longer a wanted man.^[1]

U.S. Marshals later tracked Russell down in Florida where they arrested him when he went to retrieve a fax. Russell was then sentenced to a total of 140 years in prison (119 for the escapes and subsequent scams).

As of 2010, Russell, [Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#) #00760259,^{[2][3]} is located in the [Polunsky Unit](#).^[4] His release date from prison is July 12, 2013.

I love you Phillip Morris: a conman's story

Steven Russell – currently serving a 144-year sentence – is an inveterate conman who has made a series of daring jail breaks to reunite with his lover. As his story is brought to the screen, starring Jim Carrey and Ewan McGregor, he talks from his prison cell to Elizabeth Day



Steven Jay Russell photographed in Huntsville Prison, January 1997. Photograph: George Hixson

In the Michael Unit correctional facility of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Steven Russell sits on the other side of a bulletproof screen with an out-of-place smile on his face. He is wearing white prison overalls and the collar of his shirt is stained with what looks like faded tomato sauce. Curiously, one of the first things he mentions when he starts to speak is the poor quality of the prison food. "Hotdogs, hamburgers, pork this and pork that," he says with a laugh. "There's quite a bit of pork."

His upbeat demeanour is at odds with his predicament. Nine years into a 144-year jail sentence for assorted charges, including felony escape and embezzlement, Russell is one of the Michael Unit's most notorious and closely guarded inmates. His skin is pale and puffy from the 23 hours a day he spends in solitary confinement and he has almost no contact with the outside world. We have to speak into connected phone receivers to make ourselves heard through the thick screen and the line is crackly and unclear even though he is sitting only two feet away from me. Several months ago, a fellow prisoner shook him by the hand while he was being walked to his cell – it was the first time Russell had been touched for almost a decade.

And yet, despite his desperate situation, Russell insists his story is not a dispiriting tale of [crime](#) and punishment. Ask him why he is here, incarcerated and alone, and he will answer without missing a beat that it is because he was a fool for love.

"This is a love story," he says, light and breezy as a chatshow host. "It's about what a person will do, who is in love, who can't see the forest for the trees." He smiles his crooked smile and sits back in his chair. A

glimmer of sweat appears on the flesh just beneath his right eye and he wipes it away rapidly with the sleeve of his shirt.

Steven Jay Russell has many other names. As well as the 14 known aliases he used while fabricating bogus credentials and passing himself off variously as a judge, a doctor, an FBI agent and a bar student, he has been nicknamed "Houdini" and "King Con" for his remarkable ability to escape from prison. From 1992, when he was imprisoned for the relatively minor charge of insurance fraud, Russell managed to escape four times from several different Texan jails over a five-year period. His story has been immortalised in a film starring [Jim Carrey](#): it had its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January and is due to be released in the UK next year. Critics have already called it "top notch" and "an hilarious tragedy" in the vein of Steven Spielberg's 2002 hit movie *Catch Me if You Can*, which recounts the real-life story of con artist Frank Abagnale Jr.

Like Abagnale, who successfully stole millions of dollars by posing as a pilot, an attorney and a doctor, Russell's life story is also the stuff of improbable fiction. His escapes were marked by astonishing brazenness that left law-enforcement officials slack-jawed in bafflement. But unlike Abagnale, Russell's shenanigans were driven by his obsessive love for a fellow inmate called Phillip Morris whom he met in jail in 1995. (The escapes always took place on Friday 13th, the day on which Morris was born.)

"It was lust at first sight," says Russell now, in his first interview since the film went into production. "I didn't think it was possible. I mean, we were in prison! He was softly spoken, with a deep southern accent. I saw him in the law library trying to get a book. He's short – he's only 5ft 2 and I'm 6ft 2, and I said, 'Hold on, I'll get that for you.' And that was it."

I ask Russell to describe the man for whom he experienced such a startling *coup de foudre*. "He's very intelligent, he loves fishing and four-wheel driving. He loves music." What kind? "Oh, er, classical, like Bach and Beethoven and Mozart. He's like a little mess. He's a diabetic, but he'll go out and buy 12 doughnuts and eat them all at once."

Russell and Morris, who was serving a sentence for failing to return a rental car, were both released on parole in 1995. Setting up home together in Houston, Russell went in search of money to lavish on his lover. He persuaded a medical insurance company to hire him as their chief financial officer on the basis of a greatly exaggerated CV with all references directed back to him. In five months, he embezzled

\$800,000 from dormant accounts to fund the couple's glamorous lifestyle of Mercedes-Benz cars, jet-skis and matching Rolex watches. Russell even had his teeth capped and plastic surgery on his eyes.

Eventually, he was found out and sent back to jail, but not before impersonating a judge over the telephone and demanding his own bail money be lowered from \$900,000 to \$45,000 (he paid with a cheque that later bounced). Back in captivity, his escapes were from then on shaped by the single, overwhelming desire to be with Morris.

Perhaps, then, it is no surprise the film of Russell's life, which co-stars [Ewan McGregor](#) as Morris, is being released with the self-explanatory title, *I Love You Phillip Morris*. The gay love story at the heart of the film initially put off several American distributors; it was finally acquired in May by Consolidated Pictures Group and is due for release in the US on Valentine's Day next year.

"I think it's a good title," admits Russell. "I did those things because I wanted to be with Phillip. I was out of control." And therein lay his fatal flaw; despite managing repeatedly to outwit the federal authorities, Russell was always caught because, each time he escaped, he would end up beating a path to Morris's door. He claims not to have seen Morris, who now lives in Arkansas, for several years. Does he still love him?

"Well, I'm not in love with anyone else," he says, shrugging his shoulders. "I miss him. But I'm also realistic. I don't want to ever do anything that would hurt him again and any action I took now would cause him problems. I can't be with him, there's no way they [the authorities] would let that happen."

How does that make him feel? "It doesn't make any difference how I feel about it," he says, his natural ebullience temporarily deserting him. "You can't feel sorry for yourself. I did this to myself."

In person, the 52-year-old Russell is an engaging, quick-witted conversationalist. He claims to have an IQ of 163 and spends his days reading newspapers and magazines. "I have a stack this high," he says, lifting his hand several feet off the floor. "I read the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Scientific American*, *National Geographic* and the *Economist*. You can't be lazy. If you don't keep yourself focused in here, you lose your mind."

He talks in a soft, southern drawl punctuated with high-pitched laughter and looks quite unexceptional: he is bald, broad-shouldered and plump, with stubby fingers. Perhaps his only distinguishing feature is his mouth, which opens to reveal sharp and surprisingly delicate teeth.

But it is this unmemorable physical exterior that has proven to be Russell's greatest asset. He seems to possess an extraordinary capacity to transform himself and go unnoticed. According to Steve McVicker, the Houston-based journalist who befriended Russell and wrote the book on which the film is based: "He has lots of different voices and he always makes sure to give a different face in every mugshot."

Russell's escapes were never violent – he claims, even now: "I didn't break out. They opened the door and let me through" – but they were ingenious. Twice, he simply walked through the front gates. In 1993, while languishing in the Harris County Jail in Houston for making a false insurance claim about an injured back, Russell disguised himself as a workman with a walkie-talkie and a pair of women's black trousers stolen from the prison infirmary. "I tapped on the security gate with my walkie-talkie and the guy let me through," he explains, nonchalantly. Was he scared? "No. And if you are scared, you really mustn't show it. You have to act like you're meant to be there."

Three years later, he stockpiled green felt-tip pens from prison art classes, squeezing the ink from the cartridges into a sink of water and dying his overalls the colour of surgical gowns. "You have to be very careful because if you wring them out, you get streaks in the material," he says matter-of-factly. Underneath the makeshift medical clothes, Russell taped several plastic bags tightly to his body so that police dogs would not be able to follow his scent once he was on the run. He picked a moment when the woman manning the front desk was on the telephone and then, unquestioned by prison staff, simply walked out "dressed like Dr Kildare".

"You do get a huge adrenaline rush. I walked to the woods just outside the penitentiary and after about 100 yards, I turned round and went like this [he mimes giving someone the finger with the glee of a naughty child]. I guess it was kind of arrogant."

Russell walked to the nearest house, knocked on the door and claimed to be a doctor who had been involved in a car accident and who needed a lift into town. The stranger obliged. "By the time they had their helicopters and search teams out, I was drinking margaritas in a bar in Houston."

But not for long. Within the year, he was back in jail, this time plotting his most daring escape ever. Over a 10-month period in 1998, Russell began to feign the symptoms of Aids. He ate almost nothing and took laxatives in order to look as emaciated as possible. He wrote up fraudulent health records on the prison library typewriter and sent them to the relevant department in the internal mail system for inclusion in his medical file. Astonishingly, Russell was so persuasive that the Texas authorities never ran their own tests and he was transferred to a nursing home. From there, he posed as his own doctor over the telephone and received permission from parole officers to take part in a non-existent treatment programme. A few weeks later, the bogus doctor called the prison to let them know that, sadly, Russell had died.

In reality, Russell was very much alive and on his way, once again, to be with Phillip Morris. "That escape was the most difficult," says Russell. "I had to completely discipline myself to lose the weight and did lots of reading up on the symptoms of Aids. You do whatever you have to do. I get my ideas from studying. I watch, I look for weaknesses. You look the whole way around something and you never let yourself get blocked in.

"I don't think I'm cleverer than the police, but I managed it because they think anyone who is a criminal is stupid and they're complacent. I think anyone can escape from anywhere."

He says he is convincing at assuming different professional personae because, in each case, he is able to sound like he knows the terminology. "Most of the time I make it up, it's just bullshit." I ask him to demonstrate and he immediately slows his voice down to a deep, languid drawl. "I, uh, did a bail hearing for Steven Russell this morning. I don't have the computer print-out in front of me but the docket sheet should reflect his lowered bond." He grins. "It's kind of like acting."

No one is quite sure what to make of Russell, a man who possesses as many facets as he does aliases. For Steve McVicker, who visited Russell every Saturday for six months while he was researching his book, it was hard not to warm to him. "He's a natural-born liar but he's so charming and so funny," says McVicker. "If he ever gets out of jail, I can imagine having dinner with him."

Terry Cobbs, the commander of special operations at the Texas Department for Criminal Justice who tracked Russell down after his two last escapes, is less enamoured. "He's a big guy so full of himself who absolutely loves the attention," Cobbs says. "He's obnoxious. I can't stand to be around him for too long.

"There's two sides to him: if he's in a group of people who don't know his identity, there's a confident part, a remarkable ability to convince them. The other end of that is when he knows you know who he is and he's like a bowl of mush. All of his confidence goes out of the window, his voice will shake and he is a frightened little man."

But for Jim Carrey, the actor who plays Russell in *I Love You Phillip Morris*, the truth was more straightforward: "The bottom line was that he [Russell] wanted to be loved and he felt disenfranchised his entire life."

Russell politely dismisses this thesis when I put it to him, but there is much in his background to suggest it might be true. In 1957, Russell was given up for adoption at birth by his mother, who had just divorced his biological father and did not want to raise a child out of wedlock. Russell later tracked her down only to discover that she had remarried his father and given birth to three other children, each of whom was Russell's biological sibling. "I felt rejected," is all he will say now. "I had a little bit of a problem when I found out."

His adoptive parents, Brenda and Thomas, were a conservative couple who ran one of the largest food produce companies in the state of Virginia. Russell later married and had a daughter, Stephanie. For much of the late 1970s, Russell was a law-abiding citizen who played organ for the local church and, somewhat ironically, volunteered as a deputy police officer.

But in 1985, the death of his adoptive father triggered a personal crisis. Walking out on his wife and 12-year-old daughter, Russell moved first to Houston, where he began living as a gay man and then, three years later, to Los Angeles.

"People use the term 'sham marriage', but I don't think it was a sham because there was a sexual attraction towards women, but there was always a stronger attraction towards men," he says. "I finally let go and it became easier to deal with my sexuality because I wasn't trying to hide it."

It was his sexuality that, indirectly, first led Russell into criminal activity. He claims to have been sacked as a sales manager for a food services company in Los Angeles when the chief executive found out he was gay, after which he spiralled into bitterness. "When I lost my job, that really screwed with my head," he says. "I lost control of my life." Soon, he was being arrested for lewd behaviour and false passport

applications. When he fraudulently pretended to have hurt his back to claim insurance money, he was sent to jail in 1992 for the first time.

Looking back now, does Russell feel guilty about any of it? There is a long pause. "Yeah," he says finally. "I feel bad that I've deprived my daughter from seeing me [Stephanie still occasionally visits Russell in jail]. I was a completely different person back then." He claims that he is resigned, now, to a future behind bars – he says that planning escapes was "exhausting" and that he no longer suffers from the extreme anxiety he would get while on the run (although he still has nightmares about being chased).

Would he do it all again? "No. I would never put myself or anyone else through that. Instead of feeling sorry for myself when I lost my job, I would have got another job. I didn't know how to react because I was angry. I'm not angry anymore."

In fact, news of the film's release has made him into something of a celebrity among his fellow inmates and he is occasionally asked for autographs, sometimes even from the prison guards. Although he has not been able to see the movie yet, Russell has managed to download some clips from Google and is struck by the accuracy of Carrey and McGregor's portrayal.

Carrey and Russell have never met, but the actor has heard taped recordings of Russell's voice and Phillip Morris acted as an adviser to the production. "They've got it down," Russell says. "The way we speak, the mannerisms, the clothes – everything. It's surreal."

Yet despite Russell's apparent acceptance of his fate, few around him are convinced. McVicker says he would not be surprised if Russell turned up on his doorstep tomorrow. "He's just so darn persistent," says McVicker. "If I know Steven, he's in touch with Phillip Morris right now." Terry Cobbs remains "absolutely positive that his little brain is constantly turning".

And it is difficult to believe that Russell, with his finely tuned people-watching skills and his childish delight in getting one over the authorities, does not miss the social interaction of life on the outside. He tells me he is "pretty happy", but there is a gap at the end of his sentences, a small exhalation of sadness, a drooping at the corner of his tired eyes that suggests otherwise.

Of course, if he does plan to escape, it will have to be on Friday 13th. Does he know when the next one will fall? "November," he replies, without hesitation and for the briefest instant his face is totally serious, his

mouth set in an unsmiling line. Then he catches himself and starts to giggle. Perhaps King Con is not ready to lay down his green marker-pens just yet.

The Master Manipulator

I Love You Phillip Morris:

I'll get to that "so-called" comment in a minute. But first, the premise: Russell landed in the Harris County jail in 1995 for insurance fraud. It wasn't his first time there, but it was his first chance to meet the improbably-named Phillip Morris, a hapless inmate doing time for violating a probation imposed when he failed to return a rental car. Morris, who McVicker describes as "a boy-man with porcelain skin, wire-rimmed glasses, and baby-fine blond hair," caught Russell's eye one afternoon while browsing the jail's law library. The two non-violent offenders hit it off immediately. Russell, according to McVicker, "found something appealing in Morris' Lolita-in-distress air as he unsuccessfully tried to reach a book on the top shelf of a bookcase." Morris, for his part, "had been impressed with Russell's knowledge of the law and flattered by his obvious interest in him." As Morris puts it, "he seemed like a man who knew what he was doing." True enough. Within a few days Russell somehow arranged to have himself transferred to Morris' cell block, an all-homosexual unit. "One day I turned around, and there he was," recalls Morris. "We saw each other and began to hug." Little did Morris know the ride his new lover was on.

I'll get to that in a minute too. But back to that "so-called" remark. Certain stories beg to tell themselves, and McVicker, using the sparest prose, makes it seem as if this one does just that. His artful narrative threads the sub-plots of Russell's prison breaks, business schemes, ex-lovers, affection for Morris, and his past life as a conventional family man into a tapestry of epic adventure. It's a quality that certainly obscures McVicker's painstaking attention to craft while keeping this unpretentious, soap-operatic book grounded in the smallest details of Russell's life. The problem is that the person ultimately orchestrating this story really isn't McVicker at all, but rather Russell. McVicker, an ex-reporter for the Houston Press, had a maddening time "verifying what Russell told me, and wrote in his letters." Russell's brother, mother, ex-lover's family, and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles refused to talk in any substantial way about Steven Russell's life. Russell's ex-wife had little to offer. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice was also gagged on Russell's case, probably because his repeated escapes made it look so damned stupid.

To his credit, McVicker could not be more up-front about these problems, and this common journalistic headache really might not matter so much if the subject at the story's sizzling vortex wasn't a brilliant and vulpine master of manipulation. But, as it stands, McVicker finds himself in the awkward position of reporting on a man who has lived his adult life deceiving others with details almost

exclusively provided by the deceiver himself. The fact that McVicker “never once caught him in a lie” is cold comfort. Not to mention quiet testimony to the machinations of a man with an IQ of 163.

But so what. While the core of the story might be misconstrued, or at least unverifiable, the outlines and inner layers have complete integrity and make for a riotous, fun, and even provocative book. When Morris and Russell made parole, they moved to Houston and lived like queens-fancy restaurants, sports cars, weekends at the Ritz, vacations to Miami. Naturally, this lifestyle had to be paid for, but such a concern was always an afterthought for Russell because “Russell felt prepared to enter a world where he knew his skill as a con artist would be appropriately rewarded. He was ready to join the ranks of the Fortune 500.” The deep background to this audacious and seemingly ludicrous ambition leads McVicker into to the ironic source of Russell’s very well-honed deceptive skills: the law.

Russell eventually found his mother, and the reunion becomes one of the book’s more sensitive episodes. Even more interesting, however, is the way in which Russell exploited his access to the tools of law enforcement to walk the thin blue line like a tightrope and then flagrantly violate it.

After coming out of the closet, Russell lost his job and his family, suffered a steep emotional decline, and began visiting parks and bathrooms to engage in anonymous sex. It was the latter indulgence that led to his forced resignation from a job as a well-paid manager at a food distribution company. And it was that resignation, made in the midst of a sexual identity crisis, that inspired him to make “a conscious decision to become a career criminal.”

Russell’s life subsequently became a revolving door between freedom and imprisonment. The well-greased hinge was always a well-choreographed deception. In the clinker, he escaped through deceptively simple schemes. Luck, sure, but Russell’s foresight predisposed him to be lucky. For example, his first escape from the Harris County jail followed the logic that the most obvious was the least obvious. Russell decided that the best way out would be to “get hold of civilian clothes and somehow walk out of the front door from the visitors side of the jail.” His prison job as a data clerk gave him access to the discarded clothes of new prisoners. After pilfering duds that looked like they might fit, he asked a small kid whom he had occasionally defended to secrete them in an isolated location on another floor. Next, to improve his get-up, he snagged a walkie-talkie by getting an infirmary nurse to drop her guard by offering her a hamburger that he obtained from the officers’ dining hall. He intensely studied jail security, paying specific attention to when guards took cigarette breaks. Finally, he arranged for his lover at the time to make detailed maps of the visitors’ lobby. On May 12, 1993, he went for it, and it worked.

McVicker tells it with characteristically subdued intensity:

As he made his way to the front doors, he partially covered his face by pretending to speak into the walkie-talkie. At any moment, he expected to be grabbed, tackled, or shot. But nothing happened. He kept on walking. No one shouted for him to stop. No one slapped a pair of handcuffs around his

wrists. No one put him in a headlock or wrestled him to the ground. No bullets flew past his head. . . . And then he was outside.

And once outside, the high-stakes hijinks intensified. “Ex-convicts fresh out of prison often find themselves bouncing from menial job to menial job,” McVicker writes. “For Steven Russell, that simply would not do.” That’s when the Fortune 500 plan came in. To see what an executive resume looked like, Russell took out bogus ads in the Houston Chronicle for swank jobs in a fabricated Fortune 500 company. From the responses, he cobbled together a dream resume for an HMO executive position under an alias, set up accounts with answering services that posed as his references, called back glowing reports on his own behalf, and learned the business inside and out. The upshot? He landed an \$85,000-a-year job as the CFO of North American Medical Management. “Russell was the best chief financial officer we ever had,” one of NAMM’s founders would later admit. That was, of course, when he wasn’t pilfering hundreds of thousands of dollars from the company.

The prison escape and the NAMM scam accurately strike the tenor of a half-dozen or so other con jobs that keep the line between freedom and imprisonment so precariously thin for Russell. As McVicker recounts these schemes, however, he loses sight of two themes that might have leavened his book with material that would have added some substance to its style. First, Morris never comes to life as anything more than a whiny little twerp who remains strategically ambivalent about his lover’s chronic criminal behavior. What were the dynamics of their relationship? Did Morris feel strange about driving the \$86,000 Mercedes that Russell bought him on his \$85,000 salary? Morris stayed with Russell through thick and thin, wealth and poverty, sickness and health. There was obviously an unusual spark and a tenacity to their relationship. But McVicker never captures it. Second, Russell pulls off what he does not only because of his own intelligence but also because of others’ incompetence. Failing to do thorough background checks or leaving prison guardposts empty to take cigarette breaks suggests deeper institutional problems that McVicker fails to explore.

In the end, though, we have Russell. He’s enough to keep the story going. How, after all, do you resist the arrogance of a man who says, “The only reason I have remained incarcerated is so that Steve can finish his book”?

(To which McVicker responds, “God help the good men and women of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. They’re going to need it.”)

Alcatraz



Cell vents

On January 3, 1960, Morris was shipped to Alcatraz, where he became prisoner AZ1441. Morris reportedly began devising his escape within a year of his arrival at Alcatraz.^[5] There were three others involved: [John Anglin](#), his brother [Clarence Anglin](#) and [Allen West](#) (who masterminded the plot^[6] but was the only conspirator who did not participate in the escape, as he was unable to finish removing the ventilator grill in his cell in time to join the escape when it was eventually carried out^[7]). The escape was long and complicated. Over a period of two years, Morris, West and the Anglin brothers created a raft and lifelike dummies, and stole tools to dig with. So many escape materials had been used by the conspirators that they had created a workshop above their cell row.

Allen West was cleaning above their cell row and asked prison guards if he could cover the area with blankets. West explained his cleaning area was extremely dusty and dust was falling down on the prison floor. These blankets completely covered West's workshop area. By May 1962, they had dug through the vents at the back of the cells, working in shifts, with someone keeping lookout while others dug. On the night of June 11, 1962, the attempt went ahead. The group placed the dummies in their beds, escaped through the vents at the back of their cells and into the utility corridor. They then proceeded onto the roof and down to the bay. There they boarded the raft they had constructed and disappeared into the night.

The following morning prison officers found dummies lying in the beds and the prisoners missing. Parts of the raft and life preservers were later found in the bay together with a waterproof bag containing personal effects of the Anglins. The authorities were certain the men had drowned.^[8] They cited the fact

that "the individuals' personal effects were the only belongings they had, and the men would have drowned before leaving them behind."

When authorities searched for bodies, they found none. Harlem crime boss [Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson](#) claimed to have known of the plot and told authorities that he had arranged for a boat to pick the men up from the bay. However, his testimony was given little credit due to his background and prior attempts of lying to gain favor or plea deals. The FBI said in their report that on July 17, 1962, a Norwegian ship spotted a body floating in the water 20 miles northwest of the Golden Gate Bridge. Although they did not retrieve the body and did not report the sighting until October, they told the police the body was dressed in clothes that prisoners on Alcatraz used, and that the body resembled Frank Morris.^[9]

According to the 2011 [National Geographic](#) documentary, *Vanished from Alcatraz*, bones from a human were found eight months after the escape on the shore near the place where the Norwegian ship had spotted a body. The bones were recovered and buried and on *Vanished from Alcatraz*, the bones were dug up, and DNA from the bones was compared to one of Morris' paternal relatives. The DNA did not match and so the bones were not Morris', although it is not certain if they belonged to the floating body at all.



Dummy head found in Morris' cell.

In the end, authorities pointed out that the chances of the prisoners surviving the trip across the bay were slim. At the time, there was no discovery of robberies or car thefts that could have been attributed to them, and the men were habitual criminals yet were never arrested again. The FBI officially closed the case on December 31, 1979, concluding that "no credible evidence emerged to suggest the men were still alive" (though there have been many subsequent reconstructions and yearly triathlon events are held to commemorate the event). There have been sightings of the three men over the years^[10] which provides

circumstantial evidence that they might have survived. If Morris did survive the escape and is still alive today, he would be 86 years old.^[8]

Alleged escapes

While being deported to the U.S., Abagnale escaped from a British **VC-10** airliner as it was turning onto a taxi strip at New York's **JFK International Airport**. Under cover of night, he scaled a nearby fence and hailed a cab to **Grand Central Terminal**. After stopping in **The Bronx** to change clothes and pick up a set of keys to a Montreal bank safe deposit box containing \$20,000, Abagnale caught a train to Montreal's **Dorval airport** to purchase a ticket to São Paulo, Brazil, a country with which the U.S. had no extradition treaty. After a **close call** at a **Mac's Milk** in **Dundas, Ontario**, he was apprehended by a constable of the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police** while standing in line at the ticket counter. Abagnale was subsequently handed over to the **U.S. Border Patrol**.^[citation needed]

In April 1971, Abagnale reportedly escaped from the Federal Detention Center in Atlanta, Georgia, while awaiting trial. In his book, Abagnale considers this to be one of the most infamous escapes in history. During the time, U.S. prisons were being condemned by civil rights groups and investigated by congressional committees. In a stroke of luck that included the accompanying **U.S. marshal** forgetting his detention commitment papers, Abagnale was mistaken for an undercover prison inspector and was even given privileges and food far better than the other inmates. The Federal Department of Corrections in Atlanta had already lost two employees as a result of reports written by undercover federal agents and Abagnale took advantage of their vulnerability. He contacted a friend (called in his book "Jean Sebring") who posed as his fiancée and slipped him the business card of "Inspector C.W. Dunlap" of the **Bureau of Prisons**, which she had obtained by posing as a freelance writer doing an article on fire safety measures in federal detention centers. She also handed over a business card from "Sean O'Riley" (later revealed to be Joe Shea), the **FBI** agent in charge of Abagnale's case, which she doctored at a stationery print shop. Abagnale told the corrections officers that he was indeed a prison inspector and handed over Dunlap's business card as proof. He told them that he needed to contact FBI Agent Sean O'Riley on a matter of urgent business.^[citation needed]

O'Riley's phone number (actually the number altered by Sebring) was dialed and picked up by Jean Sebring at a payphone in an Atlanta shopping mall, posing as an operator at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Later, he was allowed to meet unsupervised with O'Riley in a predetermined car outside the

detention center. Sebring, incognito, picked Abagnale up and drove him to an Atlanta bus station where he took a [Greyhound](#) bus to New York, and soon thereafter, a train to Washington, D.C. Abagnale then bluffed his way through an attempted capture by posing as an FBI agent after being recognized by a motel registration clerk. Still intent on making his way to Brazil, Abagnale was picked up a few weeks later by two [NYPD](#) detectives when he inadvertently walked past their unmarked police car.^[8]

William "Willie" Sutton (June 30, 1901 – November 2, 1980) was a prolific [American bank robber](#). During his forty-year criminal career he stole an estimated \$2 million, and eventually spent more than half of his adult life in prison. For his talent at executing robberies in disguises, he gained two nicknames, "Willie the Actor" and "Slick Willie." Sutton is known, albeit apocryphally, for the [urban legend](#) that he said that he robbed banks "because that's where the money is."

Life summary

Sutton was born into an Irish-American family in an Irish neighborhood in [Greenpoint, Brooklyn](#). He was the fourth of five children, and did not go beyond the 8th grade of school. He turned to crime at an early age though throughout his professional criminal career he did not kill anyone. Described by [Mafioso Donald Frankos](#) as a little bright-eyed man who stood at 5 feet 7 inches, he was very talkative, chain-smoked hand rolled [Bull Durham tobacco](#) cigarettes, and dispensed mounds of legal advice to any convict willing to listen. Inmates considered Sutton a "wise old head" in the prison population. When incarcerated at "[The Tombs](#)" (Manhattan House of Detention) he did not have to worry about assault because Mafia friends looked after him. In conversation with Donald Frankos he would sadly reminisce about the violent and turbulent days in the 1920s and 1930s while he was most active in robbing banks and would always tell fellow convicts that in his opinion, during the days of [Al Capone](#) and Charles Lucania, better known as [Lucky Luciano](#), the criminal underworld was the bloodiest. Gangsters from the time period, and many incarcerated [organized crime mafia](#) family leaders and [made](#) Mafiosi loved having Sutton around for companionship. He was always a gentleman, witty and non-violent. Frankos declared that Sutton made legendary bank thieves [Jesse James](#) and [John Dillinger](#) look like amateurs.

Sutton married Louise Leudemann in 1929. She divorced him while he was in jail. Their daughter Jeanie was born the following year. His second wife was Olga Kowalska, whom he married in 1933. His longest period of (legal) employment lasted for 18 months.

Sutton preferred the name Bill, but police nicknamed him Willie.

He robbed about 100 banks from the late 1920s to his final arrest in 1952—with several prison terms in between; he was also a master at breaking out of prisons.

□ Career in crime

Sutton was an accomplished bank robber. He usually carried a pistol or a [Thompson submachine gun](#).

"You can't rob a bank on charm and personality," he once observed. In an interview in the [Reader's Digest](#) published shortly before his death, Sutton was asked if the guns that he used in robberies were loaded. He responded that he never carried a loaded gun because somebody might get hurt. He stole from the rich and kept it, though public opinion later turned him into a perverse type of [Robin Hood](#) figure. He allegedly never robbed a bank when a woman screamed or a baby cried.

Sutton was captured and recommitted in June 1931, charged with [assault](#) and [robbery](#). He did not complete his 30-year sentence, escaping on December 11, 1932, using a smuggled gun and holding a prison guard hostage. With the guard as leverage, Sutton acquired a 13.5-meter (45 ft) ladder to scale the 9-meter (30 ft) wall of the prison grounds.

On February 15, 1933, Sutton attempted to rob the [Corn Exchange Bank and Trust Company](#) in [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#). He came in disguised as a [postman](#), but an alert passerby foiled the crime. Sutton escaped. On January 15, 1934, he and two companions broke into the same bank through a [skylight](#).

The FBI record observes:

Sutton also conducted a Broadway jewelry store robbery in broad daylight, impersonating a postal telegraph messenger. Sutton's other disguises included a police officer, messenger and maintenance man. He usually arrived at banks or stores shortly before they opened for business.

Sutton was apprehended on February 5, 1934, and was sentenced to serve 25 to 50 years in the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the machine gun robbery of the Corn Exchange Bank. On April 3, 1945, Sutton was one of 12 convicts who escaped the institution through a tunnel. Sutton was recaptured the same day by Philadelphia police officer Mark Kehoe.

Sentenced to life imprisonment as a fourth time offender, Sutton was transferred to the Philadelphia County Prison, Holmesburg section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On February 10, 1947, Sutton and other prisoners dressed up as prison guards. The men carried two ladders across the prison yard to the wall after dark. When the prison's searchlights hit him, Sutton yelled, "It's okay!" No one stopped him.

On March 20, 1950, Sutton was the [eleventh](#) listed on the [FBI's](#) brand new [FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitives](#), created only a week earlier, on March 14.

In February 1952, Sutton was captured by police after having been recognized on a subway and followed by [Arnold Schuster](#), a 24-year-old Brooklyn clothing salesman and amateur detective. Schuster later appeared on television and described how he had assisted in Sutton's apprehension. [Albert Anastasia](#), Mafia boss of the Gambino crime family, took a dislike to Schuster because he was a "squealer." According to Mafia turncoat and government informant, [Joe Valachi](#), Anastasia ordered the murder of Schuster, who was then shot dead outside his home on March 9, 1952.

Judge [Peter T. Farrell](#) presided over a 1952 trial in which Sutton had been charged with the 1950 heist of \$63,942 (equal to \$610,146 today) from a branch of the [Manufacturers Trust Company](#) in [Sunnyside, Queens](#), part of more than \$2 million he was estimated to have stolen from various banks over the course of his career in crime. Sutton was found guilty and given a sentence of 30 to 120 years in [Attica State Prison](#).^[1]

Farrell suspended Sutton's sentence in December 1969, ruling that Sutton's good behavior in prison and his deteriorating health due to emphysema justified the suspension of the sentence. After the ruling was delivered, Sutton said "Thank you, your Honor. God bless you" and started crying as he was led out of the court building. Sutton still had to receive a suspension of a separate 30-year-to-life sentence he had received in [Brooklyn](#) in 1952 and then could be released on parole from a 1930 conviction.^[2]

□ Final years

Willie Sutton stole an estimated \$2 million in his career, and spent more than half his adult life in prison.

A series of decisions by the [United States Supreme Court](#) in the 1960s led to his release on [Christmas Eve](#), 1969, from [Attica State Prison](#). He was in ill health at the time, suffering from [emphysema](#) and in need of an operation on the arteries of his legs.

Once a free man, he spoke about [prison reform](#) and consulted with banks on anti-robbery techniques. In an ironic display, he made a television commercial for New Britain Bank and Trust Co. in Connecticut for their cr card with picture ID on it. His lines were, "They call it the 'face card.' Now when I say I'm Willie Sutton, people believe me."^[3]

Sutton died in 1980 at the age of 79; before this he had spent his last years with his sister in [Spring Hill, Florida](#). He frequented the Spring Hill Restaurant where he kept to himself. After Sutton's death, his family arranged a quiet burial in Brooklyn in the family plot. According to findagrave.com his plot is under the family name of Bowles at Holy Cross Cemetery.

□ An urban legend

Sutton is famously — but apocryphally — supposed to have answered reporter Mitch Ohnstad, who asked why he robbed banks, by saying, "because that's where the money is." The supposed quote formed the basis of [Sutton's law](#), often taught to medical students.

In his partly ghostwritten autobiography, *Where the Money Was: The Memoirs of a Bank Robber* (Viking Press, New York, 1976), Sutton dismissed this story, saying: The irony of using a bank robber's maxim as an instrument for teaching medicine is compounded, I will now confess, by the fact that I never said it. The cr belongs to some enterprising reporter who apparently felt a need to fill out his copy...

If anybody had asked me, I'd have probably said it. That's what almost anybody would say...it couldn't be more obvious.

Or could it?

Why did I rob banks? Because I enjoyed it. I loved it. I was more alive when I was inside a bank, robbing it, than at any other time in my life. I enjoyed everything about it so much that one or two weeks later I'd be out looking for the next job. But to me the money was the chips, that's all. Go where the money is...and go there often.^{[4][5]}

List of Alcatraz escape attempts

In its 29 years of operation, there were 14 **attempts to escape from Alcatraz prison** involving 36 inmates. Officially, every escape attempt failed, and most participants were either killed or quickly re-

captured. However, the participants in the 1937 and June 1962 attempts, though presumed dead, disappeared without a trace, giving rise to popular theories that they were successful.

Attempted escapes

April 27, 1935

Joseph Bowers was working burning garbage at the island's incinerator when he suddenly ran and began to climb a chain link fence in an apparent attempt to make for the shore. Quickly spotted by a guard in a watch tower, he ignored orders to desist as well as a warning shot before being hit by rifle fire. He then fell 10–20 meters to the shore below and died.

December 16, 1937

Theodore Cole and Ralph Roe had gradually filed through iron bars in the prison's mat shop in the industries building and escaped on a very foggy day, preventing them from being spotted by guards in the watch towers. The two jumped into the water and were never seen again, but the severe weather conditions at the time have led to a consensus that they drowned in the bay and their bodies were swept out to sea by the strong current in [San Francisco Bay](#). However, they were listed as #1 and #2 on the [FBI Most Wanted List](#).

May 23, 1938

Rufus Franklin, Thomas R. Limerick, and James C. Lucas attacked and killed a guard^[1] with a [claw hammer](#) in the woodwork shop in the industries building and then proceeded to the roof, where an armed guard shot Franklin and Limerick. Other guards arrived at the scene. Lucas was cornered and surrendered to the guards.

January 13, 1939

Arthur 'Doc' Barker, William Martin, Rufus McCain, Henri Young, and Dale Stamphill were inmates of the prison's supposedly most-secure unit, D-Block, when they managed to escape the cell house and reach the Alcatraz shore on the night of January 13, 1939. As they were putting a makeshift raft together they were spotted and fired on by a guard in a watch tower. Barker was killed, Stamphill wounded and the others recaptured and sent to [solitary confinement](#). But they were found to be alive almost 30 years later they survived and got arrested once again.

☐ **May 21, 1941**

Joe Cretzer, Sam Shockley, Arnold Kyle, and Lloyd Barkdoll were working in the industries area when they jumped the guards on duty and attempted to saw through window bars to reach the shore. The tool-proof bars foiled the attempt and they surrendered when this became apparent. Both Cretzer and Shockley would try to escape again in the [Battle of Alcatraz](#).

☐ **September 15, 1941**

John Bayless was working on the garbage detail and managed to elude the guards and reach the Alcatraz shore. He jumped into the water and tried swimming to [San Francisco](#) but quickly gave up the attempt. He was killed by the icy temperature of the water.

☐ **April 14, 1943**

James Boarman, Harold Brest, Floyd Hamilton, and Fred Hunter escaped from the industries area after overpowering and binding two guards. However, the escapees were not long in the water before one of the captive guards managed to free himself and raise the alarm. The fleeing prisoners were fired upon; Boarman was wounded, and his body was never recovered. The others were all recaptured, although Hamilton spent two days freezing in a small cave before climbing back into the industries building, where he was discovered by correctional officers.

James Boarman (January 1, 1919 – [presumed dead](#) April 14, 1943) took part in [Alcatraz](#) prison's 7th escape attempt on April 13, 1943.

At 9:30 a.m., in the model building at the northwest end of the island, the four convicts, with "[shivs](#)" (prison-made knives) in hand, overpowered Custodial Officer Smith and bound and gagged him. Shortly afterwards, Captain of the Guards, [Henry Weinhold](#), noticing that Smith was not on guard, entered the room and was also overpowered. Then, the convicts leapt out a window, clad only in their underwear and covered in grease, and plunged 30 feet down a sheer cliff into the water. They had left behind two of four cans that were designed to stay afloat and had army uniforms inside.

Smith managed to get his whistle loose and into the mouth of Weinhold, who blew it. At the same time, Officer Frank Johnson outside saw the convicts swimming away and sounded an alarm. The tower guards trained their guns on the convicts in the water and began shooting. A bullet hit Boarman in the back of the head, near his left ear. Boarman floated in the water unconscious. A prison launch pulled alongside

Brest, who was holding on to the unconscious and wounded Boarman. As Brest reached up for the guard's grip, he let go of Boarman, who disappeared beneath the water. The guards were convinced Boarman was dead.

Hunter, injuring his back and cutting his hands, gave up on swimming and sought refuge in a nearby cave. The guards took a boat over to the entrance of the cave. One of the guards ordered him to come out. When he didn't respond, the guard fired a pistol shot. Hunter then came out. The hunt was continued throughout the day in the hope of finding the bodies.

Hamilton, assumed to have been dead, had been hiding in the same cave as Hunter. Three days later, on Friday night, he climbed back up the cliff and through the same window from which he had jumped. He then hid under a pile of material in the storeroom of the model building. Weinhold, while searching for implements used in the escape, discovered Hamilton the next morning. Hamilton was not wounded by gunfire. Warden [James A. Johnston](#) made an interesting, conclusive statement the day after the escape: "We're positive that Hamilton is dead. He was shot, and we saw him go under." Hamilton's brother Raymond worked as driver for [Bonnie and Clyde](#) and committed crimes with them, before being executed in 1935.

The body of James Boarman has never been found; he is presumed drowned.

☐ August 7, 1943

Ted Walters escaped from the laundry building of Alcatraz but was captured on the shore before he could enter the water.

☐ July 31, 1945

[John Giles](#) was working on the docks and, by pilfering over the years, had managed to gradually put together a full [U.S. Army](#) staff sergeant uniform. When the prison launch docked he managed to change into the uniform and board the launch. Shortly after its departure for [Angel Island](#) Giles was found missing on one of Alcatraz's many unscheduled head counts. He was met at Angel Island by prison officers and returned to Alcatraz.

☐ May 2–4, 1946

Main article: [Battle of Alcatraz](#)

Clarence Carnes, Bernard Coy, Joseph Paul Cretzer, Marvin Hubbard, Sam Shockley, Miran Edgar Thompson

Coy, a Kentucky bank-robber and a cell house orderly on Alcatraz managed to take the gun cage in the main cell house and seize the two firearms held there. However, due to a breach of regulations by a prison officer, the key to the yard door, from which the inmates planned to gain access to the prison launch, was not in its place and inadvertently doomed the escape attempt. The prisoners refused to surrender and Coy, Cretzer, Hubbard, and two prison guards died in the fighting, which ended two days later, on May 4, 1946.

Carnes survived the "battle", and because of his youth and because he refused to kill the guards when ordered to do so by his colleagues, he was spared the death penalty; instead, he received a life sentence. Shockley and Thompson were sentenced to death and subsequently executed in the [gas chamber](#) at [San Quentin](#) in 1948.^[2]

☐ July 23, 1956

Floyd Wilson disappeared from his job at the dock but was discovered after hiding for 12 hours among large rocks along the shoreline after giving up his plan to make a raft out of driftwood.

☐ September 29, 1958

Aaron Burgett and Clyde Johnson were working on the garbage detail when they overpowered a guard. Both jumped into the water, trying to swim off the [island](#). A police launch intercepted Johnson, but Burgett disappeared until his body was found floating in the bay two weeks later.

☐ June 11, 1962

Main article: [June 1962 Alcatraz escape](#)

Frank Morris, John Anglin, and Clarence Anglin may have successfully carried out one of the most intricate escapes ever devised, on June 11, 1962. Behind the prisoners' cells in Cell Block B (where the escapees were interned) was an unguarded 3-foot (0.91 m) wide utility corridor. The prisoners chiseled away the moisture-damaged concrete from around an air vent leading to this corridor, using tools such as a metal spoon soldered with silver from a dime and an electric drill improvised from a stolen vacuum cleaner motor. The noise was disguised by accordions, played during music hour, and their progress was concealed by false walls, which, in the dark recesses of the cells, fooled the guards.

The escape route then led up through an air vent, a shaft large enough for a man to climb through. Stealing a [carborundum](#) cord from the prison workshop, the prisoners had removed the rivets from the grille and substituted dummy rivets made of soap. The escapees also stole several raincoats to use as a raft for the trip to the mainland. Leaving [papier-mâché](#) heads in their cell bunks, they escaped. The prisoners are estimated to have entered San Francisco Bay at 10 p.m.

The official investigation by the [FBI](#) was aided by another prisoner, [Allen West](#), who also was part of the escapees' group but was left behind. West's false wall kept slipping, so he held it in place with cement, which set. When Morris and the Anglin brothers (John & Clarence) accelerated the schedule, West desperately chipped away at the wall; however, by the time he made it through the wall, his companions were gone. Articles belonging to the prisoners (including plywood paddles and parts of the raincoat raft) were later found floating in the bay, and the official report on the escape states that the prisoners drowned in the cold waters of the bay while trying to reach the mainland. However, there were sightings of the men over the years, and friends and family of Morris and the Anglins have been receiving postcards written in the men's handwriting.^[3]

Certain aspects of the escape proved it might have been successful as it was recreated on the hit Discovery TV show [Mythbusters](#).

The 1962 escape was examined in a 2011 [National Geographic Channel](#) program entitled *Vanished from Alcatraz*. According to the newly uncovered official records discussed on the program, a raft was discovered on Angel Island with footprints leading away. Furthermore, there was also a report of a stolen car in the area that night, which could have been used by Morris and the other escapees. However, while confirming these facts, which were hidden from the officials for quite some time, the findings of further investigations remain inconclusive. As a result, the U.S. Marshall's office is still investigating this case, which will remain open on all three escapees until their 100th birthdays.^[4]

December 16, 1962

John Paul Scott and **Darl Parker** were the last two to attempt escape from Alcatraz. Scott used banjo strings and a makeshift saw in order to cut through the bars on a kitchen window in the cell house; he was able to reach the shore. Parker was found 100 yards from the main island on the rock formation known as *Little Alcatraz*, but Scott reached [Fort Point](#) on the mainland where he was found by teenagers, suffering

from [hypothermia](#). After recovering in the hospital, he was returned to Alcatraz. It is the only proven case of an Alcatraz inmate reaching the shore by swimming.

Brenden Abbott

Brenden James Abbott



Brenden James Abbott

Brenden James Abbott (born 8 May 1962) is an [Australian](#) bank robber who was branded **the Postcard Bandit** by the Western Australian Police to attract news media attention. The bank robberies

he has been attributed as masterminding, yielded as much as [A\\$6 million](#), though a significant proportion of that amount was unrecoverable.

Over the last 13 years he has been regularly transferred between [Woodford Correctional Centre](#) and [Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre](#), and held in both mainstream and Supermax conditions. He was moved to Brisbane Correctional Centre in August 2011, and is detained under severe, Supermax-style conditions.^[1]

A film about Abbott, *The Postcard Bandit*, was made for television by Nine Films/Pacific Coast Entertainment in 2003 and released on DVD on 22 March 2005.^[2]

Childhood

A former ward of the state of Western Australia, Abbott is a member of the Forgotten Australians and still suffers a range of anxiety and health-related problems, noted in semi-biographical work by Derek Pedley, Australian Outlaw. The hearing impaired boy was subjected to corporal punishment in solitary detention in November 1974, at age 12, in the specially-modified child torture cell at the now notorious, Hillston Boys Home. Abbott's last water colour, "[Little Boy Blue](#)," was painted after the national apology.

The biography also mentions his affliction with [chronic suppurative otitis media](#), a painful, recurrent middle-ear disease prevalent in [Western Australia's North-West](#), causing lifelong hearing loss and auditory processing delay, and an elevated risk of juvenile interaction with the criminal justice system. At earlier than one year of age Abbott had bilateral perforated ear drums and chronic recurrent bilateral effusion. Over the years that followed, he had repeated failed ear-drum grafts, with the last tympanoplasty taking place at age 13. As was the government practice at that time with little known about the condition and little concern for the well being and future of state wards, no additional education, medical, and communication support, no court and interrogation support, nor any appropriate rehabilitation services, were made available to the youth.

[] Prison escapes

Brenden James Abbott escaped from jail twice, and he also fled from police in 1986 during questioning at [Nollamara Police Station](#). Unlike crimes Abbott was previously a party to, the escape from [Sir David Longland Prison](#) at Wacol in November 1997 utilized actual force rather than an implied threat of force. In

that instance Brendon Berichon, a young former SDL inmate, fired warning shots overhead from the outside of the fence. The offenders alleged this occurred in panic, when the three escapees' intended surreptitious escape plan went awry. Sir David Longlands Prison was also known as "the Killing Fields," and was later decommissioned by the Queensland government.

On 24 November 1989, the [Fremantle Prison](#) escape occurred that earned Abbott his lifelong notoriety as a criminal genius, and ultimately led to his permanent and erroneous branding as "The Postcard Bandit." In the escape, Abbott and another inmate jumped from the roof over the high limestone prison walls, in uniforms similar to guards,' which Abbott had made in the prison tailorshop.

Fremantle Prison, built in the 1850s originally as an immigration holding centre, had a long history of escapes which feature in the heritage listed site's tours. Fremantle Prison, like Sir David Longland Prison, was also decommissioned by the government due to substandard conditions in the years following Abbott's escape. Both prisons were notorious for their severe and outdated conditions, and inmates' bloody and brutal existence. Nollamara police officers featured in the 2003 Western Australian [Kennedy Royal Commission](#) into Police Corruption, when former detainees detailed allegations of physical torture during questioning. (Kennedy Royal Commission Final Report, 2003, Chapter 3 - Operation Least Said, p. 153)

□ Fugitive

Abbott was on the run for six months in 1986/1987; as *Australia's Most Wanted Man* from 1989-1995 (five and a half years), and from 1997-1998 (six months). He was eventually caught in [Darwin, Northern Territory](#) in 1998 and is^[when?] serving a 23 year sentence in [Queensland](#) for bank robberies and the 1997 prison escape. After serving two years of his current sentence in solitary confinement, he sued the Queensland Government for mistreatment.^[3] He was released from solitary confinement in May 2004 and returned there on a Maximum Security Order in April 2006, after he requested medical attention three times in 12 months, which the authorities deemed suspicious. After years in mainstream, Abbott was again returned to Supermax solitary confinement in August 2008 and then released back into mainstream detention in the days preceding a judicial review hearing into his back-to-back Maximum Security Orders, in October 2009.

Dubbed "The Postcard Bandit," media reports in the 1990s said Abbott sent postcards of his travels to the Western Australian Police. However, the postcards in the "Postcard Bandit" story were a WA Police Media

Unit invention;^[4] The "postcards" were photos Abbott lost while running from police after the Fremantle Prison escape with Aaron Reynolds, and were intended for his friends and family. They included a picture of Reynolds outside the [Dwellingup](#) Police Station, in Western Australia. While Reynolds was arrested within weeks, the fugitive, Abbott, went on to establish himself as a "professional" bank robber, using self-taught skills in make-up to create convincing disguises, computers to create false IDs, and electronics to dodge alarms.

His five and a half years on the run came to an end when police tracked down a post office box on the [Gold Coast, Queensland](#) used by Abbott, which was found to contain a pager bill registered to the address where he was living. Confronted by police at a Darwin laundromat he surrendered without resistance and this is a typical facet of each of his arrests, historically.

□ Current sentencing

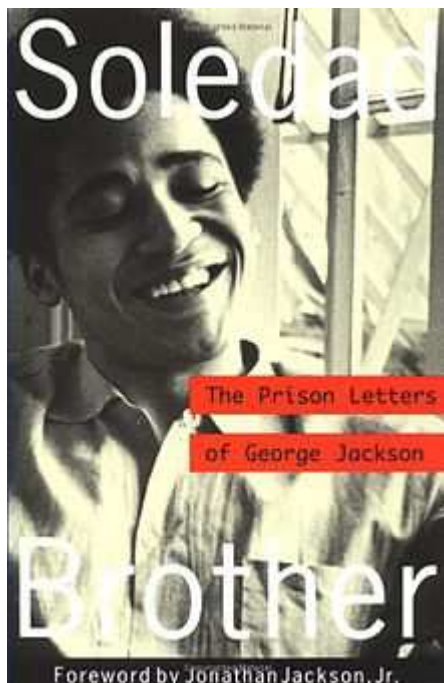
The Australian mainstream media has widely featured speculation that at the conclusion of Abbott's current Queensland sentence the West Australian police may apply to the Queensland courts to extradite Abbott to complete the remainder of a sentence for an armed robbery, and for trial over one count of escaping custody. Presently, no legal provisions exist for his past and present sentences to be served concurrently across the state boundaries of Queensland and Western Australia, and this is one factor contributing to the public perception that the prison time Abbott has served is disproportionate to sentences commonly handed down by the courts for similar offences.

Western Australian Labor politicians have twice refused Abbott's transfer applications in 2005 and 2008 to return to the state to complete his sentence. In 2004 Queensland authorities approved an interstate transfer^[5] but Western Australian Attorney-General [Jim McGinty](#) refused to accept him.^[6] In early 2007, Abbott re-applied to be transferred to Western Australia and that was approved by the Queensland Attorney General in 2008.^[7] However, former WA Corrective Services Minister, Margaret Quirk, promptly released a media statement rejecting Abbott's bid to return home. Abbott has applied for transfer back to Western Australia four times in response to the outstanding warrants, though all the applications have been refused by the Western Australian government. In May 2010 Glenn Cordingly of The Sunday Times in Perth, cited an unnamed WA Police source who alleged that Western Australian authorities "had a cell waiting" for Abbott, although there has been no official confirmation of such.^[8] The story sparked public debate for over a year, which is indicative of the public perceptions of Abbott's treatment and sentencing.

[] Armed robbery

A 1994 warrant for questioning remains in place with Adelaide Criminal Prosecutions Branch for one count of armed robbery in Glenelg, South Australia. In mid-2008, Brenden Abbott applied for an interstate transfer to South Australia to address the outstanding warrant. The application followed official statements by Adelaide detective Sid Thomas, in *The Adelaide Advertiser* in 2008, that detectives were travelling to Queensland to question Abbott at Woodford Correctional Centre, although no such interview has ever occurred. In December 2010, Abbott's application for a South Australian transfer was approved by the Queensland Attorney General, and the South Australian Attorney General's decision is pending. On 12 June 2011, Adelaide Advertiser reporter Nigel Hunt incorrectly reported that Abbott had filed for a Supreme Court Judicial Review regarding the application to transfer to face the charges.^[9] Hunt's story concludes with an unnamed source's suspicions that Abbott could have committed not just the one he is sought for questioning over, but *multiple* robberies in South Australia. The author of the book based on Abbott's life, *Australian Outlaw*, is currently the night-or at *The Adelaide Advertiser*, and speculated in the book that Abbott had done robberies in South Australia, though the SA Police have never questioned him.

George Jackson (Black Panther)



George Lester Jackson (September 23, 1941 – August 21, 1971) was an African-American [left-wing](#) activist, [Marxist](#), author, a member of the [Black Panther Party](#), and co-founder of the [Black Guerrilla Family](#) while incarcerated. Jackson achieved fame as one of the [Soledad Brothers](#) and was later shot to death by prison guards in [San Quentin Prison](#) during an escape attempt.

Biography

Born in [Chicago, Illinois](#), Jackson was the second of Lester and Georgia Bea Jackson's five children. He spent time in the California Youth Authority Corrections facility in [Paso Robles](#) because of several juvenile convictions including armed robbery, assault, and burglary.^[2] In 1961 he was convicted of armed robbery, for robbing a gas station at gunpoint and at age 18 was sentenced to serve [one year to life](#) in prison.^[nb 1]

During his first years at [San Quentin State Prison](#), Jackson became involved in revolutionary activity as well as assaults on guards and fellow inmates, which was used to justify his continued incarceration on an indeterminate sentence. He was described by prison officials as [egocentric](#) and [anti-social](#).^[4] In 1966, Jackson met and befriended W.L. Nolen who introduced him to [Marxist](#) and [Maoist](#) ideology. The two founded the [Black Guerrilla Family](#) in 1966 based on Marxist and Maoist political thought.^[5] As Jackson's disciplinary infractions grew he spent more and more time in solitary confinement where he studied [political economy](#) and radical theory. He also wrote many letters to friends and supporters which would later be read and compiled into the books "Soledad Brother" and "Blood in My Eye," which became bestsellers and brought him a great deal of attention from leftist organizers and intellectuals in the U.S. and Western Europe. Jackson's political transformation was seen as insincere by prison officials, with San Quentin associate warden commenting that Jackson "was a sociopath, a very personable hoodlum" who "didn't give a shit about the revolution". He did, however, amass a following of inmates including whites and Hispanics although with less enthusiasm than his fellow black inmates.^[6]

According to [David Horowitz](#), Jackson joined the Black Panther Party after meeting [Huey P. Newton](#) in jail.^[3]

In January 1969, Jackson and Nolen were transferred from San Quentin to [Soledad prison](#).^[7] In January 1970, Nolen along with two other black inmates were shot to death by guard O.G. Miller during a yard riot with members of the [Aryan Brotherhood](#). Following the death of Nolen, Jackson became increasingly

confrontational with corrections officials and spoke often about the need to protect fellow inmates and take revenge on guards for Nolen's death in what Jackson referred to as "selective retaliatory violence".^[8]

On January 16, 1970 Jackson was charged along with Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette for murdering guard John V. Mills, who was beaten and thrown from the third floor of Soledad's Y wing.^[9] This was a **capital offense** and a successful conviction could put Jackson in the **gas chamber**. Mills, an inexperienced rookie, was murdered, supposedly in retaliation for the shooting deaths of Nolen and the other two black inmates by officer Miller the year prior. Miller was not convicted of any crime, a **grand jury** ruling his actions to be **justifiable homicide**.^[10]

[] Marin County courthouse incident

Main article: [Marin County courthouse incident](#)

On August 7, 1970, George Jackson's 17-year-old brother **Jonathan Jackson** burst into a **Marin County** courtroom with an **automatic weapon**, freed prisoners **James McClain**, **William A. Christmas** and **Ruchell Magee**, and took Judge **Harold Haley**, Deputy District Attorney Gary Thomas, and three jurors hostage to demand the release of the "Soledad Brothers." Haley, Jackson, Christmas and McClain were killed as they attempted to drive away from the courthouse. Eyewitness testimony suggests Haley was hit by fire discharged from a **sawed-off shotgun** that had been fastened to his neck with adhesive tape by the abductors. Thomas, Magee and one of the jurors were wounded.^[11] The case made national headlines.

Angela Davis, accused of buying the weapons, was later acquitted of conspiracy, kidnapping, and murder. A possible explanation for the gun connection is that **Jonathan Jackson** was her bodyguard. Magee, the sole survivor among the attackers, eventually pleaded guilty to aggravated kidnapping and was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1975.^[12] Magee is currently imprisoned in **Corcoran State Prison** and has lost numerous bids for parole.

[] Death

On August 21, 1971, Jackson met with attorney **Stephen Bingham** on a civil lawsuit Jackson had filed against the California Department of Corrections. After the meeting, Jackson was escorted by officer Urbano Rubico back to his cell when Rubico noticed a metallic object in Jackson's hair, later revealed to be a wig, and ordered him to remove it. Jackson then pulled a Spanish Astra 9mm pistol from beneath the wig and said "Gentlemen, the dragon has come", a reference to **Ho Chi Minh**.^[13] Jackson then ordered

Rubico to open all the cells and along with several other inmates they overpowered the remaining guards and took them, along with two inmates hostage. Six of the hostages were killed and found in Jackson's cell, including guards Jere Graham, Frank DeLeon and Paul Krasnes and two white prisoners. Guards Kenneth McCray, Charles Breckenridge and Urbano Rubiaco had been shot and stabbed as well, but survived.^[14] After finding the keys for the Adjustment Center's exit, Jackson along with fellow inmate and close friend Johnny Spain escaped to the yard where Jackson was shot dead and Spain surrendered.^[15] Jackson was killed just three days prior to the start of his murder trial for the 1970 slaying of guard John Mills.^[16] Three inmates were acquitted and three were convicted for the murders: David Johnson, Johnny Spain and [Hugo Pinell](#).^[17] They became known as the [San Quentin Six](#).

Supporters of Jackson believe that his death was the result of a setup in which Jackson was provided with the gun by Rubico so prison officials would have an excuse to kill him. Intellectuals such as [Michel Foucault](#) and [Jean Genet](#) argued that Jackson's death was a "political assassination."^[18] In his autobiography *Revolutionary Suicide*, Newton claimed that Jackson was "attempting to save [fellow inmates] from being massacred by guards".^[19] [James Baldwin](#) wrote: "No Black person will ever believe that George Jackson died the way they tell us he did."^[20]

There is some evidence, however, that Jackson and his supporters on the outside had planned the escape several weeks in advance. Three days before the escape attempt, Jackson rewrote his will leaving all royalties as well as control of his legal defense fund, which had become very well-funded with the donations of wealthy leftists, to the Black Panther Party.^[21] Also, many Black Guerilla Family members became bitter and upset with Newton, believing Newton used his contacts within Soledad to hamper Jackson's release as he did not want a potential rival for power to be freed.^{[22][23]}

Attempts to escape Oflag IV-C

Prisoners made numerous **attempts to escape Oflag IV-C**, one of the most famous [German Army prisoner-of-war camps](#) for [officers](#) in [World War II](#). Between 30 and 36 (German/Allied figures) men succeeded in their attempts. The camp was located in [Colditz Castle](#), situated on a cliff overlooking the town of [Colditz](#) in [Saxony](#).

The [German Army](#) made Colditz a *Sonderlager* (high-security prison camp), the only one of its type within Germany. Field Marshal [Hermann Göring](#) even declared Colditz "escape-proof". Yet despite this

audacious claim, there were multiple escapes by [British](#), [Canadian](#), [French](#), [Polish](#), [Dutch](#), and [Belgian](#) inmates. Despite some misapprehensions to the contrary, Colditz Castle was not used as a Prisoner-of-War camp in World War I.

Methods & equipment

Prisoners contrived a number of methods to escape. They duplicated keys to various doors, made copies of maps, forged *Ausweise* ([identity papers](#)), and manufactured their own tools. [MI9](#), a department of the British [War Office](#) which specialized in escape equipment, communicated with the prisoners in [code](#) and [smuggled](#) them new escape aids disguised in care packages from family or from non-existent charities, although they never tampered with [Red Cross](#) care packages for fear it would force the Germans to stop their delivery to all camps. The Germans became skilled at intercepting packages containing contraband material.

There was also a form of [black market](#) whereby the prisoners used items from their [Red Cross parcels](#) to buy information and tools from the cooperative guards and townsfolk. Since the Germans allowed [Douglas Bader](#) to visit the town, he took [chocolate](#) and other luxuries with him for trading. Flight Lieutenant [Cenek Chaloupka](#) traded goods for information and even had a girlfriend in the town. [David Stirling](#) later took control of the black market operations.

The Singen route

Once escaping from captivity, the POWs still faced the considerable challenge of negotiating their way to non-hostile territory. The [Singen](#) route into Switzerland was discovered by Dutch naval lieutenant [Hans Larive](#) in 1940 on his first escape attempt from [Oflag VI-A](#) in [Soest](#). Larive was caught near Singen close to the Swiss border. The interrogating Gestapo officer was so confident the war would soon be won by Germany that he told Larive the safe way across the border. Larive did not forget and many prisoners later escaped using this route. This includes Larive himself, [Francis Steinmetz](#), [Anthony Luteyn](#), [Airey Neave](#), [Pat Reid](#) and [Howard Wardle](#) in their escapes from Colditz.^[1]

Unsuccessful attempts

Most of the escape attempts failed. [Pat Reid](#), who later wrote about his experiences in Colditz, failed to escape at first and then became an "Escape Officer", charged with coordinating the various national groups so they would not ruin each other's escape attempts. Escape Officers were generally not themselves permitted to escape. Many tried unsuccessfully to escape in [disguise](#): [Airey Neave](#) twice dressed as a guard, French Lieutenant Boulé disguised in [drag](#), British Lieutenant [Michael Sinclair](#) even dressed as the German Sergeant Major Rothenberger [an NCO in the camp garrison], when he tried to organize a mass escape, and French Lieutenant Perodeau disguised as regular camp electrician Willi Pöhnert ("Little Willi"):

On the night of 28 December 1942, one of the French officers deliberately blew out the fuse on the lights in the courtyard. As they had anticipated Pöhnert was summoned, and while he was still fixing the lights, Lieutenant Perodeau, dressed almost identically to Pöhnert and carrying a tool box, walked casually out of the courtyard gate. He passed the first guard without incident, but the guard at the main gate asked for his token — tokens were issued to each guard and staff member upon entry of the camp guardhouse specifically to avoid this type of escape — with no hope of bluffing his way out of this, Perodeau surrendered.

Dutch [sculptors](#) made two [clay](#) heads to stand in for escaping officers in the roll call. Later, "ghosts", officers who had faked a successful escape and hid in the castle, took the place of escaping prisoners in the roll call in order to delay discovery as long as possible.

Camp guards collected so much escape equipment that they established a "Kommandant's Escape Museum". Local [photographer Johannes Lange](#) took photographs of the would-be escapers in their disguises or re-enacting their attempts for the camera. Along with the Lange photographs, one of the two sculpted clay heads was displayed proudly in the museum. Security officer [Reinhold Eggers](#) made them a regular part of *Das Abwehrblatt*, a weekly magazine for the German POW camps.

[\[\] The fatality of Michael Sinclair](#)

There was only one confirmed fatality during the escape attempts: British Lieutenant [Michael Sinclair](#) in September 1944. Sinclair attempted a repeat of the 1941 French over the wire escape. Security officer Eggers warned him after which Sinclair was fired upon by guards. A bullet hit Sinclair on the elbow and ricocheted through his heart.^[2]

The Germans buried him in Colditz cemetery with full military honours — his casket was draped with a [Union Jack](#) flag made by the German guards, and he received a seven-gun salute. Post-war he was awarded the [Distinguished Service Order](#), the only man to receive it for escaping during World War II. He is currently buried in grave number 10.1.14 at [Berlin War Cemetery](#) in the [Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf](#) district of [Berlin](#).

[] The Red Cross Tea Chest

Because of his very small stature Flight Lieutenant [Dominic Bruce](#) was known ironically as the "medium-sized man". He arrived at Colditz in 1942 (after attempting to escape from [Spangenberg Castle](#) disguised as a Red Cross doctor). When a new Commandant arrived at Colditz in the summer of the same year he enforced rules restricting prisoners' personal belongings. On 8 September POWs were told to pack up all excess belongings and an assortment of boxes were delivered to carry them into store. Dominic Bruce immediately seized his chance and was packed inside a Red Cross packing case, three foot square, with just a file and a 40-foot (12 m) length rope made of bed sheets. Bruce was taken to a storeroom on the third floor of the German Kommandantur and that night made his escape. When the German guards discovered the bed rope dangling from the window the following morning and entered the storeroom they found the empty box on which Bruce had inscribed *Die Luft in Colditz gefällt mir nicht mehr. Auf Wiedersehen!* — "The air in Colditz no longer agrees with me. See you later!" Bruce was recaptured a week later trying to stow aboard a Swedish ship in [Danzig](#).

[] The Mattress

In late 1940, British officer "Peter" Allan (real name Anthony Murray Allan) found out that the Germans were moving several [mattresses](#) from the castle to another camp and decided that would be his way out. He let the French officers moving the mattresses know that one would be a little bit heavier. Allan, a fluent German speaker due to his schooling in Germany before the war prior to attending [Tonbridge School](#), dressed himself up in a *Hitlerjugend* ([Hitler Youth](#)) uniform, stuffed [Reichsmark](#) in his pockets, and had himself sewn into one of the mattresses. He managed to get himself loaded into the truck, and unloaded into an empty house within the town. Cutting himself out of the mattress several hours later, when all he could hear was silence, he climbed out of the window into the garden and walked down the road towards his freedom.

Along the 100 mi (161 km) way to [Vienna](#) via [Stuttgart](#) he got a lift with a senior SS officer. Allan recalled that ride as the scariest moment of his life, "To be vulgar, I nearly needed a new pair of trousers." Allan

had been aiming to reach Poland, but soon after reaching Vienna he found he was out of money. At this time the Americans had not yet entered the war, so Allan decided to ask the American consulate for assistance; he was refused. Allan's stepmother Lois Allan (founder of [Fuzzy Felt](#) toys in the UK) was a U.S. citizen and he felt that they would provide sanctuary because of this. Allan had been on the run at this point for nine days; broke, exhausted, and hungry, he fell asleep in a park. Upon waking he discovered he could no longer walk due to his [starvation](#). Soon after he was picked up and returned to Colditz, where he spent the next 3 months in solitary confinement.

[] [The Bed-Sheet Rope](#)

On 12 May 1941, Polish Lieutenants [Miki Surmanowicz](#) and [Mietek Chmiel](#), attempted to rappel down a 36 m (120 ft) wall to freedom on a [rope](#) constructed out of [bed sheets](#). In order to get into position, both men put themselves into solitary confinement. After forcing open the door and picking the locks, they made their way to the courtyard where they climbed up to a narrow ledge. From the ledge they were able to cross to the guard house roof, and climb through an open window on the outer wall. Reusing their bed sheet rope, they lowered themselves towards the ground; they were caught when the German guards heard the hobnailed boots of one of the escapees scraping down the outside of the guardhouse wall. The guard who spotted the escapees shouted 'Hände hoch!!' [Hands up!!] to the men as they were descending the rope.

[] [The French lady](#)

On June 5 1941, while returning from the park to the castle, some British prisoners noticed that a passing lady dropped her watch. One of the British called out to her, but the lady kept walking instead of retrieving her watch. This aroused the suspicion of the German guards and, upon inspection, "she" was revealed to be a French officer – Lieutenant [Chasseurs Alpains](#) Bouley– dressed as a very respectable woman.^[3]

[] [The Canteen Tunnel](#)

Early in 1941, the British prisoners had gained access to the sewers and drains which ran beneath the floors of the castle. Entrance to these was from a [manhole cover](#) in the floor of the canteen. After initial reconnaissance trips, it was decided that the drain should be extended, and an exit made in a small grassy area which was overlooked from the canteen window. From here, they had planned to climb down the hill, and drop down below the steep outside eastern wall of the castle. Knowing which sentry would be on duty during the planned night of the escape, they pooled their resources and collected 500 [Reichsmark](#) for a

bribe (100 of which were paid up front). This plan took three months of preparation. On the evening of 29 May 1941, Pat Reid hid in the canteen when it was locked up for the night. He removed the bolt from the lock on the door, and returned to the courtyard. After the evening meeting, the chosen escapers slipped into the canteen unnoticed. They entered the tunnel and waited for the signal to proceed. Unknown to the prisoners, they had been betrayed by the bribed guard. Waiting on the grassy area was [Hauptmann Priem](#) and his guard force.

Pat Reid recalls:

"I climbed out on to the grass and Rupert Barry, immediately behind me, started to follow. My shadow was cast on the wall of the Kommandantur, and at that moment I noticed a second shadow beside my own. It held a gun. I yelled to Rupert to get back as a voice behind me shouted, *Hände hoch! Hände hoch!*. I turned to face a German officer levelling his [pistol](#) at me."

Behind him were seven British and four Polish officers. On his order the remaining men backed up the tunnel to evade detection, but the Germans were waiting for them outside the canteen. Not wanting to give their captors any satisfaction the British burst into laughter as they came out.

Hauptmann Priem ends the story:

"And the Guard? He kept his 100 Marks; he got extra leave, promotion and the [War Service Cross](#)."

[\[\] The French Tunnel](#)

Nine French officers organized a long-term tunnel-digging project, the longest attempted out of Colditz Castle throughout the war. Deciding that the exit should be on the steep drop leading down towards the recreation area, outside the eastern walls of the castle, they began to scout for a possible location for the entrance. The problem was solved by Lieutenants Cazaumayo and Paille, who had gained access to the clock tower in 1940.

Their tunnel began at the top of a chapel's [clock tower](#) and descended 8.6 metres (28.2 ft) into the ground using the shaft which contained the ropes and weights for the clock. They found that the weights which used to hang down the shaft, and the chains, had been removed. This left an empty shaft which extended from the clock to the cellars below. After the previous escape attempts of Cazaumayo and Paille, the doors (one on each floor) which provided access to the tower had been bricked up in order to prevent further

escape attempts. However, by sealing up the tower the Germans had in essence provided a secure location where escape tunnel work could be done without notice. The French this time gained access to the tower from the attics, descended 35 m to the cellars, and began work on a horizontal shaft in June 1941. This shaft work would continue for a further eight months.

The horizontal shaft towards the chapel progressed 4 m (13 ft) before they hit rock too hard to dig. They then decided to dig upwards towards the chapel floor. From here the tunnel continued underneath the wooden floor of the chapel for a distance of 13.5 m (44.3 ft). For this to be achieved, seven heavy oak timbers in the floor, measuring 0.5 m (1.3 ft) square had to be cut through. Homemade saws, assembled from German table knives, were employed for this task. With this completed, the tunnel dropped vertically from the far corner of the chapel a further 5.2 m (17 ft). The tunnel then proceeded out towards the proposed exit with two further descents, separated by shafts in the tough stone foundations of the castle. The tunnel now ran a horizontal distance of 44 m (144 ft), reaching a final depth of 8.6 m (28.2 ft) below the ground.

Tunneling continued well into 1942. By then Germans knew that the French were digging somewhere, based on the noise of their tunneling reverberating through the castle at night. The French thought that its entrance was undetectable. However, on 15 January the Germans eventually searched the sealed-off clock tower. Noises were heard below, and after lowering a small boy down the shaft three French officers were found. After searching the cellar thoroughly, the entrance to the tunnel was eventually discovered a mere 2 m (6.5 ft) short of completion. The French were convinced that they had been betrayed by one of their own countrymen but this was denied by the guards who demanded the French pay to repair the damage (estimated at 12,000 Reichsmark).

The tunnel had electric lighting along its whole length, powered by electricity from the chapel. This allowed the tunnellers to see what they were doing and signal the arrival of sentries. The entrance to the tunnel in the wine cellar was concealed by five large stones covering a small door, which left little trace of any hole. Debris was transported in sacks hoisted up the clock tower to the castle's attics. The wine cellar was regularly cleaned and redusted using dust harvested from the attic, so as to hide the reddish clay dust which was not present in the cellar ordinarily.

[] The "Colditz Cock" glider



The only known photo of the original "Cock" glider taken by an unknown American GI in April 1945.



A replica of the Colditz Glider as seen at the [Imperial War Museum](#) in [London, England](#).

In one of the most ambitious escape attempts from Colditz, the idea of building a [glider](#) was dreamt up by two British pilots, [Jack Best](#) and [Bill Goldfinch](#), who had been sent to Colditz after escaping from another POW camp. They were encouraged by two army officers, [Tony Rolt](#) and David Walker, who had recently arrived in the camp. It would be Tony Rolt who would recommend the chapel roof, since he noticed it was obscured from the view of the Germans.

The two-man glider was to be assembled by Bill Goldfinch and Jack Best in the lower attic above the chapel, and was to be launched from the roof in order to fly across the [river Mulde](#), which was about 60 m (200 feet) below. The [runway](#) was to be constructed from tables and the glider was to be launched using a pulley system based on a falling metal [bathtub](#) full of [concrete](#), which would accelerate the glider to 50 km/h (30 mph).

Prisoners built a false wall to hide the space in the attic where they slowly built the glider out of stolen pieces of wood. Since the Germans were accustomed to looking down for [tunnels](#), not up for secret

workshops, the prisoners felt safe from detection. However, they still placed lookouts, and created an electric alarm system, to warn the builders of approaching guards.

Hundreds of [ribs](#) had to be constructed, predominantly from bed slats, but also from every other piece of wood the POW's could obtain. The [wing spars](#) were constructed from floor boards. Control wires were made from electrical wiring taken from unused portions of the castle. A glider expert, [Lorne Welch](#), reviewed the stress diagrams and calculations made by Goldfinch.

The resulting glider was to be a 109 kg (240 lb) two-seater, high wing, monoplane design. It had a Mooney style [rudder](#) and square [elevators](#). The [wingspan](#), was 9.75 m (32 ft), and the fuselage length was 6 m (19 ft). Prison [sleeping bags](#) of blue and white checked [cotton](#) were used to skin the glider, and German [ration millet](#) was boiled and used to seal the cloth pores. The war ended before the glider was finished.

Although the Colditz Cock never flew, the concept was fictionalized, depicting a successful flight and escape, in the 1971 TV movie [The Birdmen](#) starring [Doug McClure](#), [Chuck Connors](#), [Rene Auberjonois](#) and [Richard Basehart](#).

A replica of the Colditz glider was built for the 2000 [Channel 4](#) (UK) 3-part (150 minute total) *Escape from Colditz* documentary, and was flown successfully by John Lee on its first attempt at [RAF Odiham](#) with Best and Goldfinch in tearful attendance. It is currently housed at the [Imperial War Museum](#) in [London](#). The Channel 4 material was ed to 60 minutes and shown in the US in 2001 as *Nazi Prison Escape* on the [NOVA television series](#).

A list of tools used in constructing the Glider Source: [1]	
<p>Side-framed saw</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handle of beech bed board • frame of iron window bars • blade of gramophone spring with 8 teeth / in (3 mm teeth) 	<p>Large plane, 14½ in (368 mm) long</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 inch blade obtained by bribing a German guard • Wooden box (four pieces of beech screwed together)
<p>Minute saw for fine work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gramophone spring blade, 25 teeth / in (1 mm teeth) 	<p>Small plane, 8½ in (216 mm) long</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blade made from a table knife
<p>5/8 in (16 mm) metal drill obtained by bribery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drill bits for making holes made 	<p>Plane, 5 in (127 mm) long Square</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made of beech with

from nails	gramophone spring blade
A gauge	Set of keys including:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> made of beech, with cupboard bolt and gramophone needle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> universal door pick, forged from a bucket handle

[] Successful attempts

Pat Reid claimed in *Colditz: The Full Story* that there were 31 "home runs", whereas German authorities give 30 and some other sources give up to 36. It should be noted that Reid included prisoners from the hospital and prisoners being transported, who were not directly under Colditz staff control. Henry Chancellor in *Colditz: The Definitive History* claims 32 escaped but only 15 were "home runs": 1 Belgian, 11 British, 7 Dutch, 12 French and 1 Polish. The difference is that Reid claims any successful escape by an "official" Colditz POW a "home run" where most other historians only consider escapes from the castle or castle grounds itself as a "home run". Also a subject of debate is whether or not Lieutenant [William A. Millar](#)'s escape should be considered a "home run", but since he is listed as "[Missing in action](#)" (unofficially he is assumed deceased), Chancellor does not count him as such.

At the end of May 1943, the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* ("Armed Forces High Command") decided that Colditz should hold only British and Commonwealth officers. Because of this decision, all of the Dutch and Polish prisoners and most of the French and Belgians were moved to other camps in July. Three British officers tried their luck by impersonating an equal number of French when they were moved out, but they were later returned to Colditz. German security gradually increased and by the end of 1943 most of the potential ways of escape had been plugged. Several officers tried to escape during transit, having first caused themselves to be transferred for that purpose.

Some officers faked illnesses and [mental illness](#) in order to be [repatriated](#) on medical grounds. A member of the [Royal Army Medical Corps](#) (RAMC), Captain [Ion Ferguson](#), wrote a letter to an Irish friend where he suggested that [Ireland](#) join the war; the letter was stopped by the [censors](#) but his wish to be moved elsewhere was granted. In [Stalag IV-D](#) he certified a number of prisoners as insane, who were consequently repatriated. He then convinced the Germans of his *own* insanity and returned to Britain the same way. Four other British officers claimed symptoms of [stomach ulcer](#), insanity, [high blood pressure](#) and back injury in order to be repatriated. However, there were also officers who went genuinely insane.

[] From Colditz Castle and Grounds

1. French Lieutenant [Alain Le Ray](#) escaped April 11, 1941. He hid in a terrace house in a park during a game of [football](#). First successful Colditz escaper and first to reach neutral [Switzerland](#).
2. French Lieutenant [René Collin](#) escaped May 31, 1941. He climbed into the rafters of a pavilion during exercise, hid there until dark and slipped away. Made it back to France.
3. French Lieutenant [Pierre Mairesse Lebrun](#) escaped July 2, 1941. He was captured trying Collin's method. Later vaulted over a wire in the park with the help of an associate. He reached Switzerland in eight days on a stolen bicycle.
4. Dutch Lieutenant [Hans Larive](#) escaped August 15, 1941. He hid under a [manhole](#) cover in the exercise enclosure, emerged after nightfall, took a [train](#) to [Gottmadingen](#), and reached Switzerland in three days.
5. Dutch Lieutenant [Francis Steinmetz](#) also escaped August 15, 1941 with Larive
6. Dutch Major [C. Giebel](#) escaped September 20, 1941 using the same method as Larive & Steinmetz.
7. Dutch Lieutenant [O. L. Drijber](#) escaped September 20, 1941 with Giebel.
8. British Lieutenant [Airey M. S. Neave](#) escaped January 5, 1942. Crawled through a hole in a camp theatre (after a prisoner performance) to a guardhouse and marched out dressed as a German soldier. He reached Switzerland two days later. This first successful British escape was a joint British Dutch effort. Neave later joined [MI9](#).
9. Dutch Lieutenant [Anthony Luteyn](#) escaped January 5, 1942 with Neave.
10. British Lieutenant [Hedley Fowler](#) escaped September 9, 1942. Slipped with four others through a guard office and a storeroom dressed as German officers and Polish orderlies. Only he and Van Doorninck reached Switzerland. Like Luteyn and Neave, this was another successful British Dutch effort.
11. Dutch Lieutenant [Damiaen Joan van Doorninck](#) escaped September 9, 1942 with Fowler.
12. British Capt. [Patrick R. Reid](#) escaped October 14, 1942. Slipped through POW kitchens into the German yard, into the Kommandantur cellar and down to a dry moat through the park. He took four days to reach Switzerland.
13. Canadian Flight Lieutenant [Howard D. Wardle](#) (RAF) escaped October 14, 1942 with Reid.
14. British Major [Ronald B. Littledale](#) escaped October 14, 1942. Slipped through POW kitchens into the German yard, into the Kommandantur cellar and down to a dry moat through the park. He took five days to reach Switzerland.
15. British Lieutenant-Commander [William E. Stephens](#) escaped October 14, 1942 with Littledale.
16. British Lieutenant [William A. Millar](#) escaped January, 1944. He broke into the German courtyard and hid in a German truck intending to go to [Czechoslovakia](#). He never reached home and is listed missing on the Bayeux memorial. There is speculation that he was caught and executed in [Mauthausen](#) concentration camp as a victim of the secret [Kugel-erlass](#) ("Bullet decree") July 15, 1944.

[] From outside Colditz Castle

1. French Lieutenants J. Durand-Hornus, G. de Frondeville and J. Prot escaped while on a visit to the town [dentist](#) December 17, 1941.
2. Polish Lieutenant Kroner was transferred to [Königswartha](#) Hospital where he jumped out of the window.
3. French Lieutenant Boucheron fled from [Zeit](#) Hospital, was recaptured, and later escaped from [Düsseldorf](#) prison.

4. French Lieutenants Odry and Navelet escaped from [Elsterhorst](#) Hospital.
5. British Captain [Louis Rémy](#) escaped from [Gnaschwitz](#) military hospital. His three companions were captured, but he reached [Algeciras](#) by boat, and later Britain.
6. British Squadron Leader [Brian Paddon](#) escaped to [Sweden](#) via [Danzig](#) when sent to his previous camp for a court martial.
7. French Lieutenant [Raymond Bouillez](#) escaped from a hospital after an unsuccessful attempt to jump from a train.
8. Dutch Lieutenant J. van Lynden slipped away when the Dutch were moved to [Stanislau](#) camp.
9. French Lieutenant A. Darthenay escaped from a hospital at [Hohenstein-Ernstthal](#), later joined the [French Resistance](#), and was killed by the [Gestapo](#) on April 7, 1944.
10. Indian RAMC Captain [Birendra Nath Mazumdar](#) M.D. was the only Indian in Colditz. He went on a [hunger strike](#) to have himself transferred into an Indian-only camp. His wish was granted three weeks later and he escaped from that camp to France and reached Switzerland in 1944 with the aid of the French Resistance.
11. Royal Navy ERAs W. E. "Wally" Hammond (from the sunken submarine [HMS Shark](#)) and Don "Tubby" Lister (from the captured submarine [HMS Seal](#)) campaigned for a transfer from Colditz, arguing that he was not an officer. He was transferred to Lamsdorf prison, escaped from a Breslau work party, and reached England via Switzerland in 1943.^{[4][5]}

[] "Ghost" prisoners who hid inside Colditz Castle

1. British pilot [Jack Best](#), "ghost" from 4 May 1943 to 28 March 1944.

Shin Dong-hyuk (human rights activist)

Shin Dong-hyuk (born on November 19, 1982 as [Shin In Geun](#))^[1] is a [North Korean defector](#) living in [South Korea](#).^[1] He is the only person known to have escaped from a "total-control zone" grade internment camp in [North Korea](#) and lived to tell about it.^[1] He is also the only person known to have been born in a North Korean prison camp and later escape from it.

Shin is the subject of a biography, *Escape from Camp 14*, by former [Washington Post](#) journalist Blaine Harden. Shin, sometimes accompanied by Harden, has given talks to audiences around the world about his life in [Kaesong internment camp](#) ([Kwalliso](#) No. 14) and about the totalitarian North Korean regime to raise awareness of the situation in [North Korean internment and concentration camps](#) and North Korea.^{[2][3]}

[] Biography

Shin Dong-hyuk was born in [Kaecheon internment camp](#) ("Camp #14"), a slave labor camp where prisoners usually stay for life and die by age 45.^{[4][5]} He was born to an arranged marriage of two prisoners, who were allowed to sleep together for a few nights a year as a reward for good work.^{[4][5]} Shin rarely saw his father, who lived elsewhere in the camp, and lived with his mother until he was 12.^[4] According to Shin, he saw his mother as a competitor for their insufficient food rations,^[5] and consequently had no bond of affection with his parents or brother.^[6] The North Korean government officials and camp guards told him he was imprisoned because his parents had committed crimes against the state, and that he had to work hard and always obey the guards; otherwise he would be punished or executed.^[7] Shin experienced considerable violence in the camp,^[8] and witnessed dozens of executions every year.^[7] Part of Shin's right middle finger was cut off by his supervisor as punishment for accidentally breaking a sewing machine.^[9] In addition, he saw adult prisoners and children beaten every day,^{[10][11]} and many prisoners dying of starvation, illness, torture and work accidents.^[7] Beginning when he was young, Shin learned to survive by any means, such as through eating rats, frogs and insects, and reporting on fellow inmates for rewards.

When Shin was 14, he overheard his mother and brother planning an escape attempt and informed the guards, which was something he was taught to do from an early age.^{[4][5]} Rather than reward Shin for turning his family members in, the guards tortured him for four days to extract more information from him.^{[4][5]} According to Shin, the guards lit a charcoal fire under his back and forced a hook into his skin so that he could not struggle,^[12] and this caused Shin to receive many large scars from the flesh being burned and other abuses.^[13] On November 29, 1996, camp officials forced Shin to watch the public execution of his mother and brother, and he knew that he was directly responsible for the execution.^{[5][14][15]} Shin said that at that moment, he thought his mother deserved to die, but he said that his actions would haunt him later in life.^{[4][5]}

While working at a textile factory, Shin became friends with a 40 year old political prisoner from [Pyongyang](#) named Park, who was educated and had traveled outside North Korea.^[4] Park told him about the outside world, such as stories about food that Shin had not experienced before.^[4] According to Shin, nearly every meal he had eaten up to that point had been a soupy gruel of cabbage, corn and salt, with occasional wild-caught rats and insects. He was excited by the idea of being able to eat as much food as he wanted to, which Shin considered to be the meaning of freedom, and he decided to attempt to escape with Park.^[4] They formed a plan in which Shin would provide local information about the camp, while Park would use his knowledge once outside the camp to escape the country. On January 2, 2005, Shin and Park

were assigned to a work detail near the camp's [electric fence](#) on the top of a 1,200-foot (370 m) mountain ridge to collect firewood. Noting the long interval between the guards' patrols, the two waited until the guards were out of sight, then made their attempt to escape.^{[1][16]} Park attempted to go through first, but was electrocuted by the high voltage fence and died on the spot. Shin managed to pass over the wire using Park's body as a shield to [ground](#) the current, but suffered severe burns when his legs slipped onto the lowermost wire as he crawled over Park's body.^{[4][5]}

After escaping, Shin broke into a nearby farmer's barn and found an old military uniform.^[4] Wearing the uniform, he masqueraded as a North Korean soldier and worked his way northward, surviving by scrounging and stealing food.^[1] Shin was unfamiliar with money, but within two days of his escape, he had sold a 10 lb (4.5 kg) bag of rice stolen from a house and used the money to buy cookies and cigarettes.^[4] Eventually, he reached the northern border with China along the [Tumen River](#) and bribed destitute North Korean border guards with food and cigarettes.^[4] After spending some time working as a laborer in different parts of China, Shin was "accidentally discovered" by a journalist in a restaurant in [Shanghai](#), and the reporter recognized the importance of his story. The journalist brought Shin to the South Korean embassy for asylum,^[4] and from there he traveled to South Korea, where he underwent extensive questioning from authorities to determine if he was a North Korean assassin or spy. Afterwards, Shin's story was broadcast by the press and he published a Korean language memoir. He later moved to [southern California](#) in the United States, changing his name from Shin In Geun to Shin Dong-hyuk, and worked for [Liberty in North Korea](#) (LiNK), a non-profit organization that raises awareness of human rights issues in North Korea and provides aid to North Korean refugees.^[1] Shin then moved back to South Korea, where he campaigns for the eradication of the North Korean prison camps.^[17]

Dengler had a reputation from his experiences at the Navy [survival school](#), where he had escaped from the mock-[POW camp](#) run by SERE instructors and [Marine](#) guards two times and was planning a third escape when the training ended.^[3] He had also set a record as the only student to actually gain weight (3 pounds) during the course — his childhood experiences made him unafraid of eating whatever he could find and he had feasted on garbage. Unfortunately, immediately after he was shot down, he smashed his [survival radio](#) and hid most of his survival equipment to keep the enemy from finding it. The day after being shot down, Lt. Dengler was apprehended by [Pathet Lao](#) troops. Bound, he was led through several villages. He escaped once when he failed to signal a passing aircraft, but he was later recaptured while drinking from a spring. In retaliation, he was tortured numerous ways while in captivity.

[] POW camp

Dengler was eventually brought to a prison camp near the village of Par Kung where he met other POWs.

The other six prisoners were:

- [Pisidhi Indradat](#) (Thai)
- [Phisit Promsuwan](#) (Thai)
- [Prasit Thanee](#) (Thai)
- [Y.C. To](#) (Chinese)
- [Duane W. Martin](#) (American)
- [Eugene DeBruin](#) (American)

Except for Martin, who was an Air Force helicopter pilot who had been shot down in North Vietnam nearly a year before, the other prisoners were civilians employed by [Air America](#), a civilian airline owned by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#). The civilians had been in Pathet Lao hands for over two and a half years when Dengler joined them. The day he arrived in the camp, Dengler advised the other prisoners that he intended to escape and invited them to join him. They advised that he wait until the monsoon season when there would be plenty of water. Shortly after Dengler arrived, the prisoners were moved to a new camp ten miles away at Hoi Het. After the move, a strong debate ensued among the prisoners, with Dengler, Martin and Prasit arguing for escape which the other prisoners, particularly Indradat, initially opposed. One of the Thais heard the guards discussing the possibility of shooting them in the jungle and making it look like an escape attempt. With that revelation, everyone agreed and a date to escape was set. Their plan was to take over the camp and signal a [C-130 Hercules](#) flareship that made nightly visits to the vicinity. Dengler loosened logs under the hut that allowed the prisoners to squeeze through. The plan was for him to go out when the guards were eating and seize their weapons and pass them to Indradat and Promsuwan while Martin and DeBruin procured others from other locations.

[] Escape

On June 29, 1966, while the guards were eating, the group slipped out of their hand and foot restraints and grabbed the guards' unattended weapons, which included M1 rifles, Chinese automatic rifles, an American carbine and at least one submachinegun, as well as an early version of the AK47 automatic rifle, which he used during the escape from the POW camp. Dengler went out first followed by Duane. He went to the guard hut and seized an M1 for himself, and passed the American Carbine to Duane. The guards realized the prisoners had escaped and five of them rushed toward Dengler, who shot at least three with the AK47. Duane shot a popular guard in the leg. Two others ran off, presumably to get help, although at least one had been wounded. The seven prisoners split into three groups. DeBruin was originally

supposed to go with Dengler and Martin but decided to go with To, who was recovering from a fever and unable to keep up. They intended to get over the nearest ridge and wait for rescue. Dengler and Martin went off by themselves with the intention of heading for the [Mekong River](#) to escape to Thailand, but they never got more than a few miles from the camp from which they had escaped.

With the exception of Indradat, who was recaptured and later rescued by Laotian troops, none of the other prisoners was [ever seen again](#). DeBruin was reportedly captured and placed in another camp, then disappeared in 1968.

[\[\] Rescue](#)

Dengler and Martin found themselves in a jungle filled with leeches, insects and other creatures that made life miserable. They made their way down a creek and found a river, but when they thought they were on their way to the Mekong, they discovered that they had gone around in a circle. They had spotted several villages but had not been detected. They set up camp in an abandoned village where they found shelter from the nearly incessant rain. They had brought rice with them and found other food, but were still on the verge of starvation. Their intent had been to signal a [C-130](#) but at first lacked the energy to build a fire using primitive methods of rubbing bamboo together. Dengler finally managed to locate [carbine](#) cartridges that Martin had thrown away and used the powder from them to enhance the tinder, and got a fire going. That night they lit torches and waved them in the shape of an S and O when a C-130 came over. The airplane circled and dropped a couple of flares and they were overjoyed, believing they had been spotted. They woke up the next morning to find the landscape covered by fog and drizzle, but when it lifted, no rescue force appeared.

The following day, they were demoralized after a rescue force did not appear in response to their signal of the C-130 flareship. Martin, who was weak from starvation and was suffering from malaria, wanted to approach a nearby [Akha](#) village to steal some food. Dengler knew it was not a good idea, but refused to let his friend go near the village alone. They saw a little boy playing with a dog, and the child ran into the village calling out "American!" Within seconds a villager appeared and they knelt down on the trail in supplication, but the man swung his machete and struck Martin in the leg. He swung again and hit him behind the neck, killing him. Dengler jumped to his feet and rushed toward the villager, who turned and ran into the village to get help. Dengler managed to evade the searchers who went out after him and escaped back into the jungle. He returned to the abandoned village where the two had been spending their time and where he and Martin had signaled the C-130. That night when a C-130 flareship came over,

Dengler set fire to the huts and burned the village down. The C-130 crew spotted the fires and dropped flares, but even though the crew reported their sighting when they returned to their base at [Ubon](#), Thailand, the fires were not recognized by intelligence as having been a signal from a survivor.

Deatrick has long marveled at the fact that had he stuck to his original flight schedule on the morning of July 20, 1966, Dieter would not have been at the river to be sighted at that earlier hour. "If God put me on the earth for one reason," Deatrick says, "it was to find Dieter over there in the jungle." As it was, Deatrick describes it as "a million-in-one chance."^[4]

-Excerpt from Dengler biography regarding the role of pilot Eugene Deatrick



Photo taken of Dengler in the hospital after his rescue. At 5 feet nine inches (175 cm), Dengler weighed only 98 pounds (44.45 kilos)^[5]

When a rescue force again failed to materialize, Dengler decided to find one of the parachutes from a flare for use as a possible signal. He found one on a bush and placed it in his rucksack. On July 20, 1966, after 23 days in the jungle, Dengler managed to signal an Air Force pilot with the parachute. A 2-ship flight of Air Force Skyraiders from the [1st Air Commando Squadron](#) happened to fly up the river where Dengler was. [Eugene Peyton Deatrick](#), the pilot of the lead plane and the squadron commander, spotted a flash of white while making a turn at the river's bend and came back and spotted a man waving something white. Deatrick and his wingman contacted rescue forces but were told to ignore the sighting, as no airmen were known to be down in the area. Deatrick persisted and eventually managed to convince the command and control center to dispatch a rescue force. Fearing that Dengler might be a [Viet Cong](#) soldier, the helicopter crew restrained him when he was brought aboard.

According to the documentary, *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*, Dengler said one of the flight crew who was holding him down pulled out a half eaten snake from underneath Dengler's clothing and was so surprised he nearly fell out of the helicopter. The person who threw Dengler to the floor of the helicopter was Air Force Pararescue specialist Michael Leonard from [Lawler, Iowa](#). Leonard stripped Dengler of his clothes, making sure he was not armed or in possession of a hand grenade. When questioned, Dengler told

Leonard that he escaped from a North Vietnamese Prisoner of War camp two months earlier. Deatrick radioed the rescue helicopter crew to see if they could identify the person they had just hoisted up from the jungle. They reported that they had a man who claimed to be a downed Navy pilot who flew a Douglas A-1H Skyraider.

It wasn't until after he reached the hospital at Da Nang that Dengler's identity was confirmed. A conflict between the Air Force and the Navy developed over who should control his debriefing and recovery. In an apparent attempt to prevent the Air Force from embarrassing them in some way, the Navy sent a team of SEALs into the hospital to literally steal Dengler. He was brought out of the hospital in a covered gurney and rushed to the air field, where he was placed aboard a Navy carrier delivery transport WC-8 from VR-21 and flown to the *Ranger* where a welcoming party had been prepared. Dengler's deprivation from [malnutrition](#) and [parasites](#) caused the Navy doctors to order that he be airlifted to the United States.

Over the wall

On November 4, 1951, Eddie and the Jacksons hacksawed the bars and went over the wall and escaped. They met a friend, Valent Lesso from Cochrane, one of the violent members of Lennie Jackson's original gang, and the four became a team. Lesso was a talented musician who couldn't find work; he changed his name to Steve Suchan and became a bank robber. They soon pulled off a series of robberies, including the biggest one in Toronto history. The newspapers dubbed the new group "the Boyd Gang," seeing Eddie as the brains behind the operation. Willie Jackson was arrested and sent to the Don Jail. Eddie went into hiding with his wife Dorreen.

On March 6, 1952 Detective Sergeant [Edmund Tong](#) aka 'The Chinaman' and his partner pulled over a suspicious car at a Toronto intersection. The car contained Steve Suchan and Lennie Jackson working on their own. A gun fight ensued, and Suchan killed Detective Tong. They were later wounded and captured in a gun fight and ended up again in the Don Jail, charged with [murder](#). Eddie Boyd was tracked down and caught in bed beside an attaché case full of money, and five loaded pistols. Eddie was put in a jail cell with his two buddies. They became friendly with one of the older guards. As the pretence of a joke, one of the gang members grabbed the guard's key ring and gripped it tightly while kibbitzing and joking with the guard. When he let go of the key, an impression was left in his hand and in short order they fashioned a key for the cell door and slipped out briefly. When the guards were not around they hack-sawed a window in preparation for escape. To be able to fit out the small opening, they all went on a diet. Just before Suchan and Jackson were to stand trial, on Sept 8, 1952 they escaped the Don for a second time. The

biggest [manhunt](#) in Canadian history ensued, with a large reward — to be specific, a then-perhaps overindulgent CAD\$26,000 — offered for information leading to their capture. Several jail staff were fired and a [Royal Commission](#) was set up to review the circumstances of their escape.

Canadian newspaper wars were fierce in 1952, and every detail of the Boyd Gang's activity and attempts at their capture were reported in headlines across the country. There were reports of sightings across Ontario and Quebec. Local police officers travelled in pairs and were well armed.