

**B**y the mid-1970s I had spent time in jail and was on probation for burglary. My probation officer, thinking I could never stay “clean” (not use heroin), thought I belonged in San Quentin and told me he’d do everything within his power to send me there. He tested my urine for drugs and checked my arms for needle marks with a magnifying glass two or three times a week until I couldn’t take it any-

more. Eventually I quit reporting and went “on the run.” The fact that I had skipped probation and there was now an arrest warrant with my name on it left me feeling like a desperado. Now it was time to get really hooked.

I began selling dope to support my habit. I was living in a Manhattan Beach motel and selling about a thousand dollars’ worth of

heroin a week. For me this was “doing good,” because I wasn’t stealing. Not only that, my customers seemed to appreciate my services.

### ARREST

One Thursday afternoon, while calling my connection from a phone booth in front of my motel, I noticed several men in suits knocking on the door of my room. I instantly knew they were cops and that I needed to get away from there fast. Trying to be discreet, I opened the booth door and quietly started walking away. Before I took two steps a woman came running out of the nearby motel

office, pointing at me and yelling, “There he is! There he is!” Because of the many people she had observed coming and going from my room, she suspected me of dealing and called the Manhattan Beach City Police Department.

I started running but didn’t get far. Besides the cops upstairs other officers were surrounding the motel. Though I hadn’t noticed, two of them were within ten feet of where I stood. As soon as I realized that I had been spotted by the police, I bolted from that phone booth as if my life depended on it. Ignoring their commands to “halt,” I ran as fast as I could. Before I had gone a hundred yards, they tackled me to the ground and cuffed me. At that moment I felt a sense of fear, helplessness, and anger that is difficult to describe. I was under arrest—again. While one cop held me from behind, the other went into my pockets and pulled out eleven balloons filled with heroin. The plainclothes cops found more heroin, other drugs, and several hundred dollars in my room. Next thing I knew somebody was reading me my Miranda rights (“You have the right to remain silent...”) and I found myself sitting in the back seat of a cop car, alone, angry, scared, and cuffed, the crackling sounds and voices from the police radio relentlessly assaulting my ears. Welcome to my nightmare—live from Los Angeles County.

During the ride to the Manhattan Beach City Jail, the police lockup, I felt helpless and desperate, like a captured animal. The cops in the front seat seemed excited as they talked about what had just gone down—the chase, the bust. As I listened to their conversation I got a sense of what I must mean to them—a good catch, evidence of a job well done, but little else. They talked about me as if I were invisible. That my whole world had just caved in was apparently insignificant to them. Underneath all these feelings was the unquestionable certainty that I would soon become sick from heroin withdrawal.

## INSIDE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND BEYOND: ONE MAN’S JOURNEY

# Stepping into a New World: Arrested, Booked, Charged, Jailed, and Investigated

WRITTEN BY CHUCK TERRY

## BOOKING

We quickly arrived at the local police lockup—a small facility that functioned as a way station, a place where recently captured “suspects” are held until they can bail out or be transported to the county jail. Once inside I was promptly booked, a process that included being notified of my charges (given paperwork clarifying the specific crimes I was being accused of—possession of heroin with the intent to sell was the most serious) and the amount of my bail (which was high), photographed, fingerprinted, and strip-searched. Because I could not make bail, I was held for a court appearance and confined to a small cellblock (the tank), where I was given a blanket, toilet paper, and food twice a day. Because Friday was a holiday I would not be sent to the county jail until Monday. It was here that I began kicking a heroin habit that was so bad I did not sleep for the following three weeks.

For the next four days this cellblock was my home. I had never been so physically addicted or experienced such severe withdrawal. I was weak, couldn't eat, ached all over, and had the sweats, chills, and diarrhea. While in the lockup a few other men came and went. Most had been arrested for crimes that were not as serious as mine—not paying traffic tickets and the like. But they say misery loves company, and having other people around did help. In such facilities there is usually a high level of camaraderie among inmates. Having been stripped of everything we take for granted “on the streets,” like personal autonomy, heterosexual relations, jobs, safety, and loved ones, we are left with just about all there is to associate with and find meaning from on the inside—each other.

On the third day I was called out of the tank and placed inside a room with two men who looked like addicts. One was Chicano and the other white. They had tattoos, tracks on their arms (scars from needle marks), and talked like convicts. By this time I was extremely weak—neither my vision nor my

perception was very sharp. To my surprise these guys turned out to be narcotics officers who worked for the local police department. I felt like I was in the Twilight Zone. They wanted me to tell on my connection. “We know you were scoring ounces. We figure if you tell us who your man is we can get to the guy who has the pounds.” My head began to spin.

Even though it happens a lot, being a police informant is taboo among prisoners. Informants often spend years in protective custody (special sections of jails or prisons separated from the main population) or are killed for providing information that leads to further arrests. Nevertheless, police relentlessly seek new informants. Payment for cooperation varies. A good example of this is the witness protection programs that keep all sorts of people, including murderers, out of prison in exchange for the information they provide.

I was still consumed by my need for heroin as I sat facing these guys. Sick as I was, I would do just about anything for a shot. Except tell. They said if I cooperated they would give me enough dope to “get well.” I told them I could never give up my connection because he was my friend. How could I live with myself if I did that? They told me they'd set it up so nobody would have to know (apparently they didn't understand why I couldn't do it). Their plan was for me to have my connection meet me on a street corner and sell me some dope while they watched from a hidden location. Once the buy was made they would rush in, arrest us, take us both to jail, and then let me go. All my charges would be dropped and they would cut me loose. Luckily, their offer did not tempt me. I knew what time it was. I went to bed in the tank that night sick as a dog, but I still had my dignity. The following Monday I was transported in chains to the county jail. ■