

Comparisons of Three Federal Prison Camps Within the Bureau of Prisons

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*Descriptions of living conditions at Florence Camp,
Lompoc Camp, and Taft Camp.*

When a judge imposes a prison sentence, a cloud of anxiety accompanies the sanction. White collar offenders, especially, live with the unknown. In many cases, those convicted of offenses related to fraud, tax evasion, securities violations, or the like, struggle with the unfamiliar and unenviable position of having insufficient information about what is to come.

It is not only the defendants who struggle with the unknown, as family members suffer as well. Television programs broadcast episodes of *Lockdown* and *Maximum Security, Oz*, and *Prison Break*. Those shows sensationalize and perpetuate the myths of confinement. White collar offenders, however, rarely experience such volatility. In fact, most first-time, nonviolent offenders who have release dates within ten years or less, serve their time inside minimum-security prison camps. Although not all camps are the same, this article will provide a description of what most white-collar offenders can expect.

Before I write much more, let me establish some credibility by introducing readers to my experiences. I was arrested by DEA agents in 1987. Despite having no history of violence or previous incarceration, my judge imposed a 45-year sentence after a jury convicted me. I began serving my sentence in high-security penitentiaries, where I remained for longer than six years. From there I served many years in medium- and low-security federal correctional institutions. Since 2003, I have been confined in three separate minimum-security camps.

During my imprisonment, I developed a plan that would help me emerge successfully from this journey. Despite my having passed longer than 21 years of my life as a prisoner, I remain

true to my plan. It has been a compass, guiding me through the turmoil and filling me with optimism. The plan has opened opportunities to educate myself, to build a thriving network of support, to keep physically fit, and to feel blessed with a magnificent, beautiful wife. The experiences I have lived qualify me to guide others through the challenges of confinement.

Since most of my readers will begin serving their sentences in minimum-security, in this article I intend to describe the facilities, the structure of time, and typical days in three separate federal prison camps. The information will provide readers with sufficient background to understand what to expect from any federal prison camp. Other articles attached to this series available through MichaelSantos.net will describe higher-security prisons, strategies I used to reach my fullest potential, and profiles of many other prisoners.

I begin with a description of the federal prison camp located within the Federal Correctional Complex in Florence, Colorado.

Florence Camp

I'll always remember the day I was processed into the camp in Florence. Unlike most camp inmates, I did not self-surrender to the prison. I had been locked inside cages, fences, and walls since August 11, 1987. Then, on December 4, 2003, my chains were removed. Officials at the adjacent medium-security institution processed the other new camp inmates and me, then instructed us to walk over to the camp. That was my first day outside of secure boundaries of concrete and steel.

As an aside, I should offer a tidbit of guidance for individuals who have been given the privilege of self-surrendering. If the sentencing judge offers the defendant an option of self-surrendering, the defendant should accept. The alternative is to process through the prison transport system. The transport system means handcuffs and leg irons and chains; it means

countless stops in federal or state holding facilities; it means mixing with prisoners of every security level, many of whom seethe with hostility.

When given the option, as most white-collar defendants receive, the defendant should surrender directly to the prison camp; further, the defendant should ask counsel to ensure that the defendant's appropriate paperwork—including the judgment and commitment orders along with a copy of the Presentence Investigation—has been filed with the prison camp. Paperwork sometimes gets mixed, and defendants who could self-surrender to camp sometimes make the mistake of surrendering to U.S. Marshals.

Florence Camp was one of several prisons situated within the Federal Correctional Complex. The complex also housed the nation's most secure prison, known as ADX Florence, or the Supermax. Adjacent to the supermax was the high-security penitentiary known as USP Florence. Nearby was the Federal Correctional Institution, which confined inmates of both medium- and high-security. Those higher-security institutions were completely separate, and while inmates were locked inside one, they did not have any interaction with inmates inside the other facilities.

Unlike the adjacent higher-security prisons, Florence camp was relatively open. A light fence surrounded the outer perimeters, though it lacked the obtrusive coils of razor wire that made the other prisons look so foreboding.

In reporting to the camp, I walked through a control center where camp officers congregated. The area was known as "the bubble" which was a misleading name. The room had windows that faced the interior of the camp compound, a few desks, along with control devices including video monitors that broadcasted images transmitted by various cameras around the camp.

Being of relatively new construction, the camp was well maintained with clean, well kept grounds. Inside the perimeter, the camp used two separate buildings for inmate living. One of the

buildings was named Summit, the other was named Teller. I was assigned to the top floor of Teller Unit.

Each of the housing units was of an identical floor plan, constructed in the shape of an X. Each wing of the X held approximately 36 men in cubicles with either two or four beds. When I was confined there, the bed frames were made of steel with springs, and mattresses were sufficient for a comfortable rest.

I was assigned to a two-man cubicle. Inside the cubicle, my cube mate and I each had a steel locker. The locker was about waist high, perhaps two feet square. We also had a few hooks on the wall from which we could hang institutional clothes. The cube had a small, rectangular steel-plate attached to the wall with a fixed stool that one person could use as a writing surface. The window in my cube looked out at the majestic mountain known as Pike's Peak.

In total, approximately 260 camp inmates were assigned to the Teller Unit of Florence Camp, and Summit Unit had the same number. Each wing had its own bathroom with three showers, five sinks, two urinals, and two toilets enclosed in stalls. For prison, the bathrooms were well maintained, as a cadre of inmate orderlies were assigned to clean regularly.

Each housing unit had six rooms for television viewing. They were small, with seating capacity for fewer than 20. In order to lessen possibilities for confrontations with others, I spent more of my leisure time reading and writing than watching television.

The television rooms were self-segregated, for the most part, and inmates who had the most seniority inside the camp claimed their "spot" for seating. Each inmate cubicle was assigned two chairs, and inmates who wanted to watch television carried their chairs with them.

The housing units had a community laundry room with four washers and six dryers. Inmates had the option of purchasing laundry soap from the commissary to wash their own clothes, or they could carry their clothing to the institutional laundry for washing.

Four microwave ovens were available for inmate use inside the housing unit. A hot water dispenser was also available for instant coffee or cooking dry soups. Many inmates preferred to purchase rice, beans, tuna, and other items from the commissary; they prepared meals in the housing units when they wanted to avoid the institutional setting of food services.

Unlike higher-security institutions where I have been held, telephones were not available inside the housing units of Florence Camp. A community phone room was located in the services section of the camp. Inmates could walk to the phone room whenever the camp compound was open, generally between six a.m. and nine in the evening.

The telephone room had about 15 wall-mounted phones that an inmate could use to make collect or prepaid calls to anyone on his approved list. The approved list could ordinarily include up to 30 telephone numbers, and adding numbers was relatively easy. The inmate simply filled out a telephone form and submitted the form to his assigned counselor; usually within ten days, the requested number would be available for calling.

All of the telephones would be available for inmate use between the hours of 6:00 and 7:30 in the morning, between 11:00 and 12:00 in the afternoon, between 4:30 and 9:00 in the evenings, and all day on weekends or federal holidays. During weekday work hours, however, only two telephones were available for inmate use. Inmates were only authorized 300 minutes of telephone access during most months, however, so limited use of the phone room was a moot point. After one phone call was made, inmates were required to wait one hour before they could use the phone again. All telephone conversations, of course, were subject to electronic monitoring.

Beside the community telephone room, that services section of the camp at Florence included the institutional laundry, a commissary, a chow hall, two classrooms, a small library, a recreation room for the table games, arts and crafts rooms, and a gymnasium. Outside, the camp had an

excellent weight lifting area, and a running track that circled a softball and soccer field. A multipurpose chapel building was available for worshipping and limited quiet space. A few video monitors were available in the chapel building for educational or instructional use.

As a minimum-security facility, each of the 500-plus men assigned to Florence Camp was within ten years of his release date. There were no convicted sex offenders at the camp, nor were there inmates who had been found to have committed acts of violence within the past several years. That did not mean the camp did not confine men with proclivities for violence. I sensed that many of the men had allegiances to street gangs and were susceptible to bursts of violence if provoked. Their prison records, however, did not reflect convictions for violent acts.

Accordingly, administrators classified them as appropriate for minimum-security placement.

My first friend at Florence Camp was Eric. He was a typical white-collar offender, being a man of business, family, and community. Eric was in his early 50s and serving a split sentence, requiring him to serve five months at Florence Camp, followed by a consecutive five months on home confinement. He had self-surrendered the day before I arrived, and we were assigned to the same work detail.

In the Federal Bureau of Prisons, all capable inmates reported to regular work assignments. Staff members assigned those jobs according to institutional need, though savvy inmates sometimes succeeded in maneuvering their way into desirable jobs. Inmates assigned to camps located on Federal Correctional Complexes, like those at Florence, were required to supply labor that would support all of the facilities on the complex.

Eric and I were required to work in the laundry facility of the supermax. Each morning we boarded a bus with others that drove us to the ADX. Guards from the supermax searched us, requiring us to walk through metal detectors and sometimes to strip off our clothes for a full

body search. We then worked in the locked room of the ADX laundry for a seven-hour shift, washing and mending clothing for the supermax prisoners who lived locked in single cells.

A total of seven inmates were assigned to work at the ADX laundry. Other camp inmates were required to work in food services, landscaping, or worked for the education department as tutors. Newly arriving inmates sometimes found the structured work days therapeutic. As a man became more conditioned to institutional living, on the other hand, he frequently developed his own strategy for passing through the time in confinement.

The meals at Florence Camp were better than at any of the other prisons where I had been held. Portions of the main meals were abundant, but I especially appreciated the fresh salad bar as well as a hot bar offering rice and beans. If the scheduled meal did not seem agreeable, I could always bring a pack of tuna and add it to a salad.

Florence Camp administrators required inmates who did not have a record of high school equivalency to attend GED classes. Those who refused were penalized with loss of good time and other sanctions. Other than those GED classes, however, educational opportunities were more individual in nature. College courses were not offered inside the institution, though a few motivated students coordinated programs that allowed them to study through correspondence. Other articles on MichaelSantos.net describe some of the strategies I used to earn an undergraduate and a graduate degree through independent study programs.

What I liked most about Florence Camp was the visiting policy. With access to only 300 minutes of telephone time per month, I found visiting access essential to strengthening family ties. At Florence, my wife and I were able to visit each Friday evening between 5:00 and 8:00. We were able to visit on weekends and federal holidays between 8:00 and 3:00. I really appreciated those liberal visiting hours, enabling my wife and me to nurture our marriage

through my imprisonment. Carole, my wife, moved to Florence so we could visit those days each week.

Rules inside the Florence Camp visiting room were strictly enforced. An officer was posted at a desk. He monitored activities in the visiting room, allowing inmates to embrace and kiss visitors at the beginning and conclusion of each visit. During the visit itself, some officers authorized hand holding, others did not. The visiting room had two remotely operated video cameras that surreptitiously recorded inmate interactions with visitors. If the visiting room guard or an offsite officer monitoring the video recordings caught an inmate stealing a kiss during a visit, the guards might terminate the visit and punish the inmate with severe sanctions. Valuing our visiting privileges, Carole and I were scrupulous in following the letter and spirit of all rules.

A typical day for me at Florence Camp began at 5:30 in the morning. I'd shower, dress, then write a letter to my wife. At 7:00 I'd board the bus that drove me to my job at the ADX. The other crew members and I would eat lunch there, and our shift usually ended by 2:00 in the afternoon. We would board the bus, and on most days we were back at the camp by 2:30.

In the afternoon I would exercise. At 4:00 p.m. each day we were required to be standing in our assigned areas for one of the many daily census counts. By 5:00 p.m. on most days, the guards released the housing units for the evening meal, commissary purchases, or recreational activities. I taught an evening class on Success Strategies two evenings each week while I was there, and I would spend my other free time writing or reading. I avoided problems by focusing on my work and spending a lot of time alone. By 9:00 p.m. on most evenings, I was in bed. Friday evenings, weekends, and holidays, I spent visiting with my wife.

I spent 18 months of my confinement at Florence Camp. Inmates who were self-directed could pass time easily there, though the level of administrative control was higher than at other minimum-security camps. At Florence, guards frequently interrupted routines with unscheduled

census counts, or they might take privileges away from the entire camp if an individual broke one of the many rules. Having had many years of confinement behind me, those disruptions did not bother me, though newer prisoners found the controls suffocating. For example, at Florence, guards sometimes woke prisoners in the dead of night if the inmate committed the infraction of covering his head beneath the blanket. If one could deal with the pettiness and strict controls, however, Florence Camp was a fine place to serve a prison term.

Lompoc Camp

I arrived at Lompoc Camp via the inmate transport system in July of 2005. I had been chained up in Florence, then transferred to the holding center at Oklahoma City. I remained in Oklahoma for about one month waiting for my scheduled flight to California. We flew to Victorville, and deputies from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department were there to take me to the county jail. I waited in the San Bernardino County Jail for a week, mixing with felons of every security level. Deputies then hoarded those of us transferring to Lompoc in a holding cell. They shackled us, then chained each man's wrists to another man's waist. It was very uncomfortable, but part of the prisoner transport system that I have come to expect. It is the reason that I encourage those who are offered the privilege of doing so to self-surrender or furlough transfer to their designated prison.

When I arrived at Lompoc Camp, I found aspects of the camp that I liked better than Florence. Likewise, Lompoc had some parts that I did not like as much. That's the way prisons go. Some parts are better than others, some parts are worse. Security levels are more important than locations, because inmates must share space with hundreds or thousands of others. As long as everyone is of the same security level, it is easier to predict the behavior patterns. At Lompoc Camp, as in all federal prison camps, the inmates were of minimum-security level.

Whereas the camp at Florence had been a part of the original complex's design, the camp at Lompoc was a kind of afterthought. Lompoc was also a Federal Correctional Complex, with two adjacent secure prisons. The camp was opened in the early 1990s, though it was not built like most prisons, with a heavy emphasis on security. Later, a second camp was opened at Lompoc specifically for inmates participating in the Residential Drug Treatment Program.

Inmates confined at the main Lompoc Camp were confined in two housing units, A and B. They were of a kind of cheap construction, more like a prefabricated metal warehouse. It was the only prison I had ever been with plasterboard walls. Rather than cubicles, each housing unit had six rows of beds that were butted against each other. Inmates who stretched out their arms would touch another prisoner; if I reached behind my head while sleeping, the beds were so close that I would touch another man's head.

The housing units had a stated capacity of far fewer than the 170 men who usually occupied them. As a consequence, common rooms had been filled with metal racks and lockers. Although more men were crammed inside the housing units to live, the bathroom facilities were not expanded. In my housing unit, the 170 inmates had only four shower heads available, six toilets, three urinals, and eight sinks. Whereas the bathroom facilities at Florence Camp had been as clean as a typical Denny's Restaurant, the bathrooms at Lompoc were frequently disgusting. Inmate orderlies were assigned to keep them clean, though without constant care, the inadequate facilities were dirtied easily. It seemed very unsanitary, more so than in most prisons where I had been held.

The chow hall was built to accommodate far fewer inmates. Accordingly, it too was frequently crowded. The food was not as abundant as in Florence, nor was it as well prepared. We did not have a salad bar or soup bar while I was confined in Lompoc, and the commissary did not sell any vegetables. In fact, Lompoc had the smallest selection of commissary items that I

had ever encountered in federal prison. The entire library consisted of two portable trailers that were filled with books that inmates donated. There were no educational programs to speak of, not even a staff member assigned to the education department. A chapel building was available for religious services, but other than that, Lompoc Camp did not offer much space for inmate recreation.

Since the housing units were too crowded with beds for inmate televisions, administrators maintained a portable building for recreation. Inside were two pool tables, several televisions, a few microwaves, and game tables. Access to those facilities was available whenever the compound was open. When inmates were required to report to their housing units, however, they were pretty much restricted to their bunks because there was no space for anything else. Besides the recreation portable, a few televisions were available in the chapel, and a few more were stationed outside under a shack.

The facilities at Florence Camp, in my opinion, were far superior to the facilities at Lompoc Camp. That said, for many reasons I preferred my time at Lompoc Camp to Florence. Lompoc has a reputation around the country as being one of the easiest camps to serve time in. The reason serving time there was easy was because inmates at Lompoc Camp enjoyed an extraordinary degree of freedom. There were good parts and bad parts to that freedom. Let's start with the good.

In Florence, administrators from the higher-security adjacent prisons governed the camp. The camp had no shortage of staff presence, and they were frequently obtrusive. Shakedowns were routine, and inmates were belittled or patronized with regularity. That could aggravate an inmate's time. For those who had experience with living in prison settings, those aggravations did not matter so much; I was totally at ease with them. Newer inmates, on the other hand,

sometimes struggled with the petty interferences. At Lompoc Camp, inmates had significantly more autonomy.

All inmates were assigned jobs, and at Lompoc Camp many of the men were assigned to work on a large ranching operation. I was assigned to a dairy operation with more than 300 head of cattle. Others worked planting fields, operating heavy machinery, serving as cowboys, or performing other farming duties. A few inmates had jobs that required them to drive 18-wheeler rigs to adjoining states for the delivery of dairy products manufactured at Lompoc Camp. The fortunate few with those jobs slept in motels and ate their meals in restaurants four nights each week. Those kinds of jobs were not like prison at all.

Inmates who were not assigned to the farm or dairy operations generally worked to maintain the camp grounds, or they worked to maintain grounds of adjacent prisons. Others were required to maintain the landscaping of a nearby subsidized staff housing project. Most all of those jobs required inmates to drive government vehicles. Some boarded a bus each morning that drove them to the nearby Vandenberg Air Force Base so that the inmate orderlies could work on landscaping projects there.

The work details at Lompoc Camp meant that inmates served time without staff supervision for significant periods of each day. On my first day there, I was told to board a van with approximately six other inmates. The inmate driver tuned into a classical rock station and we drove approximately 20 miles away from the prison on public highways. I couldn't believe we were so free. We pulled into a bean field, where we were supposed to labor by tilling the earth. We worked there on that field for the entire day. Later, I was assigned to a clerical job at a nearby powerhouse. Another inmate and I drove in a government vehicle, without supervision, on a public highway as late as midnight.

That level of freedom was nice because it came with a degree of trust that I appreciated. It was not so good, however, because many of the prisoners with whom I served time abused that trust regularly. There was more contraband at Lompoc Camp than any prison where I had been held. Guards were powerless to stop the flow of contraband when hundreds of inmates left the camp each day to work in neighboring communities. During the evenings, only one guard was assigned to Lompoc camp, and there was no way he could keep track of the 350-plus inmates who were designated there.

I did not feel comfortable with so much contraband around me. I expected guards to hold periodic raids. When they came in for their massive search parties, I knew they would be hoarding groups of inmates at random and charging them with contraband offenses. Some of those penalties could be stiff. Those caught with a cell phone, for example, could expect to lose their telephone and visiting privileges for a year or longer; those caught with cigarettes were transferred to higher security prisons; those caught leaving the prison without permission to visit wives or friends in town subjected themselves to criminal prosecution. I was uncomfortable with the heavy presence of alcohol, marijuana, and other contraband that could lead to the types of problems I wanted to avoid.

For a person like me, who wanted to finish serving his time without any problems, Lompoc had its pros and cons. I really liked the freedom. At the same time, I hated knowing that at any time, I could be rounded up and charged with wrongdoing because of something others had done. That was a danger in a loose prison like Lompoc Camp.

Lompoc was situated, however, on an extraordinary piece of real estate. Tall eucalyptus trees lined the grounds. The camp inmates had planted a magnificent garden that was very peaceful. Tables and benches were all around the campus, and the central coast of California brought pleasant temperatures for most of the year.

Although the camp did not have a gymnasium, it did have an outdoor basketball court, volleyball, horseshoe pits and bocce ball courts. There was one of the best outdoor weight lifting areas I had seen in federal prison. Lompoc Camp did not have a regular oval running track, though it did have a long trail that I used each morning. During the season, inmates coordinated softball, soccer, and flag football teams.

Visiting at Lompoc while I was there was very pleasant, though since then a new warden came and made access to visiting much more restrictive. When I was confined at Lompoc Camp, inmates were authorized to visit every Saturday, Sunday, and federal holiday between the hours of eight and three. My wife, Carole, moved to Lompoc to facilitate our easy visiting and I appreciated the time we could spend together. Visiting there was very family friendly, with choices between indoor and outdoor seating. Since my transfer from Lompoc in the summer of 2007, a new warden closed part of the outside visiting section and implemented a restrictive system that authorized inmates fewer than five visits per month. As in all federal prisons, there is a huge discrepancy between statements that describe the importance of family visits and the actual policies that hinder family relationships.

In June of 2007, administrators transferred me from the camp at Lompoc to another camp in Taft, about 100 miles to the east. That transfer turned out to be a huge blessing for me.

Taft Camp

Taft is a small town to the west of Bakersfield, in the central valley of California. The Taft Correctional Institution was opened sometime in the earlier part of the 1990s. It is different from other federal prisons in that the Bureau of Prisons has outsourced the management to private contractors.

At one time it was managed by Correctional Corporation of America. Then, for a while, the GEO group managed the prison. Since 2007, a Utah based company known as MTC has had

the contract to manage this facility. As far as I was concerned, MTC did a far superior job of managing inmates to anything I experienced during my 20-plus years as a federal prisoner.

The large, adjacent, low-security prison primarily held prisoners who were scheduled for deportation. The Taft Camp sat behind the low-security prison, and looked like an oasis in the desert. It was built of a concrete tilt-up construction, with aesthetically pleasing windows. The buildings look more like the headquarters of a successful software company than a prison. Lush green lawns, palm trees, wide sidewalks, and very clean surroundings made Taft Camp stand out from other prisons.

Inmates were assigned to four large housing units. Each unit had a capacity for approximately 150 men. The men were assigned to three-man cubicles when they arrived. After a few months, they could transfer to a two-man cubicle. The bathroom facilities were the cleanest I had seen in prison, and they were more than ample. As a comparison, at Lompoc Camp we had four showers in our housing unit to accommodate 170 men. At Taft Camp, we had 17 deep-stall, individual showers to accommodate fewer than 140 men. As a consequence of there being so much space the bathrooms were much cleaner.

Whereas both Lompoc and Florence had telephone areas that were separated from the housing units, at Taft Camp each housing unit offered six telephones. Further, all telephones were available for inmate use between six in the morning and midnight. We still had the 300-minute phone restriction per month, but at least we could access the telephone during convenient times to talk with our family members.

Each housing unit had six televisions for inmate viewing. Three of the televisions required inmates to listen to sound through radio headsets, while the other three were normal. I preferred to listen through the headsets because that blocked the sound of others in the room. As

in most prisons, there was a kind of segregation to television viewing, though it was less pronounced at Taft Camp than at other institutions.

The housing units had four microwave ovens available and a hot water spigot for drinks and soups. The commissary at Taft Camp was by far the best that I had experienced as a federal prisoner. Inmates were allowed to shop twice during most weeks of the year, and fresh produce like tomatoes, onions, green peppers, avocados, lemons, apples, bananas, and jalapeno peppers were available. If an inmate didn't like to eat the meals from the chow hall, he had the option of purchasing food from the commissary that could sustain him. As in all federal prisons, however, inmates were limited to spending \$290 per month on food items.

The chow hall at Taft Camp was sufficient to accommodate the population, and like all buildings at Taft, it was air conditioned. I found the meals satisfying, something like I remembered from high school cafeterias. Unlike the chow hall at Florence, however, neither a salad nor soup bar was available.

Recreational facilities at Taft Camp were quite good. There were no weights available, but the camp had many stationary bicycles, Stairmasters, elliptical machines for running, and an outstanding running track on which I averaged more than 50 miles of running each week. Frequent watering kept the lawns lush. Inmates organized soccer and softball leagues. Taft had pull-up bars, pushup bars, and dip bars. It offered exercise balls, volleyball, bocce ball, and horseshoes. There was a music room with drums and guitars, a recreation room with pool tables and additional televisions rooms.

In the Education Department, staff members offered courses to lead participating inmates to high school equivalency. Further, the Taft community college offered courses through independent study along with a computer lab to help them complete their work. The library held about 5,000 books, most of which seemed to be donated by inmates. The library subscribed to

several newspapers, and inmates brought their own subscriptions as well. In the law library, five electric typewriters were available, and a copy machine stood ready for inmates who prepaid less than a dime per copy.

All things considered, I was grateful for every day that I served at Taft Camp. The staff members were the least obtrusive and patronizing. Rather than trying to interfere with the lives of inmates, they were content to leave inmates alone as long as the inmates did not violate rules. What I appreciated most, however, was that staff members were amenable to allowing inmates to choose their roommates and choose their job assignments. Since I enjoy spending my time writing, staff members allowed me to work as an orderly, which gave me ample time to write when I completed my job assignment.

One area that I did not write about with regard to Florence Camp or Lompoc Camp concerns health services. Each federal prison struggles to keep up with health care needs just as many in society struggle in receiving adequate medical attention. I was blessed with excellent health and I always worked hard to keep physically fit. I am thankful that I rarely required medical attention, though I can say that regardless of which facility was confining me, I always received the medical attention I needed. It was not a pleasant experience, as there were always waiting lists and delays, but at least I was able to see a nurse or physician's assistant when I was in need of medical attention. Other prisoners who had more severe health problems sometimes complained about the health care they received, but I was not a witness to any mistreatment.

Final Word

During the many years that I served in federal prison, I found that I could adjust much better than I would have thought. It didn't matter whether I was in a high security penitentiary, a medium- or low-security correctional institution, or a minimum-security camp. By focusing on

my goals and choosing my associates carefully, I was successful in avoiding problems with others and reaching my fullest potential.

I was always at peace, though I can say that as I moved from one institution to another, I always liked the newer surroundings best. Those who expect confinement in a minimum-security camp could expect to serve their time without volatility. There would not be any gang pressures or random acts of violence. During the five years that I served in prison camps, I did not witness any serious violence. A few fights may have broken out, though that was to be expected in a population of men who were living under duress. The salient point to keep in mind was that inmates in camps, more than in high security prisons, had the option of keeping to themselves. That was always a good strategy, I found, for those who wanted to avoid problems.