

Law students crack books for prisoners

By Winifred Sease
Staff Writer

The first time Rachel Graham went to the N.C. Correctional Institution for Women in Raleigh, she noticed its campuslike atmosphere.

"There were all these people milling around, listening to music and smoking," she said.

But after return visits, she noticed some differences.

She noticed everyone had on a green, blue or brown shirt. There, color symbolized reality. Inmates with green shirts had been convicted of misdemeanors, blue shirts signified felonies and women wearing brown shirts have yet to be processed.

"At first I thought that this can't be that bad, but the more that I have thought about it, I know they (mill around) because they can't do anything else. It has to be very frustrating," said Graham, co-director of Women Prisoners Rights Project.

It was a similar realization of this frustration that prompted Lucy Inman to found what would eventually be called the Women Prisoners Rights Project — a project in which law students visit women prisoners to inform them of their rights, especially in the areas of civil and domestic law.

Inman stumbled upon this as a volunteer at the women's correctional center while doing an independent study with Daniel Pollitt, Kenan professor in the School of Law.

Years before Inman founded the WPRP, Pollitt acknowledged the need for all prisoners to have some way of receiving and gathering information. "When we started, prisoners had no other recourse," he said.

This is the reason that 15 years ago, Pollitt and some law students started offering their services to prisoners who could get no one else to listen.

The group he formed is called the Prisoners Rights Project and functions differently than the Women Prisoners Rights Project. The PRP deals exclusively with male inmates and communicates with the inmates through written correspondence, while WPRP visits the women inmates in the prison and then researches inmates' problems.

Ann Hester, a volunteer for PRP,



said because funds were limited, prisoners did not have access to a law library to research their rights. The prisoners can write letters to the PRP on issues they are concerned with, such as adequate medical care, and a law student will research and write back, telling the inmate what the law is.

The project receives about 10 letters each week and is now back-logged, because the letters did not stop coming over the holidays.

Hester said, "You can't give everyone your full attention. It is depressing. There is a lack of resources and we are completely swamped all the time. And as long as they continue to warehouse prisoners, it won't get any better."

Pollitt said a state-funded organization, Prisoners Legal Services, was established two years ago, to match licensed attorneys with prisoners' legal problems, but because of high demand and limited manpower, Prisoners Legal Services cannot reply to all requests.

Prisoners Legal Services employs only 10 attorneys handle complaints of prison conditions, medical care, inadequate representation and parole status.

The attorneys, unlike the law student volunteers, can file suit, advise and represent inmates. But because the students are not licensed to practice law, they are limited in the assistance they can provide.

To make sure there are no misunder-

standings about what the students can tell the prisoners, four office staff members read all letters sent back to the prisoners to make sure no one gives advice, Hester said.

"If it looks like a legitimate complaint, we send it to Prisoners Legal Services.... We can't give them advice, we just tell them what the law says," Hester said.

There are many letters for which Prisoners Legal Services probably would not have time, such as the letter Pollitt said PRP received from an inmate who wanted to know the penalty for second-time escape. A PRP volunteer replied, only for the letter to be returned marked "Addressee Unknown." "Obviously, he didn't wait for the answer," Pollitt said.

Unlike PRP, the WPRP meets the inmates face-to-face by appointment. Correctional officer Brenda Ewell acts as a liaison between the project and the inmates. Volunteers go to the prison two days a week, meeting about 14 inmates a week to tell them about the laws that will help them, Ewell said. After meeting an inmate, volunteers try to get back in touch within two weeks.

One way the WPRP has helped the inmates is through the development of a divorce packet. It contains instructions on how to file for divorce and the papers that have to be filled out. "It makes it easier on the prisoner," said Constance

Apostolou, director of the WPRP.

Because a high percentage of the female inmates are the primary caretakers of their children, many have to deal with the custody of their children while they are in prison. "Prisoners Legal Services focuses on prison environment and validity of the inmate's case, not family and domestic law. Women have to have their own funds (to get legal aid) or they get caught between the cracks," Apostolou said.

Inman said, "In 1990, 86 percent of the women were mothers, and two-thirds of them were the primary caretakers of their children."

"The prison administrators and inmates expressed the need for assistance in domestic law," she said. "This is a need the government has been unable to address. I would love to see a network of practicing attorneys working on this issue."

Apostolou explained by telling a story about a woman inmate who has an eighteen-month old baby. She gave custody to her mother, but the court gave custody to the father, who has been in trouble for alcohol dependency and child abuse. The WPRP makes it possible for the inmate to gather information about her child and learn her rights.

"The law students are very much needed and very much in demand," Ewell said. "We are booked up for a month and a half."

The female prisoners, like the male prisoners, mostly hear about the help available to them from the law students by word-of-mouth. "Once you tell one inmate, everyone knows," Ewell said.

"The inmates are always disappointed during Spring Break and the Christmas holidays. They want to know where the students are and when they are coming back," Ewell said.

But it is not only the inmates that profit from the project.

Pollitt said: "Most law students are comfortable middle class. This is a first-time exposure. They can gain an awareness and sensitivity to certain problems."

"You can't help but feel different when you learn how intelligent some (inmates) are — it breaks the stereotypes," Apostolou said. "I don't ever give up on the idea that if you give them a break they will change. They are just people. You can talk legal mumbo-jumbo all you want, but people still end up in prison."

On-campus job recruiting February 10-14

Resume drop: Jan. 21 *Open Sign-up: Feb. 5

Date	Company	Positions	Majors
2-10	National Starch & Chem	SALE	APMS/BS, APPS/BS, CHEM/BS, CHEM/MS, CHEM/PHD
		RESC	BU/BS, ECON/BA, BU/BS, MATH/BA/BS
2-11	Robinson Humphrey Co.	BNKG	ANY/BA/BS
		FINN	BU/BS, ECON/BA, ENGL/BA, INDR/BA, INDS/BA, INTS/BA
2-12	Thalhimers/Div. May Co.	RMGT	ANY/BA/BS
		GMGT	BU/BS, ECON/BA, ENGL/BA, INDR/BA, INDS/BA, INTS/BA
2-13	Baker & Taylor Books	SALE	ANY/BA/BS
		SALE	BU/BS, ECON/BA, ENGL/BA, INDR/BA, INDS/BA, INTS/BA
2-14	Beep One/Metronet Corp.	BNKG	ANY/BU/BS
		FINN	BU/BS, ECON/BA, LIBA/BA
2-15	Denver Publishing Inst.	Grad Sch.	ANY/BA/BS
		SALE	BU/BS
2-16	Eastman Kodak Company	SALE	ANY/BA/BS
		OPER	BU/BS, LIBA/BA
2-17	Ralston Purina	SALE	ANY/BU/BS
		SALE	BU/BS
2-18	Roadway Express Inc.	RMGT	ANY/BU/BS
		BNKG	ANY/BU/BS
2-19	Fidelity Financial Serv.	FINN	ANY/BU/BS
		MGTC	ANY/BU/BS
2-20	General Electric Co.	FINN	BU/BS, ECON/BA, LIBA/BA
		SALE	BU/BS, LIBA/BA, BIOL/BS, CHEM/BS
2-21	Merck & Co. Inc.	SALE	BU/BS, ORSA/BS, ECON/BA, INDR/BA, SOC/BA, APMA/BS, STAT/BS/MS
		TSMK	ANY/BA/BS
2-22	Central Carolina Bank	BNKG	BU/BS
		GMGT	BU/BS, ECON/BA, INDR/BA, SOC/BA, APMA/BS, STAT/BS/MS
2-23	Collins & Aikman	MGTC	ANY/BA/BS
		MFGM	BU/BS
2-24	Smithkline Beecham	OPER	ANY/BA/BS
		PERR	ANY/BA/BS
2-25	Ferguson Enterprises	SALE	ANY/BA/BS
		GMGT	BU/BS
2-26	Prudential Insurance Co.	MKTG	LIBA/BA
		PURC	LIBA/BA
2-27	Research Triangle Inst.	SALE	BU/BS, ECON/BA, ENGL/BA, HIST/BA, POLI/BA, PSYC/BA
		GMGT	ECON/BA
2-28	Smithkline Beecham	RSCH	BIOL/BA/BS
		BIOL	CHEM/BA/BS
2-29	Ferguson Enterprises	CHEM	CHEM/PHD
		RESC	STAT/BS/MS

Additional information available at 211 Hanes Hall

Campus Calendar

TUESDAY
11 a.m. UNC Hill will be in the Pit until 2 p.m. today and Wednesday to sell trees to be planted in the Martin Luther King Forest in Israel.
AIESEC will have Fun Day in the Pit until 1 p.m. with free pizza in a pizza-eating contest.
3:30 p.m. Association of Business Students will hold the 1992 Internship Forum in 002 Carroll.
5 p.m. The Juggling Club will meet in Carmichael Ballroom.
Ridgely Action Project will meet at the Y.
6:30 p.m. UNC Hill will have a free spaghetti dinner and discussion on "Freud, Moses and Mom" led by Dr. Irv Alexander of the Duke University Psychology Department.
7 p.m. Tar Heel Recycling Project will meet in 206 Union.
Great Decisions Lecture: Michael Vlahos from the U.S. Center for Naval Analysis will speak on "U.S. Agenda for the 1990s" in 100 Hamilton.
University Career Planning and Placement Services will hold a presentation by Wachovia at the Carolina Inn, Section C.
Carolina Martial Arts Club will hold an informational meeting in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge in the Student Union.
7:30 p.m. UNC Young Republicans will hear Trip Sizemore, Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, in 106 Petzer.
Carolina Fever will meet in 111 Murphy.
AED pre-medical fraternity will meet in 224 Union.
8 p.m. Come meet members of Delta Sigma Pi, a professional fraternity for business majors, in T-7 New Carroll.
UNC Young Democrats welcome Rep. Dennis Wicker, a Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, in 101 Greenlaw.
11 p.m. WXYC 89.3 FM will play the latest CD from Rickie Lee Jones, "Pop! Pop!" in its entirety.

Correction

In the Jan. 13 article, "Front-runners emerge in governor's race," John Humphrey was quoted incorrectly. The quote should have read, "Governor Hunt believes polluters, not taxpayers, should pay to clean the environment." The DTH regrets the error.

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MLK WEEK KEYNOTE:

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8 pm

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