

Trashcan Bob: A "coach" chronicle

Scribed by Mary E Parnell.

Coach's (Eric Gulbranson) domain consists of a 90'x50' gym and an exercise yard. Both potentially dangerous places where two to three hundred inmates congregate, deals go down, and the coveted recreation takes place, the high light for the incarcerated.

Only one man is in charge, without weapons, to keep order. In its heyday the gym had a weight room, clay shop, a leather shop, a barber shop, pool tables, basketball facilities and a music room.

The yard was for exercise, team sports, or general hanging out.

Probably the most despised character on the yard was Trashcan Bob. He was like a nuclear reaction. Everyone hated him and didn't want to go near him because of his stink and his vile mouth.

Encountering a black man, he would shout, "nigger, nigger, nigger" until his head would be pounded into the ground. Encountering Coach he would yell, "Fake, fraud, you're not a real coach. You're the biggest fraud in this place."

He was mid-sixties with long graying hair and a weasel face. He could have been a character out of Dickens's denizens.

His name came from his daily activity, going through trash cans and collecting his booty in an even more vile laundry bag. An energy drink with a few drops left would be downed with a "F___ing A."

Old cigarettes collected, the tobacco dried to be formed into new ones.

For Coach the big dread was Trashcan coming into the gym to play pool. Shaking him down was no fun. Reaching into the bag to examine the contents, he would get slimed. Ectoplasm worse than Ghost Busters. Three showers and an airing out couldn't get the stink out .

All the while Trashcan would be spewing hatred.

He was detestable; Coach couldn't stand him nor could anyone else. Hard to imagine being at the bottom of the pecking order in a prison.

One day the Lord spoke to Coach. "Be kind to him." Coach groaned. Firmer still, "Find a way."

So the next time they met, nudged, Coach said, "How would you like a haircut? On the house?" "Don't mind if I do."

"Barber, give him the finest haircut and a shave."

Looking at the denizen, Coach added, "Can I buy you a coffee?"

"Yeah, make it a double."

The haircut was a study. Soon a different sort of face emerged, a tiny light sparked the eye. The face was interesting, clean. Every time Coach saw Trashcan, he offered to buy him a coffee.

"Yeah, make it a double."

There were changes on the yard. The other inmates were nicer, following Coach's lead.

A Metamorphosis began to occur. He seemed cleaner. The clothes weren't so dingy . He wasn't seen near the trash so much. Another Dickens character began to emerge. This one could wear a ruff or a four-in-hand. There was a touch of the aristocrat.

Another occasion Coach met Trashcan in the yard.

"Can I tell you a story?" Coach asks. "Sure."

"It's about the Prodigal Son." Coach began on the story. A tear fell on the cheek. "I know the story, Coach. You can call me Kenneth."

One day Coach spotted Trashcan at Chapel. "I go here now."

And so, his story began to emerge. Kenneth used to be a pilot who bought and sold airplanes. He had wealth. He was a Classical scholar. Alcohol and designer drugs changed him. Decay, crime. Then he was at Lexington. **The enemy had taken God's image, thrown it in the gutter, and trampled on it until it was unrecognizable. But God was busy restoring his portrait.**