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Editorials

Juvenile Crime

The alarming increase in violent juvenile crime has roots that seem inextricably tangled in urban poverty, family breakdown, joblessness, racial antagonisms and abrupt shifts in traditional values and goals in our changing society.

As recounted in the recent series on juvenile crime by Sacramento Bee reporter Sigrid Bathen, the main strands of the problem form a web running from racial and ethnic ghettos to the detention institutions maintained by California's Youth Authority, and back out onto the streets again.

Countless youthful offenders become confirmed in a gang-structured feudal system. Few manage to break loose. It means identity — even survival — in the neighborhoods or in the institutions.

This is not to blame the CYA. Its programs fare no better nor worse than the adult prison system to which its inmates so often graduate. What else can be done with a teen-aged murderer? Young offenders who prey upon society and upon each other must be quarantined in some way.

And after they are released, there await the same environments, the same gang elements, the same hopelessness that contributed to their problem at the start.

Aside from building more and bigger institutions for detention, the best chance of curbing juvenile violent crime appears to be preventing it — to the degree possible under current social conditions.

A considerable number of young people who get caught up in the juvenile institutional system are what are called "status offenders" — that is, they have not committed serious crimes but are runaways from hopeless home situations, truants, minor offenders and those simply overwhelmed by life's complexities.

The series brought out how the Sacramento County Probation Department began pioneering efforts in 1970 to divert status offenders from the juvenile institutional system, sidetracking them early from what might have become more serious criminal offenses.

It has been a marked success, praised by national law enforcement agencies and emulated by other probation departments in the state. These diversion programs offer crisis counseling, supportive family programs and alternative living facilities for cases where the family situation is bleak.

In its first year, the Sacramento program reduced overnight juvenile hall detentions and minor offenders by half; repeat offenses dropped as much as 25 per cent, and the cost of detention and probation work was cut by 50 per cent.

For now, we apparently have no easy answers to the major problem of increased juvenile violent crime, except for the system of detention in CYA institutions. It may be too late to help many headed for even more serious criminal careers.

But it's encouraging to see the success of programs which help divert many a youthful offender at an early stage and this is one direction to which our efforts should be concentrated and given support.

Sacramento Bee

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, Sunday, August 29, 1976

50¢

Juvenile Crime—1

Teen Offenders' Reasons Varied

Violent crimes by juveniles have reached alarming proportions in recent years. To find out why, a Bee reporter interviewed hundreds of young people in institutions around the state, parolees and adult professionals who work with them.

The result is this three-part report on juvenile crime. In most cases, the names of juveniles, or certain minor details of time or place, have been changed to protect identities.

By SIGRID BATHEN
Bee Staff Writer

MICHAEL

Michael and I are sitting in a small, pale room talking about the time three years ago when he and a friend — high from sniffing glue and paint — beat a child to death.

It is late afternoon, almost evening, at this California children's prison, and my head is already buzzing from the day's countless conversations with the kids who are locked up here.

All kinds of kids, and crimes — not many of them, mercifully, as memorable as Michael's.

I try not to blanch as this handsome, doe-eyed child, barely into his teens, tells his story. When he says "murder," it is matter-of-factly.

Fleshed out with details from social workers and counselors. Michael's story speaks volumes about the rise in violent crimes by juveniles. And it tells far more than statistics ever could about why.

"I beat him up," Michael says simply. "I was high on glue and paint. I didn't know what I was doing. If I knew what I was doing, I wouldn't have done it."

Michael's parents were divorced when he was small. He doesn't know where his father is. He is occasionally visited by his mother, who has since moved out of state, or by some of his

Bee Photo by Dick Schmidt

Light and shadow at the end of the tunnel . . .

. . . young offender cleans a prison corridor

numerous siblings. His accomplice is serving time at another California Youth Authority (CYA) institution.

His story hints at serious family problems, which centered in recent years around an abusive stepfather. Child abuse, the experts say, is a major reason for juvenile crime. Often, as in Michael's case, the abuse is coupled with alcoholism.

"He used to hit us a lot," Michael says in that flat, matter-of-fact tone of his.

With what?

"With his fists, or a belt." And he pauses, then speaks almost inaudibly. "Hard."

Later, the social worker assigned to Michael's ward at the institution explains: "His mother's first husband was an alcoholic who beat her and beat the children. She left him, went back, had more kids, left again, then married the same kind of man.

"He'd beat the kids for normal childhood stuff.

"Before the murder, there was some glue-sniffing, some paint-sniffing, apparently some sex involved, and the child who was killed was knocked around. (Michael) was so afraid of his stepfather that he figured he better kill the kid so he couldn't tell the stepfather what happened.

"That was his reasoning."

Before that, Michael had been involved in various kinds of juvenile mischief, plus some serious drug use — "I started sniffing paint when I was seven" — and was hanging around with an older brother. He also used to "beat people up when they'd say something about my family." His reasoning: "I had to do something!"

He used to cut school a lot, but now he's getting A's and B's at the institution. He may be released about the time he graduates from high school.

Lately, he has been having nightmares about his crime. In the nightmares, according to a counselor, Michael becomes the victim.

JANET

It's nearly noon, and blistering-hot. Janet is just getting out of bed, and her friend — pale, blond, sunken-cheeked like Janet — answers the motel room door.

The motel is like all places that cater to a poor and transient clientele: Dirty, run-down, depressing.

It's not a pretty sight, and neither is Janet.

Nineteen years old and on Youth Authority parole, she is one of those children of the juvenile justice system who can't seem to get out of it. Or doesn't want to.

Janet has the pallor and the puffy, blemished skin of people who spend long hours indoors and subsist on junk food. "The stove don't work," she says, "so I have to eat out — on $28 a month."

We sit in a pair of rusty metal chairs under a tree in the dirty parking lot of the motel. Periodically, as we talk, a sullen male face peers through the curtains of Janet's room. Her boyfriend — an itinerant musician who, according to one of Janet's counselors, "gets his kicks by passing (Janet) around to his friends."

She lets him do it, the counselor adds, then berates herself afterward.

By Janet's account, she has been in and out of trouble since she was in the ninth grade. First truancy, then running away from home, arson, drugs — various pills, hallucinogens, a stint with heroin ("I was never hooked or nothin'. I just used it once in a while.").

> 'I like money but I don't like to get up in the morning and go to work.'

Since her parole several months ago, Janet has performed dismally. She has: Failed to show up for educational tutoring, which would have enabled her to get a high school diploma; missed appointments for business school training, which could have led to a job; had her case closed by an understandably frustrated state rehabilitation counselor; gotten pregnant.

Her arms are covered with small scars, the results of several halfhearted suicide attempts. Janet seems to cry out for recognition and understanding, one counselor says; when she gets it, she doesn't know how to deal with it.

She has a tattoo of a dollar sign on one leg: "I like money, but I don't like to get up in the morning and go to work. . . . I never wanted to be nothing."

Janet says her father drives a bus and her mother is a beautician; her father was too strict, wouldn't let her date in high school, would sometimes beat his kids with a board. She has been in a variety of foster homes; her sister is in a foster home now, and her brother lives with an aunt.

Talking with Janet is like desce ding into a deep, unlighted pit. Y keep thinking you're going to fi some firm ground, but you ke falling.

It's easy to dislike Janet, to dismi her as hopeless. It's hard to say wh will happen to her, because h counselors all say she needs a lot help. And, they often add, th American criminal justice syste doesn't have the money, staff, publi understanding or interest to justif the enormous expenditure of time an money needed to help someone lik Janet.

Like so many families of youn people in the juvenile justice system Janet's family life was apparently unstable, unloving and unhappy. Bad home situations are the common denominator of juvenile crime — not the only one, but the most pervasive — and often related to other factors like poverty, racism and inferior educations.

She doesn't talk much about the child inside her. She had planned to get an abortion, but she just didn't make the appointment in time.

"Since I got pregnant," she says, "I'm lazy and sick all the time." The man's head sticks through the window curtains. No, he doesn't want to talk to no reporters. No way.

"I lead a very boring life. I'd like to change it, but I don't know what to do. I never could talk to nobody, not even my mother. I don't trust nobody. . . .

"I haven't done nothing (illegal) since I've been out this time. If I do it'll be something small — like stealing."

KIRK

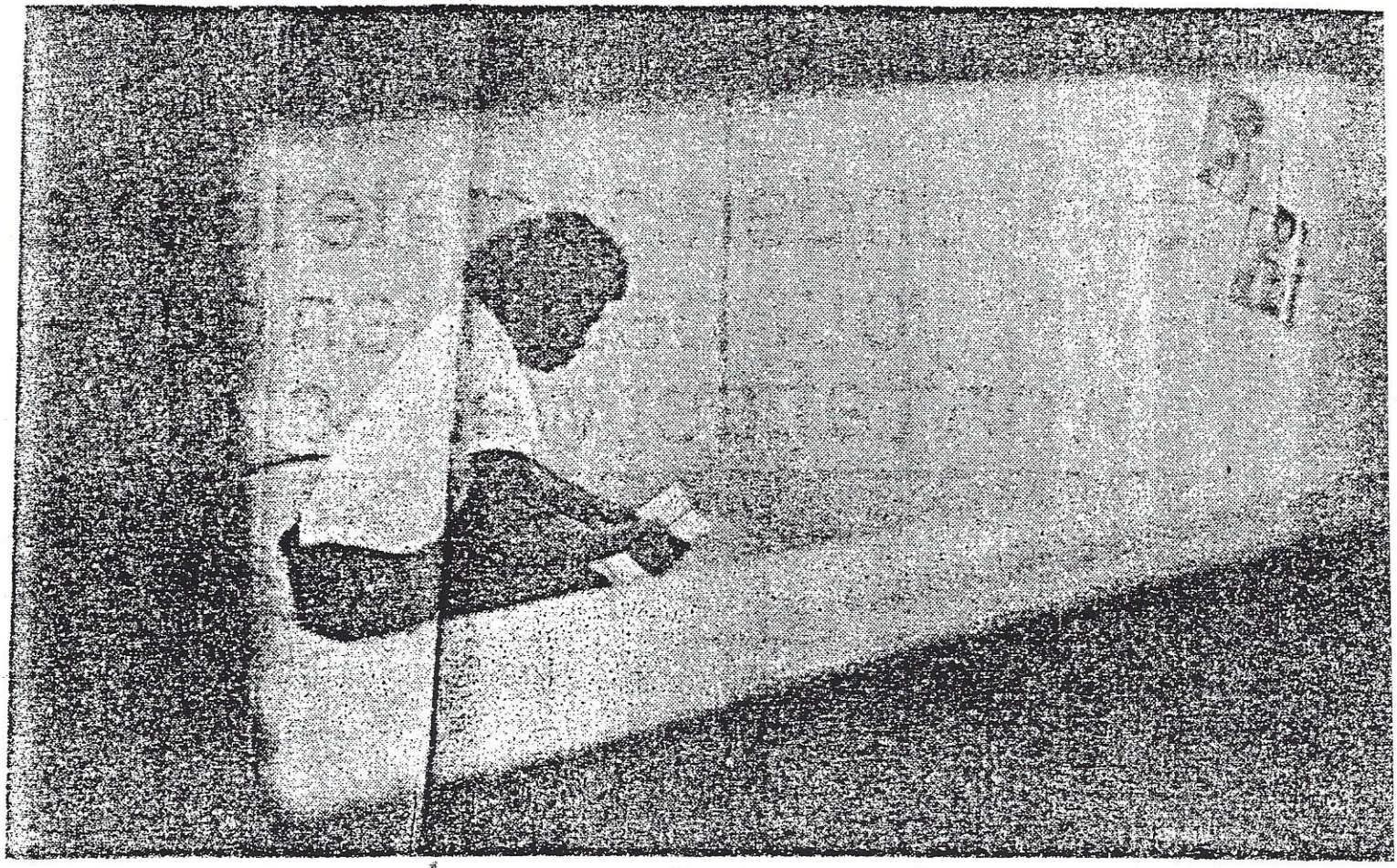
Wendell "Kirk" Junious is one Youth Authority parolee who doesn't mind having his name in the paper. And it's kids like him who help maintain the sanity of youth counselors and parole agents.

Working with juvenile crime, they tell you, is not your basic occupational high. There are a lot of lows in this business, but Kirk is not one of them.

At 21, he looks back on a life of crime that began when he was 13 — right after his father died — and he was caught stealing coins from a wishing well.

With seven kids in the family, things were tight financially, "and I was too young to get a job." He got into a lot of juvenile mischief — "throwing rocks at cars and stuff like that" — and eventually graduated to more serious things.

He had the example of his older brother, who is doing state prison time for manslaughter, to follow.



A prisoner in a maximum security cell in Sacramento County's juvenile hall, waiting . .

He dropped out of school, was married at 17, and was working as a janitor when he injured his back in a fall. He couldn't find work after that.

In 1975, he was arrested for the armed robbery of a South Sacramento market.

He was sentenced to a Youth Authority institution and had served nearly a year when he learned his mother had been hospitalized and was near death from liver and heart ailments. It looked like the younger kids, including a 12-year-old handicapped brother confined to a wheelchair, would be farmed out to foster homes.

It was about that time the transformation of Kirk Junious began:

"I felt so helpless in there. I had taken the money because I needed it for the family, and there I was locked up and they were worse off than before. . . . When you're locked up, ain't no help you can give."

His institutional record was spotless. The YA board gave him a temporary hardship furlough last spring to be with his family.

While his mother was hospitalized, he took over the household — supervising the children, handling household finances (the family receives Aid to Families with Dependent Children), cleaning and cooking.

He also counseled the other kids, citing himself as an example of the wages of crime: "My 15-year-old brother likes to cut school, and I gave him a good talking to. I told him, look at me! Look what happened to me!"

The YA board was so impressed with Kirk's performance on furlough that he was paroled in May. His mother has been in and out of the hospital since. He has continued to run the family.

He is still bothered by persistent back pain from his fall, and his own life is limited by his family responsibilities. He is taking steps to get his high school diploma and wants eventually to work with handicapped children like his brother. He worked part of the summer at a child care center, but that job ended this month.

Kirk accepts his mother's illness philosophically: "If she passes away, the family would stay together. The kids deserve a normal kids' life."

And he says he will never return to his former lifestyle: "I won't fall back. . . . I felt so helpless."

What Michael, Janet, Kirk and thousands like them have in common is their contact with a system increasing numbers of kids are experiencing.

'When you're locked up, ain't no help you can give.'

There are approximately 4,500 young "wards," as they are called, in CYA institutions all over the state, and countless more in county juvenile facilities or on probation or parole. Statistics compiled by the National Council of Jewish Women place the number of kids arrested each year in the United States at approximately two million.

As with prison populations throughout the country, CYA wards are heavily minority. More than half are ethnic minorities — 57 per cent as of March 31, including 34 per cent black and 22 per cent Chicano. By contrast, CYA staff is 70 per cent white, 15 per cent black, 11 per cent Chicano. Administrators say minority hiring is a major priority today in the Youth Authority.

Many of the young people committed to CYA are from urban ghettoes, and many are gang members. According to 1975 CYA statistics, 37 per cent of the wards' families receive public assistance and more than 70 per cent are headed by a single parent.

Before someone reacnes the Youth Authority, he or she has most likely been through a county juvenile system — usually more than once. And, before being sentenced to a county facility for any length of time, he or she will probably have been on probation one or more times.

Juvenile crime is a cumulative thing — the truant becomes the runaway becomes the shoplifter and the house burglar and the drug addict-pusher and the armed robber, pimp, prostitute or murderer. California prison officials estimate at least one-fourth of the adults in their institutions started first in the juvenile justice system.

That's why there is increasingly heavy emphasis in juvenile corrections on identifying potential repeat offenders and helping them before they move up the ladder.

There are about as many reasons for juvenile crime as there are youths caught up in the system. Basically, the experts point to the vast social upheaval of the past 15 or 20 years in America and the major changes in the structure of the American family.

"Value differences between kids and parents have always been a problem," says Elaine Duxbury, director of the CYA's Runaway Youth Project, "but values are really undergoing rapid and significant change now. . . .

"I hear a lot of talk about lack of discipline, but the kids who run away often say their parents are too strict. Or they cite arguments in the house, alcoholism, violence, lack of privacy, lack of affection, divorce.

"Sometimes they're thrown out or kicked out. In one case, the mother moved and didn't tell the kid she was moving.

"So many of these kids crave attention. I remember one 14-year-old girl in an institution who had been a prostitute since she was 12, and she was just dying to have me look at her math problems."

The children themselves provide graphic testimony to the breakdown in the American family. Many of them have been bounced from pillar to post, from foster home to institution.

The poor ones have been beaten, sexually assaulted, starved, neglected and forgotten.

The children of the affluent (fewer in number, but increasing) have been ignored or spoiled, or are so bored they commit crimes for kicks. For them, as one CYA official put it, "It's not burglary or stealing, it's entertainment!"

After hundreds of conversations with kids in the children's prisons, their faces and stories all tend to blur. A few stand out.

Spending time with the young ones — the 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds, before they and the system have become part of one another — is particularly instructive.

During one interview session at Sacramento's Juvenile Hall with a large group of young boys — most of them arrested for petty crimes — I was struck by the almost festive nature of the conversation. There was very little remorse expressed, and some of them spoke with obvious glee about their exploits.

A lot of the bravado, of course, was a coverup for hurt feelings from parental neglect or abuse (one kid had threatened his father with an electric knife if the father hit him again; another who was the object of his father's pool-cue beatings took out his frustrations by beating up little kids). But there was no disputing the fact that there was a lot of peer support for these boys' antisocial and illegal behavior.

It is also clear that warnings about the negative effects of movie and television violence on children should be taken seriously. Time and again, they would say, "I did it just like on ———!" naming any number of violent, usually police-related, television programs.

"One can only imagine," CYA Director Allen F. Breed once said, "the millions of impressionable young people who sit on their couches and

Bee Photo by Richard Gilmore

Wendell "Kirk" Junious, who went from CYA ward to head of his

unblinkingly observe shootings, stabbings and beatings which take place before their eyes.

"A recent study found that the average young person who spends two to three hours a night watching television will have witnessed 12,000 murders by the time he or she reaches adulthood."

Which brings to mind Jonathan, who served more than four years in a CYA institution for the bludgeon murder of his best friend during a camping trip. Extremely intelligent, middle-class, white and very glib, Jonathan is now on parole attending college. He has a perfect, 4.0 grade point average.

He killed his friend after an argument and will vividly recall the grisly details for anyone who has the stomach to listen — a willingness which puts a lot of people off.

"I was the All-American boy who could never commit a crime," he says brightly. "My childhood was happy. I was voted most popular in the seventh grade. I was a Science Fair winner. . . .

"The night of the murder, I just went blank. I psyched out. We had this big argument, and I was all psyched out to kill. I should have joined the Marines. It was just like a movie. . . . Don't you know this is motion picture stuff?

"Nothing I can do can ever bring him back to life. I have to live for the future. I think people want me to cry, to hang my head down and say I didn't mean to do it, but all that would do is get me an Emmy, and Baretta's got that all sewed up!"

TOMORROW: Gang Violence and Racism.

Sacramento Bee

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, Monday, August 30, 1976

15¢ NY Stocks Final Edition

Juvenile Crime—2

Racism And Violence Embitter Youths In Jail

Violent crimes by juveniles have reached alarming proportions in recent years. To find out why, a Bee reporter interviewed hundreds of young people in institutions around the state, as well as parolees and adult professionals who work with them.

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By SIGRID BATHEN
Bee Staff Writer

"This is a world within a world, and if you ain't racist when you come in, you will be when you get out."

James speaks in short, bitter sentences — sitting hunched down in a chair, his knit cap pulled down around his ears, though the day is hot. He is 20 and serving time at one of the toughest prisons in the California Youth Authority — Preston School of Industry near Ione — for a gas station robbery.

"They call this place Preston Prison Gladiator School," his friend Larry says grimly.

James and Larry are black.

"When you're on the streets, you don't realize what it's like in here. I just thought everyone did their time . . .

"Everything is divided along racial and ethnic lines . . . If I take a drag off a cigarette from a black guy . . . Well, you just don't do that . . . Somebody would get on my case."

Alex is 19 and about to be paroled from DeWitt Nelson Training Center, a minimum security CYA institution near Stockton, after serving more than a year for burglary.

Alex is white.

"If you're unprotected, you get your ass whipped . . . And you don't drink out of a black dude's cup."

Pete is 19, doing time at Preston for burglary. He doesn't talk much, but his angry, flashing dark eyes speak for him.

Pete is Chicano.

When you ask them about violence and racism in Youth Authority institutions, officials look at the floor, look out a window, look grim.

These are not subjects which warm the hearts of professionals in the juvenile justice system. Mainly because there seem to be so few solutions. And those that have been suggested often cost too much money.

As violent crimes by juveniles increase, so does violence in juvenile institutions. CYA administrators will tell you prison weapons are more sophisticated these days, the violence more sudden, more calculated and vicious. Disputes that used to be handled with fists now involve knives (prison-made "shanks"), zip guns, even explosives.

Juvenile gangs of concern to authorities are a maze of names and titles with vague racist or territorial objectives.

They are a hodge-podge of street gangs whose roots have spread from barrio or ghetto neighborhoods to juvenile prisons.

There are Crips, Pirus, Brims, Bounty Hunters and Businessmen — all black gangs with their origins in Watts and other Los Angeles ghettoes in the early 1970s.

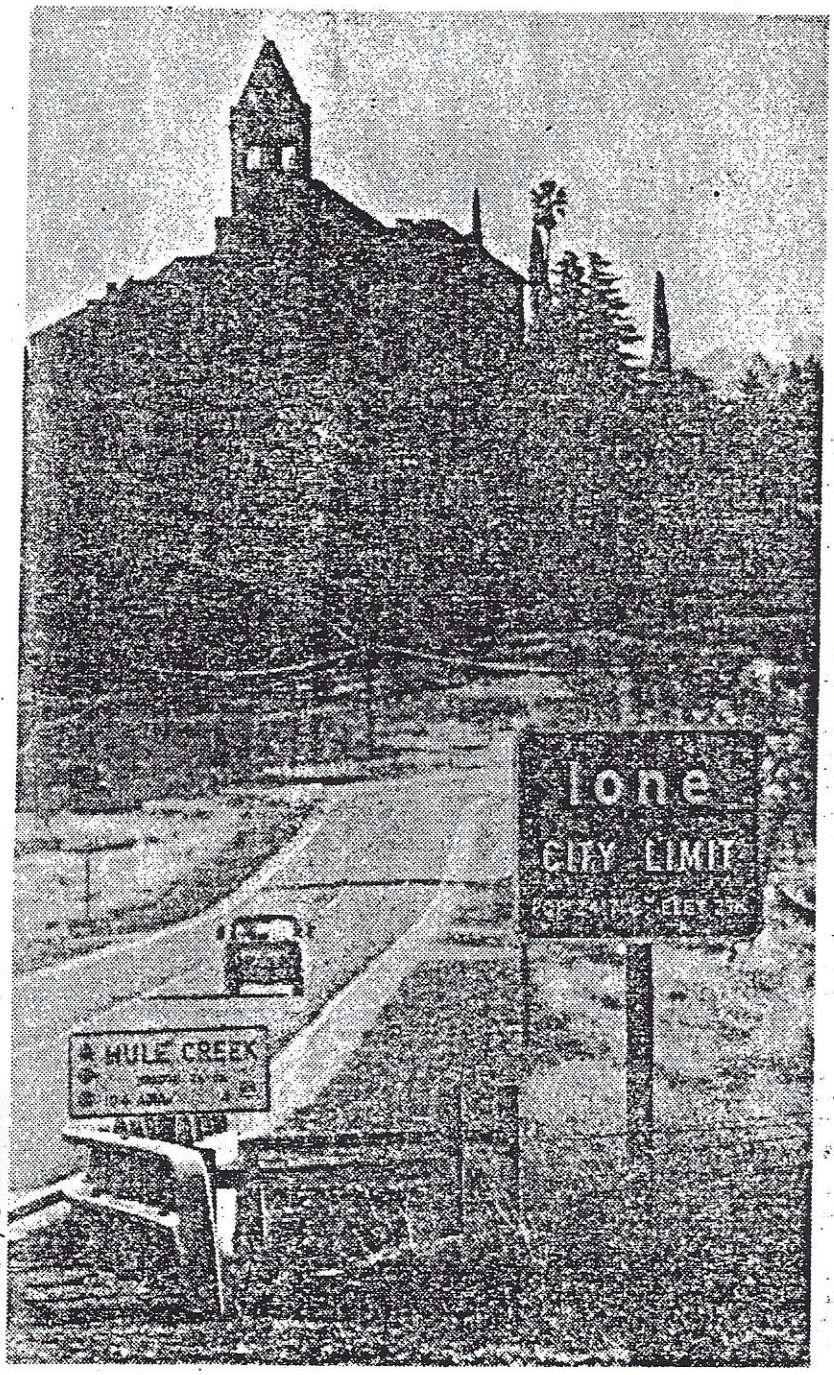
And there is a dizzying array of Chicano gangs with names like "Little Valley," "White Fence," "Dogtown" and "King Cobras." The titles reflect geographic roots in east Los Angeles, Fresno, San Jose and Santa Clara; some go back for generations.

Whites who identify with street or prison gangs are generally of the neo-Nazi variety, YA officials say. Some have swastika and "white power" tattoos and collect pictures of Hitler.

On a recent day in the disciplinary lockup unit at Preston, more than one-third of the 20 disciplinary lockup cases were neo-Nazis.

Young people on CYA parole or in institutions say violence inside "goes in cycles" depending on the ethnic, racial or gang makeup of the institutional population, the weather, or who sits next to whom in the cafeteria. Small things sometimes assume enormous importance when you're locked up.

"You come to the institution, and you're scared and nervous and your first instinct is to side with your own ethnic group," said one inmate at DeWitt Nelson, which is fairly quiet as CYA institutions go. "Most people put on a front and they stick with it until they leave. You can't be weak in jail and survive.



Bee Photo by Owen Brewer

Preston confines 400 young criminals.

"There may be a dude come in and either he spends too much time with the man (staff) or with other ethnic groups. He'll be told not to do that, or he may get beat up. I've seen it."

A DeWitt Nelson administrator says violence depends on the "population mix" of the institution. "If we get a lot of kids from an area where there are a lot of gangs, we'll have a rise in violence." Frequently, the violence will involve members of the same race or ethnic group who have some sort of "score" to settle and-or are involved in opposing gangs.

If a major racial incident occurs involving more than one racial or ethnic group, officials and prisoners say temporary alliances may be formed between Chicanos and whites against blacks (as of March 31, the CYA population was 43 per cent white, 34 per cent black and 22 per cent Chicano). Occasionally, they say, Chicanos will serve as a buffer and can influence the outcome of an incident depending on whether they side with whites or blacks.

One prisoner who was once a member of a Los Angeles Crips gang (there are several branches, loosely based on geography) says "it's hard" not to become a member if one lives in a region dominated by a particular gang.

"In L.A., there is gang activity, period," he said. "It's hard for someone my age (20) not to be in a gang, particularly if you're raised in the streets."

Two CYA institutions seem to bear the brunt of in-prison juvenile violence in California — the Youth Training School (YTS) near Los Angeles, and Preston — although all are affected to varying degrees.

Nestled in the drought-parched hills near Ione, about 40 miles from Sacramento, the medieval-style stone castle that was the original Preston School of Industry casts an eerie pall over the modern buildings constructed to replace it.

From the dull thud of the powerful door locks to the sullen faces of the young men imprisoned here, there is no doubt that this is indeed a prison. In some of the brighter, milder YA institutions, where the kids are younger and in for lesser (or fewer) offenses, one tends sometimes to forget.

But not at Preston.

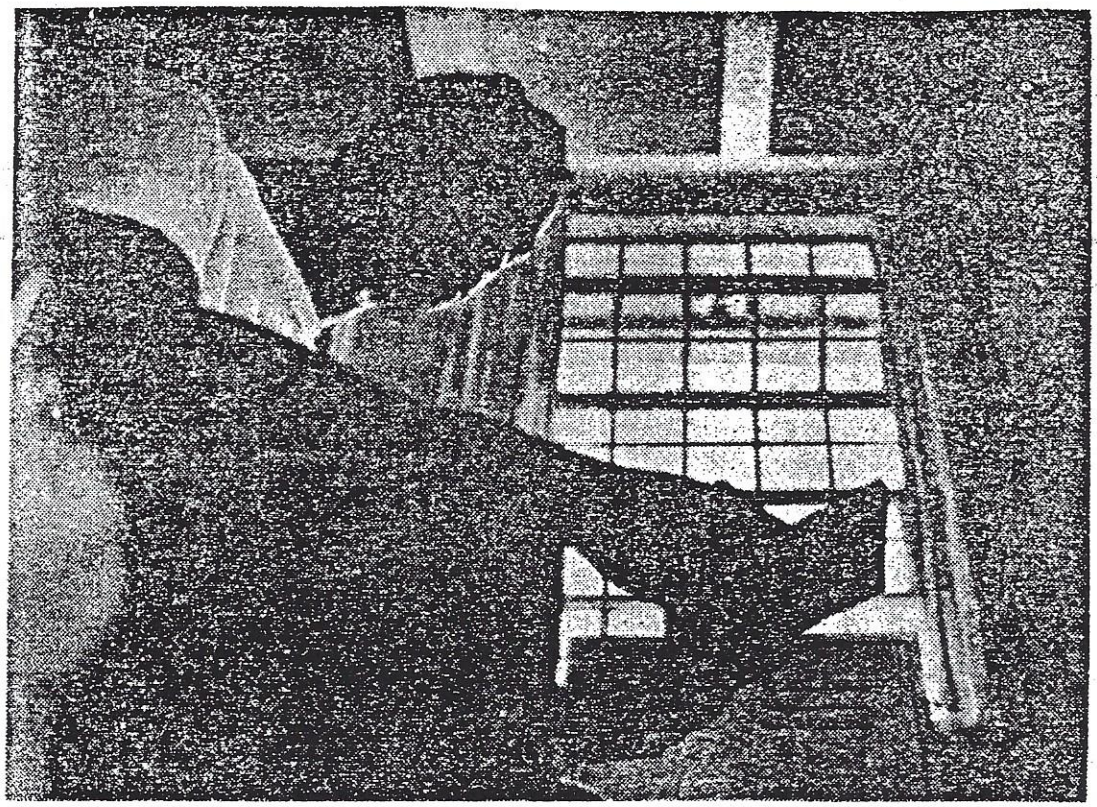
The institution houses about 400 young men, most in their late teens or early 20s. Like most people who go to prison, many are poor, minority (23 per cent black, 33 per cent Chicano), from urban environments. As a measure of their alienation — and, to a certain extent, of the isolated location of Preston — only about 75 of them have regular visitors.

The Preston of the South, YTS is physically a modern facility built in 1959 when it was still popular to tout rehabilitation as an attainable goal in prisons. It was built, Superintendent Keith Vermillion recalls, for the older, "better" kids who would most likely benefit from progressive guidance.

Preston and YTS now house a type of young offenders which once was sent to Deuel Vocational Institution, a men's prison operated by the Department of Corrections near Tracy. That practice was largely halted in the early 1970s in an effort to keep youthful offenders out of the adult prison system. As a result, a lot of older, tougher kids were sent to the Youth Authority.

YTS houses more than twice as many young men as Preston, making it the largest — and, some say, the most unwieldy — institution in the CYA system. Although gang activity is a problem at other CYA institutions — particularly Preston — it is reportedly worst at YTS because of that institution's proximity to the ghetto and barrio gangs of South Central and East Los Angeles.

The YTS prison population is 42 per cent black and 30 per cent Chicano. Vermillion, who was superintendent at Preston before he went to YTS last year, estimates more than 70 per cent of the blacks and Chicanos are ef-



'Kids in the streets with nothing to do . . . This energy is going into gang violence'

Young men serving sentences at the Preston School of Industry in Ione read in their living quarters during free time.

"The gang activity inside is pretty much a direct result of identification with street gangs," he says. "They continue their identification in the institution, and whatever happens on the outside spills over in here. There are old scores to be settled.

"All we can do is break them up as best we can."

Violence in CYA institutions takes a variety of forms. Just prior to a visit by a Bee reporter this summer, for example, there were two serious incidents which illustrate the problem: Both were stabbings with prison "shanks," and both involved ethnic, racial or possible gang violence.

One stabbing, according to officials, involved three Chicanos, two on one, and was in retribution for a three-year-old, possibly gang-related, incident at YTS. The victim survived.

"His health is good," a Preston administrator remarked, "but he's gonna die someday. Anything that is three years old is going to follow him.

"He was involved in a beating at YTS three years ago. He and two other guys threw a blanket over a guy and beat him unconscious . . . He has only been on the streets 90 days at a time in the past five years since he was 15."

In the second incident just prior to the Bee visit, a white prisoner with — as one official delicately put it — "strong racial feelings" against blacks" stabbed a black prisoner in the Preston movie theater.

"His only regret," the official said, "was that he hit bone instead of the lungs." The victim survived.

A major concern of CYA officials is the recent rise in black street gangs which are spilling over into the institutions. YTS Superintendent Vermillion says Chicano gangs have been in existence for years, while active black gang membership is a phenomenon of the '70s. Art Millington, an administrator at Preston, says gang activity has even spread to junior high schools in Los Angeles, where kids sometimes pack guns to school and are called "Baby Crips" or "Little Brims."

Ivory Jones, a CYA parole agent with a decade's experience in Watts and a year in East L.A., attributes the rise in black gangs to the destruction or demise of black political and civil rights groups in the late 1960s. Jones, who is black, has actively participated in recent CYA discussion groups organized by Director Allen Breed to discuss juvenile violence.

'You can't be weak in jail and survive'

"Prior to Watts (the 1965 Watts riot), there were black gangs," Jones says, "but it was strictly a turf thing . . . The early gangs disappeared in the 1960s when the Black Students Union and the Panthers were organizing. All of the anger and frustration were channeled into political action . . . It was the same with the Brown Berets in East L.A.

"During that time, we gave dances far into the night, and there was a lot of warmth and brotherly love. There were legitimate channels for their frustration, and once those avenues of expression were crushed the kids turned to other things.

"The Crips came first. I heard there was an older man who gave the kids some guns — I've never been able to verify it, but he was supposedly crippled, and that was the origin of their name. They started vamping on the other kids, who in turn organized. The Crips are still the largest."

Deaths from gang warfare in urban areas are regular occurrences. A Los Angeles Sheriff's official estimated in State Senate testimony on juvenile gang violence last November that 60 murders in his county were gang-related last year. Not to mention assorted stabbings, shootings and other non-fatal gang encounters.

Chuck Pineda, a CYA parole agent who lives and works in East L.A., cites his own 1950s gang experience as an example of pressure on kids in economically depressed areas to join gangs. "I did it to survive," he said. Unlike many, he did, leaving the barrio in 1959 to join the Army, later

earning degrees in police administration, sociology and psychology.

Today, he works with CYA parolees in East L.A., participates in Breed's ad hoc discussions on violence and agitates within the law enforcement and prison establishment for more money to positively channel gang activity.

"I see kids in the streets with nothing to do," he says, "no recreation, no guidance. This energy is going to be directed somewhere, and the outlet is in gang violence."

Pineda, Jones and others tie juvenile violence — gang-related and otherwise—directly to racism and economics.

"I find it unthinkable," says Jones, "to consider violence in young people without considering unemployment in the ghetto and the barrio.

"When I visit parolees, I walk into homes where all I see is grinding poverty . . . Many of these kids who come out of the institutions have been getting regular exercise and eating regularly, and they're all bright-eyed and ready to go. When they hit the reality of what they have to deal with, they lose their spirit . . .

"If we could just keep the momentum going, get them into jobs and training, not just dead-end jobs, but real training."

A new phenomenon in gang activity which is of concern to law enforcement and corrections officials is the rise in vicious, lethal crimes by Asian gangs. Although the number of Asians in California prisons is miniscule, it is climbing slightly (.7 per cent in CYA institutions this year, compared to .6 per cent last year). Authorities say the rise is a result, at least in part, of increasing Chinese gang violence in urban ghettoes like San Francisco's Chinatown.

Ron Low, a Sacramento State University graduate student who has researched Chinese gang activity, attributes increased Chinese gang violence to a kind of culture shock:

"A lot of families come from Hong Kong, and they come expecting more than there is. Our society places so much emphasis on attaining material goods — because the kids have little money, they rip off to get things.

"The mother and father frequently have to work all day to make ends meet, and the family breaks down as a result . . . Neighborhood cliques become gangs."

A Youth Authority prisoner who was a Chinese gang member in San Francisco and is serving time for possession of a deadly weapon confirms Low's view.

"My parents came from the old country, and I was born in San Francisco. My mother is a hairdresser and my father is a butcher. They tried to discipline me, but they couldn't relate to me. The only model I had to follow was James Bond and Clint Eastwood.

"I was a curious kid. I went through all kinds of different things. I'm a marginal man — a man with two cultures. I'm not completely a part of either.

"One of the reasons for the gangs is that Chinese parents are hustling to

'It's hard for someone not to be in a gang if you're in the streets

make a living. They go to work, come home, eat dinner. When I joined a gang, my parents thought I was in a group that would keep me off the streets."

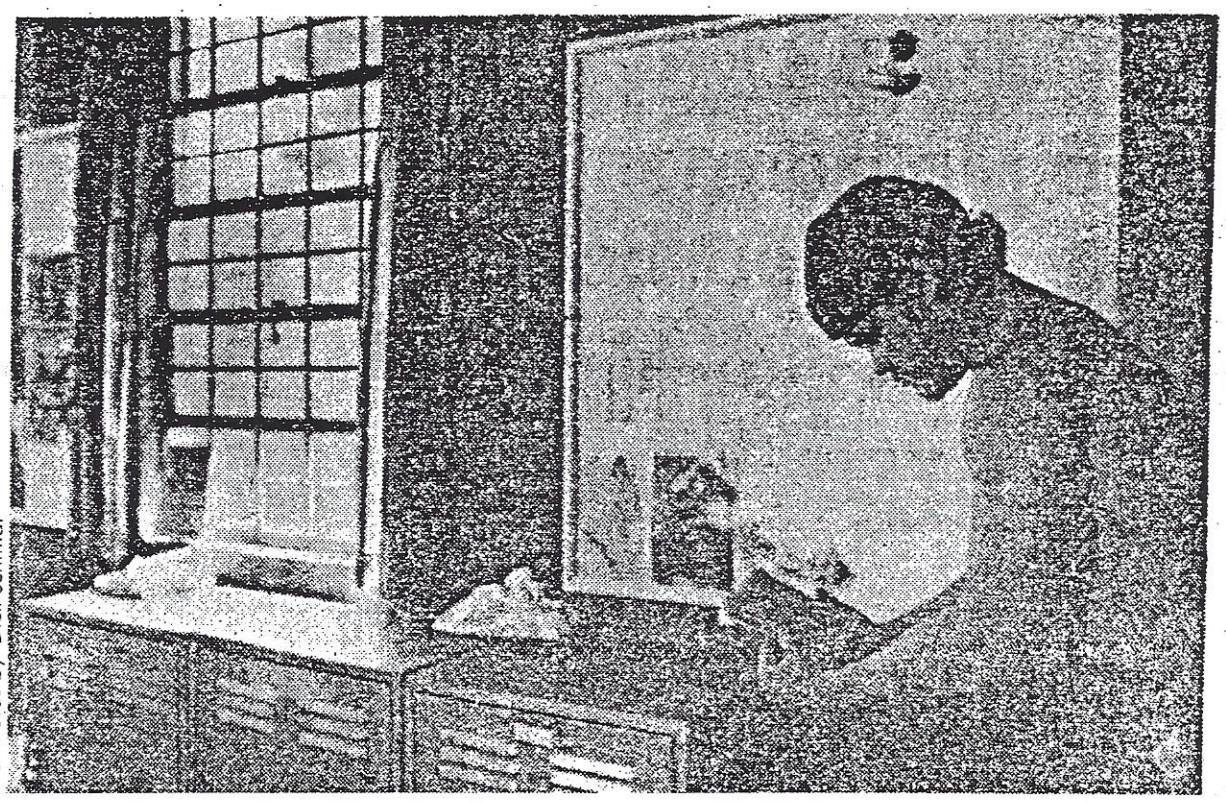
Youth workers who have watched gang violence grow agree on at least one thing: If the tremendous energy some kids put into gang activity could only be channeled productively, perhaps it could be stopped or at least reduced. Sometimes the gangs themselves offer solutions.

At YTS, Superintendent Vermillion was astonished when leaders of several black gangs—primarily Crips and Pirus — recently approached him with a plan for peace among the warring gangs.

"They're tired of getting additional time for acting against each other," Vermillion said. "They want to find alternate ways of dealing with hassles.

"I'm holding my breath."

TOMORROW: Diversion Programs — Stopping Juvenile Crime Before It Starts



See Photos by Dick Schmidt

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Juvenile Crime—3

Lesser Offenders Get Counseling

Violent crimes of juveniles have reached alarming proportions in recent years. To find out why, a Bee reporter interviewed hundreds of young people in institutions around the state, as well as parolees and adult professionals who work with them.

The result is this three-part report on juvenile crime. In most cases, the names of juveniles, or certain details of time or place, have been changed to protect identities.

By SIGRID BATHEN
Bee Staff Writer

Melanie is 14, the youngest of five children. Her parents are divorced, and she lives with her mother, who works as a motel maid.

Melanie went to a party last night, and she hasn't been heard from since. It's 11 a.m., and her mother calls the sheriff's department.

She thinks she knows where Melanie is, and she's right. Melanie spent the night with her 17-year-old boyfriend. When Mom and the deputy arrive at the boyfriend's apartment, she is asleep, nude. The boyfriend isn't there, but his roommate is.

The roommate, who is over 18, is arrested for statutory rape.

Melanie has an explanation: "I had too much to drink, and I crashed."

At best, the excuse is a little transparent. At worst, it could — and did — land Melanie in juvenile hall as an "incorrigible."

Juvenile crime records frequently begin with stories like that, which is a true one. Statistics on runaways are difficult to accurately tabulate. A recent federally funded study placed the number of runaways last year at 300,000 to 1 million nationwide.

The difference in Melanie's case is that she didn't have to spend a lot of time locked up in a juvenile detention center for what was just an extreme expression of rebellion against her harried mother. (According to Melanie, her mother made her abide by stricter standards than her brothers, and she didn't think that was fair.)

As soon as she hit juvenile hall, Melanie's case was referred to a nationally recognized local project to divert runaways and other minor youthful offenders from the juvenile detention system. Operated by the Sacramento County Probation Department, the Sacramento Diversion Project has dealt with truants, runaways, "incorrigibles" (a term used to designate kids beyond their parents' control) and similar offenders by counseling the young people and their families.

To a limited degree, the project also deals with youths who have committed other minor crimes like shoplifting or joyriding.

In a lengthy report on the program by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, the Sacramento project was described as "exemplary" and — more important — successful.

According to the report, sponsored by the U.S. Justice Department, the Sacramento approach in its first year (1970-71) reduced overnight detention of runaways and similar offenders in the project by half, recidivism (repeat offenses) by 14 to 25 per cent and the cost of treatment, detention and placement by half.

In the juvenile justice field — where in recent years there have been more disappointments than successes — those figures are enormously

"The results concerning recidivism are particularly impressive," the report notes. "The whole delinquency literature shows less than 20 projects with some proven record of accomplishment in recidivism reduction . . . By far the most frequent finding is that of no improvement or no change. The Sacramento approach on the other hand shows a clear record of improvement for a large number of cases."

Problem is family's not just the child's.

Latimer

In 1972, the project was expanded to include certain more serious offenses — those which, were the child an adult, would be crimes. Things like petty theft, malicious mischief, drunk and disorderly conduct, minor drug possession, auto theft with no damage to the vehicle.

The most important aspect of the local project is timing.

The results of that experiment were even more impressive. Based on comparisons with youths not involved in the project, recidivism was

"What it really says is that there are other ways to do this job," says LeRoy Downs, the supervising county probation officer who was in charge of the project during its early years.

The most important aspect of the local diversion project is timing. As in Melanie's case, the probation department counselors received the information on her offense and family situation within hours after her arrest. They in turn contacted the mother, who had suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be hospitalized, and arranged to have the girl placed in the care of an older sister.

Most important, Melanie did not spend the night in juvenile hall.

One of the main objectives of any diversion project — and there are others springing up around the country — is to keep a kid who is merely rebellious out of jail.

"A great deal of evidence suggests," the Justice Department report notes, "that detention is in itself a harmful factor which serves on the one hand as a school for crime and on the other as an embittering factor which makes family reconciliations . . . more difficult."

The Sacramento diversion project — and the diversion concept generally — operates on the premise that the entire family must be involved in immediate, "crisis" counseling, when a child begins to show signs of serious misbehavior.

Sometimes, the probation officer-counselors decide the youth is running away from an intolerable family situation — such as alcoholic or physically abusive parents — in which case the child is sent to the Sacramento Receiving Home for foster home placement.

Emphasis is on crisis counseling, helping families cope.

More frequently, however, the counselors find a family which is not communicating, hostile kids and angry parents who scream at each other and solve nothing. One of the project's main tools is a videotape machine which counselors use to film family counseling sessions.

"When a parent says, 'I never come on hostile!' or 'I didn't say that!' you can turn on the tape and show the parent glaring at the kid and making the remark in question," says Doug Latimer, a supervising probation officer assigned to the project.

"The diversion unit has done some very extreme things. We've told parents we won't let them leave until they take the kids with them. We've taken kids home who have just been dropped off at juvenile hall by their parents.

"Our emphasis is on crisis counseling and helping families deal with their own problems. They have to see this as a family problem, not just the kid's problem.

"We get a lot of families who are into patterns that become destructive — patterns in which they're blaming each other for problems. We have to get them all together to talk about it."

Counselors, working in pairs, spend a maximum of five one-hour sessions with families — encouraging kids and parents to talk to each other about their feelings, using the videotape machine for playbacks.

The sessions take place in a pillow-lined room at juvenile center with posters on the walls that say things like, "The last thing we want to do is lock your kid up," or depict warm family scenes of Mom and Dad romping in a meadow with the children.

If, after five sessions, additional counseling is needed, the family is referred to a community counseling agency.

Diversion counselors know that once a parent allows a child to be locked up — and runaways are usually taken home before police resort to juvenile hall — reconciliation is difficult, if not impossible. Parents often don't know what sterile, frightening places juvenile jails are; they think they'll just "teach him a lesson" by having the kid locked up for a while.

More often, when the youth is released, he or she promptly does something else to irk Mom or Dad. The second time might be shoplifting instead of skipping school, or hot-wiring a neighbor's car for a little ride with a six-pack of beer and a few pills to make it interesting. Then, if the kid is busted again, there's real trouble.

Increasingly, professionals in the juvenile justice field say, parents expect authorities to act as disciplinarians. With the diversion programs, the authorities are beginning to turn that around — insisting that entire families become involved in the crisis which parents often say is their child's problem alone.

"The family is built on trust, but when Mom and Dad turn you over to the cops, that doesn't do much for trust. Most parents don't know what kind of places these (juvenile jails) are," says David Sorenson, an ex-convict who directs a Sacramento City College program for ex-offenders, many of them California Youth Authority parolees.

"The state can't assume a family role . . . With the diversion projects in the community, we're finally beginning to get away from parents turning their kids over to the state when things get rough."

One diversion approach national is the so-called "runaway house" f young people who can't make it home. Some of the facilities, lik Diogenes House in Davis, provic temporary lodging — with parent permission — until children an parents can work out some ur derstanding, or foster hom placement can be arranged.

Other, non-residential project offer counseling, tutoring, or just place for kids to get away fron hassles at home.

"Diversion is a fairly new idea," says Elaine Duxbury, director of Youth Authority research project or runaways, — "although 75 year ago when they started juvenile courts that was the basic idea — the realization that the more kids penetrate the juvenile justice system, the more likely they are to get arrested.

Trying to keep runaways out of jail.

Duxbury

"There's a self-fulfilling prophecy too — the kid figures if he's labeled a delinquent, he must be one, so he acts like one . . .

"The contrast between some of the (runaway) houses — big old houses with funky furniture — and juvenile hall, where the door clicks behind you and there are TV cameras watching you, is enormous . . .

"Six or seven years ago, the term 'diversion' was unheard of; but now there are more and more programs around the country."

In 1974, the federal Runaway Youth Act was passed as part of Congress' Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. It required that, by February 1977, runaways and other status offenders be separated from juveniles who have committed more serious crimes. The proliferation of diversion projects is, in part, a reflection of that legislation.

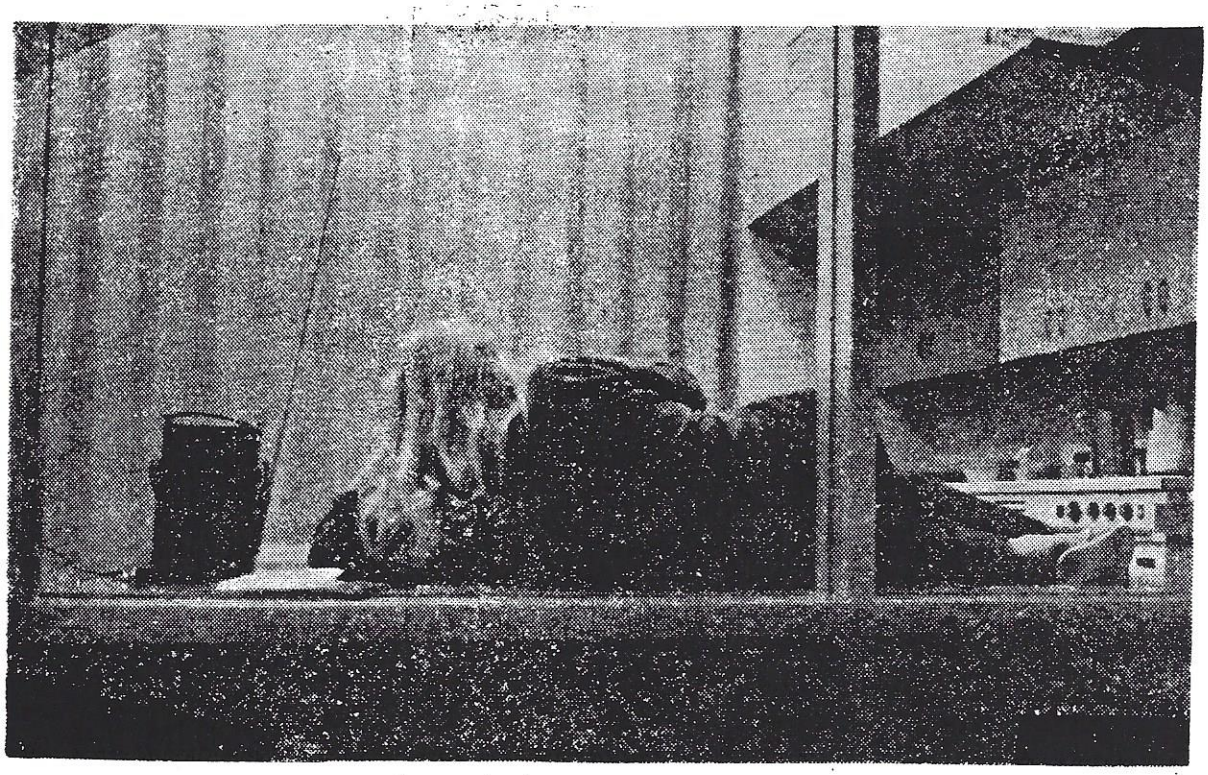
The Sacramento diversion project will soon be moving to a community location, away from its current quarters in Juvenile Hall. Counselors hope the project will then attract more young people and parents with problems who might not know about it, or who don't trust anything located in a jail.

There are other diversion projects

operated by local community agencies like the Aquarian Effort, which is primarily concerned with drug abuse but is branching out to other types of "crisis" counseling, and La Familia - Counseling Center, which serves the Spanish-speaking community. In addition, police and sheriff's department juvenile officers regularly counsel kids and parents to help them resolve family problems before a child ends up in serious trouble.

"The general public doesn't seem to understand that you can't lock everyone up," Latimer says. "If we did that, we'd be building institutions daily.

"People say 'punish 'em, lock 'em up!' But they don't seem to realize that once you threaten a kid with jail, what else is there?"



The girls dorm at juvenile hall.