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By

ROGER W. CRIST

Warden
Montana State Prison
Deer Lodge, Mont.

For 20 years, attempts had been made to replace the State of Montana's 100-year-old territorial prison with a new facility, and at a cost of \$300,000, no less than five major studies had resulted, without exception, in recommendations that a new prison be built. Finally, \$5.5 million was appropriated for the project.

Considering the relatively limited amount of money allocated, prison administrators recognized from the outset that the architects responsible for designing the new prison were faced with an extremely difficult task. And actually, the project would have been impossible had authorities been unable to remodel and add on to three existing buildings on prison-owned land. Basic roads, existing utilities, and support buildings, such as warehouses, a slaughterhouse, and a dairy and motor vehicle center, were ultimately to be incorporated into the new facility. Still, a great deal of innovative thinking and planning were required.

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It was necessary that the new Montana State Prison be all things to all people. With the small State popula-

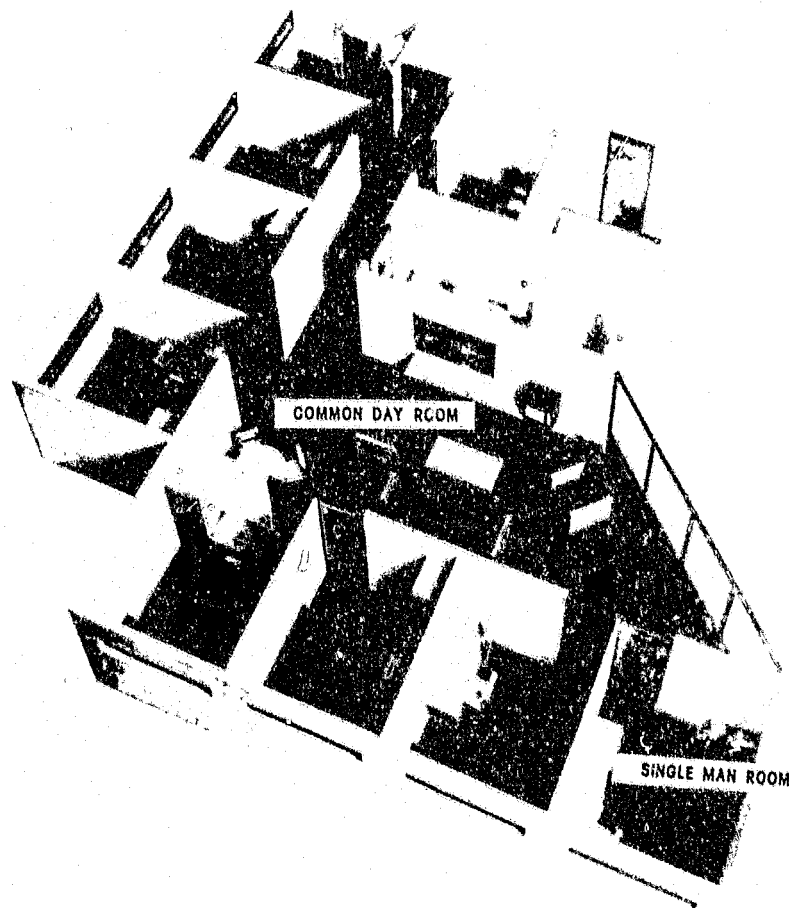
tion, low tax base, and comparatively small inmate population, there would be no way that a number of institutions could be built economically to house prisoners categorically. The new prison had to be designed to include maximum, close, medium, and minimum security inmates. The concept of creating separate housing units, each with a staff complement and regulatory strictures predicated upon the degree of security required, came into effect. This idea, the responsible living concept as it is called, utilizes the housing unit design in such a way that the more responsibility an inmate is able to accept, the more freedom he will have.

One problem that had plagued the old Montana State Prison was the inability to logically segregate inmates—the old from the young, the aggressive from the nonaggressive, the sex offenders from the nonsex offenders, and the criminally sophisticated from the nonsophisticated. The new Montana State Prison, therefore, was designed to include a maximum security, close security, medium security, and minimum security building. The maximum security building, which is architecturally traditional, is comprised of five separate units ranging in size from a 4-man unit to a 14-man unit. The close security, medium security, and minimum security build-

ings are identical in terms of physical construction. Each has three stories, with four eight-man units per floor. Each three-story building is connected to its own one-story commons building by a cement wall, a geographical divider which surrounds the security unit and its commons building. The ornamental wall creates a separate yard for each housing unit, separating them from the main yard. This yard gives the inmate a choice. Should he not want to involve himself with the entire inmate population at the big recreation yard which is located outside of the ornamental wall and away from the security units, he may remain in his own unit area out of doors in the unit yard. As previously mentioned, each floor of the three-story housing unit is broken down into four eight-man units. A unit consists of eight single rooms that come out on a common dayroom. The unit has common sanitary and shower facilities, as well as a common counseling room. Using the institution's classification system and this type of design, a maximum amount of separation, based on each inmate's ability to assume responsibility for his actions, has been effected.

Officials wanted to provide a comfortable, free-style visiting environment for responsible inmates, but saw a need also to insure tight security

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during visiting periods for those who could not accept the responsibility. This was accomplished by building a large open visiting room where inmates classified as close, medium, and minimum security could visit quite freely. Maximum security inmates now visit in the maximum security building under strict security procedures, and the building is constructed in such a way as to deny them access beyond the visiting room. Close, medium, or minimum security inmates, after checking with an officer, are allowed to go to an outside visiting area adjacent to the visiting room. Inmates in the general population who have attempted to smuggle contraband into the institution, the sexually ag-

gressive, or those prone toward violence receive their visits in the special security area adjacent to the free visiting room. In effect, inmates are being shown that they can enjoy a great deal of flexibility in visiting, if they conduct themselves in a responsible manner. If they can't, their visits will be held in the security area.

Prison officials wanted to enable treatment staff to be involved with the security staff in a unit treatment-management approach. The four separate housing units based on the security classification enabled treatment personnel to retain the traditional administration building and enter the commons building with its easy access to the housing units. The

treatment staff, working in conjunction with the security staff, could then become part of the treatment-management team that would in effect run the unit. A unit classification team made up of both treatment and security staff would administer all matters pertaining to the unit. Where their recommendations crossed unit lines, the recommendations would have to be approved by the institution classification committee. It was felt that a certain degree of autonomy should be given to the staff actually working the unit, but precautions have been taken to preclude the development of four small separate institutions in a haphazard manner.

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Facilities for treatment, individual therapy, group therapy, and religious, vocational, academic, and recreational programs were needed. Toward meeting this need, almost all of the treatment rooms in the institution have been arranged in such a way that they would serve as multiple use rooms. In other words, no single academic teacher occupies a classroom exclusively. Instead, the classroom is used variously by academic teachers, vocational education teachers, self-help group leaders, and college program personnel. Likewise, the principle has been carried over to the housing unit with each housing unit enjoying a large multipurpose room located in the commons building adjacent to a specific living area.

Officials wanted to encourage increased contact between key staff, line staff, and inmates, and as a consequence, the institution was designed

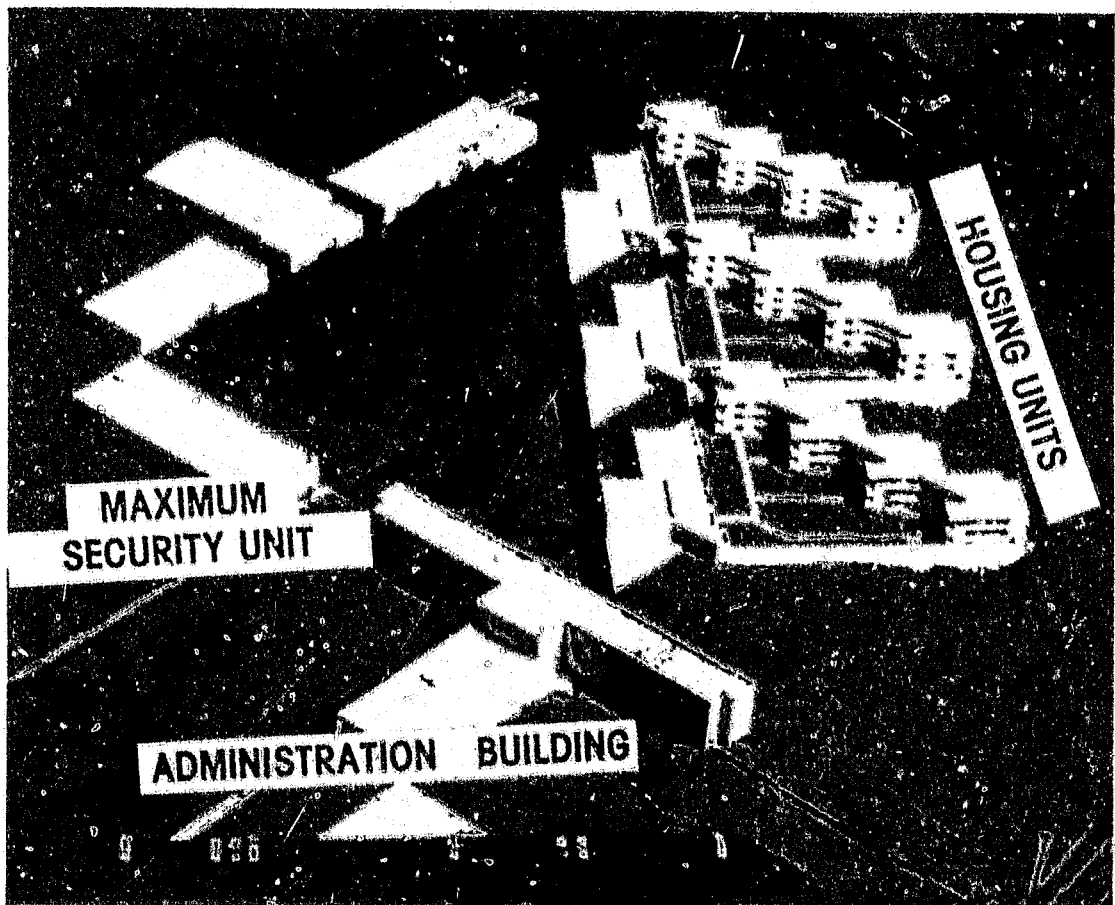
so that no interviews would be held in the offices of the warden, deputy warden, associate warden of security, director of classification and treatment, or business manager, which are all located outside of the security perimeter. When key people conduct interviews, they must enter the security perimeter and hold these interviews in all-purpose rooms within the prison proper. These rooms have been set up in the commons buildings which are attached to each security unit. Through this arrangement, key staff members come in contact with line staff and inmates, as well as the interviewees.

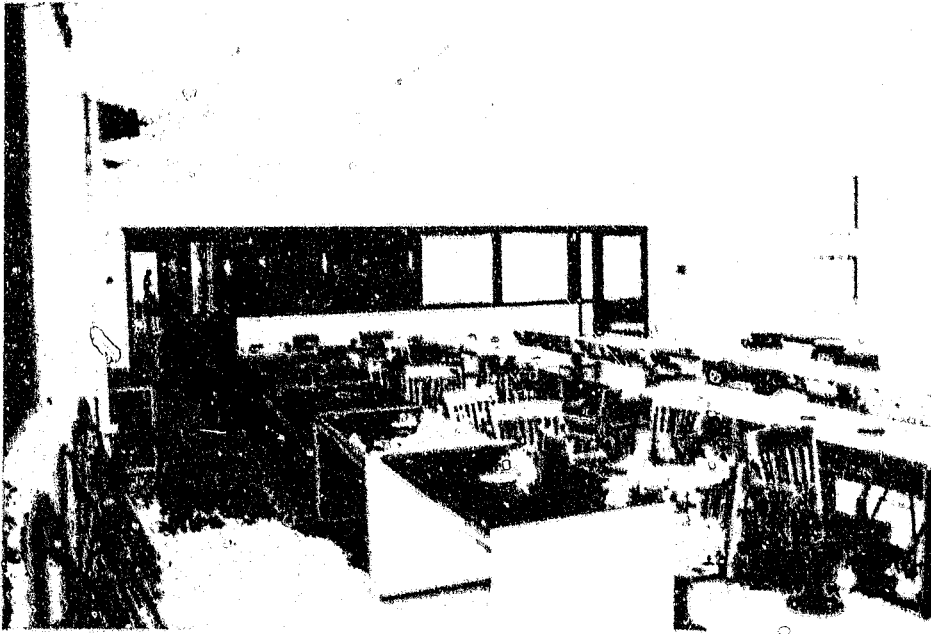
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Adequate perimeter security was a major consideration. In the old institution, seven towers were in operation. But by strategically locating a single tower on a high hill overlooking the new institution, it was possible to reduce the number of towers from seven to one. Since it takes five men to man one tower, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, this design freed 30 staff members to work on the grounds in direct relationship with the inmates. Incorporated within the plans are two cyclone fences which are equipped with an intrusion device and separated by a medial bramble wire barrier. A

motorized patrol maintains radio contact with the institution as it safeguards the prison perimeter. Additional security is provided by a staff accoutered with walkie-talkie radios, open intercoms in five control centers as well as the tower, and red signal lights on the roof of each building that will alert staff to emergencies in that building. Contributing also to security of the facility is a telephone communications system. If, for instance, any phone is left off or knocked off the hook, the control center will be alerted immediately. By dialing two numbers in an emergency situation, 21 phones





Inmates' visiting room.

will ring in the homes of key staff, even though one or more phones may be in use.

The geographic location of the institution, which is in the middle of a 40,000-acre ranch, provides an inherent security feature.

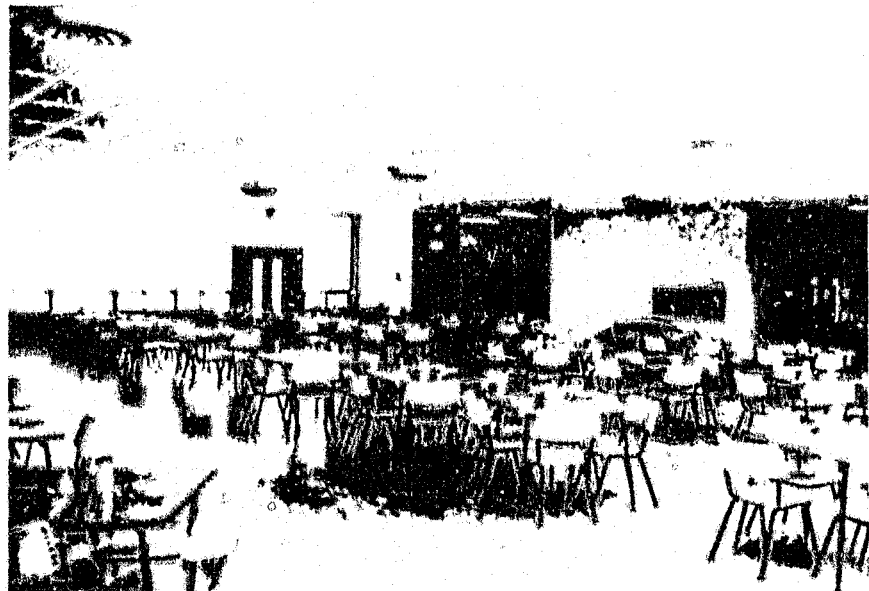
Adequate space where staff could get together in a comfortable environment away from work and away from inmate contact was totally lacking in the old facility, and this had led to a situation in which social workers tended to take their coffeebreak in the social service department with other social workers. Teachers similarly tended to take their breaks in the school with other teachers. Consequently, the staff had not been communicating adequately among the disciplines. Naturally, officials wanted to allocate space enabling the staff to meet before going to work and provide an informal environment in which psychologists, security staff, chaplains, maintenance staff, social workers, teachers, and accountants would meet and exchange ideas. This was arranged by constructing coffee-break areas in the staff dining room and in a staff room located in the new

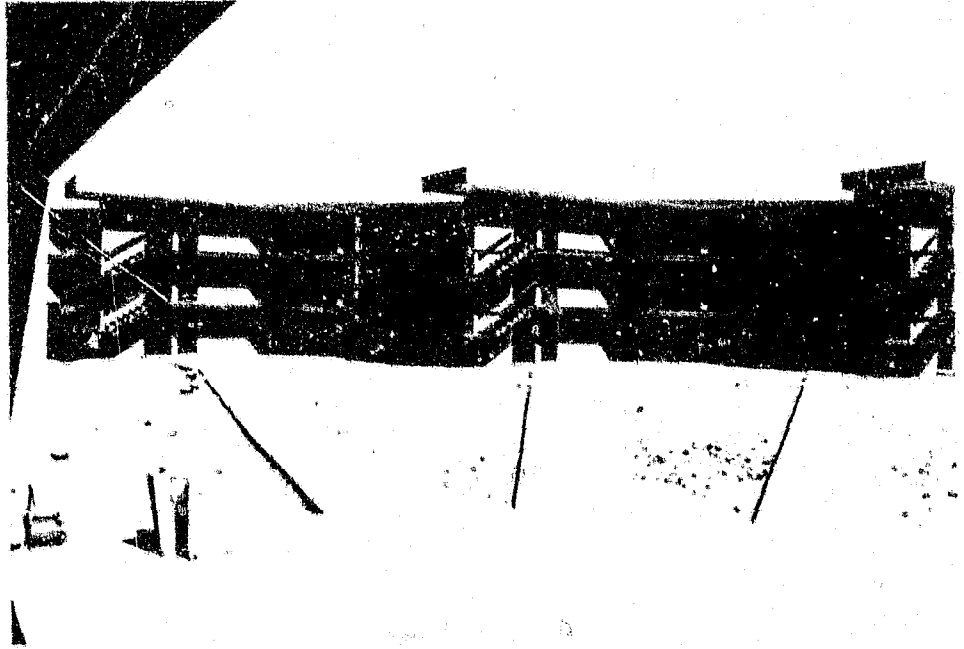
administration building.

It was necessary that the institution be accommodated to its environs. The outstanding feature of the environment was a mountainous region rising to 10,000 feet just west of the institution. Planners wanted a colorful institution but realized that if all of the buildings were painted different colors, the result could be a circus-

like appearance. On the other hand, if all buildings were painted the same color, regardless of the particular color selected, it could become a monotonous "institution color." The problem was solved by painting the buildings a variety of colors on a continuum from light cream through beige and sand colors to a dark brown color used exclusively for trim. This

Dining area in food services building.





Ninety-six-man housing unit. This type of building is used for close security, medium security, and minimum security inmates.

approach offered the desired continuity, and no single color became either offensively conspicuous or superfluous.

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Montana Board of Crime Control, the agency in Montana responsible for administering LEAA funds, had an important role in establishing the

new Montana State Prison. Through these agencies, officials obtained assistance from both the LEAA Regional Office in Denver and the National Clearinghouse on Correctional Architecture. The well-equipped library and education complex at the new institution which cost over \$200,

000 was supplied through Crime Control Commission funds. The advice and financial assistance these agencies provided is very much appreciated, and their interest and support throughout the entire project was outstanding.

Montana, like all States, has experienced an extreme population increase. When the planning of the new institution began, there had been a steady 5-year downward trend in terms of prison population and an actual count of 219 inmates. Since that time, the population has more than doubled to a current population of 533. In 1975, there was a 10-percent population increase, and in 1976, a 29-percent population increase. The new prison was designed and built to house 334 inmates. This means that while the new institution is occupied by 333 men, 200 men have had to be retained in the old territorial prison that officials had hoped to abandon. To alleviate crowding, the Montana State Legislature appropriated \$3.3 million from the general fund in 1977 to add a celled, close security housing unit for 200 more inmates.

Warden Roger W. Crist

Director Lawrence M. Zanto
Department of Institutions
State of Montana



