

HISTORIC BURLINGTON COUNTY PRISON MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

General Membership Meeting -Sat., Apr. 29, 9:30 a.m.

Tours - Sat. & Sun., Apr. 29 & 30, 10 am - 4 p.m

April 10, 2000

Dear PMA Members and Other Friends:

April Fools' Night at the Old Jail - True Tales from the Past was a rousing success. Approximately 600 attended. We ended up having to turn away about a hundred people, and no telling how many more might have driven by without stopping upon seeing the line.

Without the **RVHS Thespian Society**, there would have been no event. These young people were just remarkable. They wrote all the scripts after consulting with Dave Kimball for historically-correct story lines. They choreographed all the stunts, calculated all the very complicated logistics, carried all the props over from RVHS and put them all up, and arranged all the lighting (including covering every lightbulb in the building). When it was all over, they took down all the props and carried them all back to their school.

Of course, they also did all of the acting and the stunts. **AND THEY WERE GREAT!** By the end of the night, these kids, who repeated their scenes over and over for four hours, were pooped. The murderers and their victims were bloody and bruised; the prostitutes, who "cat-fought" all night, were scratched.

Then there was their teacher, **Peg Welch**. I don't know what I admire more about this woman: her remarkable teaching ability, marked by a blend of intelligence and energy, or her rapport with the students. Good teaching truly is a wonder to behold.

The art teacher, **Jane George**, played a big part with her students as well. They took adorable photos of children attendees with their heads sticking through a poster they did of a jail cell. Speaking of artistic people, our own **Paul Musgrove** came through for us again by creating the great banners that were hung out front and down by the Cobbler Shop, and designed the newspaper advertisement.

Our own members worked hard, too, especially **Carole Melman**, who organized the event. Carole arranged for all the advertising, roped her co-workers at NFL Films into serving as volunteers, purchased and lugged all the refreshments and supplies, including lights for the exercise yard, which she hooked up herself. She had t-shirts made for the volunteers. She devised a ticket system. The fact that she works full-time and is the mother of a toddler makes her efforts all the more amazing. Her husband also deserves our thanks for sacrificing a great deal of time with his wife over the last several weeks.

Jeanette Sozio, Edith Freeman and Vicky Raymond served refreshments in the exercise yard all night. They also ended up being impromptu babysitters. **Dianne Main, Marybeth Baron, Joyce Goldsmith, Terry Bianco, Sue and Adam Berman, Kevin McLaughlin, Dan Kimball, Marybeth Baim and Jeannie Popielis** all acted as guards. **Richard and Jennifer Hunt** guarded the front door and assisted at the end of the tour. **Buddy Raymond and Jack Yetman** were our floaters and water boys. Our backbone, **Dave Kimball**, acted as consultant and told stories in the warden's office. Our new parks director, **Paul Hagan**, did a yeoman's job. Treasurer **Tom Price** and his wife sat at the door all night taking money and stayed late counting it. **Ray Holshue** provided comic relief.

Our old friends at Buildings and Grounds, and their fearless leader, **Bruce Doty**, were there for us when we needed them, as they always are. The Freeholders' administrative assistant, **Ralph Shrom**, and his assistant, information officer **Dave Wyche**, did a fabulous job at exposing our event in the media. It was featured in articles in the Trenton Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Courier Post and the Burlington County Times, all with photographs. Much to our and the students' delight, the event was even covered on Channel 10's 11 o'clock news! You should have seen the kids' eyes light up when the Channel 10 truck pulled up front!

Finally, there were the tourists. The wide variety of people who came confirmed what we already knew: the Jail is a treasure because it appeals to just about everyone. There was the nice lady from Hainesport who remembered where people were hung on Maine Highway. The senior citizens who had just walked up the street after dinner at the Robin's Nest. The cub scout troop. "Jill", a guard from Trenton State Prison who stayed after her tour to help. We were thrilled to see **Ken Gilbert**, a former guard who later became police chief in Lumberton. He has promised to give us a tour. We were delighted when Ken joined the PMA; he is our first member for 2000. Its that time of year. Please follow suit and join or renew your membership. An application is enclosed.

Where do we go from here? We hope that April Fools' Night raised awareness about the Jail and will result in volunteers. At this point, though, we have only enough volunteers to be able to commit to opening the weekend of April 29 and 30, and the fourth weekend of each month thereafter. Contact us if you want to be a tour guide or know someone else who does.

You are welcome to attend a general membership meeting which we will hold at the PMA office on Saturday, April 29 at 9:30 a.m. We will discuss April Fools' Night, future events, the acquisition of tour guides and exhibits. **We ask that all of you who volunteered to be tour guides report at 10:00 a.m. for training.** Hope to see you there.

JANET L. SOZIO