

Black Star Publishing,

1414 Lincoln Place, Brooklyn, NY 11213

Tenacious

Writings from women in prison



mom's
know

#5

Mother's Day Issue

WHAT IS A TENACIOUS WOMAN?

by: Barrilee 'Gispert' Bannister
#11309597
PO Box 9000
Wilsonville, OR 97070

A tenacious woman possesses the will to make no compromise with wrong. She cannot be bought off to remain silent when faced with injustices. She does not hesitate to take chances, and she is not ashamed or afraid to stand up for the truth when it is unpopular. She does not lose her individuality in a crowd of faces, and she never quits because others disagree with her. She knows that her choices in life obligate no one but her, and she learns from her mistakes. She grows by her own efforts to succeed, and she is proud to stand alone knowing that she is a woman.

Are you a tenacious woman?

Tolerating injustice is an invitation to be enslaved.

Faith is holding on to the truth in a world of deception.

Success is never the problem; it's what one succeeds at that can be a problem.

Progress is to be encouraged and respected, even if it is slow.

The more aware you are, the less you can be brainwashed.

Dedication and choice destroys obstacles.

90% of women in prison are single mothers. They lose contact with their children, sometimes forever. There are 167,000 children in the us whose mothers are incarcerated. —*Prison Activist Resource Center, California*

Acknowledge Our Firsts

- Josephine Peary: first woman to join a Polar expedition (5 June 1891)
- Valentina Tereshkova: first woman in space. Was on the USSR Vostok VI (16 June 1963)
- Susanna Madora Salter: first woman mayor in the United States. (3 April 1987)
- Dr. Emily Howard Stowe: first woman licensed to practice medicine in Canada (16 July 1880)
- Emma Nutt: first woman telephone operator (1 September 1878)
- Vanessa Williams: first African-American to become Miss America (17 September 1983)
- Ethelda Bleibtrey: first American woman to win a gold medal at the Olympics
- Jennifer Capriati: first and youngest finalist in pro-tennis at age 13. (11 March 1990)
- Dolly the Sheep: first mammal cloned. (23 February 1997)
- Emma Willard Hart: first American woman to publicly support higher education rights for women

Researched by:
Melanie Schmid # 5992221
PO Box 9000, Wilsonville, OR 97070

Things That I Carry By: Barrilee "Gispert" Bannister

At first glance
You would never know
That I carry
A tenacious heart.
That throughout
My life
I have undergone
Many trials
And tribulations.
Many have
Left their mark
Permanent scars
On body
And
In mind.
None however
Have broke
My spirit
As a woman,
Mother,
And as a child.
I have learned
To carry
Admiration,
Especially for
My mother
Who cared for,
And loved
3 kids
That were not always
Angels.
This magnificent woman
My mother
Worked 2 to 3 jobs
Just to make ends meet,
And to provide for us
So that we would never
Have to go without.
This woman, my mother
Now cares for, provides for, and loves
My child,
While I am incarcerated.
I learned from her that
In order to survive
In this world
You must work,
And make a living
By depending
On yourself
And family members.
I carry many
Work related skills
That I learned

From watching
My mother.
I know how
To cook, clean,
Keep order of a house
Care for children,
And raise a child,
On my own - if needed.
Most important of all
I have learned
That standing up
For yourself
And the rights of others
Is a quality
That ever woman
Should carry.
That never should
A woman allow
A man
To abuse her
Physically, mentally or emotionally.
That a woman has a voice,
A woman has strength
Not always in the forearm
But certainly in the forehead,
And woman can defend
Herself, her child(ren), her family
And the rest of mankind,
Better than any man can.
A woman has a voice,
One that never should be
Suppressed,
By intimidation, oppression or violence.
I carry courage, strength, and power
In knowing that
I am a woman.
A woman with a mind of her own,
And a voice.
I owe thanks to
My mother
For teaching me
And currently teaching
My daughter
That a real woman
Is a woman that
Stands on her own two feet.

Sorry, we do not publish women's individual cases, charges or court experiences. We also cannot act as liaisons between those in different facilities.

We are also looking for artwork reflecting women's prison experiences, issues and concerns.

Send submissions to:

V. Law

PO Box 20388

New York, NY 10009

Deadline for the Summer issue: June 21st

Deadline for Fall issue: September 21st

Please note that submissions may be edited for grammar, clarity and length.

Tenacious is free to women in prison.

Men in prison: please send two stamps to cover the cost of postage.

Those not in prison: Your \$2 will support sending free issues to incarcerated women across the United States.

Call for Submissions

Tenacious is looking for articles, poetry and art from women in prison. We associated with Tenacious strongly believe that everyone has a story to tell, something to share and are in need of someone who will listen and offer some kind of support and/or understanding. It is important to us that women (in and out of prison) find the power of their voice. We encourage women to share with us and others in the hopes of educating those in society and to empower other women to take a stand for their rights and the rights of others. Use the power of your voice in a positive way—to educate.

Subjects we are looking for include:

Prison programs (how they do or don't work)

Mothers educating their children while on the inside

Holding prison officials accountable for their actions or inactions

Observations and applications on prison life

Women prisoners uniting to make a difference

Informing society about prison issues

What it is to be a woman in today's society or in prison

Sexual discrimination or sexual preference discrimination in your prison

Medical breakthroughs or neglect

HIV, Hepatitis C and other diseases common in prison

Helping your fellow prisoners

Literacy and education

Your job (or lack of a job)

Family Stories

As every incarcerated mother knows, the worst thing about prison is being away from our children and worrying about the effects our imprisonment is having on them. One of the things that they are deprived of is the sense of self they would otherwise get from hearing "the family stories" that they would be exposed to while we drove them to places or did the dishes. One of the things we *can* do is write some of the anecdotes of our lives and send these letters to our children.

Here at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, the only women's prison in Oregon, we have been offered a class entitled "A Community of Writers." This class is facilitated by volunteers from Lewis and Clark College near Portland. In the class, we were given writing prompts and encouraged to free write on these subjects. Each assignment generated an amazing range of different stories and life experiences from the participants. We read many of our works aloud and listened to feedback from the class. We grew close as we appreciated each other as individuals and we gained from sharing our perspectives.

Members of the class often sent their essays and poems home. It sometimes caused family members to open up and share details of their own lives.

I believe it is important for children to know why they came from. Having a sense of history helps them identify who they are. Without their own family stories, without concrete examples of how we became who we are or why certain choices we made early on led to unexpected consequences along the way, children have a hard time claiming their own identities. This leaves them more vulnerable to having others label them or pressure them. Being honest with our children about our lives is

a gift we can give them from inside these walls. People out there will be quick to pigeonhole our children into an at-risk category, probably rightly so. But if our children know specifics from us and know that our expectations for them are high and that it is reasonable for us to believe they can succeed, they will believe that about themselves. Right now, their most immediate association with us is that we are in prison. Other people's associations need not be our children's reality.

By sending my children my stories, they will know that they descend from people who dealt with some situation with humor: My dad pretended that there was a bat in my mom's hair on their honeymoon. Once he waited till my friends took a bite of chicken soup before asking them how they liked that rattlesnake meat! Hearing these stories lets my children know that we are a family of pranksters! We rely on humor to diffuse tension. They will know that their grandfather had eight brothers and sisters and slept outside of their two-room cabin. Getting an education was the most important thing in the world to him. It will help them to know that their mother stood up to the KKK or that you broke your leg the first time you went snow skiing but tried again. It will touch them to know that you cried the first time you saw their smashed little face after thirty-seven hours of labor or that one of the best moments of your childhood was when Santa brought you a Tonka truck instead of a doll, just as you had been hoping. Writing these stories is a way to replace some of the most important parts of childhood. It will help them know that their mother is not "just a prisoner." Because we are behind the razor wire does not mean that our children have to be deprived of a really important part of life.

Liya Northon, 13948511
PO Box 9000, Wilsonville, OR 97070

Resource guide for LGBT/TS/HIV affected prisoners. Free to all - stamps/donations appreciated.

T.I.P. JOURNAL

c/o Gender Identity Center of Colorado, Inc.
1455 Ammons St., Ste. 100
Lakewood CO 80215
A newsletter for transgendered prisoners.

Contact Referral Center, INC

PO Box 81826

Lincoln, NE 68501

Publishes a survival source book to help prisoners with post release survival including finding a job and a place to live.

The November Coalition

795 South Cedar

Colville, WA 99114

A National organization made up mainly of family members of prisoners. Advocates abolishing mandatory minimum sentences and imprisonment for drug related offenses. Free newsletter.

Nat'l Clearinghouse in Defense of Battered Women

125 S 9th St Suite 302

Philadelphia, PA 19107

Information, referrals, & legal assistance for battered women. Does a lot of work with prisoners. Free newsletter.

VOICES in Action, Inc.

P.O. Box 148309

Chicago, IL 60614

Network of abuse survivors. Information clearinghouse, resources

Chicago, IL 60604

Provides information about family programs.

Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers

524 Larkin Street SW

Atlanta, GA 30313

Provides information to ALL incarcerated mothers.

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

1540 Market St. #490

San Francisco, CA 94102

Referrals and resources for women. Produces a custody manual for incarcerated parents.

Families With a Future, LSPC

1540 Market St. #490

San Francisco, CA 94102

Works with LSPC to keep children connected with incarcerated parents. Sponsors support groups, children's travel grants. Does advocacy work.

Write for a list of organizations for incarcerated mothers in your state.

Other Organizations for Women in Prison

OFF OUR BACKS

2337B 18th St. NW

Washington DC 20009

A radical feminist newsjournal free to women in prison.

OUT/WORD

c/o S. Berry

P.O. Box 20900

Tompkins Square Station

New York NY 10009-8974

Ten Ways to Show Your Children You Care

Barrilee Gisbert Bannister

Being a parent in prison is not easy. How you keep in touch with your children determines how they will view you when you get out or when they get older. Here are a few ways to show your children that you still care for and love them even though you can't be with them physically:

- Take a funny picture (i.e. make a funny face, pick your nose, pretend that you're surfing or that you're a vampire) and then send it to them. Ask them to take the same kind of picture for you.
- Send 100 or more tiny paper hearts with messages like "You're special" or "You're one of a kind" or "I love you" or "I miss you" in an envelope with nothing else but the hearts enclosed.
- Write a poem or story together. You write one line, your children write the next and mail it back and forth until your children decide it's done.
- Always remember to send your children a birthday card. Handmade cards are the best.
- Send Christmas presents to your children through the Christian organization Angel Tree. (Angel Tree buys presents for your children and sends them to your children on your behalf)
- Try to write your children every week on the same day. Even if they don't write back to each

and every letter, at least they know they can check the mailbox and expect your letter every week around the same time.

- Make a Battleship board (on paper) and play it through the mail. (Other games: Hangman, Tic-Tac-Toe, Who's a Smarty Pants, etc)
- Trace your hands and feet with a pen and send your handprints and footprints to your children. Ask them to do the same. (Most prisons won't allow lipstick, paint and other "unknown" substances on paper into their facilities. Pen might be messy but it gets through.)
- Buy candy or other items off canteen/commissary and mail home a package of goodies (like for Halloween, Christmas, birthdays and other special occasions)

There are so many ways to show your children that you care for them, love them and are thinking of them. All it takes is some creativity and time.

Good luck and have fun!

Barrilee G. Bannister #11309597
Coffee Creek Correctional Facility
PO Box 9000
Wilsonville, OR 97070



National Organizations for Moms Behind Bars

Pro-Family Advocates

PO Box 17892

Long Beach, CA 90807

Works on family issues, i.e. family visiting. Newsletter subscriptions are \$10.

Parent Resource Association

213 Fernbrook Ave.

Wyncotte, PA 19095

(215) 576-7961

Referrals and information to incarcerated parents. Family counseling to parolees.

Children's Center

PO Box 803

Bedford Hills, NY 10507

Publishes "Foster Care Handbook" written by women prisoners. Costs \$2.

Families and Corrections Network

32 Oak Grove Road

Palmyra, VA 22963

(434) 589-3036

www.fcnetwork.org

Support for families of prisoners.



Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents

65 South Grand Avenue

Pasadena, CA 91105

Free educational materials for incarcerated parents and their children.

National Resource Center for Family Support Programs:

Family Resource Coalition

200 S. Michigan Ave. #1520

When my mother was a kid, she got all As and “walked a mile in the snow to school.” Later in her life, with three rambunctious and monstrous children, Mom went back to school. She took my dad back to school as well. They used to tell us that we were poor. We never believed that. Our little lives were rich!

Mom became a technical writer and, while working at Intel, won her family a trip to Disneyland. She went to work when I was twelve years old, after all of her children were old enough to not want her around as much. Before then, I remember my mom watching “The Flying Nun” and other such shows with me. She didn’t have to watch my favorite shows with me but she did. My mom was the best! Perhaps under-appreciated but still, the best. She taught us to read, play and think for ourselves. Because of my mom, I have a strong sense of who I am. Because of my mom, I know who I want to be.

I want to be like my mom!

Gretchen Schumacher
6732990
Coffee Creek Correctional Facility
PO Box 9000
Wilsonville, OR 97070

R	O	S	E	A	N	N	E	B	A	R	R	U	C
T	H	A	N	B	N	I	N	G	L	B	D	M	Y
C	O	T	A	T	I	A	N	N	O	A	E	O	L
E	L	B	M	F	I	V	A	N	T	R	B	R	E
P	A	S	E	G	O	I	R	V	M	R	B	E	R
S	M	D	Z	I	A	L	W	S	O	I	I	T	O
U	O	R	O	B	N	E	L	T	R	E	E	T	O
S	T	R	O	S	A	G	Z	E	E	E	Y	B	W
E	H	C	P	Q	B	U	T	T	H	E	R	E	S
L	E	K	I	K	I	R	Y	A	N	A	Y	I	E
P	R	Y	P	Z	N	A	M	O	W	A	E	N	T
O	M	X	T	S	O	M	N	A	H	T	R	G	H
E	A	M	O	T	H	E	R	U	E	W	I	L	M
P	V	T	O	L	A	S	E	R	E	H	T	M	O

- 1) There's a lot
- 2) more to being
- 3) a woman
- 4) than being
- 5) a mother,
- 6) but there's
- 7) a hell of
- 8) a lot more
- 9) to being
- 10) a mother
- 11) than most
- 12) people suspect.
- 13) Roseanne Barr



QUOTABLE WORD SEARCH

Created By: Barrilee Gisbert Bannister

The P.A.C.K. (The People Against Court Kidnapping)

In September of 2000 the courts declared me an unfit parent. Under allegations that I abused and neglected my child, my daughter was kidnapped by the State of Michigan. She was then placed up for adoption.

Why was I under scrutiny by the State? Because I am A Prisoner. My name is Kebby Warner. I gave birth to my daughter on June 25th, under the watchful eyes of prison guards. My daughter got the first look at a gun not even 24 hrs. into her life. The gun? On the hip of a guard.

MDOC allos the Mothers 24 hrs. with her child. I refused to comply with the order of the Beast and stopped eating. This gave me three days with my daughter. The opinion of the pigs? If I wanted to be with my child, I wouldn't of came to prison.

My daughter went to live with my parents. Four months later, after my Father's death, my Mother said she would not raise a "half black baby" by herself and put my child into the hands of the State. Me? I am left helpless behind barb wire and brick.

After two years of fighting the courts, pigs, and Michigan Parole Board, I am still held captive and my child is taken. I appeal, only to be told by my appellate attorney and the Family Independence Agency that if I do not stop the appeal, my child will be placed with a family who will adopt her immediately, the file closed, and will never know where she is at. Full of anger, pain, and helplessness, I stop the appeal.

Under Michigan Law, if a parent is locked up for two years, the child can be taken. They have made kidnapping legal in the governments eyes.

How many Mothers and Fathers being held captive by the Prison Industrial Complex have had their children kidnapped by the laws that govern this society? How many are left helpless with no one to turn to? This is my story and I am sure that there are many more that share my pain.

My anger and pain is where the idea of The P.A.C.K. came about. Many nights of laying in this lonely cell longing to hold my baby, who will never know me as Mama. Who will grow up thinking that I abandoned her.

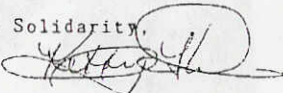
The P.A.C.K. is an organization in the making. Right now it is only an idea, that I want to make into reality. That is why I am reaching out to The People. I can not make this a reality alone. I am asking for your help.

I am asking for like minded people on the inside and out to join in my struggle to stop the Government from stealing our children. I am looking for people who are educated in Family Law in their state. In the future I want our voices to be heard from the roof tops of the Court Houses that pass these laws. Will you join me?

I will respond to all correspondance when I can. I know this will take time, but my voice needs to be heard, not for me, but for our future, our Children. Please contact me at?

Kebby L. Warner 259737
Robert Scott Correctional Facility
47500 Five Mile Road
Plymouth, Michigan 48170

In Solidarity,



"Little Bossy Girl"

How I admire you,

Your out-spoken words
ring so true,

Your fearless gestures
and fights to prove

I was wrong, and you are
rite,

Oh, How exhausting
those days,

When sleep was the
only way, you lay down
your battle gear,

Little Bossy Girl,
from you I have learned,
Patience, love and
endurance

And pride beyond this
world...

Love Mother,

Rhonda Leland, #62446

Valley State Prison for Women, C-3-1-4 Low

PO Box 92

Chowchilla, CA 93610