
HUCK'S PICKS

New Books Published on www.prisonsfoundation.org as reported by Charles Huckelbury

Issue 3

Happy Holidays and Feliz Navidad to All

THE JOEY TORREY STORY by Joey Torrey

I've read a lot of gangster stories, seen a lot of gangster movies, watched a lot of gangster TV shows, and even hung out with a lot of gangsters, so I know the difference between what's real and what's phony. When you begin reading the "The Joey Torrey Story," you'll be swept into the usual routine of a serious prison and mad as hell about how the system jerks around young guys who don't know any better than to listen to a public defender. It's the same old, same old, lying lawyers, judges with attitude, and prosecutors who make the defendant sound like Jack the Ripper. You know the drill.

But read a little farther and Torrey's story soon morphs into Jason Bourne meets the Sopranos! You get mob guys and wannabe mob guys, gangbangers, dopers, pimps and working girls, thieves of every description, almost like the show "Leverage" on steroids, only it's hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys, and that's assuming there are any good guys.

Torrey was an up-and-coming fighter before he landed a juvenile bit for a homicide and ended up turning that into a 25-to-life, courtesy of a judge with a mission to make the streets safe for widows and orphans. Once he got into the adult system, things went downhill quickly. His past hung around his neck like the proverbial albatross. After moving from prison to prison and getting out on an appeal bond for 601 days (yes, he counted each one), Torrey fell back into the life, the only life he had ever known, with predictable consequences: back to the joint to finish the 25.

Joey Torrey has been there and done that and doesn't mind telling you about it. The events he describes and the language he uses to describe them are the real deal, not some Hollywood shill trying to convince you. This *is* Joey's story, and he tells it the way you want to read it. This *isn't* some sort of moral epiphany, where the bad guy suddenly has a shattering insight and goes on to compose beautiful poetry, write nine symphonies, and win the Nobel Peace Prize. It's a sad story but an inescapable one that you won't to put down before you finish it. At times you won't be able to tell hero from villain, but you won't stop reading.



Gary Farlow's two plays, *Homeless for the Holidays* and *A Prison Carol*, provide a welcome reminder that during our worst times, hope is not always a futile exercise. *Homeless* is the story of a young man doing community service at a homeless shelter and quickly learns how much he has in common with the people at the shelter. *Carol* is another discovery story, only this one told from inside prison and framed in Dickensian terms with visits from three Christmas spirits. Danny, like Scrooge, wakes to discover how wrong he has been about what he thought was important, resolves to make amends, and discovers that he has made parole after being denied through a clerical error. These two dramatic pieces capture the essence of this time of year in ways that elude many of us for the other 364 days. Farlow's characters learn the lesson, one all of us would be wise to heed.

All of us at the Prisons Foundation want to take this opportunity to wish everyone happy holidays and a rewarding new year. We know how difficult this time of year can be for those behind the walls, but we want to assure them that someone out here cares. Maybe that isn't so much when the cell door slams shut, but then again, maybe it is. We hope it makes a difference. Be well, brothers and sisters.

Published by Prisons Foundation, PO Box 58043, Washington, DC 20037.
