

**Volume 6**

**Number 015**

**Alcatraz -I**

**Lead: For 29 years perhaps the most intimidating sound in the American judicial system was the slammer, the collective crack of 250 pound automatic doors that, at the touch of a lever, enclosed the inmates of the U.S Penitentiary, Alcatraz.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: At 7:15 on the morning of June 12, 1962, a guard in the cell block of Alcatraz made his usual morning rounds. Outside a thick fog had descended upon San Francisco**

**Bay and surrounded the tiny prison island obscuring the dawn and the view of the guards in the watchtowers above. Someone noticed that Frank L. Morris, John Anglin, and John's brother Clarence did not get up. When they did not respond the guard entered the cell. In near disbelief, he announced the three had escaped the most fearsome prison in the Federal system. That escape would sound the death-knell of one of the most famous prisons in the world. Lubyanka, the Bastille, Fulsom, Sing Sing, the Hanoi Hilton, none would come close sharing the reputation of Helcatraz, on "The Rock."**

**The small bleak 12 acre island of Alcatraz was discovered by the Spanish in 1769 and because it was covered with pelicans at the time it was called Isla de los Alcatraces - Island of Pelicans. It became a U.S. possession in 1851 and almost immediately was fortified. By the turn of the twentieth century it was being used as a military prison. In 1912 the cellhouse was complete. Three stories of reinforced concrete were thought sufficient to deter escape, but the prison's fearsome reputation grew not from concrete but from its isolation out in the midst of the swirling and treacherous currents of San Francisco Bay and from the rigid regimen to which the**

**“intractable male offenders” serving long sentences were subjected. Next time: the famous residents of Alcatraz.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

**Resources**

**DiIulio, John J. *No Escape: The Future of American Corrections*. New York: Basic Books, 1991.**

**Keye, Paul W. *Prisons and the American Conscience*. New York: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.**

**Stuller, Jay. “There Never Was a Harder Place Than “the Rock,” *Smithsonian* 46 (1989): 84-88.**

**Johnson, Joyce. “The Grim Corridors of Alcatraz as a Tourist Attraction,” *Smithsonian* 6 ( 7, October 1975): 105-110.**

**Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.**