

“MCF - The Mountain Correctional Facility” An original Great American SM-Playspace

A History of “The Mountain” by Morgan,
who was there “once or twice”, by invitation.

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The Mountain has rightly become a living legend of our SM world. You can still seek an invitation there through the Editor of *Checkmate* (email now zerotaf@hotmail.com) “The Mountain” has seen exploits and fantasies that many have dreamed about and a surprisingly large number have actually fulfilled, yet it has retained its mystique. “The Mountain” has become both one of the longest established and most respected of the American SM playspaces. It might also have attracted the largest number of players from the widest area, both from most of the contiguous States and many countries of the English-speaking world. Truly, its world-class fame has spread worldwide.



“The Mountain”, winter 1991-2

Back in the late nineteen-seventies, Vietnam, Flower Power and the Electric Kool Aid Acid Test were still fresh in the American psyche. Gay men were enjoying their constitutional rights that they had extracted a decade previously from the gloved fists, batons and shiny boots of New York’s cops at the Stonewall riots; *Drummer* and the writings of Larry Townsend were gay manifestations of free love on the West Coast.

The Susquehanna valley and the Pocono Mountains were far removed from this action: prosperity from anthracite and coal mining was declining but Interstate 80 was beginning to open up the area as a retreat; commuter sportsmen enjoyed weekends hunting or skiing. The US Army used I-80 to bus in grunts to its bases for indoctrination and field training activities.

One such six-foot US Army Command Sergeant Major (CSM) was no longer on active duty but was associated with Army Reserve units halfway across the Keystone state until the early 1980s. The CSM’s speciality was debriefings, interrogations and resistance to interrogations, the sweet art of accurately extracting secret information from captured combatants before it becomes too old to be useful.

The CSM was seeking an additional property away from the Susquehanna River flood-plain; despite levees his house in the Valley was liable to inundation; in addition the town air becomes fetid in summer. Undeveloped land was cheap in the forested hills and offered a refuge. Involvement with the Army offered the prospect of using the property for Escape and Evasion exercises in return for access to construction labour to install basic facilities for prisoner processing and interrogations.

The CSM acquired the fifty acre plot on which “The Mountain” house now stands. The topography was ideal for Escape and Evasion exercises as there are clear natural boundaries which restrict and define the search area. The woodland is sufficiently dense to give cover but not impenetrable; there is running water which provides some noise cover for movement. RV (rendezvous) points were established at the top of the property from which fugitives would depart in a direction intended to

lead them into a funnel trap, with the only course of escape being either an impassable cliff or return. Capture ensued inevitably.

The first Camp on the site was primitive: water from the creek and 4WD vehicles penetrating via a forestry track to a clearing with wooden huts; this established the viability and possibilities for the location. The original construction of The Mountain house began in the mid-1970s: there was a succession of live-in builders who traded labour for lodging.

Independently from his Army Reserve service, The CSM was also making clandestine covert contacts with the emerging gay world. Chicago Hellfire club had started its “Inferno” runs and The CSM was an early participant, travelling overland from Pennsylvania for the annual weekend. The notoriety of Inferno spread and photo spreads began appearing annually in *Drummer*. “The Mountain” project was progressing; an A-frame timber house with square-built annex was proposed over a concrete basement.

Prisoner security had always been an issue in the open plan prisoner of war camps; intelligence was obtained of old-style jailhouses in the course of demolition. The first original jail-cell gate and fixings came from Willimantic, Connecticut. A single gate arrived by transport and was stored in the wooden outbuildings whilst excavation and construction continued on the main house. Knowing its size – an American Standard – made it possible to tailor the basement dimensions to accept it and other fittings. The Mountain basement cellblock was expanded dramatically when Willimantic replaced the local city jail and the old building was torn down. Subsequent additions used equipment from Oswego, New York and Medina, Ohio.

Construction of the house was more or less complete by the mid-nineteen-eighties. One of the later builders, Ken, lived on the site in the summer and fitted out the domestic interior to his redneck taste. The CSM continued to live in the Valley and escaped to The Mountain after work. Most weekends Ken quit The Mountain for the bars of Philadelphia, leaving The CSM free to use on willing visitors his expanding collection of historical and current handcuffs and other prison furniture.

A way of play evolved to meet the situation – an SM slave would make the trek to Pennsylvania for a weekend of play and slave labour in the isolated woodland location. Some came and immediately took total fright at the prospect of handcuffs, chains, manacles and exotic leather hoods from Fetters in London. Others returned time and time again, spread the word around and told their slave friends the scary stories. It was an SM experience unlike any previous SM experience: this was real. Real SM slavery in real steel chains for a real long time. Not for a night, like in the bars, not in a fluffy apartment bedroom but in the raw hard dust of a construction site. And with a real twelve-inch dick holding the keys to your slavery.

Those that weren't scared by the stories wrote feverishly to certain PO Box numbers which appeared associated with interesting looking advertisements in the contact ad columns in leather magazines. This time was before the Internet, phone ads or the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Sex was safe, fantasies were fulfilled.

The Mountain was initially only practicable in summer time but had a growing reputation amongst the heavy players of the era; just ordinary guys who like to get chained and whipped for pleasure.

Animal first came to The Mountain as a run-of-the mill slave. He responded well to severe and sustained slave treatment and was a particularly engaging when caged. Unlike many slaves, he didn't go “quiet” when in slave role but responded and goaded The CSM with taunts encouraging him. They worked together with strait-jackets, rope and chain bondage and on construction of facilities at The Mountain. Animal particularly enjoyed the slave role of being caged naked in ordinary surroundings; The CSM had Ken install a slave cell adjacent to the high main room of The Mountain house. This was finished inside with smooth wood panelling and secured with a barred gate. The installer was told it was a secure liquor storage area!

Animal would pad naked inside the cage yelling insults at The CSM outside as he went about his business or entertained or dealt with other slaves. The CSM would tell him to shut up and he'd growl instead. When outside the cage he was gagged to keep him quiet: this behaviour developed into his “Animal” persona where he would emulate real four-legged animals, behaving as a dog or pack animal. The CSM never had a real dog but Animal!

Away from The Mountain, Animal took on real four-legged dogs on their own territory, competing with them for food and their Master's affection. One of the earliest of many "Sick Puppies" to develop their slave personalities at The Mountain.

Brian Wigzell had been to Inferno on the recommendation of Jim Stewart of Fetters, the original international bondage equipment company. Jim had met The CSM on the previous year's Inferno run. Probably one of the earliest Englishmen to make the leather pilgrimage to CHC, Wigzell was a trained Royal Marine trooper still serving in the Reserves. He was ideal new meat for The Mountain as he enjoyed both roughing it in military mode including resistance to interrogation games such as were The CSM's speciality; Wigzell was also a seriously experienced slave. His exhibitionism of his gymnast's body was legendary and interrogation stress positions showed it off a treat.

The CSM and Wigzell developed the art of bondage specifically intended to induce pain and more pain and then added caning, belting and whipping on top in a way that only a militarily trained Englishman of that era could take. They got on together like matches and tinder, striking sparks off each other until both were incandescent: Wigzell had the gift of the perfect insult gag and he used this talent to incite The CSM to greater heights of loving sadism. The CSM often quoted the motto "Masters exist to serve slaves" as Wigzell himself mastered the joys of the endorphin high.

Working in antique Hiatt four-way chains and his ubiquitous "skimpy shorts" that covered very little of his military physique, Wigzell dug out a spring on that supplied fresh water to the site tank via a pump arrangement. Running water was a great improvement – and also supplied cold showers – heating arrived soon afterwards but The Mountain was still essentially not winterproofed for some years more.

By now the jail-cell gates were installed in the basement with two standard-sized cells facing on to an open plan area in the cellar hewn out of the rock. The cell gates swung shut with a convincing clank that sucked all hope of escape from a prisoner: endurance was the only option. Toilet facilities were necessarily primitive – a large can in each cell. Sometimes it was empty when you arrived, sometime it was already half-full. Always it stank, giving a sharp stench of authenticity to jail-cell scenes and prisoner of war games. Resistance is futile... the Master holds the keys – and – for those who tried to overpower him – The CSM's mastery of the arts of unarmed combat was also becoming legendary.

If Ken was the craftsman and Wigzell was the grunt then Bob Birtles was the creative brains for the original Mountain; The CSM of course being the puppet-master pulling the strings and enjoying the birds singing in the Jail... Bob Birtles hailed from upstate New York and was the original technology "fixer" for the place. Bob installed the first sound relay system that was the end of privacy in the basement cellblock. No more jacking off in the small hours unheard – the Judas microphone gave that little game away. Some other slaves developed the art of playing to the camera – ensuring they presented a good and tasty image to the audience upstairs.

In the other direction, a loudspeaker enabled The CSM to bark orders down to the already-cowed cell rats – or alternatively he simply crept down into the cellblock like the mouse that his pseudonym TA Feldwebel implied. "Feldwebel", besides being a German army rank roughly equivalent to Corporal, translates literally as "Field mouse" although this mouse was by now anything but timid and getting quite practiced in the art of a wielding a nine-tailed cat or a single-tailed whip.

Bob's fantasies were elaborate: both cerebral and seriously painful; The Mountain was the ideal place to enact them. I believe the chain hoist in the high-roofed Main Room was his idea. It was devilishly simple and makes excellent use of the architecture whether one is suspended boots up or hands up. Ten foot up off the floor inside a mail sack is not so good a view but you sure swing around lots and can't do much about it unless you're a son of Houdini!

MY own first visit to The Mountain was faithfully recorded and published as "Mark Goes to Jail" and I was invited back many times. Although the raw fear of that first experience was hard to recreate, familiarity and the safe surroundings enabled me too to develop. Facilities improved although withdrawal of clothing and warm bedding in the cell remained as one of the most effective threats: with lack of heating in the cell area with the resulting air temperature tended to return to about 50°F (10°C). Frank from NYC extended the heating system; this extended the possibilities for play which more than compensated for the loss of the brute realities of life before central heating,

The CSM and The Mountain's popularity spread and it was rare to be alone in the cellblock, or even alone in the wood-lined cell upstairs. Different slaves have different experience and aspirations; what will freak out one will bore another. The CSM conscientiously tried to spend time with every slave but you could see that by the end of a weekend the attraction of being the Ringmaster of a Three Ringed Circus was sometimes wearing a little thin.

The woodland surrounding The Mountain house remains largely uncultivated forest, it proved ideal for outdoor SM. Various locations were suitable for various activities so that even the trees became familiar to a recidivist slave after a few hours of close attachment. Other slaves can be allowed slightly more freedom: a favourite technique is to give the prisoner a running attachment to a wire or rope stretched taut between two trees. Additionally hobbling the feet with iron fetters is gratuitous from the security point of view but typical of the overkill style of restraint that serious slaves appreciate! Other slaves were simply staked out naked Indian-style in the sunshine on the grass and as food for the bugs.

Some slaves just liked to spend time in a cell: the concept evolved of a "low maintenance slave": one came in regularly every year to do time and still does. One year I dreamt up – or remembered from somewhere – the paradox: "in a cell you are free", meaning that only in a cell can you leave behind the cares, pressures and stresses of the world outside. In a jail-cell you have no option whether you will be comfortable or in severe pain, when and what you will be fed and so there is no point in worrying about these things. It's a liberating experience, and an escape from reality.

Food at The Mountain was always a contentious issue: in which prison is it not? Legend has it that the original MCF fare was an ageing stache of army MRE's ("Meals Ready to Eat" – army field rations, dried and sealed). I never met these but gourmet cooking was never a strong point at The Mountain. Ken had installed a reasonable range cooker and some visitors from NYC brought their own food.

The CSM found he had a culinary reputation and began make it an artform, deliberately serving up perfectly nutritious food in ways that were utterly unappetising. One looked forward to the Southern delicacy of grits made with water served cold in a steel dog bowl, rather than chasing dry Cheerios round a steel bowl with no lip plus water served in another dog basin. And that's not to mention the green pea soup served with tinned pilchards floating in it!

Geology, escape attempts or other activities in the cellblock, possibly the slamming shut of those monumental cell-gates, caused structural cracks to appear in the cinder block walls on the basement cell room. Reconstruction was necessary; Ken – with his contacts – was no longer living at The Mountain so slave labour seemed the ideal method. This coincided with the time of The CSM's sixtieth birthday so a larger than usual gathering was convened. The Three Ring Circus – or two chair dentist ("two chairs – no waiting") was in town once more.

The birthday party passed off peacefully with just a few red marks around wrists and sore backs but the digging work didn't all get done and a contractor was hired to finish the job professionally.

Moreover, the birthday party marked one of the other Bob's first visits to The Mountain.

Bob – the other one – was an anti-Vietnam Californian, perhaps an unlikely match for The CSM, but opposites attract and Bob had been a heavy SM player for some while. He was working his way thorough ever increasing numbers of clothes-pins plus steadily increasing tit endurance. Wigzell nicknamed him "Sparks" as he'd worked on radio transmitters in Burbank.

The Mountain was now winter-proofed; Bob was invited to live there full-time, he added space for his electronics interests. I expect there were the usual tenancy agreement conditions like at least 24 hours cell-time per week plus one night a week in a sleep-sack and a monthly tied-down Cornwall Barracks flogging, but those are just details... If there wasn't a sign posted at the end of the track stating "Pain Pig in residence" then there should have been!

Wider circulation and acceptance of fantasies produced demand for fantasy fulfilment enterprises. "The Academy Training Center" facility firstly in Missouri and then in Georgia resulted in some memorable video shoots which fuelled demand. The counterpart in military prisoner of war scenarios was "Team Delta", who hired short-term use of some land at The Mountain for their activities but had no connection with The CSM's invited guest slaves.

More prison gates became available on the second-hand market and an extension was planned to exploit them. This enabled the old wood-lined cell to be used for storage – however the cell door and steel gate are still hanging there and all that would have to be done to put it back in service would be to remove the miscellaneous debris and check the locks and keys! But two new cells were planned and the legend of The Mountain gained new life after much further construction.

Direct entry from a vehicle was now possible to the isolation strip-cell that must be the most complete such playspace imaginable: authentic cell-gate secured, TV monitored, concrete lined, and – wonder of wonders – underfloor-heating, and floor-grill flush toilet equipped. Food delivered through the cell door so no excuses, no reason whatsoever to be extracted from the cell before Time completed.

Its unidentical twin, as open plan as the isolation cell is claustrophobic, is a cell in a bedroom. Most bedrooms have a closet: The CSM's bedroom at The Mountain has a fully authentic prison cell and prison combination flush toilet and wash station. The electric-operated cell door is push button actuated.... Who could want for more?

As I wrote in 1989:

So Hans and Roger put me on the bus at New York to Scranton. I was under the impression that Scranton was about 30 miles north of NYC (somewhere near where West Point Military academy is in fact.) and I spent the first hour of the journey wondering if I was on the right bus... Brian had phoned up Roger while we were all at Roger's place, ostensibly to tell him about the Chicago Inferno weekend, and at breakfast the next day Hans and Roger asked me whether I wanted to be sent off to see this Top that I'd heard so much about.

Standing behind me, he removed the blindfolds and I could see a grey breeze block wall with some white lines painted on it: a vertical white line and four other lines which corresponded to the extremes of an "X" at about the places where hands and feet would go on the wall for a very extreme spreadeagle. Just now the top two "X" marks kept flicking in and out of the inherent blind spots on my eyes. Apart from that the wall was quite bare as was the floor. There was my shadow thrown against it by a single bright light and also his shadow, larger than mine and evidently wearing uniform trousers and boots...

I thought of cinema interrogation scenes with the prisoner interrogated with a bright light in his face so that his interrogators could see him perfectly and he could not see anything but the bright light.

My fear level increased.

"Whilst you are here you will only speak when you are spoken to, you will begin every sentence with 'Sir' and finish every sentence with 'Sir'. Do you understand?"

And I said only "Yes Sir" which was wrong. An English officer demands only "Yes Sir" from subordinates and that is what I say when I'm on automatic response, as I was here. There was a stream of abuse about the English and I was warned that I would be either beaten thoroughly or zapped with a cattle prod or worse punishment if I did not obey orders.

"The command 'Wall' means that you place your nose against the white line on the wall and your boots, feet apart, against the wall. No other parts of your body touch the wall. You do not move. You do not move from that position unless you are ordered to do so. Understood?"

"Sir, yes, Sir" I said deliberately, having to think to make sure I didn't fuck up again.

"WALL". And I clanked towards the wall, found the white line and slightly fell towards it hurting my nose against the rough breeze block surface, simultaneously shuffling my boots so that the toecaps both touched the wall.

He grabbed one of my boots and started to unshackle them, then he undid the handcuffs.

"Remember that at all times you will be secured, there is eleven foot of chain on that collar and that is all the freedom you are allowed, eleven foot"

"Sir, yes Sir"

"STRIP". And I fumbled and clanked with my belt, jeans and boots until they were in a heap on the floor next to me. My shirt, I took over my shoulders and on to the chain attaching me to the right. I was back, nose and toes against the wall, naked.

The above is an extract from "Mark Goes to Jail"; the tale has been appreciated widely and has rarely been out of print. Many others since have taken the bus from the NYC Port Authority Coach Terminal with similar trepidation.

I recently remade that grinding journey myself; the inexorable degeneration of sophisticated urban civilisation into Hicksville backwater townships and the post industrial depression of the Valley was just as evident then as it was the first time out. Yet it is very hard to recapture the erotic thrill and visceral horror of first encountering the reality of being banged up underground in the most realistic and extensive playspace I had ever encountered.

The Mountain is the nearest embodiment of all your own nightmares without risking a criminal record; at the same time it is one of the most loving places I know. Truly a really great playspace: Thank You Sir.

Extract from "Mark goes to Jail" by Morgan, first published in Dungeonmaster magazine #40, reprinted reprinted in Leyland books' "Sir, More Sir" and Virgin Idol books' "More and Harder" © Morgan 1989, 1999, 2002, reprinted with permission of the copyright holder. All rights reserved. Do not reproduce without permission. "More and Harder" is published by Idol and is now available in a second edition. Morgan's website is at <http://www.gain18.freeseerve.co.uk/morgan.htm>

Some photos from "The Mountain" 1989 – 2001



Original cell B



Both original cells



Two prisoners – no waiting



"WALL!"



Chain hoist and the original wood panelled cell



Fireplace in the main room



His "trademark" photo



Prisoner of war, no chains required



Strip cell



Strip cell