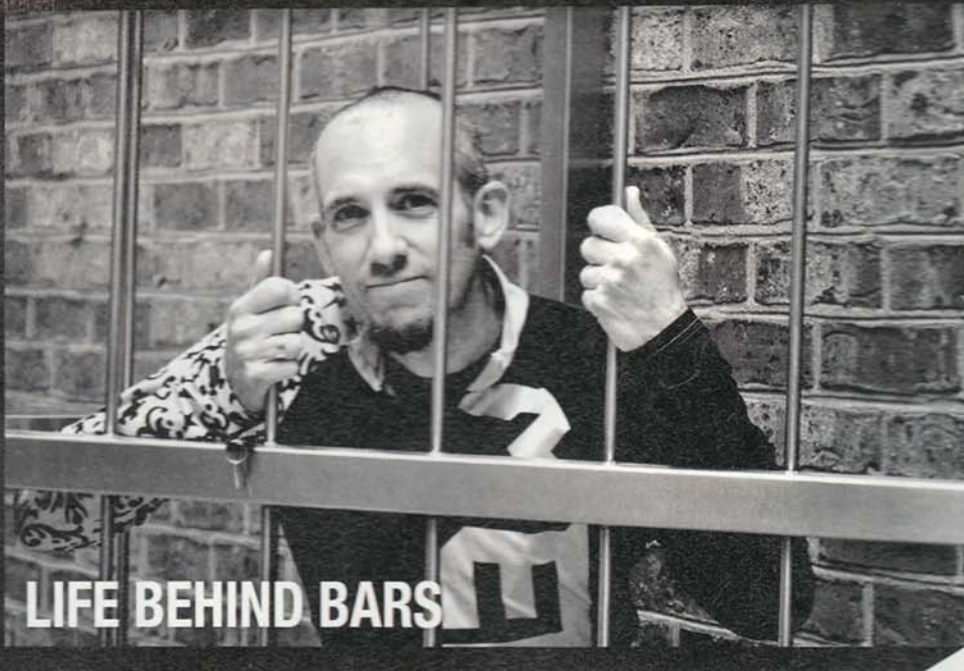


WAZUPWIDIS?

PHOTO: BILL FEHR



LIFE BEHIND BARS

your compatriots. Hucking off a six-foot-tall retaining wall can be just as impressive as picking a fight with a man twice your size. Whether or not you are successful is not important—you just need to make a valiant attempt and survive the consequences. You should make your move within sight of the guards, or in the case of showing off your freeride skills, do it close to the cars. This will make getting the urgent medical attention you'll need much easier. Regardless of the outcome, your new friends will never doubt your bravado, and you shouldn't have to prove it to them again.

Even after you find yourself

Back in 1988 a book titled "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" was published and almost immediately shot up the best seller list, heralded as a remarkably simple yet refreshing take on how to live a happy, rewarding life. While I think it's a damn fine notion that you can get through life with the liberal use of "please" and "thank you" and the knowledge that flushing is good and hitting is bad, there is a better place to learn not only how to live, but also to thrive and survive. That magical place is prison. Unfortunately, most of us don't have what it takes to handle three to five years behind bars—not to mention the ability to take that much time away from work without losing your job. The good news is that thanks to Hollywood we don't need to endure a lengthy stay in the hoosegow in order to unlock the secrets of life. Just fill your Netflix queue with some of the best prison movies like "Lock Up", "An Innocent Man", or "Shawshank Redemption" and effortlessly absorb multiple life sentences worth of lessons that will apply to your every day life...and even mountain biking.

If you are the new guy on the block, or cell block 5, as it was in Andy Dufresne's case, you should always try to assimilate yourself into a group (sometimes referred to as a "gang"). Although you may want to continue your misanthropic ways, there are many benefits to being part of a convict congregation. There's a lot to learn from the guys who have already done time, and you'd be smart to identify the Morgan Freeman type amongst your new felonious friends. He will know how to make prison hooch out of raisins and bread or how to fix a flat without tire levers. He can also procure out-of-the-ordinary things, like rock hammers, and help you press in that mail-order headset you're too embarrassed to have installed at the local bike shop.

It's important to make a good impression and establish your place with your new friends. Just as Tom Selleck had to shank a guy in the bathroom, you should be prepared to go beyond your comfort zone to dazzle

part of a penal posse, you should always be prepared to be caught on your own. You do not want to go out in the yard without your shank taped to your arm, and you shouldn't riding without a multi-tool and a pump. You might be able to make new friends in this situation, but it can be hard to tell the good eggs from the bad. Tattoos used to be a good measure of character back in the Shaun Palmer/"American History X" days. Today they are as ubiquitous as orange jumpsuits and singlespeeds.

You should always know what to do when shit hits the fan, and knowing when to "get a leg out" can save your life. Hear a couple inmates two tables over at lunch time arguing over the last cigarette? About to lose control as you drift into a loose corner near the edge of a steep drop off? In each case, getting a leg out could be the difference between life or death—or the length of time you stay in the infirmary. Be sure the situation is serious enough to warrant a state of readiness, as putting a leg out over paltry matters can be a sign of weakness. If you panic every time a plastic fork hits the floor, or when you encounter a tricky rock garden, you risk losing all your hard-earned respect, gained from punching that Aryan gang leader or hucking your Mongoose off a dumpster.

You can try all you want to apply kindergarten's Dick and Jane lessons to mountain biking, but washing my hands and flushing have never been something I've considered important on the trail. Perhaps not all the things I've learned from prison movies apply to everyday life either, especially the information I've gleaned from watching several women's prison movies. I can't remember the last time I went on a ride and it broke out into a pillow fight with female inmates clad in bras and panties, but it can't hurt to be mentally prepared for such an ordeal, can it? ☹

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