

## LIFETIME SPENT 'IN' JAIL

By Bob Reyes  
EPT Sundial 12/8/63

After almost 21 years of locking up women for a variety of crimes, Mrs. Lillie Forbes of 1509 Upson Drive, has served as matron for the woman's section of the County jail without incident.

Mrs. Forbes, who looks like she could be anybody's grandmother, still maintains that no two days are the same.

"I like the job," she said.

A small mild-mannered woman, Mrs. Forbes applied and received the job of relief matron 21 years ago in January. Later, Allan Falby, former sheriff, hired her as full-time matron:

She recalls the much publicized cases involving Mary Jane Parsons, who shot her husband to death; Edna Mead, who murdered her mother; Pearl Johnson, who killed a baby, and others who made headlines in recent years.

"But they all behaved here. None gave me any trouble. Don't ask me about dates, though, I can't remember when they were here," she said.

### TWO KINDS

Mrs. Forbes, however, admits having a little sympathy for some of the women who are locked up.

"You can tell some of them are pathetic and you sense something. On the other hand, there are others who come and go, come and go."

She recalled in particular three women who have been in and out of jail for various rea-

sons and crimes. One of them, who was in jail at the time of the interview, has been in and out of jail since she was 18 years old. She is 39.



*PAPER WORK—Mrs. Lillie Forbes, who has been a matron for the woman's section of the County jail, does some paper work at her desk. Mrs. Forbes, who runs a "tight ship," says that no two days are the same and remembers many details of incidents that occurred during her career. —(Times Staff Photo)*

"I remember. Billie Geck. She escaped from Big Spring State Mental Hospital and was caught at a Downtown department store stealing a coat. She butchered a baby with a butcher knife. That was about 15 years ago. When we put her in her cell, she started pulling out her hair until there was a pile of it in front of her. She later was taken back to Big Spring," she said.

### GETS CARDS

A majority of the offenders she jails are shoplifters, but there was a time in the old County jail when it would be swamped" with prostitutes during the war.

“But I don’t have anything to be afraid of,” she said about the element with which she is involved on a daily basis. “They are human beings just like we are. We try to treat them the best as we can,” she said.

And the treatment reflects on the cards the matrons receive during Christmastime. An early card was from an English woman who was detained in the jail pending deportation to Canada, who thanked her one-time keepers for the wonderful treatment she had received.

Some of the women prisoners read, others sew and still others embroider and amazingly enough, the pillowcases and sheets are embroidered. A woman’s touch is ever present in the jail surroundings. House plants are grown and in the interviewing room. where attorneys and clients meet, there is a doily on a table.

Women prisoners also have a radio which Mrs. Forbes explained, “keeps them calm and gets their minds off things.”

She explained that doctors also come and examine women who are ill and prescribe medicine for them, with matrons having to administer dosages at required times.

Every day they are given towels for a morning shower and sheets are changed once a week. Trustees mop and clean up and help feed the other prisoners.

What do the women prisoners do during the day?

“Some of them sleep all day,” Mrs. Forbes said. “Others like to read magazines because of the pictures. There have been some however, who were great book readers.”

Under her care are thieves, shoplifters, forgers, narcotic addicts, material witnesses, brawlers and others.

How does she feel about the prisoners?

“We’re here for them,” she said “We root for all of them.”

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## Southwestern In Focus

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