

Two loners find love behind bars

By Katie Kerwin
staff writer

PRISONER No. 88537 and No. 00897 were loners with no family and few friends. But when they met behind bars, they hit it off. A few Oakland County officials played matchmaker to arrange a permanent union.

Now the pair serve out their days together, making plans for a life after their release next year. At night, each is locked up in his own cell.

No. 88537 is Rodney Shepherd, a former plumber and printer serving a year in the county jail for counterfeiting.

No. 00897 is a dog named Casper, who came to the Oakland County Animal Care Center as a stray and stayed as Shepherd's pet — although it's still not clear just who adopted whom.

SHEPHERD, KNOWN to everyone as Shep, was working at the animal

shelter in Pontiac on a work release program from the trusty camp next door. A shy, quiet man, he mostly kept to himself. He likes dogs.

"I had a boxer before, but he died of old age and I didn't get no more dogs," said Shep, a former resident of Livonia and Redford Township.

"Then one day this summer, a Clariston woman brought in a stray white pit bull that had been hanging around her home for a week.

"He came on June 1, I can tell you the exact date," said Shep, a lean, rangy 45-year-old. His stringy, light brown hair is combed back above his craggy face and his arms are dappled with tattoos.

Casper, a tough, chunky fighting dog, was placed in a cage in kennel Row C at the center, the area Shep cleaned and cared for.

"Every morning when I came in," Shep recalled, "he started jumping up to the door and I'd let him out. Most of the rest of 'em would be sleeping."

"He kind of fell in love with that old, dumb dog," said Sgt. Ron Leake, who supervises the kennels. Shep would share his lunch with Casper and take him for walks.

BUT THE COUNTY is only required to keep strays for four days. After that, they may be sold or put to sleep if no home is found for them. Casper's time was running out.

"One night, Shep was walking along, kind of kicking at stones," Leake said. "I asked him what was wrong and he said, 'You're going to kill my dog tomorrow.' I told him, 'No, we're not going to kill your dog.'"

"We struck a deal," Leake said: Shep keeps up his good work around the kennels and the shelter will keep Casper until Shep's release in January.

"He and this dog just sort of hit it off," Leake said. "They have the same kind of personality." Shep, he said, "is the kind of guy that's quiet. He really doesn't have many friends." Casper, too, "doesn't make friends. He shows no affection. He's just a loner."

"To me, the dog has no personality at all, as far as being a big, loveable mutt," said Leake, who nonetheless pats the dog affectionately on the head and watches with amusement as he plays.

IN FACT, the trusty and his dog get a warm reception everywhere they go around the clutter-block animal shelter. "Shep and the dog are both kind of mascots for us," Leake said. Shep, who has been around the center longer than most trusties, keeps an eye on things and makes sure everything is taken care of, he added.

Another staff member dubbed the dog Casper, after the cartoon character

Casper the Friendly Ghost, "because he's all white and kind of ghostly looking," Leake explained.

The pair are a familiar sight around the animal shelter, with Casper haunting Shep's steps as he cleans cages and feeds animals.

Shep wears khaki trousers and shirt, identifiable as prison garb only by the words "PRISON CAMP" stamped on the back. Across his left hand, below the knuckles, "SHEP" is tattooed, one letter on each finger. Casper's his pale, chunky shadow.

Casper likes to clamber up a stack of newspapers saved for kitty litter and settle down in front of a window overlooking the main entrance, looking more like a house pet than an inmate.

"He's starting to get a little upset about the cage," Shep said. "Not upset, but he'll let me know he doesn't want to go in. But I tell him he has to and he goes back in."

LEAKE HAS TAKEN Casper to visit Shep's quarters at the nearby prison camp.

"They won't let me keep him over there. I wish they would," Shep said wistfully. "I've got a nice little rug he could sleep on."

Another prisoner near release just adopted an Irish setter pup to take home and now almost every trusty is adopting a pet.

Shep is vague about what he'll do after he is released, but his future definitely includes the dog.

"I've got plans for Casper and me." No one is waiting for Shep. He has an illegitimate baby daughter, but doesn't know where she is. He said he has no family.

"But I got him," he said, looking over at Casper. "I think he's a good one."



Shep and Casper, the stray who has become his best friend, greet one another each morning and share their day. The remaining months of Shep's term are slipping by faster with Casper's company, and he looks ahead to his release.

Staff photos by John Stano



Casper looks at Row C as an outsider. He started out his stay here, where strays are caged until they are claimed or put to sleep. Each evening, Casper must still submit to the indignity of returning to a cage for the night.



When Shep relaxes in the newspaper storage room, where he sometimes works, Casper is never far away. But the dog likes being the center of attention and does his best to distract his master to play.

'Dinner Party' honors women, past and present

By Joanne Stein
special writer

There are no visible guests and not so much as a ceremonial beer's head. But it's the most memorable dinner party I have ever attended.

"The Dinner Party" by Judy Chicago and 400 other artists is a monumental

artwork celebrating the achievements of women past and present, remembered and forgotten. It honors my female forebears. It honors my women neighbors, my women friends, my women students. Quite simply, it honors all women.

And that is why I'm still in awe from my short trip from Plymouth to Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

The work has already been seen in San Francisco, New York, Boston, and Houston as well as Cleveland, and it will be on view in Chicago starting Sept. 13. (Area residents will have a chance to view a film about its making prior to a dinner party on Tuesday, Sept. 22 at Schoolcraft College. Following the 5:30 p.m. film showing, a dinner prepared by the college's culinary arts

department will be served.) The Chicago showing through Dec. 31 at the Franklin Building, 720 S. Dearborn, will be the last one in the United States before it begins an international journey to Montreal and Europe.

THE THREE-HOUR CAR trip goes by quickly. I drive, and Donna Minock sits next to me, her right leg stretched

in its long splint. In back, Betty Mayes reads from a large art book the names of all 39 women whose place settings we will see, and the names of some of the 999 other women written in gold on the shining floor tiles of the exhibit.

"Keep reading," I say. "Kali. Who was she again? Ishtar. Oh! I remember a poem about Ishtar. Of course." Ishtar, Goddess of Mesopotamia, female giver and taker of life.

The other back seat guides, Sue Kaplan and Katie O'Dowd, offer tentative pronunciations: Hatshepsut, Boadicea, Sacajawea. And we comment on the more familiar, like Sappho, one of the greatest poets of Western civilization, who 26 centuries ago could write a poem saying essentially, "Don't ask me what to wear." St. Bridget, Elizabeth I, Susan B. Anthony, Margaret Sanger, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Georgia O'Keeffe. "More, read more," I demand.

"**THE DINNER PARTY**" consists of an open, triangular table, 46½ feet long on each side, 13 place settings on each side. Each setting includes a 14-inch china-painted plate, which represents a period in western civilization as well as the woman who exemplifies that period.

Some of the plates are highly sculptured, symbolizing woman's emergence during certain periods in history. The embroidered runner under each plate incorporates the needlework style and techniques of the time each woman lived.

For example, Anne Hutchinson, a 17th-century American who was persecuted, excommunicated and banished for holding debates with other women that challenged male doctrine, has a place setting based on an original American art form: the mourning picture. She is portrayed lamenting, near a weeping-willow. The direction of the needlework is downward, accentuating the sadness of the scene. The dinner plate picks up the motif of the runner in line and color — downstrokes, muted grays and mauves.

Each of the 39 table settings is extremely individual in color, form, and



Joanne Stein has been on the English department faculty of Schoolcraft College since 1967. This fall, she will teach women's literature, where she will incorporate materials from "The Dinner Party." She will also teach "Breakfast and Poetry" from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays.

Schoolcraft dinner and film scheduled

A candlelight dinner prepared by Master Chef Robert Breithaupt and the culinary arts department of Schoolcraft College will serve as a focal point to celebrate an unusual artwork by Judy Chicago on Tuesday, Sept. 22.

Those attending the 7:30 p.m. dinner will see a film at 5:30 p.m. which will describe the five-year project worked on by Ms. Chicago and 400 artists, craftspeople and researchers. The result was a giant table in the

shape of a triangle, 48 feet on each side, designed to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women to western civilization. Thirty-nine place settings represent women of historical significance. Among them are Mary

Wollstonecraft, Emily Dickinson, Sojourner Truth, Sacajawea, Queen Christina and Virginia Woolf.

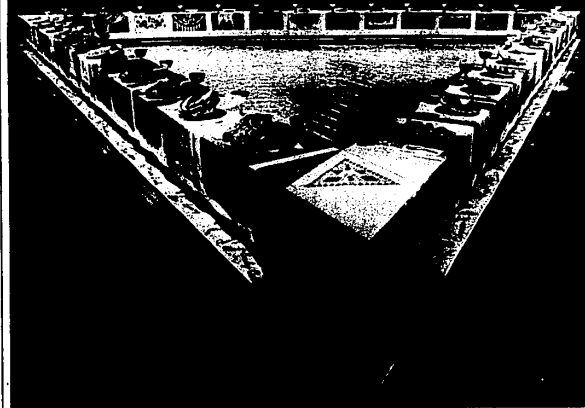
The place settings include 39 sculptured plates especially designed to represent one of the historic women. Embroidered runners lie under the plates. These were executed in needlework techniques appropriate to the subject's period in history.

The artist put in almost three years of work on the project before she acquired apprentices. She made the drawings for every plate and sculpted and painted each one. She was in constant attendance on all the runners, although the actual sewing was done by others.

The film about this monumental work is "Right Out of History: The Making of Judy's Chicago's Dinner Party." It was directed and edited by Johanna Demetrakas.

The dinner made by Breithaupt and his students includes a champagne reception with hors d'oeuvres and canapes, quiche, crab casino, brochettes, caviar, salmon, anchovy and cheese. Caesar salad is next followed by roast Long Island duckling, a tangerine candied South Carolina yams and special boiled tomato. Also on the menu will be hot rolls and butter, a beverage and Black Forest torte.

Tickets at \$20 are on sale at the college bookstore. To reserve one call the college at 591-6400, ext. 285. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.



In this artistic production called "The Dinner Party," Judy Chicago uses 39 table settings to pay tribute to the women of history. It was photographed by Mary McNally. © 1979 Judy Chicago

needlework technique. Each attempts to conjure the spirit of the woman it honors.

WE ARRIVE at the Temple on the Heights in the late afternoon. It is pleasantly deserted at this off-beat hour and we will have an unexpectedly private showing.

For some reason, I am anxious, almost nervous. Just this once, I want to part company with my friends. I want to enter alone. So, I go directly to the main hall, far ahead of the others, who view the pre-exhibits: china paintings, quilted triangles from women all over the world, presentation banners.

For a moment I am immobilized. Then slowly, even shyly, I approach the place of the Primordial Goddess, the beginning of "The Dinner Party," the beginning of a long, long walk through my history.