

24 Hours in Toledo

THE LUCAS COUNTY JAIL (Midnight - 1 a.m.)

Originally published on Sunday, January 14, 2007

By RYAN E. SMITH
BLADE STAFF WRITER

All the usual suspects are here.

There's the guy with a teal do-rag, orange pants, and no shirt.

He's sitting near a guy with ripped pants who keeps falling asleep in his chair.

Then there's the guy in a puffy coat who's scratching his face against a nearby pole. He can't get to the itch himself because, like the rest of this crew picked up by police, he's handcuffed.

It's after midnight and they're all waiting to be booked at the Lucas County jail downtown.

It's not exactly a happy place, but the jail's booking area is not as angry and chaotic as one might expect. Most of those waiting to be processed are sitting quietly, looking tired and defeated.

Arlan was booked on a charge related to his sex-offender status. Law enforcement officers arrested Rosalind for drug abuse, and William for driving under the influence.

Some here are clearly buzzed; others are just itchy.

"You get all sorts of people: friendly, intoxicated, mean, crazy," says Cristy Green, a pre-trial booking officer who interviews new arrivals before making a bond recommendation. "It's exciting."

MULTIMEDIA

[See and hear the activities at the Lucas County jail between midnight and 1 a.m.](#)



An inmate is processed by Lucas County correctional officer Dave Howell as Toledo police officers do paperwork in the Lucas County jail booking area. (THE BLADE/ALLAN DETRICH)

Those in the nearby "tanks" — holding cells for inmates arrested for lesser offenses who won't have to stay overnight — are filled with people trying to find sleep despite the ever-present lights that never turn off. Ever.

They don't look comfortable, trying to catch shut-eye with a shirt or blanket pulled over their faces. Some rest on ledges or on plastic turtle-shell beds; others just sprawl on the hard floor near a pile of discarded juice cartons.

One man just sits and stares out the thick glass window — there are no bars here.

Sgt. Jim Williams has been working in booking since 1985, sometimes seeing between 40 and 50 people a night come through.

When they leave, it's often not the last he sees of them. There are repeat offenders (like the man yelling the sergeant's last name from a holding cell, trying to get his attention) as well as random run-ins outside the building, where a former inmate might say hi at the mall or a gas station.

"I run into people all the time," Sergeant Williams says. "They recognize you but you just gotta play it off."

The night's offenders are cordial — though sometimes bewildering — as they go through the booking process. One woman with funky hair, who was arrested for assault, waves hello to a guy in one of the tanks as she walks

by and engages in some chit-chat with the officers.

“Y’all working like Hebrew slaves,” she says.

A guy picked up for DUI is asked for his height and responds: 75. Inches.

Another woman in shorts and a T-shirt claims she’s never been here before, despite the fact that her name is in the computer. Someone else must have used her name, she suggests.

This happens all the time, according to Sergeant Williams.

“There’s all sorts of stories,” he says.

Law enforcement officers take and catalogue each offender’s possessions. One woman has a rolled \$10 bill in one of her socks and \$5 in the other. Another man doesn’t even have socks or shoes.

There’s a \$100 fee to be booked in jail, so that much automatically is deducted from whatever cash the person has on them.

Then it’s time to get a mug shot followed by a thumbprint and sometimes a whole set of electronic fingerprints, depending on the charges. And, of course, there’s that infamous one phone call they’re allowed.

The phone sits on a couple of crates, right next to the glow of the fingerprinting machine. Inmates often are lucky to reach anyone at all.

“I fooled around,” one inmate tells an answering machine. “They caught me on [an] assault case. I’m in jail and I got some warrants, so it’s gonna be a while before I see you.”

Then she’s off to grab a blanket and a spot in a holding cell. (Just not the one that’s closed at the moment, a sign “Roach Motel” stuck to the window.)

And this is nothing. Yet. As Sergeant Williams says, the night is just getting started.

“It gets worse as the night goes on.”

Contact Ryan E. Smith at: ryansmith@theblade.com or 419-724-6103.

[< previous](#)



Two men wait in the detox area of the Lucas County jail's booking area. (THE BLADE/ALLAN DETRICH)