

Tom Murton--His Alaskan Connections State & Federal Records Correspondence

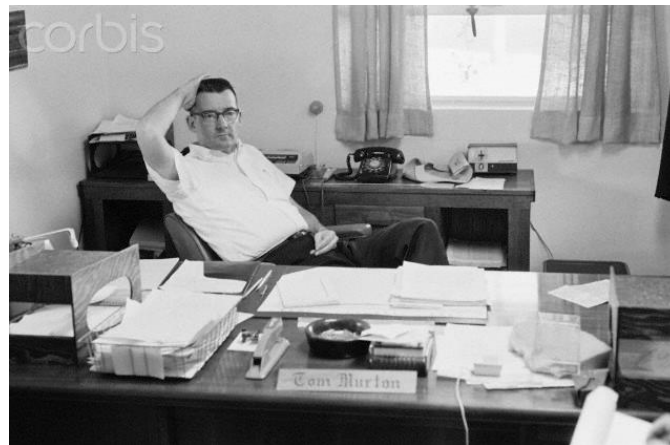
Dean Dawson, State Archivist
January 5, 2016

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BIOGRAPHICAL & HISTORICAL SKETCH:

Thomas O'Rhelius Murton was born in Los Angeles March 15, 1928 and passed away October 10, 1990. Murton is best known for his attempts to reform the Arkansas prison system in 1967 - 1968. Intelligent and conscientious with a dry sense of humour, Murton could also prove abrasive and uncompromising with others, especially with his superiors. In 1970 Murton wrote a best-selling book about his time in Arkansas entitled *Accomplices to the Crime: the Arkansas Prison Scandal*, on which the 1980 movie, *Brubaker*, starring Robert Redford was loosely based.



After Alaska achieved statehood from 1960 – June 1964 Tom Murton made his reputation by helping establish the Alaskan correctional system—the Youth & Adult Authority, now the Department of Corrections. Murton was appointed as the first probation officer for Ketchikan and moved through the ranks to become a Correctional Superintendent II. He was eventually fired for giving controversial testimony before the legislature concerning prison conditions.

After his stint in Arkansas and by February 1970 Murton had moved with his wife, Margaret, and his four children back to Alaska and was living on food stamps. Murton would continue to write extensively on prisons in America but would never work again at a penitentiary. He taught criminology at the University of Minnesota from 1971 – 1979.

Murton authored *The Alaska Penal & Correctional Institutions in Transition 1952 - 1967*, 1968, a history of the Youth & Adult Authority; *The Administration of Criminal Justice in Alaska 1867 – 1902*; unpublished master's thesis, UC Berkeley, 1965; and, *The Dilemma of Prison Reform*, 1976.



Murton earned four college degrees:

BS Oklahoma A & M, Animal Husbandry 1950
B Ed University of Alaska 1958
M Crim University of California, Berkeley 1966
Doctor of Criminology UC Berkeley 1968

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE:

This survey on remarkable Tom Murton and his activities with the Youth & Adult Authority 1960 – 1964 focuses on three Alaska State Archives' collections:

1. Record Group 180. Department of Health & Welfare, Youth & Adult Authority, Central Office Subject Files 1954 – 1972;
2. Record Group 168. Department of Health & Welfare, Commissioner's Subject Files 1961 – 1972;
3. Record Group 318. Board of Juvenile Institutions, Director's subject files.

Murton was famous for his exhaustive multi-page, single-spaced memoranda that often contained very few paragraphs, sometimes one paragraph per page. His "Murtonian" language was well-known within the Department of Health & Welfare. Summaries of correspondence are provided along with direct quotes; box numbers are usually referenced.

EARLY YOUTH & ADULT AUTHORITY HISTORY:

At Statehood in 1959 the Division of Institutions was created within the Department of Health & Welfare. There was one Section--Penology.

Charles W. Pfeiffer, was the first Director of the Division of Institutions and was appointed in 1959. According to Murton's dissertation in January 1960 Pfeiffer appeared before legislative committees in Juneau to explain his philosophy of corrections. The result was the immediate creation of the Youth & Adult Authority and the appointment of Pfeiffer as Director. Pfeiffer reported directly to the Commissioner of Health & Welfare. Pfeiffer previously served beginning March 10, 1958 as District Probation Officer—Anchorage Area under the Bureau of Prisons, Board of Juvenile Institutions. He received his BA in Psychology from Pepperdine College in Los Angeles and prior to arriving in Alaska spent six years as a Probation Officer stationed in the Long Beach probation office. Pfeiffer was fired as Director January 20, 1967.

Under the *Omnibus Act* the Youth & Adult Authority obtained approximately 10 quonset huts from the Federal Bureau of Prisons Honor Camp at Elmendorf Air Base along with other federal property. By 1962 there were nine Division entities: Central Office; Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Nome, and Juneau Regional Offices; Youth Camp; Ketchikan State Jail; and, Ketchikan Detention Home.

DESCRIPTION OF STATE CORRESPONDENCE:

Here follows a listing of the various correspondence that Murton either created or received. Much of it has to do with the establishment of the Youth & Adult Authority. It provides insight into the minds of Murton, Pfeiffer and others; and, depicts clearly how Murton's style assured his unemployment after a relatively short tenure with the State of Alaska.

There are multiple copies of many pieces of correspondence in the records as white, green, pink, blue, and yellow carbon packs were used. The correspondence includes meticulous data relating to case work minutia. There were meticulous procedures regarding the creation of files and a numbering system. Murton states that he "inherited a unique filing system," his way of saying it was quite inefficient. Murton was involved in the procurement of everything from tooth brushes, shredded cigarette tobacco, non-alcoholic shave lotion, shirts, trousers, clamp lamps, plumbing supplies, paper clips, stamps, security razors, uniforms, and fingerprint ink rollers. Washing machines were a really big deal.

6/6/60. Territorial Radio Station telegram to Murton, Clark Junior HS, Anchorage AK, "PLEASE LET US KNOW AT ONCE IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN A JOB AS PROBATION OFFICER. THANK YOU." Note: Murton had applied for the position of superintendent at the Youth Conservation Camp which opened 6/19/60 but did not get it as Pfeiffer did not believe that Murton's degree in animal husbandry particularly qualified him to manage a program centered around human behaviour modification.

7/20/60. Pfeiffer to Lt. Botelho, State Police in Anchorage. "We have a new probation officer in Ketchikan who is moving from Anchorage." This probation officer was Tom Murton. **Box 4564.**

8/1/60. Murton began case work in Ketchikan as a Probation Officer. **Box 4564.** According to Murton's dissertation he was also given the title of "Jail Administrator" and assigned the additional responsibility for developing personnel standards, conducting background investigations of officer candidates, selecting jail personnel, training the jailers, preparing a jail manual and supervising the jail operation.

8/8/60. Murton to Pfeiffer. Murton bemoans how he pays the \$10 School Tax multiple times, "During my brief stay in Alaska I have changed employment several times. Each time, the new agency has insisted upon taking out the \$10 school tax although it had already been paid on January 1st by the previous agency. No less than 4 times has this happened to my wife or myself." Murton would end up contacting the Department of Taxation and then conclude with the Governor. He ends his saga, "Do you think it is possible for you (Pfeiffer) to handle this matter or should I initiate my five letter, six month campaign?" **Box 4564.**

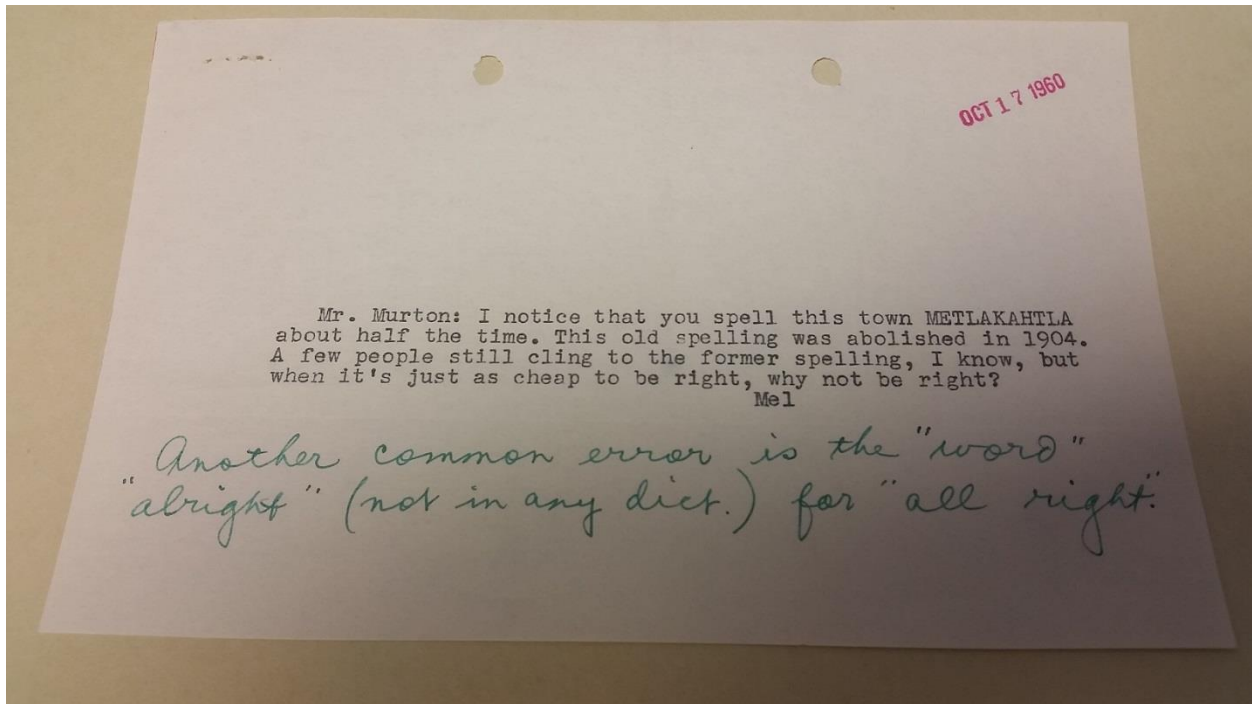
8/16/60. Murton to Pfeiffer. Low on family funds Murton states, "We are down to beans and sow belly now and could use the per diem check very well." **Box 4564**

8/23/60. Pfeiffer "Personal" to Murton. "The only area where I have any concern has to do with a certain amount of rigidity existing in your personality. Such can create more problems than it solves when one is dealing with other human beings. Nothing is ever black or white and there are always two sides to a story. I have become aware of your religious beliefs and have a great deal of respect for them. In this area let me point out something. The Old Testament taught rigidity, 'an eye for an eye,' etc. The teachings of the New Testament, on the other hand, became pliable, 'turn the other cheek,'" etc. **Box 4563**

9/1/60. Murton to Pfeiffer. Murton states that he was appointed to the Medical Advisory Board of the ACCA. **Box 4564**

9/7/60. Murton to Pfeiffer regarding getting a secretary. Murton states that the minimum wage for a secretary was \$1.50 per hour and he has told the employment office to send over suitable applicants. "They sent me a sweet granny today whom they strongly recommended. Her last job was as a cab dispatcher, has had no formal office experience but states that she does not make 'too many errors in typing' anymore. I fear that this job would not be worth her giving up her old age pension so I hope the next one will come under her own power." **Box 4564.**

10/3/60. Murton to Pfeiffer regarding alleged paycheck errors. Murton tries to set the record straight. His P.S. states "If you have as many problems with the other offices as you have with this one, I fear that, ere long, you will be a candidate for the funny farm. Cherrio " **Box 4564.**



Murton gets the final word in for the record.

10/25/60. As soon as three months after Murton's employment he was having disagreements with other staff, specifically Melvin Ricks, Chief Probation Officer. In his last line Murton states, "I fail to see how my statements are in such radical opposition to common sense that I should 'spend some time in close association with an experienced Probation Officer.'" **Box 4564.**

11/2/60. Murton to Mrs. Eileen Griffen. Murton replies regarding a memo he sent the week before: "...does not reflect the tone in which I wrote it. I was really...not complaining. I suppose part of the confusion is having two offices giving me different instructions on many of the routine things. The second paragraph in cold print appears rather sarcastic I will have to admit but I assure you that when I put it on tape it was intended as a subtle attempt at humour. It takes awhile to understand my warped sense of humour so to prevent any misunderstanding I will try to restrict my correspondence to the 'See Dick Run' type of communication. In any event, there was no malice intended and I hope none taken." [again, Murton had not been on board long and was having substantive communication challenges with other staff.] **Box 4564.**

1/3/61. From Pfeiffer to Murton, Chief Probation Officer. "Thought you might like to know that the staff here now jump at the mere mention of your name. If a letter comes in from Ketchikan, they put gloves on to open it. You have been nicknamed "The Whip." Signed *Chuck*. "PS I suggest that you refrain from licking your postage stamps if they come from here. Poison you know." **Box 4564.**

2/3/61. Murton, Ketchikan Jail Administrator to Pfeiffer, a 21-page classic. "Approximately 10:00 PM, on January 6, 1961, at your request I accepted the Ketchikan State Jail in behalf of the State. Although we did not officially assume control until midnight, at the convenience of the City Police we decided to effect the transfer at that time unofficially." The City had received the jail from the federal government. Murton described the initial work required to take over the jail—there were a few snags—including booking procedures. There was controversy over where the City Police would put their guns within the jail. Murton wanted them locked up, but the police wanted to hang them in the hallway. "This of course has obvious disadvantages which any six year old moron could comprehend. You never allow a weapon to be abandoned in a jail facility. If there would be an occasion where a scuffle should ensure or there be some disturbance in the jail and some inexperienced police officer might start blowing holes through the place." Murton continued refuting the City Police's position of leaving the guns lying around unlocked, "This of course has the same disadvantages as aforementioned in that some prisoner may be able to grab the weapon and blow a hole through three or four people before we have time to send out a green memo." Referring to the police chief after the Judge Lauber got involved, "He attempts to cooperate within the limitations of his mentality." Murton prevailed.

Murton further bemoaned about the "unreasonable limitation of 24 hours a day..." Murton said, "About once every three weeks we have a self-styled so called pseudo intellectual expert that arrives in Ketchikan and attempts to solve all the problems that have been created over a period of years." According to Murton he had the benefit of a penology background and that he knew how to supervise a jail operation. He did not desire to work things out for good public relations. Murton got into a tussle with the City Police regarding fingerprints. "I had an extensive talk with Captain Bellon yesterday. He had contacted the District Attorney upon two occasions. The District Attorney had contacted me feeling that it was ridiculous that we shouldn't provide two copies of the fingerprint card to the City Police. The police department chooses to attempt indirect pressure from every other source rather than coming in and sitting down and discussing it with me. The told the District Attorney that if they didn't get satisfaction from him that they were going to take the matter up with the Attorney General of Alaska and that if the Attorney General would not require that we submit two fingerprint cards to them they would then contact the Governor. Presumably if the Governor did not direct we give them two copies of the fingerprint card they would then take it up with Robert Kennedy the Attorney General of the United States. This situation has degenerated into a condition where in effect the Chief of Police says if you don't play the way I want to play I'm going to take my marbles and go home. He would probably be able to play this game satisfactory except I believe he has lost most of his marbles and this would make it somewhat difficult. He probably should have gone home earlier." Murton suggested that if the city didn't like the way the state runs the jail that they can operate their own jail to the specification of Walt Disney and everybody will be happy. He had to tell a jail employee that he was running a prison and not a library and that security had to be upgraded. Murton spent an entire page lambasting Mr. Kamm a jail supervisor. "Mr. Kamm is unable to cope with any situation; he has no insight or foresight, or even hindsight." In this memo Murton offers to apply for the position of jail supervisor himself and offer Kamm a guard position. He said he would submit a memorandum in support of his application for jail supervisor if he ever got through with his memo, now 17 pages long. Murton said that it seemed a little ridiculous that Mr. Kamm was paid \$40 more a month than him even though Murton had 3 other jobs besides doing the one that Kamm is supposed to do. **Box 4562.**

3/8/61. Murton, Ketchikan Jail Administrator to Pfeiffer. Covered several areas of conflicts with the City Police, issues with state police, state employment examinations, guns in the office, finger print cards, personnel issues, food preparation, cost per meal (19.5 cents), average jail population 16, doctor visits, improper release of prisoners, procurement needs (camera & vehicle), **Box 4562**

3/8/61. Murton, Chief Probation Officer to Pfeiffer. Discusses deterioration of the situation at the detention home, which was State-owned, but run by the city. Said the home took on the atmosphere of Disney Land. Mentioned a game of "in & out the window" wherein the boys take turns crawling out the window at night to lower the flag and then bring it back through the window since the door is locked. Rules were so lax at the Home that there was a concern that one of the young ladies, Marjorie, might be pregnant. Murton told Pfeiffer that Marjorie was going to be examined to determine if she was pregnant, and that if she was Pfeiffer *might as well order a case of tums and turn in his dewie button because the crud is going to hit the fan.* In closing Murton told Pfeiffer that if it's a boy, we will name it Chuck,,," **Box 4562**

4/28/61. Murton, Chief Probation Officer to Pfeiffer. Murton expounds upon the chaos at the Ketchikan Detention Home. This detention facility was the only one in Alaska at this time. Recommends that the State not negotiate a new contract with the City for the operation of the detention home. **Box 4562**

5/9/61. Murton, Ketchikan Jail Supervisor to Pfeiffer. State Jail Report for the Month of April. **Box 4562**

5/18/61. Memo from Juneau office to Murton, Jail Administrator, Probation Officer & Peanut Vendor. **Box 4564**

FORM T-11A

MEMORANDUM **TERRITORY OF ALASKA**

FROM: Charles Pfeiffer
~~XXXX~~ Youth and Adult Authority
 TU: Juneau, Alaska

DATE : June 1st, 1961

FROM : Tom Murton
 Ketchikan

SUBJECT: Expenses

Postage for mailing film to Nome Jail	----- (receipt attached)	\$.15
Postage for mailing film to Nome jail	(receipt attached)-----	.18
Postage for mailing film to Nome Jail	(receipt attached)-----	.26
Postage for mailing film to Anchorage	(receipt attached)-----	.19
Postage for mailing film to Anchorage	(receipt attached)-----	.79
Postage for mailing film to Anchorage	(receipt attached) -----	.21
Postage for mailing film to Anchorage	(receipt attached) -----	.79
Postage for mailing film to Anchorage	(receipt attached) -----	.21
		\$2.78

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and correct bill and payment therefore has not been received.

Tom Murton

Meticulous Accounting by Murton

6/29/61. Pfeiffer "TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN" regarding Tom Murton. "He is a very valuable employee and a tremendous asset to this Division's 'mushrooming' program."

7/8/61. Pfeiffer to Murton. "You have done a tremendous job for the Youth & Adult Authority. **Box 4563**

8/8/61. Murton served, in his own words--dissertation, as jail administrator, Chief Probation Officer, Detention Home Superintendent, and Chilkoot Camp Superintendent after his stint as Jail Superintendent. Also, later he said he was "Acting Chief of Correctional Services."

8/8/61. Pfeiffer to Murton. "You're like the race horse running himself to death trying to beat his own shadow." Murton has the mumps and Pfeiffer tries to cheer him up.

8/29/61. Pfeiffer "To Whom It May Concern" regarding Murton's accomplishments. "He displayed tremendous ingenuity and fine leadership...In all of his actions while with this Division, Mr. Murton has displayed ingenuity, creativeness, and leadership abilities that are needed in the administrative aspects of a correctional program." **Box 4563**

9/15/61. Ketchikan Mayor RM Hardcastle thanks Murton for his service on the Youth Council for the past year. Note at bottom of page says that Murton agreed to serve on the Youth Council for two years. **Box 4564**

10/19/61. Murton, Personnel Officer, to potential hire. States that the Ketchikan Jail is the first State Jail for adults and the only one at the time operated by the State. Others were operated on a contract basis. This is the first step in establishing a correctional system in Alaska. The jail was a former Federal Jail and the facilities were generally good. **Box 4564**

10/25/61. Murton writes to John Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, for Pfeiffer. Discusses fingerprints. On 1/5/62 Murton follows up to Hoover stating that they have not received the fingerprint cards yet.

10/31/61. Murton, Corrections Bureau to All Staff, State Jail and Detention Home. Regarding personnel issues Murton said, "I am happy to interview any prospective candidates for the position of correctional officer; however, I don't have time to interview every person in Ketchikan who is out of work and thinks there might be an opening at the jail. Somehow you people are giving the impression that there are vacancies at the jail. I have better things to do that to sit and talk to every unemployed person in Ketchikan. **Box 4564**

11/9/61. Murton authored "Operational Standards for the Ketchikan Detention Home."

11/21/61. Murton, Bureau of Corrections to a manager at Pictures, Inc. regarding invoicing problems. Ketchikan, Nome and Wasilla were charged for a showing of the movie "Dream Wife." [motion pictures were routed beginning in Ketchikan to the jails.] He concludes by saying, "I doubt if this letter is much less confusing than the situation here." **Box 4564**

11/21/61. Murton, Personnel Officer memo to Victor Urban. Mentioned Stenorette foot control (for dictating & transcribing). Murton refers to it as a "stupid machine" and asked Juneau for an operator's manual. **Box 4564**

11/27/61 Pfeiffer to Murton. "The Detention Home Rules, as promulgated by you, are excellent. They are clear and complete with a fine tone of rehabilitation throughout. May I say you have again demonstrated insight and a real ability to create and direct." **Box 4562**

11/27/61 Pfeiffer "Personal" to Murton. "You are a moaner by nature, but have developed maturity of judgement and tremendous insight to go along with it which are great tempering agents." Pfeiffer provides Murton with constructive thoughts on how to address life. **Box 4562**

1/2/62. Pfeiffer to Murton, Correctional Supervisor re "Procedure Manual of State Jail. Pfeiffer had read it and said that it was a "real contribution." "In spots I believe the manual has tendencies to over discuss a problem, boiling down too fine. There is a point of no return in making something clear with discussion and making it so involved that someone cannot or will not read it or follow it." Pfeiffer said, "I can't put my finger on it, but in reading through the whole thing, I got the feeling that many times it repeats itself and covers matters already referred to earlier in the manual. In reading it through I noticed various misuse of words and punctuation, but this is a matter of specific editing and something I did not go into. Would appreciate your comments on my comments." **Box 4562**

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE
Division of Youth and Adult Authority
Alaska Office Building
Juneau, Alaska

January 2, 1962

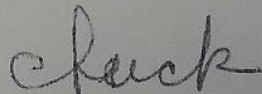
Mr. Tom Murton and Crew
Ketchikan State Jail
P. O. Box 2333
Ketchikan, Alaska

Dear Tom and Crew:

The tremendous support all of you have given the Y.A.A. program this last year is appreciated. Unfortunately for the State all the other programs are not staffed with such a hard working crew as is the Y.A.A.

Thanks.

Very truly yours,



CHARLES W. PFEIFFER
Director

Pfeiffer appreciates Murton's efforts.

1/16/62. Murton, Correctional Supervisor to Pfeiffer. [Murton was stationed in Anchorage at the time.] Discusses chain of command. "Even you and I are not quite sure of what my position is. We've got too many chiefs and not enough Indians now and I believe that this can only lead to confusion." **Box 4564.**

1/25/62. Pfeiffer states Murton will be filling his position of Correctional Superintendent II in Ketchikan temporarily. He was previously in the Adult Conservation Camp. **Box 4564**

1/29/62. A classic from Pfeiffer to Murton. "The recent turn of events grieves me deeply and I am sorry that you have taken it as a personal blow... At this point it almost appears as though you have doubts as to my integrity and for this I am deeply sorry. Our miserable, struggling program is going to get there eventually. This program needs your integrity, dedication, knowledge, organizing abilities and general know how. But, 'damn it', you must, for our sake and your own, ease off the trumpeting down the middle of the road or nothing approach." **Box 4564**

1/30/62. Murton memo to Romine R. Deming, Acting Chief Probation Officer with a subject header "Miscellaneous Crud". "As you know my experience in Ketchikan and elsewhere with the Youth & Adult Authority has been frequently fraught with controversy. Contrary to popular belief I do not seek this controversy but I am nevertheless attracted to it. I actually desire to avoid controversy and take whatever steps is necessary to accomplish this, providing no principle is compromised." Murton mentioned the mutual misunderstandings he'd had and noted, "It is quite obvious that the hierarchy in Juneau are not aware that we even exist and couldn't care less if they did." Said Deming's proposal to rearrange the office bordered on "insanity" and would only lead to chaos. Said "Pfeiffer goes ape for this togetherness. If you wait long enough you can have this entire empire here as I plan to move on one way or another. However, I would appreciate your awaiting my demise before I am entombed. From time to time in a moment of weakness I throw up my hands in despair and indicate that I no longer intend to fight for what I consider is right. This is only temporary insanity and should not be considered as a policy on my part. If I had my way our office would be about 15 miles apart." Murton didn't want his secretary to be supervised by Deming. Signed the memo "Yours for a brighter day, Cheerio, Murton." **Box 4562**

1/30/62. Murton memo to Pfeiffer with a subject header "Smoke Rings." "Quit groaning Norma, this is just Murton blowing smoke again so you don't need to pay any attention to it. Murton states, "All of the officers except one at the Ketchikan Jail desire to transfer to just about anyplace else." Laments his problems with the personnel system. "Before moving on to some other position I would still like to receive my permanent status as probation officer I effective last July, and Chief Probation Officer effective March 1st this year. I can't think of anything else to relate that will brighten your day. I have no reason to believe that you will pay any more attention to this memo than you have any of the others. P.S. You need to send someone up to survey the Chilkoot Trail when the snow is off the ground." **Box 4562**

2/1/62. Telegram from Murton to Pfeiffer "I cannot work without secretary have transferred everything to probation office and closed my office gone fishing." **Box 4562**

CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED		CABLE	
DOMESTIC		FULL RATE	
TELEGRAM	X	DEFERRED	
DAY LETTER		NIGHT LETTER	
NIGHT LETTER		SHIP RADIOGRAM	

ALASKA COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
SIGNAL CORPS U. S. ARMY
TELEGRAM

ACCOUNTING DATA	
T/L	
O/L	
TAX	
TOTAL	

SEND THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE, SUBJECT TO THE TERMS ON BACK HEREOF:

February 2, 1962

Mr. Tom Murton
Ketchikan State Jail
P. O. Box 2333
Ketchikan, Alaska

PLAN TO BE DOWN SUNDAY OR MONDAY P.A.A. TO BAIT YOUR HOOK.

C. W. Pfeiffer

Division of Youth and Adult Authority
Department of Health and Welfare
Phone 6-2500 Ext. 9 or 2

Pfeiffer uses word pictures displaying his relationship with Murton.

2/16/62. Murton to Pfeiffer. Murton states that he was employed by the University of Alaska 6/10/50 until 8/31/51. **Box 4564**

TELEGRAM	X	FULL RATE	
DAY LETTER		DEFERRED	
NIGHT LETTER		NIGHT LETTER	
		SHIP RADIOGRAM	

ALASKA COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
SIGNAL CORPS U. S. ARMY
TELEGRAM

O/L	
TAX	
TOTAL	

SEND THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE, SUBJECT TO THE TERMS ON BACK HEREOF:

Norma Kirkham
Youth & Adult Authority
Alaska Office Bldg.
Juneau, Alaska

PLEASE SEND AT ONCE 50 SHEETS 4¢ STAMPS. WE NEED THEM FOR CORRECTIONS, DETENTION HOME, AND JAIL.

Tom Murton

3-12-62

Murton's standard request for commodities.

3/19/62. Don Davis, Acting Jail Supervisor to Murton, Correctional Supervisor. "I phoned your wife and told her you were in the states, but I don't think she believed me." Played joke on Murton **Box 4564**

4/13/62. Murton, Ketchikan Correctional Supervisor to Pfeiffer "For the month of March there were 2,688 meals served at a cost of 27.5 cents per meal. There is no time to render a complete report on the chaotic fiasco at the jail." **Box 4562**

4/23/62. Murton to an administrative staffer regarding his getting per diem from weather related delays, "...Therefore, it should seem quite obvious to anyone with the mentality of a jack-ass that I would be entitled to per diem." **Box 4564**

6/6/62. Van Winkle to Pfeiffer "Mr. Murton was guest speaker discussing the Chilkoot trail, promoting volunteers and work on the trail. A very successful sales talk. I realize that with Mr. Murton's departure we are going to be in somewhat of a quandary time. The decisions he made in a lot of matters will evolve when we make those decisions." **Box 4562**

According to Murton's dissertation, the Chilkoot Trail project was a joint venture with the state Division of Lands and Youth & Adult Authority to restore the Trail as a state historical site and recreational area. Trail had been cleared by the CCC in 1941. Murton's initial response was less than enthusiastic: "It is respectfully recommended that the originator of the idea to reconstruct this trail be drawn, quartered and cremated after first being forced to walk the trail in 3 days with a 50 pound pack. Murton supervised the adults on the Trail project. The Project was executed in the spring/summer of 1961 - 1964. Murton did not work the 1964 season and things fell into disarray. The Division of Lands took over in the 1965-66 season and labeled the project a success. (Murton mentions this in his dissertation and was bitter over this.)

7/5/62. June Monthly Report. Murton, Correctional Supervisor to Pfeiffer. **Box 4563**

August 1962. The Youth & Adult Authority established an Adult Conservation Camp, also known as "Operation Boot Strap" outside of Palmer at the Buffalo Mine. Murton began this project "with a compass in one hand and a bottle of insect repellent in the other." [**Box 4553**] Murton was the superintendent of this Camp, crafted out of 640 acres of virgin timber.

8/10/62. Van Winkle to Pfeiffer in July Monthly Report that "We have begun use of several new forms sent us by Murton, they help in our kitchen department and probably will be of even greater value in a larger institution." **Box 4562**

10/9/62. Ketchikan jail supervisor Robert Van Winkle wrote Pfeiffer in his September Monthly Report, "Murton arrived on the 27th of September with some constructive criticism, plus the necessary fundamentals to set up our budget system and our new double entry ledgers." **Box 4562**

11/7/62. Pfeiffer to Murton. "During my last evening with you quite a few things came to the fore and some feelings were expressed and although I believe these feelings are somewhat unfortunate I am pleased that our

relationship continues to be one where there is a freedom of expression." Pfeiffer rambles and then concludes, "Now blast it, if you write off the above words as merely being some more of Pfeiffer's flowery bouquets you really have rocks in your head." **Box 4563**

1/23/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. Chuck is seriously concerned about Murton's purchase of one garter belt from Betty's Apparel in Palmer. **Box 4563**

1/29/63. Murton to Pfeiffer. Murton mentioned that "in pursuance of Hellenthal's Honeymoon idea it is thought perhaps we could solve our homosexual tendencies at camp by having a permanent call girl. An entire page of incoherent rambling. **Box 4563**

1/31/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. Chastises him for criticism of district attorneys and causing inter-agency friction. "Next to the courts and police, the District Attorneys are the people we probably have to try the hardest to get along with and whose help we constantly need. I have mentioned to you quite a few times in the past that your letters are too blunt." **Box 4563**

2/15/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. "Tom, your last memo seems to have clearly destroyed all basis for a continued working relationship. For this I am truly sorry." **Box 4563**

3/1/63 Adult Conservation Camp Newsletter "Conservari Non Punire" Story entitled "Restoration of Chilkoot Trail" by Sgt Branton states that the project began June 5, 1961. The chosen group from the Youth Conservation Camp to establish the first State-operated minimum custody camp for adults arrived at Dyea June 14 under the supervision of Superintendent Murton. About 20 men and youth worked on the trail at a time. On June 1, 1962 Captain Murton was transferred from Ketchikan to assume the superintendency of the Adult Conservation Camp in Palmer. **Box 4564**

3/8/63. Pfeiffer to Adult Camp Staff in Palmer. "It is quite obvious that through your tremendous efforts you are at last over the hump....The drive and leadership of Mr. Murton has been an outstanding factor in the development of the camp."

3/14/63. Pfeiffer to Murton, Adult Camp. Pfeiffer *blows his stack* at Murton. "In a memo that I found on my desk when I returned to Juneau from Anchorage you were giving me a blast about picking prisoners out of here to send to our camp. Just about every time you are raising Cain about something and I attempt to compensate for the inadequacies you are displeased and, to say the least, I am a little irritated. ...If you will remember the cat skinner that you ranted and raved and pleaded for, who by the way, did an excellent job and yet created all kinds of problems. Of course you are going to say that the man was promised the moon and this is

what caused the problems. As you can see from this blast I am not my jolly old self." **Box 4564**

3/15/63 Murton to Miss Patricia King. "Generally speaking the convicted female felons from Alaska are incarcerated in Terminal Island CA. Upon rare occasions they might be confined in Alderson WV." **Box 4564**

3/21/63. Murton at Adult Conservation Camp in Palmer. Youth & Adult Authority constructed the camp themselves with logs. Murton opened the temporary camp May 1, 1962. Camp was located on 640 acres 12 miles from Palmer. Murton admitted that the Camp was basically a primitive program unrestricted by preconceived ideas which is very challenging and the only restrictions are the officer individual capabilities. **Box 4564**

3/26/63. Murton to Pfeiffer labeled *Personal* with a "Peaceful Coexistence" subject. Murton thought that Pfeiffer was "setting me up for termination"; "you have a personal problem with your wife leaving"; "personal relationship seems to have deteriorated quite rapidly since December or January." **Box 4563**

3/28/63. Murton to Pfeiffer. Murton invites Chuck to an empty, isolated cabin at Girdwood. Murton tells Pfeiffer he can "get a sack of rol-aids and a six pack and forget the whole blasted thing." **Box 4563**

3/29/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. "Tom, there is no problem between us except communication." **Box 4563**

5/17/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. "Pucker up chum because I am rather upset and plan to chew a little." Murton is remonstrated for not following State purchasing regulations after submitting a \$1,000 grocery bill to Pfeiffer. **Box 4563**

6/5/63. Murton, Superintendent to Robert Erwin District Attorney in Anchorage. "I assume that you are plagued in the same manner in which most of us are in that you are surrounded by incompetent individuals." **Box 4563**

6/5/63. Murton, Superintendent to Fort Richardson Post Commander regarding the state's use of the Port of Whittier. "I am vaguely familiar with the situation since I served as first confinement officer of the new post stockade at Fort Richardson in 1954 and 1955. I also served two weeks at Whittier on reserve active duty in 1953." **Box 4563**

7/16/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. Chuck sends a letter of appreciation and recognitions for recent efforts put forth in behalf of the program. "You conducted yourself in a quiet, effective and objective manner and made some sound contributions." **Box 4563**

8/20/63. Pfeiffer to the School of Criminology at the University of California-Berkeley regarding Thomas O. Murton. Favourable *Letter of Reference* for the purpose of enrollment in the Graduate School of Criminology. Murton began work in **7/60** as a Probation Officer at the Ketchikan Sub-Office. **3/61** Murton promoted to a Chief Probation Officer. Pfeiffer noted that Murton served as a Confinement Officer in the military. In Ketchikan Murton developed the first state jail manual. **9/61** Murton became superintendent of the Adult Conservation Camp, which Murton developed from scratch. As of **8/63** Murton was still the superintendent of the Adult Camp with 50 men. "It would be a serious mistake if he [Murton] were not permitted to pursue his interest and dedication to corrections in a school of the high caliber of the U of C."

9/1/63. Supervisor of the Ketchikan jail Clarence Abbot told Pfeiffer in his August Monthly Report that "Mr. Murton arrived on August 30th and on August 31st all correctional officers were given the new test. **Box 4562**

9/4/63. Telegram from Murton to Commissioner Levi Browning requesting one year leave without pay to obtain his master's degree. **Box 4561**

9/10/63. Bill Meredith to Commissioner Levi Browning requesting educational leave for Murton. Approved same day. **Box 4561**

9/11/63. Henry Harmon, Deputy Commissioner to John Beard, Director of Personnel requesting Educational Leave. States that Murton has been a Probation Officer I, Probation Officer II, and Correctional Officer II. **Box 4561**

9/11/63. Telegram from Murton to Browning stating that dates of school Sept 16 through June 15. **Box 4561**

9/11/63. Browning to Murton—authorization for Leave Without Pay granted. **Box 4561**

9/11/63. Henry Harmon, Deputy Commissioner to Murton stating that Murton's original request was not submitted in ample time for due process. "We understand that this had been part of your plan for some time and that such a request could have been initiated on your part at a much earlier date." **Box 4561**

9/13/63. John Beard to Harmon. Murton's leave approved. **Box 4561**

9/18/63. Daniel H. Morrissey, Personnel Officer for H&W to John Beard. "I was informed today Mr. Murton is still at work. He states that he may ask for educational leave for the spring semester. At any rate, thanks for your efforts on his behalf." **Box 4561**

9/19/63. Bill Meredith to Dan Morrissey. Murton said no time to take advantage, will reapply in time for the second semester. Requested to be put back on the Payroll. **Box 4561**

10/4/63. Murton to Pfeiffer. Murton sketches out his well plan diagram with two six-inch circles--a Top View (As seen by a man standing at the surface and looking down at the well) and a Bottom View (As seen by a man standing in water at the bottom of the well and looking up). Permission was denied for the staff to drill a well. Murton was surly and arrogant.

10/5/63. September Monthly Report. Murton, Superintendent, (Adult Camp) to Pfeiffer. First line, "This month will probably go down as being the most frustrating, disastrous month in the entire development of the Adult Conservation Camp. Heavy equipment woes, as the Youth & Adult Authority was constructing everything themselves, including the road. Needed to put in a well and Murton states, "Now all we need is authorization to purchase well casing. In view of the present situation, I suppose that I will have to submit a plan for construction of a well. The only thing I know to do is take a blank piece of paper and draw a hole on it six inches across." "I was instructed to take the test for Chief of Correctional Services this month, which I did. However, it seen somewhat of a farce, since it was determined, before I took the test, that I would not receive the appointment." Murton complained about a recent hire being a liar and untrustworthy. Complained about another having no experience related to the work, has never supervised men, and his only claim to fame, other than knowing a United States Senator, is that he has written several articles for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Yet a third hire was a man with an alcoholic problem who is shackled up with his wife's sister in Anchorage. Murton was critical of Pfeiffer about these three hires and bitter over not getting the Correctional Supervisor job. Mentions a plethora of equipment problems. Issues with Division of Supply. "Received a report this month that your ace superintendent at the Youth Camp was seen drunk on the street twice this month in Palmer. The question made was, how can this man still be on the payroll when he is drunk half the time and spends most of his time in the Palmer bars? I am neither verifying it nor investigating it, but passing it on as a cheery little comment about the funny farm." Murton received notice to cease all construction at the Adult Camp and that everything will be funneled through the Commissioner of Health & Welfare, and then through the Division of Buildings. Had some problems with rejected billings and stated, "If no one in the Commissioner's Office is deliberately attempting to cause difficulty and tie our hands at the Adult Camp, they are certainly giving a

good impression that this is their entire motive in life." Murton received notification that he had been accepted for admission to the Graduate School at the University of California to work on Masters in Criminology. Wasn't able to register in September and there was confusion. Toward the end Murton stated, "I have been advised this month that my application for Chief of Correctional Services will not be accepted because of my past record." [furnace fiasco & personnel hassle.] "I am again formally requesting that you investigate the charge made by Jack Asher that I was attempting to get you fired. These are the rumors that start drifting around and will follow me for years to come. Whether you believe these accusations or not, it is your responsibility to clear me of it and not just slough it off. Otherwise it will be used against me later on. Now is your chance to prove your ability as an investigator. It is quite obvious to me that Asher made these statements in order to push his own candidate for this position. Nevertheless I feel you owe that much to me." Concludes incongruously, "Yours for a brighter world tomorrow in the field of Corrections." **Box 4563**

10/23/63. Murton to Pfeiffer requesting Educational Leave "conditional upon the fact that I will be allowed to return to duty in my current pay grade during the summer months." **Box 4561**

10/28/63. Dan Morrissey to John Beard regarding Murton's leave. "We will notify Mr. Murton we will expect him on duty *immediately following expiration of the requested leave.* **Box 4561**

11/13/63. Pfeiffer to Murton. Pfeiffer sent Murton's educational leave request for 5 months leave to the Department of Administration. **Box 4563**

12/17/63. Pfeiffer to Henry Harmon. Any extension of Murton's leave would have to be addressed on an individual basis. **Box 4561**

1/7/64. Pfeiffer to Murton. "I have at least two tentative job situations in Bay area for you. What is your Berkley arrival date?" **Box 4563**

2/64. Murton testified before the Legislative Health Welfare & Education Committee. Pfeiffer advised him that Governor Egan had admonished all to remain silent or jeopardize their continued tenure in office.

2/15/64. Murton began his Educational Leave.

4/64. Pfeiffer was advised by the Governor that either Murton or Pfeiffer had to leave the state payroll.

Spring/Summer 1964. Murton in California on educational leave.

6/8/64. Murton fired. A series of administrative appeals not successful.

FEDERAL RECORDS CORRESPONDENCE 1981 - 1982 TABLE OF CONTENTS

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SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE:

Alaska State Archives: Accession File for the *Tom Murton Collection*.
Rasmuson Library, Alaska & Polar Regions Special Collections: Accession File for the *Tom Murton Papers*.

In the bibliography of Tom Murton's dissertation he references "Unpublished Materials" including Letters to the Attorney General from the United States Marshals Office, and other miscellaneous Marshal's Office correspondence from Juneau, Sitka 1884 – 1905 and states "From the author's personal library of original correspondence." Murton clarified in his preface that he possessed large quantities of original contemporary documents. Murton later claimed in correspondence to Paul McCarthy, director of the Rasmuson Library, that he *rescued* these files from the dump and that they were previously stored under hazardous conditions in the attic of the Juneau Jail. Years later, however, premier Alaska historian Bob DeArmond refuted this rendering and told State Archivist Virginia Newton that Murton *stole* the records from the court house.

RETURN OF FEDERAL RECORDS TO ALASKA:

In 1981 Murton, then residing at Deer Creek, Oklahoma and arguably under financial distress began the process of donating his collection of government records that he had gathered to the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Rasmuson Library. Murton, however, wanted compensation for shipping the materials to Fairbanks and for storing the records all these years. He also wanted a letter of value for Internal Revenue Service purposes. In a **7/6/81** letter to McCarthy he stated, "I wish to retain these files (6 cubic feet) until I have had an opportunity to complete my research and writing. A second category of records (6 cubic feet) he too wished to retain until he had "organized them, done my research and prepared any writing I do on them." Murton was done with about a dozen boxes and had inventoried the records. Murton said that if he couldn't locate a university for his records he might just burn them. Further, "I wish to discard the past and move onto something. Right now I am duck farming and driving tractor for a neighbor and have to think about survival; I have not the luxury of time and resources to do any writing now..." Thus begins a series of interactions between Murton and McCarthy.

Murton shared his employment history and stated, "I later was head of the system until I was wiped out by Gov. Egan for testifying before the legislature." He stated that after the Arkansas prison experience of 1967 – 1968 he found himself "persona non grata" in the field of penology. He couldn't get back into prison work and was locked out of his field.

Murton wrote McCarthy **7/22/81** that he'd just had a propane fire in the house the Alaska documents were stored. He also mentioned that other records were destroyed when the truck bringing them to Oklahoma overturned, killing the driver. "Maybe my bad luck is tied to these court records!" Murton snarkily addresses reimbursement for handling, storage, boxing, shipping and curating these records for 20 years. He had built two storage sheds for them in Alaska and shipped them to Minnesota when he was "run out of" Alaska. McCarthy told Murton **8/31/81** that UAF would reimburse about \$600 for moving costs.

In a **9/9/81** letter to McCarthy Murton referenced his well construction plan as described on page 19. In a **9/22/81** letter to Murton McCarthy says that UAF will pay \$696.88 for freight and \$51.88 for postage. As of **11/3/81** Murton complains to McCarthy that he still hadn't received payment. Murton mentioned his "rehabilitation plan" for his chickens, duck and turkey—he would reduce the costs of incarceration by separating their heads from their bodies and tuck them away in the freezer for the winter." On **1/2/82** Murton again complains that he still has not received the inventory or appraisal that McCarthy promised. Murton again writes on **2/2/82** that he still has not received the appraisal that McCarthy promised, "Nothing personal but good intentions are about as useful as tits on a boar."

On **5/20/82** Murton divulges that he shipped Youth & Adult Authority files 1960 – 1962 and Territorial Bureau of Prisons files that he had absconded to McCarthy. "I was stationed in Ketchikan in 1960 and opened the first probation office there; we took over the only state Detention Home; and we started the first State Jail there." Further, "Are you interested in weight bills from the summit of the Chilkoot Pass that were used for materials loaded on the cable at the 'scales' and transported to the summit? 1898 – 1899. Let me know; I have some."

One tranche--**5 boxes**—was donated **6/10/82**. Michael S. Kennedy, Certified Appraiser stated that "This is not nearly as valuable – nor as vital – as the earlier Murton acquisitions. The value is therefore, considerably less, namely: \$3,068.00. On **7/15/82** Murton identifies himself as *Head Duck* and returns *Certificate of Gift* to McCarthy. Murton said that the check for the postage still had not reached him. Murton wanted to make a deal on the weigh bills for the "scales" at Chilkoot Pass; he wanted to donate some and pass on others to his family.

9/5/82. Murton to McCarthy again wondered when he would receive his reimbursement. "Our duck population has doubled which is a tribute to the fertility of the ducks and the ineptness of the coyote population."

9/21/82. Murton donated **24 Boxes** to UAF, Accession #82-145.

On **11/6/82.** Murton transmits another *Statement* (\$22.54) to McCarthy, "Try not to lose this one."

TRANSMITTAL OF MURTON COLLECTION TO STATE ARCHIVES:

Virginia Newton, State Archivist, sent McCarthy, Director of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks a letter dated **4/5/90** stating that Tom Murton unlawfully removed **41** cubic feet of court records from Juneau and subsequently donated them to UAF. It was alleged that these federal records were transmitted to UAF in contravention of AS 40.21. Newton claimed that the court system designated the State Archives in Juneau as the official repository for its territorial records and requested that Murton's personal historical collection be returned to Juneau. In December 1990 these strayed records were shipped to the State Archives. These court records, mostly from Southeast Alaska date from 1892 – 1928, were originally accessioned (1991-054) into the State Archives titled the *Thomas Murton Papers*.

EPILOGUE:

After Murton was fired from the State of Alaska he stated that he spent three years looking for an attorney to initiate civil action in court. A suit was filed in federal court in fall of 1966 but dismissed on December 19, 1967 for lack of prosecution because "no attorney could be retained who was willing to haul the Governor of Alaska into court."



In Murton's dissertation he was quite critical and bitter of Pfeiffer, even accusing Pfeiffer of committing a felony, while conveniently ignoring his own "acquisition" of government records!

From calling local Juneau Judge Tom Stewart a "crudhead" to telling Deputy Commissioner Harmon October 9, 1962, "Contrary to popular opinion I do not thrive on controversy and avoid it wherever possible" Murton was an Alaskan character whose correspondence weaves a remarkable tale. His employment in Alaska was full-on a prologue to his subsequent colourful professional career.

* * * * *

Also sources conferred in the execution of this monograph:

Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture (online edition);

Redford Plays Him Like a Hero but the real 'Brubaker' Can't Get a Prison Job,
People.com, 7/21/80;

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the Murton Foundation for Criminal Justice, Inc. 1974. [The thrust
of Murton's Foundation according to *Perspectives on Incarceration*, A
conference clustered around the concepts of fairness, equity and
justice in both personal relations/institutional management models];

Cool Hand Bob: The Grisly Facts Behind Brubaker. David Frankel, 6/27/80.
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