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BOOK INFORMATION SHEET (7.18.24)

Author (as it should appear on the book): Denis Wood

Title: *Soft Time in a Hard Place*

Subtitle: *My Kind of Prison Life*

Partner: Published in association with the Center for the Study of Place

Distributor: University of Virginia Press

Book pages: 216

Number and type of illustrations: 17 black-and-white drawings, 4 color plans, 2 color photographs, 2 black-and-white cartoons, and 1 watercolor = 28

Trim size: 7.0" x 9.0" upright

List price: \$30.00

Discount: Trade

ISBN (book): 978–1–938086–71–7

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E-book? TBD

Interactive e-book? N.A.

Jacket: N.A.

Edition size: 750

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Printed in: Korea

Bookstore categories (list three): Memoir/Criminal Justice/Sociology

Audience: Anyone interested in the criminal justice system and prisons—especially as a place—including general readers as well as scholars and students engaged in criminal justice, sociology, and place-based fields of study.

Selling points (list three): (1) The book breaks new ground in understanding prison as a place; (2) the book refutes common perceptions of prison life that are portrayed on TV and in films such as *Cool Hand Luke* and *The Shawshank Redemption*; and (3) readers will quickly see why Wood's opening chapter won first place in the non-fiction category of the PEN American Center's Writing Award for Prisoners.

Tagline: A renowned scholar's inside view of life in prison unlike any other—whose opening chapter won first

place in the nonfiction category of the PEN American Center's Writing Award for Prisoners.

Description of the work:

Denis Wood is one of the world's leading historians of cartography and environmental psychology. In 1995, he made a personal mistake, for which he spent nearly three years in North Carolina prisons at every custody level. No writer or scholar, until now, has written a book about *prison as a place*, from the inside, and Wood will impress readers with his quick wit and unexpected perceptions about life in prison that refute common understandings of incarceration in America. Despite widespread images of prison as a hellhole that all of us receive from books, TV, and movies such as *Cool Hand Luke* and *The Shawshank Redemption*, Wood encountered almost no bars in prison, no sadistic guards, and practically no violence of any kind. Instead the most common sound he heard was laughter.

U.S. courts lock up an absurd proportion of the American population, the majority of them people of color, almost all of whom get out and most of them soon. America has for decades been #1 in the world for its incarceration rate. Ex-cons are everywhere—coast to coast, in towns, suburbs, and cities—and there's no way to recognize them because they carry few if any scars from their experience inside prison. Instead, their scars come from the outside. How and why this is so are key to what Wood observes and writes about.

Readers of *Soft Time in a Hard Place* will soon see why Wood's opening chapter won first place in the non-fiction category of the PEN American Center's Writing Award for Prisoners. His prose is fast-paced and his insights remarkable if not enlightening. Today, when Wood is asked to reflect on what he did during his time in prison, he responds: "Doing time and making a lot of new friends, none of whom I would have met otherwise or elsewhere because of race, education, class, opportunity, and zip code." What is life like in prison like? Read Wood's scintillating book and find out.

Blurbs:

"Denis Wood's *Soft Time in a Hard Place* is a wonderful book, well written, personal, thoughtful, honest, provocative. His surprising insistence that he enjoyed his time in prison undermines the expectations and clichés most people associate with incarceration. In the process he turns what might have been a nightmare into a forceful affirmation of humanity and a stirring indictment of the society which has come to rely so heavily on institutions like prisons."

—H. Bruce Franklin, John Cotton Dana Professor Emeritus of English and American Studies at Rutgers University and editor of *Prison Writings in 20th Century America*

"Allow me to commend the author for courageously sharing his experiences in the criminal justice system. The book offers readers an in-depth look into the correctional apparatus from the perspective of someone who (in my

view) should not have been incarcerated, much like many of those behind bars. And it falls into a genre containing works that are largely autobiographical in approach, but he offers key social, cultural, and political commentaries on the American criminal justice system. Wood's ideas are accessible, the book is written clearly, and the work is interesting to read. *Soft Time in a Hard Place* should contribute to a much-needed debate over the purpose and utility of incarceration."

—Michael Welch, Professor of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University and author of *Escape to Prison: Penal Tourism & the Pull of Punishment*

"*Soft Time in a Hard Place* is a highly readable, more-or-less chronological narrative of Wood's life as a prisoner, revealing his activities, emotions, reflections, dealings with other inmates and his guardians, and, above all, his thoughts concerning the American penal system and the larger lessons we can draw from its nature and the shortcomings of American society and government in general. In sum, this is an important, well-written, and highly original work about prison as a place that will have quite an impact on a general readership."

—Wilbur Zelinsky, Professor of Geography Emeritus at Pennsylvania State University and author of *The Cultural Geography of the United States*

About the Author:

Denis Wood is the author of many acclaimed books, including *Weaponizing Maps: Indigenous Peoples and Counterinsurgency in the Americas*, with Joe Bryan (Guilford Press, 2015), *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas* (Siglio Press, 2010; Second Edition, 2013), *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (Guilford Press, 2010), *The Natures of Maps: Cartographic Constructions of the Natural World*, with John Fels (University of Chicago Press, 2008); *Making Maps: A Visual Guide to Map Design for GIS*, with John Krygier (Guilford Press, 2005; Second Edition, 2011; Third Edition, 2016); *Five Billion Years of Global Change: A History of the Land* (Guilford Press, 2004); *Seeing through Maps: The Power of Images to Shape Our World View*, with Ward L. Kaiser and Bob Abramms (ODT, 2001; Second Edition, 2005), *The Power of Maps* (Guilford Press, 1992), and, with Robert J. Beck, *Home Rules* (Johns Hopkins University Press, in association with the Center for American Places, 1994), which was designated one of the top 100 geography books of all time by the Royal Geographical Society. For many years he was Professor of Design and Landscape Architecture at the College of Design at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where he still resides.