

## Freedom In A Brand New Year?

### Governor Cites Gunk Journal Writings In Hattley Decision



Eastern Correctional in Napanoch was one of the institutions that columnist Matthew Hattley, whose sentence was commuted by the governor last week, has described life within in our pages over the past five plus years. Courtesy photo

By Chris Rowley

ELLENVILLE – Regular readers of the Shawangunk Journal are familiar with our column from inside the walls, written for the past five years by Matthew Hattley, who was sentenced to 25 years to life imprisonment for the killing of a man in a street fight in 1993.

This past weekend, Hattley was chosen as one of six prisoners in the state to gain a New Year's commutation of sentence from Governor Cuomo. And so, Matthew Hattley will be an almost-free man within two weeks.

"While incarcerated, he has committed himself to helping others, leading substance abuse and aggression treatment workshops and serving as a voice for his peers in his regular columns for the Shawangunk Journal," read a press release announcing the governor's decision. "He has received many commendations and an award from facility staff and organizations. His case was handled pro bono by the Legal Aid Society and the law firm of Kirkland and Ellis through the Governor's pro bono program. Upon release, he plans to pursue a career in both heating system repair and counseling for youth at risk of criminal justice involvement."

There are stipulations to that release, though: Hattley must live with family members, and endure many restrictions on his liberty, but he will be outside the walls of a

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**January 2017  
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## Color Court A To Matc Pushing Project A

By Lisa Carroll

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## Beautiful Earth's Vertical Farm Plans! Mamakating Review To Continue Through January

By Chris Rowley

WURTSBORO – The Beautiful Earth Group has plans for Mamakating



## Freedom...

*continued from page 1*

prison for the first time since he was 25 years old and charged with murder after a bout with binge drinking led to a fatal clash in the streets of Brooklyn.

It's been my job and privilege, here at the Journal, to liaison with Matthew Hattley and provide a light edit to his columns. That has sent me to visit him a number of times in two different prisons, first at Eastern, in Napanoch, and then at Woodbourne, in Sullivan County. The experiences were both salutary and very interesting.

It's an odd aspect of our life here in the Mid-Hudson Valley that we constantly drive past these immense buildings, the property of the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. But unless we work inside them, or had the misfortune to be imprisoned, we know almost nothing about what goes on behind the tall walls and razor wire.

Many of us out here don't even know the proper names of these facilities — Eastern Correctional, in Napanoch, Woodbourne, Shawangunk, Downstate, Fishkill — and our ideas of the world within those hulking structures are often tainted with lurid ideas and images fed us from Hollywood and the world of television.

Back when we received a letter from Hattley in 2011, then serving the latter third of his sentence in Eastern, we knew it would be an opportunity to publish a different kind of voice from everything else we print. Not long after that, I made my first visit to Eastern to meet Matthew and discuss what he wanted to write, as well as what we wanted to publish.

Until you've visited a prison you don't quite understand the concept of "security." Oh, sure, you've had your shoes searched at the airport, but getting inside a prison takes this to a higher plane. The first warnings are the huge signs: "No Cell Phones Allowed Beyond This Point" followed by "You Will Be Arrested and Detained Immediately If Found With a Cellphone On Your Person." This is serious. At Woodbourne, once, I arrived just after they had actually arrested a woman and had her removed by police for being stupid enough to ignore the warning. You may not take anything inside except cash money. Keys, wallet, notebook, pens, pen knife (what are you, nuts?) all go in the lockers in the ante room.

## Landscape Versus Place?

*continued from page 3*

others convey vivid memories of personal experiences that altered the landscape for ever — turning it into a deeply felt place.

In *Preoccupations* (1980), Seamus Heaney, a modern poet of place, paid special tribute to Wordsworth as "the first man to articulate the nurture that becomes available to the feelings through dwelling in one dear perpetual place." But though Wordsworth wrote so passionately about the region he had known since birth, its special meaning dawned on him fully only when he wasn't there. His first substantial poem was written after he left the Lakes to study at Cambridge, while a very cold winter in Germany prompted his later recollections of his Lakeland boyhood in *The Prelude* (1850). It was only after a decade of restless traveling that Wordsworth returned to settle in Grasmere with

You wait on molded plastic chairs while CNN bubbles away on a corner TV. The corrections officer on duty processes you, making you remove all metal items... belt buckles, shoes with steel shanks, bras with metal inserts, your glasses with metal frames, and even baseball caps with a metal button in the crown. You go through a serious metal detector and if it beeps, the CO will go over your body with a handheld detector. Literally the only metal that can go inside is in your zipper.

Eventually, you can put your belt back on, with your hat and your shoes, and go through two massive steel doors controlled by an unseen operator. You enter the visiting room.

I got used to it over a few visits at Eastern, but it is a place inside another world. Men enter wearing prison "greens" from the far end. They meet family members, there are hugs, laughter, sometimes tears. They sit around the tables up and down the long room, flanked by snack machines at one end and a kiddies' room with Marvel characters painted on the walls at the other. People chat, enjoy their children; some play cards. It's a snap shot of life before cell phones.

Matthew Hattley turned out to be anything but the kind of frightening character that you might expect to be serving 25 to life. Friendly, engaging, intelligent, I had to wonder how this man had wound up inside for all this time.

Now, after more than fifty columns, Hattley has spoken of the world inside, as well as that world beyond the walls and razor wire he's long dreamed of reentering. We have learned how meals are served, how "the count" is organized, how work and play is apportioned, even the colors of clothing that are not allowed. We've learned of the way religious life is organized inside, and prisoners' views on things like gun control and the war on drugs. We learned about the SHU (Secure Housing Unit), which is what "solitary" confinement is called. We learned about the power of the state Parole Board, which can take years off a sentence... or add them.

Now, Matthew Hattley will face a new world. He will be introduced to cell phones. He will encounter the internet and social media, and send and receive his first emails. In time, we hope, he will also write more columns, and articles, detailing the reality of life behind the walls, and the even rarer experience of going inside and then returning back outside.

led to new readings of place in terms of stasis and mobility. Instead of regarding "place" as stable and ultimately knowable to those who belong there, it might be understood as a much more mobile space, open to numerous experiences and characterized also by its confluence of passing people.

In *Place* (2014), the geographer Tim Cresswell has summed up this more dynamic view as "routes" rather than "roots." And once routes are seen as essential to the sense of place, the experiences and perceptions of visitors — be they travelers, tourists or traders — become as much part of the place as those of its inhabitants, while the places thicken with additional layers of meaning and contrasting perspectives. This mobilized sense of place means that landscapes cease to be so distant: the more detached perspective can in turn contribute to the developing collective meaning. There are many instances of places being transformed by artists — coming across the region with a fresh

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