

He's a killer, a thief, and a model of rehabilitation

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Ex-Con Sentences Himself to Good Works

By Greg Middleton
The Province Staff Reporter

He was once featured on Most Wanted posters as a deadly armed robber with a \$10,000 reward on his head.

Now Glen Flett is the poster boy for prisoner rehabilitation.

The 46-year-old convicted killer was awarded the Betty Urquhart Community Service Award at University College of the Fraser Valley yesterday.

"We think he's done a wonderful job," college president Peter Jones said. "He reinforces our belief as educators that people can change." Flett won the award for his work with Partners In Knowledge, a program he helped develop to assist prisoners and kids in alternative schools.

Flett was in trouble with the law by the age of 11. At 22, he was sentenced to his first federal prison term for robbing a gas station.

In 1975, after a dozen years more in than out of jail, he and two partners went on an armed-robbery spree through the U.S. and Canada.

"I was a very dangerous guy," Flett admitted. "I hated everybody. Psychologists said I should be locked up and never let out again." In 1978 in Toronto, Flett and one of his partners opened fire on Hudson's Bay store employee Theodore Van Sluyman during an armoured car hold up, and killed him.

Flett drew 20 years for the murder.

Back in Jail and with a high profile as a convicted killer, Flett inherited a hugely profitable drug ring.

An inmate who threatened his jailhouse gang was murdered. Flett says that while

he didn't do it, the killing was on his orders -- and his conscience. One of the men who did the murder got life in prison. I had a hard time with that," Flett said.

Several tormented years later, he walked in to the prison chapel looking for a peace of mind and found Christianity.

"My whole life was just darkness and death and one day I went to the Chaplin and slowly things started to change." He also met and married his wife, Sherry, then a young sociology Student. In 1986, Flett's sentence was reduced from 21 to 14 years by the Ontario Court of Appeal.

While serving his time in Ferndale Institution In Mission, he began working with disadvantaged kids. There are now about 10 inmate tutors in the Partners in Knowledge program. Since getting full parole four years ago, he started another program, this one to help repeat offenders break the jail cycle and learn to live on the outside. The program is now getting federal funding.

"I can never take back what I've done," he said. But I can give something back."

Flett even impressed hard-line Reform party justice critic and Fraser Valley MP Randy White.

"Credit should be given where credit is due." White said. "He's an example of what people who have ended up in prison can do to help others and make up for what they've done. I congratulate Mr. Flett."