Forsgren or Yount, he's liked

Friends say killer would be welcome

By Byron Blake
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HUNTINGTON, Pa. — Jon Yount 
would like to go home again —
home to Idaho, that is. It may never happen, though.

Many of the friends he made in Idaho while on the run between 
April 1986 and June 1988 gladly 
loved their homes to the men 
they came to know as Jim Forsgren, even though they knew he 
has been convicted of murder and 
has escaped.

The same is true for Yount's 
companion from that period, 
Kathy Kermer, even though they 
now know she is really Diane Brodbeck, 
who is accused of helping Yount escape and leaving her hus-
band to be with him during the run.

Today, Yount, 22, sits in 
his cell in the State Correctional Institution 
at Huntingdon, a maximum-se-
curity prison. He faces sentencing 
today, having pleaded guilty to es-
scape from prison on April 5, 

Brodbeck, 43, is awaiting trial on 
a charge of conspiring with Yount 
to plan and carry out the escape. A 
pretrial hearing for her is sched-
uled for Dec. 5 in Centre County.

The two were captured June 15 
in Courr d'Alene, near the 
driving border from Idaho.

Yount said he returned to prison 
after more than two years spend-
mory in Boise as he had made him 
realize how precious freedom was. 
"The truth is," he said last week, 
"I'd happily trade the rest of my 
life to relive those 29 months of freedom.

Yount, a schoolteacher in his 
native Pennsylvania, mortared 
one of his students, Pamela Sue Rimer, 
in 1956. After a false 
report of the crime, he was convicted and impris-
oned.

Three years later, he disap-
ppeared from a minimum-security work 
detail at the State Correct-
ional Institution at Rockview.

The next day, the worried hus-
band of Diane Brodbeck, a York 
County housewife who had volun-
teered for a prison ministries pro-
gram, called the Pennsylvania 
State Police to report her missing. 
Police soon learned that Brod-
beck had been linked to Yount's escape.

Some investigators thought 
Yount, already convicted of murder, might have killed Brodbeck. 
Her husband and children, 
however, dismissed the story to a 
belief that she was alive.

Yount and Brodbeck wandered 
into Boise in December 1986 in 
some of a new home, new 
job and a new way of life.

"How we started out was really 
strange," Yount recalled. "We first 
went to the Salvation Army. We 
saw the captain if he knew of any 
elderly or needy people with whom 
we could share our Christmas. It seems that because of insurance li-
ability for any such referral, the 
captain was disinclined to give us 
any names. But he did send us over 
to the Unity Church.

Yount said his experiences with 
volunteers, foundationland and 
services in the three Pennsylvania 
cities he spent more than 
20 years gave him an ecumenical 
view of religion. Brodbeck had a 
less tolerant, but he also was 
reluctant.

Neither of them was uncomfort-
able with the rather suburban 
churches they encountered in their 
 Unity Church service, he recalled.

"I was able to sit right in it," 
he said. "When they found out I 
could sing — and, to a lesser extent, 
I could play the piano and 
organ — it didn't take long 
for them to accept Brodbeck and me into their fold.

He described how, during their 
second or third Sunday service, 
the minister met the group 
Gospele. He had earned that mon-
iker by his reputation as a bird 
and — some said — too many 
soaks for sake.

"When I introduced myself as a 
补偿, we were real sorry to see them leave — even sorrier 
when we heard the news about their arrest.

Their landlord had a hand-
scrapped brother whom Yount be-
friends. A Boise businessman, he 
seems an old stud farm. But two 
months later, a stroke that 
shattered his spirit and drained his 
intelligence.

"It was rather difficult at first," 
Yount said. "Because of his speech 
was impaired. But he could underst-
and me very well, and we hit it 
off pretty well right from the start.

In the spring of 1987, I took 
him fishing. He obviously had be-
come accustomed to having people 
do just about anything for him.

"When I told him, you're going 
to have to hike your own boat, and 
you're going to have to join in the 
catch yourself," the man thought I 
was really being hard on him. But 
after catching that first fish by 
his side, he seemed to take on a 
whole new outlook. He discovered 
he could do a lot of things for him-
self.

The man's wife said, "He was al-
most like a new person. (Yount) 
made him work hard, and each day 
the victory day by day seemed to 
give him another good reason for 
just to be alive.

Now, reflecting on what hap-
penned last June, when Boise res-
inately search for more than 
two years, she said, "We were so 
shocked. It's still very hard to 
believe. Although our children, who 
live away from us and had met them several times, expressed con-
cern that (Yount and Brodbeck) 
their death, we're not bitter about 
their fate. They lived the life.

Yount, although he murdered 
someone, Jon isn't a murderer.

"If they ever went to Idaho, they certainly would have a 
place to stay — here with us."

Another friend, a local barber, 
recalls Yount and Brodbeck be-
friends a couple in their 70s.

"These people were on welfare 
and couldn't afford anything else," 
he said. "(Yount and Brod-
beck) took them fishing, cooked 
dinner for them, even helped with their 
housework. It really made a 
difference in those people's lives.

They're still talking about it.

Others have expressed similar 
sentiments and related similar 
experiences.

Yount's mother, who lives on 
the family homestead near Dubois, 
Pa., receives several letters a day 
from Idaho friends.

Back in Pennsylvania, though, 
strong sentiment was fueled by 
broad media coverage of the 1986 
murder, and of subsequent at-
tempts by Yount's attorneys in 
petitioning for his parole.

That has made any chance of re-
lease slim at best, according to 
Pennsylvania officials. The commis-
sion of any offense of at least 10 to 
years for his escape from prison 
would seem only to confirm Yount's future as a life in Pen-
nsylvania's corrections system.

Brodbeck faces a possible prison 
tterm of 25 to 40 years if she is 
convicted of conspiring with Yount 
in his escape from Rockview, 
officials say.

"Although he has come to regret 
his actions," Yount said, "I have 
some of the best memories anyone 
could ask for. (We) shared some-
ting wonderful with so many dif-
frent people, and nobody can take 
that away from us."