

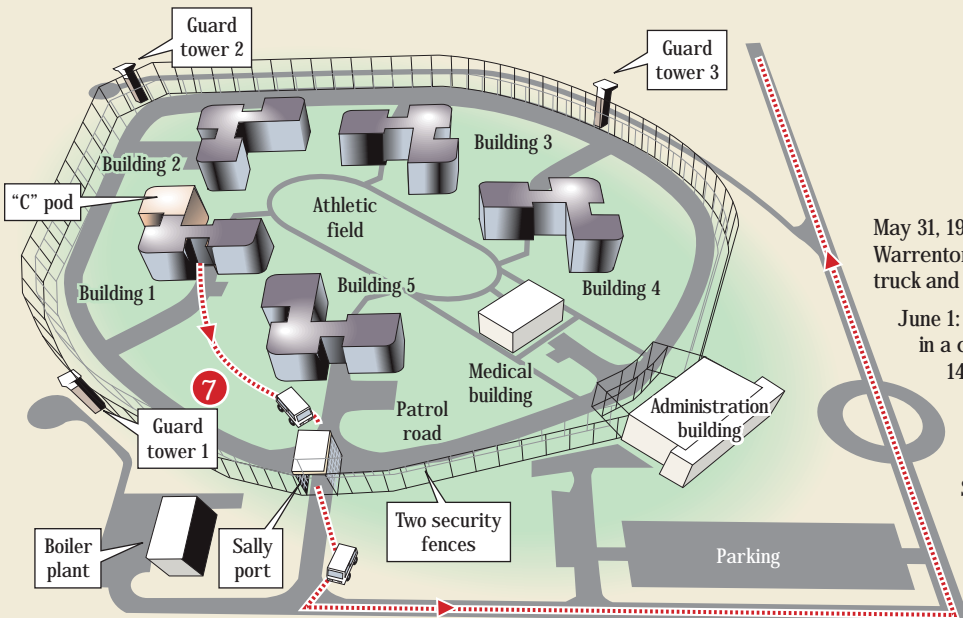
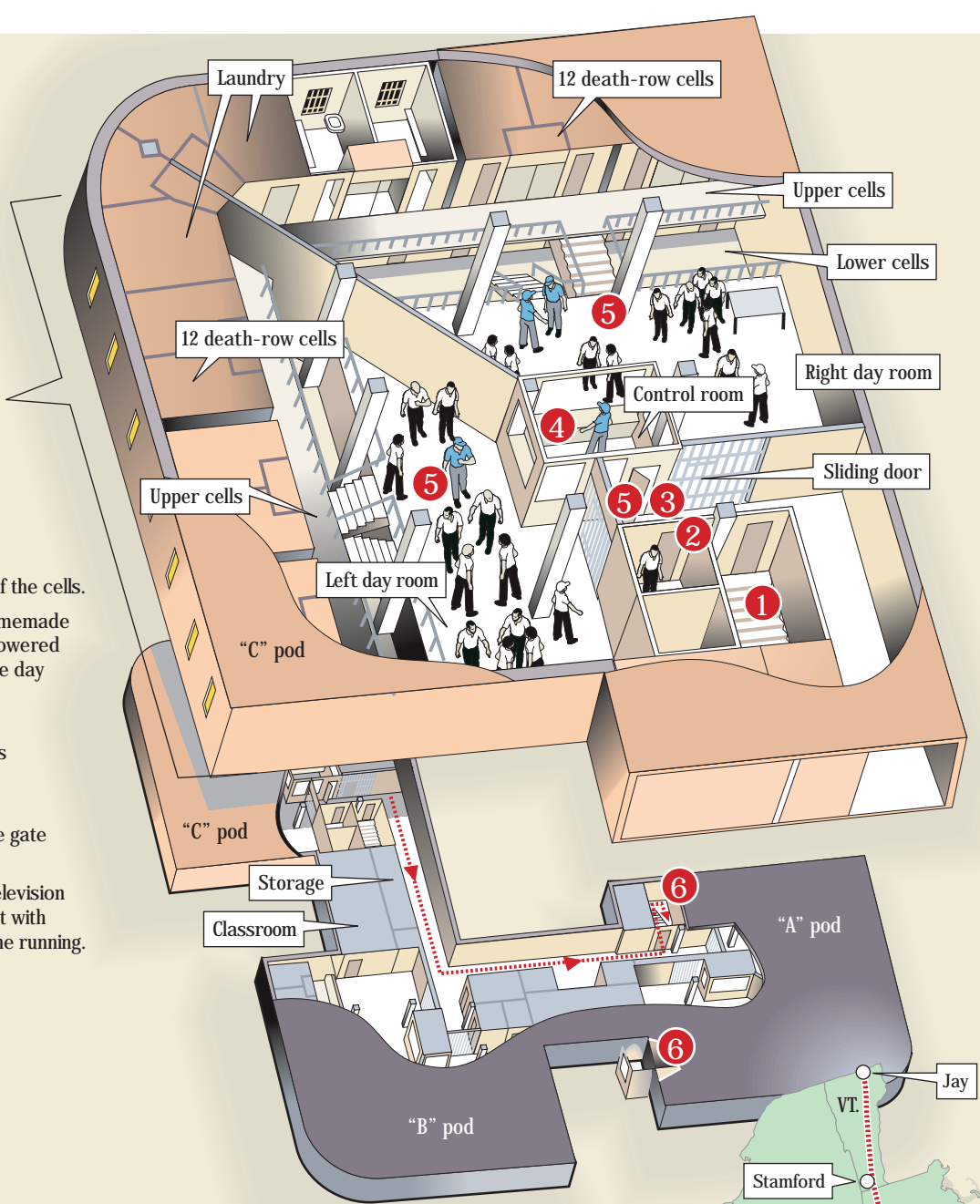
# Death-row escape

On Thursday, May 31, 1984, most of Virginia's 24 death-row inmates were confined to the "C" pod on the second floor of the Mecklenburg Correctional Center Building No. 1. A solid wall divided the pod in half. A guard was in each day room and the control room.

Here's how six inmates escaped:

- 1 About 8 p.m. that day, inmates returned up the stairs to the right-side day room from outdoor recreation.
  - 2 Earl Clanton Jr. ducked into the guards' unlocked bathroom.
  - 3 About an hour later, James Briley, in the right-side day room, asked the control room guard to bring him a book from the left-side day room. Against procedure, the guard stepped out of the control room, leaving its door open.
  - 4 Clanton rushed from the bathroom into the control room and opened doors to each of the cells.
  - 5 The guard almost wrestled Clanton out of the control room, but Briley ran in with a homemade knife and took the guard hostage. Other inmates, some with homemade knives, overpowered guards in both day rooms and took their uniforms. Guards carried only stun guns in the day rooms. By 10:30, inmates held 13 hostages, captured one by one.
  - 6 The watch commander was forced, at knifepoint, to call the guard in the first-floor control room who operated Building 1's entrance gates. He told her a replacement was coming and that, upon his arrival, she was to report to the administration building.
- An inmate in a guard's uniform arrived. Against policy, the control room guard opened the door. The guard was captured and forced to demonstrate how to work the gate controls, then she was locked in a nearby bathroom.
- 7 The six escapees, all in guard uniforms, donned riot helmets found nearby, placed a television on a stretcher and staged a bomb ruse. They covered the TV with a blanket, sprayed it with fire extinguishers and carried it 150 yards to a prison van waiting at the sally port, engine running. The van had been ordered by the watch commander, who was under threat. The six inmates ordered the tower guard to open both sally port gates, and they escaped.

Second floor



May 31, 1984: The six headed south and abandoned the van in Warrenton, N.C. Two escapees remained there; four stole a pickup truck and headed north to Interstate 95, passing through Richmond.

June 1: Earl Clanton Jr. and Derick Lynn Peterson were captured in a coin laundry in Warrenton. Clanton was executed April 14, 1988. Peterson was executed Aug. 22, 1991.

June 8: Willie Leroy Jones surrendered to police in Jay, Vt. Jones was executed Sept. 15, 1992. Lem D. Tuggle Jr. was captured at a roadblock near Stamford, Vt. He was executed Dec. 12, 1996.

June 19: Linwood E. Briley and James D. Briley were captured by the FBI in Philadelphia. Linwood was executed Oct. 12, 1984. James was executed April 18, 1985.

