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ordered everyone to see *The Godfather* "three or four times" to underscore his core values, says Dixon.

Newton fled to Cuba in 1974 to avoid trial on a murder charge, and the Panthers renewed community and political outreach in Oakland under his charismatic successor, Elaine Brown. The Panthers established a private school, helped develop 1,000 units of new housing and, using a grassroots political network developed by Brown, installed Lionel Wilson as Oakland mayor. But holding power on the streets of Oakland and enforcing discipline within the organization—often with beatings or lashings—also remained priorities.

Things worsened when Newton returned in 1977 to face trial, Dixon says. In short order, Dixon recalls, Newton tried to engineer a \$50,000 shake-down of local gang leaders linked to the drug trade and beat up Brown, who took out a full page ad in the *Oakland Tribune* to announce her departure from the party.

"The dark days of the party were 1977 and 1978. I remember sitting in an after-hours club with my .45. It had become like my right arm. The weapons were our downfall. In the past, all our fighting had been with the police, and it was an outgrowth of our crusade for justice, for freedom. Now we were fighting with our own brothers on the street, over drugs and some misguided notion of honor," says Dixon.

Putting a fine point on how strange things had become, Dixon recalls fulfilling a directive from Newton to dig up and dispose of Panther guns buried in 50 different locations. He dumped them into San Francisco Bay at 3 a.m. from the middle of the San Mateo Bridge.

Around this time, Dixon finally realized it was time to move on. "I was so disillusioned and angry. I was trying to figure out a way to get out of the party." Dixon says he found the strength and support he needed to do that in Pat, the woman who became his second wife. His exit from the Panthers wasn't into the straight life, though.

"At that time in California there was this illegal, illegitimate life that a lot of people went into. I had a lot of anger" against Huey and the government. I was still a revolutionary." Dixon says that, with Pat, he took up "the paper game," essentially a form of embezzlement. "We would go into a bank with a forged check and walk out with tens of thousands of dollars. We made \$100,000 illegally. We were living that outlaw life. We had the FBI looking for us." On the run through Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Illinois, Dixon and Pat landed in Houston, where they were apprehended.

Dixon says they were each sentenced to five years but had to serve only six months. He did his time at Lompoc, California. After release, he says, they got nailed once more on a similar charge. He served another six months in Marin County, but was released each weekday to go to work at a job

he had found in between terms, as a substance abuse counselor in Oakland.

From there, Dixon says, he began to turn the corner. "I held that job for four years and settled down. We changed our locale and our friends, got some dogs and moved out to a nice big house in Pleasant Hill, near Concord."

In 1986, Dixon headed back home to Seattle to be closer to his two oldest children, then teenagers and both in need of guidance, he says. Dixon worked in construction and sales, and then found his footing in a series of community-based positions that have shaped his current priorities. He helped teens find summer jobs, low-income mothers get off welfare and communities fight the crack epidemic. He mapped existing community youth resources for social service agencies and counseled at-risk gang-affiliated youths.

Until this spring, he worked for Casey Family Programs, a Seattle nonprofit providing a range of foster-care-related services that was established by the family of United Parcel Service founder Jim Casey. Dixon's focus was helping ex-foster children make the difficult shift to self-sufficiency, beginning at age 18.

He left that position in April to focus more fully on several ambitious projects, which, along with raising his three younger children, are the focus of his life now. One priority is completing a memoir of his life and times. And Dixon has big plans for Central House, a drop-in center for at-risk gang youths he