

TRUE CONFESSIONS

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The NEWS stories about prisoner abuse in Iraq,¹ has made it clear to me, which side the press is on. While I in no way excuse, condone, or attempt to minimize the actions of those soldiers, I can't help but wonder why the Media does not expose the abuse and exploitation of incarcerated veterans in the United States.

A full expose' here is prohibitive for lack of space; I lay out all the details in a book I'm writing: "*The Wheel of Ixion - Beyond the Belly of The Beast*".² Suffice it here to say that at least on ONE "correctional" facility in New York,³ vets (and non-vets) were being psychologically tormented by unqualified "counselors", treated for PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) by an unqualified registered nurse,⁴ and unlawfully denied parole in order to keep a Federally funded (VA) program packed with participants.⁵

Although they put on a good "front", no one in the VA or in the DOCS (Department of Correctional Services) really cared about veterans who honorably served their country when they got in trouble with the law and ended-up in prison. The media ignored their complaints; all except for the Judicial Process Commission,⁶ which published an article I wrote *sub nom*⁷ in their Nov-Dec 2000 newsletter.⁸

In 1998-2000, I was one of four incarcerated veterans at Groveland prison in SONYEA,⁹ New York, who tirelessly worked to expose the abuse and exploitation of incarcerated vets who were compelled by (written¹⁰ and verbal) threats, to "volunteer" to enter a jailhouse program called VRTP (Veteran's Residential Therapeutic Program). In VRTP, vets were segregated from the rest of the prison riff-raff, and given their own (80-man) dormitory, complete with a TV/Day Room, and full kitchen cooking facilities.¹¹ If you've ever tasted New York prison food, you'd know why the kitchen itself was a very powerful incentive. In short, vets in VRTP were made to feel comfortable, and most of them did not see through the lies they were told, and did not know what four vets¹² had discovered.

¹ May-June 2004 (see API newswire).

² Tentative title - A book in the spirit of the late Jack Henry Abbott's "In the Belly of the Beast".

³ Groveland Correctional Facility, aka: "Groovy-Land Corruptional Facility", SONYEA, NY.

⁴ According to Dep't of Veteran's Affairs Inspector General investigation I helped to initiate.

⁵ This allegation is yet to be empirically proven, however, I believe it to be true.

⁶ Judicial Process Commission, 121 N. Fitzhugh St., Rochester, NY, 14614 - non-profit org.

⁷ Sub nom (Latin) - "under another name".

⁸ *Justicia* newsletter - ISSN# 1077-6516 - Article titled: "*Veterans Exploited in New York Prisons at Taxpayer Expense*".

⁹ SONYEA - acronym for: State of New York Epileptic Association - prison was formerly an asylum.

¹⁰ Official documents, memos, letters, and responses to FOIL requests substantiate this allegation.

¹¹ Vets were provided with 2 (old) stoves, 5 (old) refrigerators, microwaves, toasters, pots, pans, etc.

¹² I am one of the four vets; other vet's identities are withheld to prevent reprisals by prison staff.

Because there were not enough vets coming into the prison system to keep the VRTP programs in prisons across the state¹³ full (and fully funded), we alleged that vets (at least the vets at Groveland) were not released on parole at a rate that was consistent with their non-vet peers. This allegation is hard to prove, since it would require the release of parole data (statistics) that DOCS claims "does not exist". However, I believe it is true by direct observation.

The numerous complaints from vets about "unqualified staff" were substantiated, particularly in the case of a registered (male) nurse from the Canandaigua, NY (VISN-2) Veteran's Administration, who pretended to be, and was represented by prison staff to be "a psychologist specializing in PTSD". This man, according to a Department of Veteran's Affairs Inspector General (DVA-IG) investigation¹⁴ that I helped to start, was found to have written "*...descriptions of treatments outside the scope of care for which he was credentialed and privileged*" into vet's medical records. According to the report obtained from DVA-IG with the Freedom of Information Act, he was doing this "for over a year" with a dozen incarcerated veterans.¹⁵ Actually, DVA-IG only audited the books for fiscal year 2000, and concluded that the \$40,000 per year / per vet that the VA funds for "psychotherapy" never changed hands, because the vets he was "treating" were "not in the complex care group".¹⁶ DVA-IG said that the RN made "*a coding error*",¹⁷ but that's not true; the "coding error" - a dozen vets being treated for PTSD was CORRECT for what he claimed he was doing by documenting the "treatments" in the vet's medical records: psychotherapy.

This RN had been doing this, apparently for quite some time. Prison staff denied that they were under investigation,¹⁸ and Albany categorically denied the plaintiffs the information they sought. DVA fired the RN, and prison staff retaliated against those of us who got wise, by writing bogus disciplinary reports, which caused us to be sent to different facilities before we could complete the paperwork for a lawsuit. They even confiscated a draft copy of a civil lawsuit (under Title 42 USC 1983) out of my locker - but not before I had sent copies of it off the facility.

Why would an RN working for the VA put his job at risk playing Hick-Farmer Sigmund Freud wannabe, and documenting his "work" in vet's medical records? Well, $\$40,000 \times 12 \text{ vets} = \$480,000$ if I did the math correctly; how he could get his hands on the money is anyone's guess - probably through the DOCS or the prison to which the VA would pay the money. This would explain why the prison staff would go along with the fraud, and not check the man's credentials. Vets wouldn't know the man was a quack; how could they find out, unless he did something very overt to tip them off?

¹³ V.R.T.P. was running in at least six NY State prisons at the time of the DVA-IG investigation.

¹⁴ DVA-IG case # 2001 HL 0066, report # 01-00290-22 dated October 31, 2001.

¹⁵ The investigation audited only fiscal year 2000 - the RN had been doing this for many years prior.

¹⁶ Complex Care Group - a category of eligibility, which determines level of benefits paid.

¹⁷ He coded for psychoTHERAPY vs. psych EDUCATION; \$40,000 vs. \$100 per year, respectively.

¹⁸ Citizen's Commission on Human Rights and Congressman Bernie Sanders (Vt.) were involved.

Obviously, these people - all of them having to work in cahoots with each other, didn't count on being caught; they had gotten away with it for so long, they became overconfident and audacious.¹⁹ Well, they never ran into a Scientologist²⁰ before - I know a quack when I'm exposed to one.

Vets being denied parole to maintain a federally funded program, treated for serious psychological conditions by a quack, and tangible help to reconstruct their lives denied is only the tip of a very large iceberg that nobody wants to tackle.

There are also extremely serious medical issues with New York State prisons; issues that certainly present a real and clear danger to sick prisoners, and also for the communities into which they will eventually be released. For example:

In 1999-2000, NY DOCS Surgeon General Dr. Lester Wright instituted a policy that anyone (in prison) with Hepatitis-C, must complete a 6-month substance abuse program, and meet a dozen or more criteria (such as length of time remaining on a sentence, etc.) before the prison gave them (any kind) of medical treatment for their condition. A full list of the "treatment criteria" mandated by Dr. Wright was published in a 2003 edition of *Justicia*.

One Vietnam vet of my acquaintance, had Hep-C, and he signed up in the V.R.T.P. program in order to "satisfy" his mandated program, and simultaneously filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court to get DOCS to treat him. When DVA-IG's investigation was in progress, we found out that the V.R.T.P. program was never issued a State certification, and the program's "modules"²¹ were effectively useless for "Earned Eligibility"²² - the status that gives a prisoner a "liberty interest" for release; in other words, it affected a man's eligibility for parole. My friend, Mr. Standley, who was dying of **Hep-C with a viral load of over a MILLION**, was assigned a prominent Rochester attorney²³ by the Federal court.

In one of his pre-trial briefs to the court, Mr. Standley's attorney wrote:

"...the treatment of my client violates all standards of decency, and is a violation of the Geneva Convention III for the treatment of enemy prisoners of war."

I supplied copies of documents, memos, and incriminating responses to FOIL requests to Mr. Standley's lawyer, proving that DOCS knew that V.R.T.P. was not a "certified" program from "jump street", and had forced Mr. Standley to participate "voluntarily" by threatening to keep him in prison past his conditional release (CR) date.²⁴

¹⁹ One of the counselors bragged to me: "*You'll never be able to prove it!*"

²⁰ Scientology - "knowing how to know" - I am also a Born-Again Christian.

²¹ The "modules" were: ASAT-Substance Abuse, AAABB-Aggression, SOP-Sex Offender programs.

²² Earned Eligibility gives a prisoner a "liberty interest" in his release; the parole board must prove their subjective reasons for keeping a man in prison to the standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt".

²³ Mr. Donald Rheikopf Jr., Esq. - Brenna & Brenna Associates, Inc.

²⁴ This threat was put in writing in a memo dated June 8, 1999, and posted for all prisoners to see.

Mr. Standley's "counselors" were brought into court for a preliminary hearing, after which they retaliated against him for filing the lawsuit by denying him conditional release despite his spotless disciplinary record, and program completion. You see, Mr. Standley at that point was "A walking dead man", as he put it. With the evidence in his exhibits, which included a Pro Se'²⁵ brief proving that DOCS' chief surgeon (Dr. Wright) lied to the court, intentionally misquoting CDC²⁶ treatment protocols, Mr. Standley's case was a "slam-dunk" to win... but time was against him. He would not live long enough to see the jury selected, let alone through a complex and lengthy trial.

The staff at Groveland knew about Mr. Standley's condition, so they took his "good-time" without cause, and we surmised²⁷ that they were hoping that Mr. Standley would die in prison, at which point his precedent-setting lawsuit would become moot.²⁸ Of course, his family could then sue for wrongful death, and it would be a hard case to win, with the plaintiff / witness dead. Besides, what prisoner would risk similar retaliations if he offered to testify on Mr. Standley's behalf? I offered to testify, and let his attorney know. Not only that, but I supplied some of the evidence for the case. I was "in their face" with it, and did the right thing - I helped a fellow vet get out of prison, so that he could spend (probably his last) Christmas with his family. For my efforts, I was also retaliated against.²⁹ I expected it, but I had to do the right thing.

"Greater love hath no man than this; that he lay down his life for his friends."

- Jesus Christ

Had Mr. Standley died, his family would have had to overcome an almost impossible burden of proof, and probably would have settled out-of-court for 1 or 2 million dollars - if they were lucky. DOCS would then be free to continue to deny medical treatment to approximately 30,000 to 40,000 prisoners (estimated to be) infected with Hep-C, at a cost of \$15,000 to \$35,000 per year, per person, for the duration of their sentences, because Hep-C is incurable.

Let's do the math... 30kPrisoners x 15kilo-bucks = 450 million dollars; 40kPrisoners x 35kilo bucks = 1.4 billion... and that's PER YEAR. Suffice it to say, DOCS could ill-afford to lose that trial. Settling out-of court would save the NY prison system from "bankruptcy"; after all, it is a State-run "business" of sorts. Like I said, the "powers-that-be" were not too thrilled about my analysis.³⁰ they were even less pleased with the investigations that I started, and underestimated the tenacity of my voracity; they ain't seen nothing yet! Suffice it to say, I have several lawsuits in-the-works.

²⁵ *Pro Se'* - (Latin - legal term): "On one's own behalf".

²⁶ CDC - Center for Disease Control.

²⁷ This is the only motivation we could think of that would cause staff to do what they did.

²⁸ A lawsuit becomes a nullity upon the death of the plaintiff; however, his estate can sue civilly.

²⁹ I could tell when my allegations "touched a nerve", based on retaliatory and harassment tactics. I was sent to Attica CF.

³⁰ They even said: "*It would help if you affirm that your allegations are mistaken*".

And so when I see the Media do what it did; take the side of enemy prisoners - innocent or not - and excoriate soldiers who are serving their country for such *deminimus*³¹ offenses as compared with how vets in particular, and prisoners in general are treated here on our own shores; and when I see an American soldier APOLOGIZING to a bunch of low-life scumbag terrorists, it makes me want to toss my cookies. It calls to mind, the Gospels, where Jesus says to: "...*pull the beam out of thine own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to remove the speck from another's eye*".³²

The truth of the matter is: This is war. We didn't have anyone in Iraq apologizing to the American people for the 3,000 dead on September 11th, or for the thousands upon thousands of victims of suicide attacks over the years in Israel. If I was interrogating a suspected terrorist, believe me, he would tell me all that he knows, and I would have no apologies for my methodology; the Geneva Convention be damned!

Veterans In New York prisons are not only NOT being helped, they are being abused by quack "psychologists"; exploited for their VA benefits, and denied parole because VA-funded "therapeutic" programs make veterans "cash cows" to keep around a bit longer... well, at least they gave us a kitchen... we can bake bread and cook pizza and manicotti while we're illegally held incarcerated. The jig is up! Now it's time to help those who risked their lives to protect and serve this country. The way vets - particularly Vietnam vets - have been treated is shameful, but the treatment of vets in NY prisons is a crime... and a crying shame.

Don't talk to me about those poor Iraqi darlings in Abu Gharib, until you clean house in the USA, and honor the men who laid it on the line for freedom, and are now being denied the liberties, rights, and freedoms they fought for.

Don't talk to me about liberating Iraq, until there is no such thing as a US Service Veteran who isn't getting medical treatment for injuries and diseases he / she got during their honorable service.

Don't say another damn word to me about the "poor babies" who were embarrassed in Abu Gharib, until there are no more homeless US Service veterans living in shelters and on the streets in THIS country.³³ That's all I have to say.

Have a NICE DAY Mr. Recchio and Ms. Crawford!³⁴ – payback is a bitch!

For further rabble-rousing articles & books
Go to my web site at www.Net4TruthUSA.com or
Visit my bookstore on: www.LuLu.com/Net4TruthUSA

³¹ *Deminimus* – (Latin, legal) –of minimum impact; of little consequence.

³² Matthew 7:4, 5; Luke 6:42

³³ See NY Daily News Feb 16, 2005 – Queens Section – "Vets home ripped over drugs, food & care" by Donald Bertrand.

³⁴ These were "counselors" at Groveland CF.