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In 1974, when I was nine years old, I was molested at Camp Cowles, BSA, a Boy Scout camp at Diamond Lake, Washington. The offenders were members of the Spokane Sheriffs Department. It came to light that members of the Sheriffs and the clergy operating the Morningstar Boy's Ranch had been victimizing boys and young adults for many decades. The scandal included Jim West, who eventually rose to the position of mayor in Spokane, Washington.

I say this because immediately after this event I started to form a deep-seated mistrust of people in positions of authority and started using drugs and alcohol. Don't get me wrong. To this day, I have great respect for *authority*; however I have a much greater mistrust of those in *positions* of authority. While I cannot say for sure, I feel it deep in my bones that had this incident not occurred, I would not have ever come to prison.

Yes, I know that many people are abused, and much worse than I was ever abused. *They* don't go out and commit crimes. Well, I am glad that they are strong enough to bear their crosses. I was not strong enough. I did commit crimes, *many* over the years. I never did have much respect for the laws, which seemed to protect the police but not the public.

Coming to prison actually saved my life. I was either going to come to prison or die. I was a daily drinker, full-blown alcoholic, and addicted to methamphetamine, cocaine, hallucinogens, and marijuana.

I went to two outpatient drug and alcohol programs. The first one was state-sponsored and they didn't care what I did, as long as I made the payments. The second one was more of a medical program and it worked for a while. Still, I could not kick my addictions, not for me, nor for my family. I had not yet dealt with the underlying emotional issues that fueled my addictions.

While I knew that I was headed for either the big house or the cemetery, I expected to be arrested for dealing in drugs or stolen merchandise. I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would go to prison for hurting or killing someone. That was just *not* in my mindset. I am a very non-violent person. And yet, two innocent young ladies died for merely being in my way.

I have committed the rest of my life to Julie and Karen. They died so that I could go on living. I couldn't kick for myself, but I have decided that I can for them. I have tattooed teardrops made of their initials onto my hands so that I will never forget my promise to them (as if I *could*)! As I write this, I have over seventeen years of continued sobriety. I only made it *nine* years on the streets.

I ran a red light on May 26, 1996, causing a five-car collision. I had mixed phenyl ephrine with alcohol. I did not know at the time that those do *not* go together! I was fading in and out of consciousness, and I thought that I was being chased, that the world was coming to an end. I had an out of body experience after the crash, which I remember

vividly. The rest is hazy, but I started coming around inside the police car. Unbeknown to me, the arresting officer had placed me into custody for my protection, from the 200+ people who had gathered at the crime scene. They wanted to lynch me on the spot. I don't blame them.

At the time, Spokane had the highest per capita rate of red light runners in the country. There was a campaign against running red lights, and I quickly became the poster boy. Also, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers had won a long-fought battle for stricter punishment for drunk drivers. The new law was going into effect in July 1996, only two months after my collision. It was also Memorial Day weekend, and there is the added stigma of driving drunk attached to that holiday. Finally, it was an election year. Lots of politics played a role in my trial. The Spokane Spokesman-Review, the local newspaper, called my case "number six" of the top ten stories of the year. The prosecutor won his second year in office on my case. He was ousted by his own office one year later, and someone set his office on fire.

I was charged with Vehicular Homicide. When I first saw my attorney, I said, "Let's just plead guilty and get this over with." He told me that his job was "to make sure that the prosecution does their job correctly." Later, they added First Degree Murder by Extreme Indifference to the charges. I was convicted of Murder One and sentenced to fifty years.

One victim's mother and grandmother came to visit me in the county jail. The mother told me that she thought that maybe one day she would be able to forgive me. I cannot explain how much weight that lifted off my shoulders. I have the utmost respect for this woman. She had to learn how to walk again as I crushed her pelvis, broke her shoulder, and punctured her lungs with broken ribs.

The other victim's family told me that they will do everything they can to make sure that I die in prison or at the very least do the entire fifty years. Again, I don't blame them.

I appealed my case and lost. The Court of Appeals published part of the opinion, because this was the first time in Washington history that anyone was charged and convicted of Murder in a drunk-driving collision. When I lost my appeal, it made the front page of the USA Today newspaper.

While in prison I have learned quite a bit about legal matters. I now work in the law library, where I research and assist others with their legal matters. I am still fighting my case and the multiple civil rights violations that come about almost daily. I have become somewhat of an activist.

I have always loved learning, so I took as much schooling as the state would provide. They allowed me to get enough credits to obtain a second Associate degree in Information Technology. At my current prison, we have a group called the University Beyond Bars. I hope to one day achieve a Bachelor's degree in Business Law and Psychology through this program. The UBB is *completely* voluntary. Instructors and Professors donate their time to come into the prison and teach college level courses. When there are enough funds, they even pay for the credits. This program is currently only available in two of this state's prisons. I have found out that I am a pretty decent artist through their program, so I like to spend some of my time creating things with my newfound skills. In the art class we also donate some of our works to be auctioned off to

help raise funds and awareness for the UBB program. I absolutely *love* the program and the people who dedicate themselves to it. It is my light in this dark place.

I also attend a program here called Concerned Lifers Organization. We try to figure out ways to live better lives, both inside prison and possibly in the real world. We are active in politics, philanthropy, and finding ways to make the world a better place. We are currently working to push a bill through legislature to offer prisoners a second chance in the frère world.

I always volunteer to take each and every program offered by the state, but my time structure means that I will not be allowed many for at least twenty five-years from now. Some of the programs I have taken more than twice. Often the name of the program changes to re-sell it to the taxpayers, but it is the same old recycled misinformation. The prison has taught me *nothing* that will assist me if and when I am able to go home. Their *only* concern is that I do the time. I can waste away in the yard playing cards if I want to.

The State has these "evidence-based programs" that they always want to promote. I did some research myself, and found that their own evidence said this latest program was only 55% effective. They only tested in five prisons. The professor who made the program stated that his findings were not even completed, yet, and that it was not meant for a prison setting. I can provide copies of all the evidence upon request. The real "evidence" is that the State will be able to get some federal funding to promote the program. That is the bottom line.

The only programs I have found in prison that I think are worth anything at all came from volunteers. They are *not* promoted (sometimes even deterred) by the State and cost the taxpayers *nothing*. The State will then only admit that there is "anecdotal evidence" that these programs work. They will not recognize any true evidence that does not pad their pockets. They know that education will prevent people from entering prisons, but they still spend seven prison dollars for each education dollar. They don't provide more than the basic GED education in prison, unless it is some skill that is necessary for the construction and maintenance of further prisons. Drug counseling is also very minimal.

I cannot stress enough, how much more meaningful the volunteer programs have been for me. State programs are not meaningful for my present time here in prison or my future time outside of prison.

And yet I have made the choice to change for the better, *myself*. I owe it to the two young ladies who gave their lives for me. And I am not really all that concerned if I ever get out of here again. Sure, it would be *nice*, but I will have amassed a legal debt of over a half millions dollars by then. My restitution started at \$65,000 and at 12% interest it has grown to over \$200,000 at present. How is a man at the age of 73 to 81 years going to take care of all that debt when he gets out? Where is he even going to get a job? None of these questions are asked or answered by the state. They don't care.

And I really don't care, either. As long as I have school, my artwork, and my legal battles to keep me busy, I will do just fine. I might even write a book someday. Who knows?