

MY FIRST YEAR DOWN

My experiences living at the Federal Prison Camp

It was a cold February 12th 2014, my wife was at work and I was in my home office working and drinking my coffee when my doorbell rang. It was Lewis showing me his DEA badge and had about ten other men and women with him. He waved a paper in front of me and said that they are searching my house. He said that I was selling a banned product called XRL11. I told him that I never heard of that and never bought it. It did not matter I was "Guilty Til' Proven Innocent". My products were synthetic marijuana started out as K2, then other names as others were coping us and the name.

They seized about \$2,500,000 in assets and cash that day. Some money I had before it was banned but it was all bad he said.

I had met Lewis in fall of 2013 when a customer brought him to my house to try my products. He told me his family had several stores in Indiana and Kentucky and wanted my products. I mentioned about retiring and he even stated he might buy me out. (All Lies).

I worked with them for three and a half years and then sentenced to forty eight months in a Federal Prison.

Now my experiences at my new home at the Federal Prison Camp at Ashland Kentucky.

Ashland Kentucky Federal Prison Camp, my new home for three plus years. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) or (Backwards on Purpose) as some call it, runs the camp.

I was sentenced on September 14th 2017 and surrendered here on October 24th 2017. I have never been in prison or a jail before and did not know what to expect. I tried to prepare myself of what I was about to get myself into. Was

I going to handle it. Was I strong enough. I would soon find out. On the website it did not look to bad. Looked like a lot of things to do. I just thought sitting in a cell would drive me crazy, and how about the crazy inmates I would have to deal with. Would I be in a cell with Bubba. I do not know, but I can not show fear, I need to be a badass. A short sixty nine year old badass.

On Monday morning my wife Peggy and I picked up our daughter Shelby and my favorite son-in-law which only live about five minutes from us. We are all very close and good friends as well. We are together alot and are together almost every weekend going out to eat, movies, bar hopping or a short vacation. Just about two weeks before moving to this place the four of us flew to Boston then rented a car and drove up the east coast to Bar Harbor Maine. Then back down to Portland Maine and flew back home from there. It was a week of pure fun and good eating. Oh, Salem Mass was fun too.

Monday October 23rd we headed south and we just took our time to get to Ashland. We stopped in Cincinnati at the wierd store called Jungle Jim's because Ryan wanted to. Then we went to Frisch's so I could get two hamburgers and fries, one of my favorites. Then on to Ashland Kentucky. We got there

around 5pm. We wanted to go to WalMart and get me a cheap wedding ring and a watch which we did. We were hungry and there was an Outback Steakhouse there as well, another favorite. We enjoyed dinner and I had my last good steak and Blooming Onion for a while and a couple margaritas too.

After dinner we located a motel and checked in. Then we went out bar hopping. We found a few in a little town of Ironton and a hole in the wall redneck bar. There was not many there, just a few guys playing pool. I jumped in and play Ryan pool and beat him and another local put money on the table for the winner. I played him and beat him too. Hoping we would not get into a fight. Peggy was scared but we did not. Down the street there was another bar with a live band even on a Monday night. I said live band well they could not be a dead band. Either way they thought they were good. It was about lam, we retired back to our motel room for my last night with Peggy and family for a while.

Tuesday morning we left the motel around 9am and found a Bob Evans. We all had biscuits and gravy another favorite again. Then we drove around Ashland for a while and found our way to the prison camp, which is next door to a prison. We all four went into the office for me to get registered here. I brought two pairs of glasses and my medical records. Gave the gentleman my drivers license and two hundred dollars for commissary. I gave Peggy, Shelby and Ryan the good-bye hugs and kisses and they left in tears.

I was then processed and was told to take my clothes off and then bend over and cough. I guess he thought I was trying to bring in some drugs up my butt. After I passed that test he gave me a jump suit, socks and shoes. I put them on and

now looked like an inmate with clothes that do not fit. I guess I am now a real criminal. The officer was nice and had a sense of humor. He called for Terry Bradshaw to come there. I thought wow is Terry Bradshaw in here. No it was George and he somewhat looks like Terry Bradshaw. I will find out about everyone there has a nickname.

George started giving me the tour of the place. We went through the visit area and R&D which is the shipping of post office for here. Then we went out the back of the building into a big courtyard. There off the courtyard between the first and second building was the chow hall, the best restaurant around, the doors to the counselor and management offices. The medical unit, the laundry which he said we would come back to. Next was the barber shop and then the commissary. I noticed some corn hole games there as I like to play corn hole, I even had to make some. Then he took me between the buildings behind the courtyard to another smaller courtyard and there was another two buildings. One was the rec room with exercise machines, two pool tables and a ping pong table, then another weight room. Pretty impressive for a prison I thought. Next he took me to the chapel, besides church services they show current movies on weekends on a big screen. You can also watch movies from a dvd on small tv's in the back anytime. Then the library, it was nice with a good selection of books and several computers for the law library and typewriters. There was a racketball court, basketball courts and a baseball diamond. Also horseshoe and bocie court. Glad I am not going to a prison.

There are two middle buildings and that are the housing units. Each has two units A1, A2, B1, and B2. He took me to

A2 my unit and where I will sleep for the next three plus years or so. My number was 16 and it was on the end next to the bathrooms. From there he took me to the front of the unit and the TV room where each unit has three or four TV's. The ice machine and hot water in one room just like a hotel. Then in the back was the bathrooms with three large showers, five sinks and five toilet stalls, not bad.

It was around 2pm and he told me to go to back up front and get my ID. Now I am #12636-028 and inmate at a Federal Prison Camp. I then had to go to laundry and get my clothes and bed roll. They gave me three pants, socks, toboggan, six t-shirts and three button down shirts. Four towels, three wash clothes and my bed roll.

By this time I am getting tired so I made my bed, which I really do not like to do, because Peggy makes me help at home and I do not like it. I had no roommate, that was good.

4pm count came and I had to stand close to the doorway so when the officers walked by they could count us. There are two one going one way and the other one going the opposite way and counting, I guess if they both got the same number the count was clear. There is a 9pm count too and they then turn off the lights at the 9pm count. After that we can not go out the back door but we can go out the front door, to the phones and TV room. You can watch TV all night long if you want. My room is about 8x10 with block walls about six foot high and a four foot opening. It has two beds a little smaller than twin beds, two cabinets with doors and drawers and a medal desk hanging off the wall with a light above it. All painted in a soft beige, not bad. No locks,, front door and back door with no locks, nothing like I thought it would be

before I got here.

There is a computer station with four computers for us to do emails. I am set up with my pac number so now I can email. I have to send a invitation to someone and after they except we can email back and forth. You have to pay for time and you can only be on the computer for thirty minutes at a time. That sucks. Same way with the phones it cost about twenty one cents a minute and you can only talk for fifteen minutes. Then you have to wait for thirty minutes before you get back on for each.

My first night was rough and I could not sleep the bed was hard and the pillow was plastic. I soon learned how to make things better. I got a different pillow and change mattress from another empty unit. Much Better.

Now I survived a year here at the camp and it has not been too bad but it is stupid warehousing most of us here which really would be less costly on the government and more productive for everyone concerned. Inmates that are ordered restitution can not pay making twelve cents an hour in here. At home on home detention with work release they can pay some and also to society and be with their families, they are not a risk to society. I have met some Brilliant Minds that knowingly or unknowingly made a mistake and should not be here, as I said. The DOJ is not fair and needs to be fixed. The BOP is not fair and needs to be fixed.

The Prosecutors and Judges should not worry about their quotas and look at the person after they look at the guidelines. Consider their age, health, prior history, accomplishments in their life, is this first time and non-violent offence. Would they be a threat to society. Forfeiture and time waiting is punishment enough, they are already Guilty Til' Proven Innocent.

Do they have a home, family, job or career and if they do again what good is it to send these people to be warehoused in a prison or a prison camp all on the Government. Not good business since is it. Or do they care about good business since.

The food here at the camp is much better that I expected. We have breakfast at 6:30am, lunch at 11:00am and dinner at 3 or 4pm. Then we have brunch of Saturdays and Sundays which are my favorites, such as pancakes, potatoes, french toast or biscuits and gravy, and most of the time is good.

There is corruption in the chow hall though. The food is not consistence. There is a conspiracy going on and maybe between some inmates and CO's (correction officers).

For instance when we are to have beef tacos it is made with turkey. They run out of chicken or french fries, and use something else. Why? Because some inmates take the food and fry hamburgers on the grill and then sell to other inmates in their rooms for say four stamps. (Old stamps is our currency here. Each stamp is thirty cents, six dollars a book, which is twenty).

Do you think a guy can fry forty hamburgers on the grill without someone else knowing it, I do not think so. All different kinds of food is sold everyday in the units by the hustlers in here. They are entrepreneurs making money for commissary.

The menu for Saturday and Sunday says coffee is served, well I have been here for a year and have never seen coffee at the chow hall. Why don't they take it off the menu.

The hustlers not only sell food from the chow hall, there is food and many other things sold in the units everyday. I have seen bananas by the box for a stamp a piece. Cakes and pies, underware, shoes, business supplies, etc.

If you want a McDonalds Big Mac, some vodka, beer, or some candy just put your request in and you can get it.

The biggest problem of all the contraband is cigarette's and cell phones. Contraband is anything an inmate that may have that is not given to you by the BOP or what is not available at commissary. Also food brought from the chow hall is considered contraband. That means that you are not to have an apple in your locker. Everybody would go to the hole if they went that low though.

There are a lot of cell phones in here. These guys are very creative in hiding them. The same as cigarettes and booze. When an officer finds someone with a cell phone, a cigarette or booze are taken to the hole. I have never been to the hole and hope I never do. I hear it is a true cell with bars, bunk beds, a sink and a open toilet and you only get out an hour a day. You can only take a shower twice a week I think.

Now when an officer finds contraband such as a cell phone somewhere and does not know who it belongs to they get creative. If it is found close to the rec room then the rec room is shut down for a week. If it is found close to a unit such as unit #1 their TV's may be off for a week. Is this mass punishment. The BOP says that their policy is no mass punishment. Of course the person that owns the cell phone that was found will not stand up and admit it was theirs and take the punishment. No they do not want to go to the hole, they thought they would not get caught, they do not think they have to follow the rules.

Rules, nobody follows the rules not even the CO's. The library is to be open four hours at least a day. There are days that it is not unlocked. There are whole weekends they is has been locked. There are days that the rec room is locked.

These may not be opened because the officer that is in charge of them is not here and the other officers do not want to make the effort to unlock them. Maybe it is a union thing. Is that mass punishment or just being mean.

Programs. There are Programs or classes that they offer here. I don't think it offers much correction to the inmates though. Other than the GED classes that is rewarding for the ones that complete it. A lot have been taking it for years and still never graduated.

I have taken several classes including the Master Gardener class offered by the University of Kentucky, which I completed. Now I am a Master Gardener, I can help Peggy with our flower beds, if she will let me.

Of all the classes that I have taken which there has been six classes they are the same group of inmates taken them. The ones that will have no problems when they get out like me. We have home, family and jobs, or retired like me. The ones that need to take classes do not.

One thing that they do learn in here is by their hustling and wheeling and dealing they are becoming a better criminal.

One program that they take is the RDAP drug and alcohol program. After completion you get a year off your sentence and more halfway house and home confinement. You are to have drug or alcohol problems, some do and some get in somehow. This is great if it helps them. But most go to the same environment and come right back in prison for their continuing education.

To me this is discrimination there is no program for inmates that are in here and follow the rules and take classes. What rewards do we get for following the rules, taking several classes. Well we do get a Certificate with our name on it.

I have six certificates and working on two more. Other than that, what do I get. I feel like I should be a drug or alcoholic so I can not get a year off for being good. The GOP is not fair.

Within a couple days after I got here I got a job working on the homes that they were remodeling owned by the BOP. I am a retired custom home builder and grew up building homes with my dad. I have built over two hundred homes and before I got too big I did a lot of the work. There is nothing on a home that I have not done. I have also bought a lot of homes and rehabbed them and sold them. I worked with the officer there for a couple months and I decided that it was not for me especially making eighteen dollars a month doing labor that was always someone else's way, right or wrong. Besides at sixty nine with bad back and legs I really could not do anymore physical work. When I first met this officer I reached out my hand to shake and he said that we do not do that here. When I told him that I was quitting and going to the library, he reached out his hand and we shook and he said come back and visit. I took a job in the library as an Education Clerk and I am still here.

The library is nice and the officer here is very nice. There is a good selection of books. There are several computers for the law library and three typewriters for inmates to use. There is a room here that has about fifteen computers that are not in use. They said that they used to have Microsoft Word to help inmates to learn word. The officer said they lost their license for Microsoft Office. That is strange to me. I see so much waste through out this whole camp and they can not get Word which is the basic 101 to learning. What would it take, this would be the best learning tool they would have here.

Taking a basic typing and Microsoft Office with word and Excel would be the best class, it would give some inmates a little more skill to get a job on the outside. Maybe someday they will get it and take advantage of the computers just sitting there. Maybe they should crack down on the wasteful spending and the food that is wasted could pay for them.

There is always about 230 inmates here at the camp and all races. There are no gangs as I thought that there may have been before I got here. There are a few clicks tough. Everybody here is on their last leg of their sentence that have come down for the low and you are under tens years to go when in the camp. So most are just doing their time to go home. I have been here a year and have not seen a fight or a real argument. Maybe a squabble over a card game or sitting in the wrong chair. This is what drives me crazy. Many think they own a chair and a spot in the TV room. They leave their ear phones in the chair and do not want anyone sitting in the chair even when they are not there. One guy says he has two chairs. Really I would like to see them take them home with them when they get out. I just sat where I want and if I am asked to move because I am in their chair I reluctantly move to another one.

At the start of summer and it was getting hot outside our HVAC was not working properly, it was hot in the units. Most of us had a small fan and they sold them in the commissary, which helped. But some guys were charging their cell phones in the outlets. So the warden ordered to take out all of the outlets in the rooms, and now we can not use the fans, what a bummer, at home I always have the ceiling fan on.

Well a few guys started a food strike to get things fixed. This was a Monday and for lunch only two inmates went to lunch.

They thought it may work. No it backfired. The warden, assistant warden, captain and a few other officers came into each unit and gave us a speech. They said that they were not playing games and they were taking TV's, and commissary away until further notice. Then if the strike continued it would be worse. Then they had each inmate meet a counselor as they asked each do you know who started this. I told him no and I did not go on Mondays anyway. I heard over twenty men told on two guys. Those two guys were gone that afternoon to the hole and shipped somewhere else. Dinner was back to normal. We were out of commissary except for hygiene for thirty days and TV's for two weeks. We did get the air fixed though, now guys were complaining it was too cold though, wow. They finished taking out the outlets and no fans. By the way the two that did go to lunch that day were getting out that week so they had to go.

The cops usually find a cell phone or other contraband about every week and then post a picture of it on trulinks our email system where we check email and announcements.

Recently one night around ten pm there was a lot of screaming, a cop was chasing an inmate or two and they caught one. This was a Thursday night. They turned on the lights and searched the units, then the TV room. They packed the one guy out. He will go to the hole and may not come back here. The next morning we were all called into the visitation room. The Assistant Warden and Captain and other cops were there. The Captain spoke and said that this is a camp and causes more problems than the low next door. He said that commissary, rec room and TV's will be gone until further notice. Also we will be on lock down until further notice. That means stay in our rooms and only leave them except to the bathroom and shower,

or supervised release. The worse part is that we can not make any phone calls or emails. Here it is Friday and I call Peggy every night and I can not call her for a while, they said until further notice. Luckily they did not cancel visits, my roommate had a visit with his daughter and I gave him Peggy's phone number and she call her and told her what was going on and I was ok. That made me feel better. Come Monday we got the Emails and phones back on and the lock down was lifted but the TV's and commissary was off for a week. Is this mass punishment for the actions of a few. I believe so. But maybe this is the right thing for them to do, these guys are now going to stand up and take their punishment for not following the rules.

There are a lot of men in here that do follow the rules though. There are doctors, attorneys, politicians, and many other professional men in here with Brilliant Minds that may have knowingly or unknowingly committed a so called crime no matter how small. They were Guilty Til' Proven Innocent. A lot are caught up in a conspiracy and sentenced on hearsay. The prosecutor and Judge needed a quota or just went by a guideline and not valuated the person. Maybe home confinement would be a better punishment and save the Government money. The stories of a lot of these Brilliant Minds are amazing and should be told. There is many men and women in prisons across the country warehoused in prisons that should be home. They are first time non-violent inmates that can be productive on home confinement and save the Government as well, They are not a risk to society. For example a eighty year old priest was sentenced to 90 days here at the camp for using someone else's credit card. He did wrong but he could have been punished in another way. He is not a risk. Why not some sort of community service and home

confinement. This is where compassion should come into play by the prosecutor and Judge. Who does it help sending a eighty year old to prison for a few months.

My stay here at the camp is not all bad. As I stated before the food is better than I thought it would be. I have not had any problems with the staff and correctional officers. They have treated me with respect and I treat them with respect. The place is kept clean and my bed is pretty comfortable. I think I get along with almost everyone here but there are only a few that I would hang out with at home. There are many times that it has been fun. We cut up with each other and there are a few pranksters, and maybe I am one too. I keep busy in here and with the classes I have taken and the ones in progress and I will take more. Besides playing cards, pool, ping pong, watching TV and movies I read some and write. I committed to myself that I would turn this negative into a positive. I told Peggy that I was going to write a book.

I have got one book under contract and three others complete. I am in progress of writing two others now. I will not quit writing books until I leave. I have included an intro of my books. Four of my books are of the Brilliant Minds that I have met in here and their stories. The other two are fiction.

I am getting ready for my second Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years, in here away from my family that I miss so much. I can not enjoy the fellowship with the rest of the families that I always have. Everyday I think about Peggy, my daughter and son-in-law and all the fun we have together. Everyday is a day closer to being back with them again.

Ashland Kentucky Federal Prison Camp has been my home for just over a year and I will go home in the fall of 2020 unless

the Senate passes the bill the First Step Act which looks good to pass before the end of this year of 2018. If it becomes a bill and President Trump signs it which he said that he would I would go home in the early fall of 2019. This would help a lot of deserving inmates go home to their families and be productive in society.

As I stated before I got here I did not know what to expect going to a prison. I was relieved when they called it a camp and it has been a better experience than I expected. We have a lot of freedom warehoused here, its like the Twilight Zone, no locked doors, no bars but we can not leave.

Its sad to see the Brilliant Minds just wasting their minds in here reading novels and playing senseless games. Its sad to see the hustlers in here knowing when they get out will continue their ways and most will be back in prison.

Federal Correctional Facility as some call it. I do not see any correction in the inmates. Maybe they learn to be a better criminal, and then they come back for continuing education. They are on their own when they get out no one there to help them, be a mentor or big brother or sister to guide them. Someone that will contact them, someone to lead them to the right path. At least lead them to the water even if they do not drink it, so to speak.

I have learned a few things while in here. I never thought about it before I got here and most people do not. I have learned that the systems are nor fair they are broke and needs to be fixed.

It starts with Sentencing reform. Catch up with the other countries and sentencing only criminals to prisons. Other punishment will work just as well, maybe better. Then offenders

can work and pay their debt to society and help others. Bring back parole and furloughs. Consider the cost savings to the Government and the income of taxes that a productive citizen can bring. Give Prosecutors and Judges better avenues and punishment rather than prison for First Time, non-violent offenders. Change the excessive sentencing.

Prison Reform: Correct the prisons. Send home First Time, non-violent inmates that has no violations to home confinement and a work release. Give them additional community service as well so they can help others. This will save the Government Billions and will not hurt society. It will only help society.

Maybe close the camps or change them to immigration camps. That might be too cruel though, they are breaking the law, some come in and commit major violent crimes. They are not citizens and many do not want to separate their families but American families are separated everyday because one of them made a mistake or a so called minor crime and sent to prison.

Yes I think different now and when I get out and I see on Tv or read in the paper that someone is sentenced to prison, is he really guilty, is it necessary. Is he Guilty Til' Proven Innocent.

I will say good-bye someday to the Ashland Kentucky Federal Prison Camp and when I do I will help change things. I will help "Make America Great Again"

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