

"They Don't Like To Talk About That"

I was content living out the rest of my 20-to-life sentence. I have 44 years of it already complete, how much more can there be? I no longer attend my futile parole hearings. I have come to terms. Then they killed Louie. A prisoner, person, who lived in the bed across from mine. I didn't know him very well. He was somewhat irritating. Early in the morning someone woke us up and said that they killed Louie. Louie had a bad reaction when his psyc. medication was abruptly changed. He was acting strange for a couple days, then attempted to follow the pill nurse into the locked and secured prison pharmacy, because that's where the pills that worked were located.

Louie was rushed to be examined and evaluated by one of the multitude of mental health professionals on staff and available, just one floor above the incident, of course not. That memo came out a couple weeks after Louie was dead. But they don't like to talk about that now.

Louie was placed in the hole. Rapidly de-compensated, acted out and was subdued and sprayed with a chemical agent. He was placed on Crisis Watch (Suicide Constant Watch) in a cell in the hole. He spread feces on the wall of his cell. He was subdued by guards, sprayed with a chemical agent again. In the struggle some feces got

on the guards' supervisor. Louies' face hit the wall and his nose was broken. Later that day the guards bragged about what they did in defense of their supervisor. In their defense, this was before they knew that the events they had set into motion would cause Louies' death.

Louie was transported to a local hospital where his chemical burns and broken nose were treated. His nose was set and packed with gauze. Remember this last sentence. One must wonder why the civilian medical professionals at the hospital were not concerned with the injuries this prisoner, in mental distress presented.

When Louie was returned to the prison, he was placed in a crisis cell (in name only) in the prison infirmary, back where this all began. Of course since his mental status had not been addressed, he again acted out. Louie was sprayed with a chemical agent, then placed in 4-way restraints. All four limbs strapped to the bed, laying on his back. He was observed, by the assigned observer, who logged Louie's every action and move in a minute-by-minute log. The observer was just a couple feet away on the other side of the glass. The door was closed (why) when Louie died, death observed, but not logged until it was too late. You can't breathe through a gauze packed nose, you can't clear your airway when strapped on your back.

This was the last straw for me. Now understand this did not happen in one of those prisons on basic cable. This is a faith

Based Prison. God walks the hallways. That is what they say when citizens come for the tour. Four chaplains instead of the standard issue one. This prison is located in a self proclaimed rehabilitation enlightened state. The Department of Rehabilitation & Corrections' Director touts Evidence Based Programming and something called Best Practices, every time his switch is turned on before an interview. He is a "former" corporate officer of one of the largest private prison operators in the world. Here to bring corporate values to the state prison system. The reporters love him. Just the latest effort to spin the same old Worst Practices as something new and savory. It is like all other prisons, worse than some, better than others, with a shiny new mission statement.

Ohio's prisons had allot of reforming to do. In the 1960's Ohio contracted to have prisoner "volunteers" injected with live cancer cells in order to determine if cancer could be caught like a cold. The Nazi doctors did the same thing. This experiment was one that the Great States of Alabama and Georgia declined to participate in. Ohio, of course, had no problem taking the contract, it was for the good of humanity and the bottom line. What could be the downside? They don't like to talk about that now. In fact they banned the issue of the Columbus Dispatch that printed the expose' decades after the contract was fulfilled by the State. The contract will never be closed for the prisoner subjects.

The experiments took place in the Old Ohio Pen, located in downtown Columbus. A place, like those seen on basic cable and old prison movies. A place of many riots, fires, death and atrocities. A fire with hundreds of prisoners locked in their cells, when the guards left with the keys when the smoke got to them. Luckily cancer, at least the kind used in the experiment, was not contagious. I wonder what they would have said if it was contagious and got away in the overcrowded Civil War era prison. I assume they already had a good cover story ready. Cunning prisoners. But they don't like to talk about that now.

The got away with it, but it did come back to haunt them in April of 1993 at the replacement for the Old Ohio Pen, at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility located in Lucasville, Ohio. Called "Luke" for short. This new state-of-the art, 70's style prison, now called a "Correctional Facility" was designed to emphasize rehabilitation. A new, radical concept. That lasted only a year or so, then the emphasis reverted to the "correction" mission. It quickly became a shiny version of the Old Ohio Pen, and still is.

Back to Easter weekend 1993, there was to be mandatory TB testing, the new warden, an ex-FBI agent announced. It would be in the form of an injection. Alarmed prisoners who remembered or knew prisoners who were victims of the Old Ohio Pen cancer experiments were to put it mildly, concerned. They did not trust anything the

administration said. All they heard was "mandatory injection". Some heard it contained pork products or other agents that would cause harm. Some thought the State, hard up for money, signed another contract. No information was forthcoming. No trust was warranted. In a meeting with the warden, prisoner representatives were told that they would all take the shot if he personally had to shove it up their ass.

As not so secret plans were made to lock down the prison for the testing, an uprising occurred on Easter weekend, April 11th, 1993. Eleven murdered, ten prisoners and one guard. Untold (because they just don't care) numbers tortured, raped and traumatized. After all the investigations were over, reports filed, time-line breakdowns, after action reports, indictments, trials, event narratives, academic papers written, careers made, death sentences handed down, policies changed; now the bag lunches to be served during a prison lockdown, are packed secretly at another facility and delivered the day of the event. Rapid response teams, both strategic and tactical, are at the ready waiting to settle the score. All commanded by a new "Critical Incident Manager" located somewhere in a secure location.

No one ever asked why did the prisoners find their conditions so hopeless and oppressive that they took over the prison. Prisoners live in a concrete box. Most of your life and possessions are in that box. The only information that comes into that box about

prison life comes from prison staff and prisoners with first hand knowledge. There is no trust of prison staff. Rumors were the truth. The match was struck when kitchen prisoners were tasked to make the sack lunches that are always a part of a pending prison lockdown. Your life and death are subject to the whims and competence of prison staff. Nothing has been done to ensure, at least some trust, is restored. Millions have been spent to crush it when it happens again.

Back to Louie. After his death I wrote a 3 page letter to the new warden expressing my concern over what happened to Louie. I inquired about a memorial service and expressed my concern that the administrations' routine was business-as-usual. I made reference that I felt we were in a race to the bottom since the new warden took over. The new warden was truly offended by that statement. She had no understanding that something went wrong. In our face to face meeting where she attempted to handle me, I was assured that she and her staff cared, but could not talk about it, because of the investigations, I was assured that all was done was according to policy. The Nuremberg defense. She didn't see a problem. She never will. Something went wrong. Admit it, at least to yourself just like prisoners must admit their guilt to the Parole Board before they can be considered for release. But they don't like to talk about that now. Arrogance.

A few days after my meeting with the new warden another prisoner suffering with mental health issues was placed in the hole. He didn't make it into his cell. He was locked in a recreation cage prior to being processed into the hole. A recreation cage, in full view of the guards' security station and other prisoners, and hung himself until dead. One good thing came out of my talk with the new warden; at the time of our talk there was a prisoner who had been on a hunger strike for 15 days. I brought this up to her and was assured by her assistant, who apparently keeps track of such things that they were within policy number such-and-such. That was my answer. I told the new warden that after 15 days the prisoner was either nuts or serious and did she want to bet his life and her career on her policy and the competence of the medical staff? The prisoner was transferred to the Department's mental health crisis facility within a couple days. Yes they have such a thing, but I think the prison administrators consider it a failure on their part if they can't handle a prisoner and "correct" him in house without outside intervention.

I asked to be shipped to another prison for health reasons and for the un-stated concern over retaliation. I am now in a corporate prison managed by the Morton Salt people for the State of Ohio. The North Central Correctional Complex. I am here wondering why, never, in my 44 years of incarceration, not once, ever, did any student, professor, researcher or anyone else for that matter take the time

to talk with me or others like me. You would think they would be at least curious as to what damage their theories have done to a prisoner after 44 years, give or take. Or maybe that someone inside the system for 44 years, give or take, may just be a subject matter expert with insight and valid ideas and something to say. Safer to regurgitate their teachers' correctional models and theories. Safer to teach fantasy prison than play in the real game. Better to absorb retired correctional administrator's self serving war stories allowing him or her to relive and rewrite their past. There are many sides to those stories. But, they don't like to talk about that.

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