

My Story Part 3

07/15/2020

On November 6 2018 I was transferred out of Seminole County Jail and headed toward Tallahassee Federal Detention Center to await further transportation elsewhere. On the way we stopped by the Huge FCC Coleman complex. (the largest in the States)

My heart started fluttering when we pulled in front of Coleman 1 pen and the transfer guards started calling names and numbers. Thank God, I was not called! Then a glimpse of death as we drove by Coleman 2 pen with tall alien looking gun towers overseeing the complex with a sense of death and despair hovering over it like a black cloud. We transferred more men off and on at the low and medium with our shackled inmates going crazy when they saw the female prisoners working the complex grounds. I was thinking - seriously? Harden federal inmates acting like little kids at day camp! Wow!

On to I-75 to Gainesville to cut across 'old' Florida to pickup more inmates in Baker County near Jacksonville. This bus had windows and I got to see parts of Florida I've never seen. Again, reflecting back I was wondering why didn't I ever take time to explore? My obsessions and severe habits kept me a prisoner to greed. Chasing material things, never enough for my collections that in the end - don't matter. I was so jealous of my time, I even resented giving time to Mom! She died in 2015 and doesn't have to feel the shame of seeing me carted away in chains. My guilt of how I treated her the last few years and months of her life haunt me still. I ask for forgiveness and say a prayer every November 4 in remembrance.

Seeing the beauty of old Florida just pushed home how selfish I was and the life I was wasting. Never Again!

I spent 9 days at the FDC and it was glorious! I had my own cell with locking door for some much needed privacy! The food was incredible after experiencing poor jail rations the past 15 months, but amazingly I heard inmates complaining and throwing trays away! Such waste! I had started to finally appreciate the little things. We were allowed outside rec so I resumed walking. (My jail buddy and I started pacing the small jail pod up to 10 miles a day) Wow, this was a Fed "Jail", what would the Fed Prison be like? I still didn't know where I was going but our group from Seminole started hearing rumors of Jesup, Georgia. More rumors of Jesup persisted and it was a "sweet" place. I prayed and hoped for my life - not a pen!

While at the FDC I met 'Barney' an older white man awaiting trial working as a orderly. He owned a book that

should be a must read for any Federal inmate awaiting trial:

"Busted By the Feds, 17th Edition" I don't recall the author, but man, what an eye opening book! Everything this book said would happen - did in my case! If only I had known about this book and the revelations what the lawyers and prosecutor would do to me before I caved in and signed my life away! I didn't get a deal - what I got was a "dummy" deal with no benefit to me! Don't be ignorant! Now is the time to study before being locked up! I didn't study or pay attention to the world, it's too late for me?

We left on November 16 2018 and headed east on I-10 toward Jesup, yes rumors were true! Once we got to the compound, located in southeast Georgia in the middle of a rural wooded area I noticed it was very clean and well maintained with lots of grass and trees with open areas.

I was going to the medium, my time kicked me out of a low facility, but the best thing - there was no pen here! I might just survive! The first thing I noticed was how much relaxed and professional the CO/Guards behaved. After R&D I was pointed to a door and told to go to laundry for my stuff.

What? Walk around by myself? What was this place?

R&D had assigned me to a room in 'E' unit but then that room was occupied, plus I was told "sorry, no white men." Now what?

A CO told me to hold on, and a couple hours later, off to find a room in 'F' unit. This room was occupied with latinos and same thing: "sorry no white men." The unit counselor got involved and soon found me a room with a younger white man. My Fed bid had begun!

I have to say, the first month was the most uncomfortable

since I have been locked up. It wasn't long before my cellie knew of my charges, whether accurate or not but began to be insistent that I move out! His explanation was if his "home boys" found out that he let a 'SO' in his cell, his life or his family could be at risk. I thought this was an overreaction considering what I had seen of this compound. Where was I supposed to go? I knew no one well enough to be "invited" into a new room. I got the counselor involved and man was my cellie pissed! Turns out my cellie was on his fourth prison term and hated anything to do with the "police." Personally I thought what an asshole - one bid should have been enough! He was into everything: gambling, drugs, stealing from the kitchen and who knows what else. I hated his "boys" having free access to the room liked they owned it. Luckily with God's grace I was able to move into the next room with a younger

black man trying to change his life and going home in a month!

I paid him some commissary and finally was able to sleep and find some peace.

I quickly found a routine: get up and head to the library, then lunch, then outside on the rec yard. After evening count I would perch on the top bunk and read. I went to Church services and found a prayer group in the unit with men of God who began to mentor me. Brother Bishop, Brother Tommy, Brother Willie took time to instruct me on prison life and God's purpose for our new lives. Brother Willie blessed me with a "care package" while I waited for my money to show up on commissary. He also blessed me with a radio so I could listen to the TV's in the dayroom. Being able to hear music again after 15 months without it can not be overstressed! So

Glorious to hear music from my generation! Incredibly, a radio station I listened to while in the Marines at MCAS Beaufort S.C. was still on the air! When my sister sent some emergency money I repaid the blessing and bought care packages to hand out. My first priority was to get to work at the UNICOR textile factory. I've always been self-sufficient so I wanted to make my own money and not depend on my family. Plus I didn't want to be assigned to the kitchen! I don't steal so working in the kitchen where all the inmates use it as a "business" (stealing food then reselling it for stamps in the unit) would be bad for me. I kept to myself, spending time with the Church crowd and trying to be "me" as I was advised. Prison men can sense fakers and liars, which cost you respect. With nothing for possessions, these men hold onto respect as

value for their life. One thing you learn is everyone watches each other. Even though I was told this compound is considered a "dropout" yard, similar to a PC yard, there still is extreme watchfulness. My new friends who didn't care about my charge helped me lose some of the blackness and lonely despair I was feeling for myself. I remember calling family and saying this is not a nice place. Obviously, I had a lot to learn!

Meanwhile my court appointed lawyer for my appeal had not contacted me for information, so I began the task of trying to learn the law/library computers. In reality I was lost on what to research to help fight my sentence. Most state courts give first timers benefit of mercy and 3 strike rules. Not the feds! While in jail I was told by a inmate that the feds are fair for certain charges, but others are "lightsout"

"lights out" I didn't know if he meant physical death from other inmates, or extreme sentences. Well, after getting to know some friends here with "dirty" charges, the extreme sentences seemed to be common. What a similar or charge in the state would be less than ten years, the feds punish 25 to 35 years! It really is insane to think a non-nude video done with parental consent (parents not charged) would be 30 years!

Soon the realities of this 30 year old prison began to take shape. In jail, the stories of the Feds with their "country clubs" and state of the art facilities and equipment are not true for Jessup. The rec yard "weight pile" is full of broken down equipment rusty iron bars for upper body exercise ^{with} cracked and jagged edges. A few working stationary bikes being used for gambling table supports. Inmates smoking and running "stores" selling

junk food to smokes at the tables. One guard/rec officer watching hundreds of men with only 2 cameras! I spent my days on the bike trying to recover my legs and lots of pushups, situps. Oh how I wanted to scream at these men! Too much arrogance, too much pride, too much sense of entitlement! Walking around the track (about 3 laps equals a mile) I can overhear many conversations, and very few involve changing their life so they never come back to prison! Even my limited time here I have seen men go home and come back! What a waste! Some of us might not get 1 chance to go home!

February 2019 my young black-man went home so I had a single room! Ah privacy! ^{Forcing} Two men in a 12x8 concrete box which is a bathroom with two lockers, two bunks, a sink and a tiny shelf to write is not natural! For the most part

FB unit is quiet at nite. My cellie said while in jail men are in process of losing their life: loss of the wife, kids, possessions work and reputation creating angst, fear and lots of rage! Prison, on the other hand is full of men who in essence have already lost everything of value, so the rage is subsided.

What really upsets me is the rampant waste, the indifference from the executive staff, the lack of information, no incentives to help educate men for their release, no incentives to earn reduction of sentences. The warehousing of inmates has to stop! Only by educating the public of what is happening will help change and move reforms.

In February 2019 I started work at UNICOR as a t shirt flipper, starting pay is .23 an hour, yes thats right 23 cents an hour. As I write this I have been

given a QA job at .92 an hour. UNICOR pays the most of any work detail at this facility. Talk is other UNICOR's pay actual minimum wages. Also there is talk that a unit counselor complained of the wages here forcing them ^{down} to their current levels. The unit team and case counselors show no urgency to send inmates home! More inmates, their pensions are secured!

I met my new best friend at UNICOR who is the recommended "jailhouse lawyer" to assist in my case. His "fee": cookies!

My life and routine here ^{are} pretty much the same everyday, so I'll fast forward to February 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic struck home. Rumors of lockdowns began and in March 2020 changes in the moves on the compound reflected the social distancing and mask requirements. As this years PLN (Prison Legal News) have followed the pandemic in the state and Fed

facilities with their well written and factual accounts of just how the prisons will cope with the lack of medical staff, lack of proper spacing and in general the lack of proper sanitation to combat a global threat. As expected a lot of men are very upset and scared. Stories from their families enhance the crisis. This compound is not united, so we'll have to go with the instructions provided to us and hope for the best. April 2020 we were enforced to lockdown and have been in full lockdown or modified lockdown ever since. We've been allowed out side rec three times since April. When we get out of the cell, we rush the computers and phones. What chaos! I walk laps around the unit, do pushups while waiting for my turn on the phone or computer. We don't get out on the weekends so I have not spoken to my sister since

February, as she only picks up on the weekends. Luckily they have written, saying they are essential workers so are not facing undue financial stress. We have it easy here - just eat, sleep and read while marking out the days. By the end of June we were told no cases on our compound, however that changed in July as our warden (whom we have not seen since January) purposefully started transporting positive coronavirus cases ONTO our clean compound. So now we are again on full lockdown!

Staff have confirmed the cases and say 'E' unit and 'F' unit are full of positive cases! I was moved in April to the 'D' unit and so far no cases in 'C' or 'D' units. What happens when the cases overwhelm this compound? Does any one know about Jesup now? Lockdown means no communication going out via phone or computer. We'll see what happens! See ya!