

## freedon fighters of the doc

Who will speak for me when I am gone? Where are the writers and demonstrators? Where are the friends that I have made in my life? Is there anyone out there?

I came to prison on May 17th, 1973. I was 26 years old and had been to the war in Vietnam on two tours of duty. I went to college on the GI Bill and made the Deans List my very first semester. I was married and had a three year old daughter named Elizabeth whom I adored. I had never been to prison before so Walpole was an eye-opening experience for me.

Men were sitting in the corridor shooting drugs and smoking pot openly. The guards were nowhere to be seen. I was met by Hoss Harding in 2 block which at the time was called Death Valley because so many of the murders happened in that block. The cells in the max end had no toilets or sinks as they had all been smashed. There was a body laying on the floor and someone on the third tier was pissing over the railing onto the body, and laughing hysterically. Soon as we got to Hosses cell he gave me a knife and told me to carry it everywhere I went and even into the shower. Walpole was a very dangerous place.

My first two years was a blur of fires, drugs, booze, and blood. It wasn't until 1975 before I began to appreciate a life sentence for what it was. My choices were that I could stay high until I died or I could fight the system and make changes. I was a Marine and I had a discipline in me forged in combat. I chose to fight. I began by organizing a work stoppage. If no one made the license plates then they would be forced to negotiate with us for better living conditions. That was my first of many long trips to the infamous "ten block" where, before it ended I would spend several years. While in ten block I forged my writing skills and sent out copious missives to the press and certain friendly senators like Barbara .... and Jack Bachman. I read, I wrote, and I persevered. Segway to 40 years later.....

My body is wracked with pain from bullet and schrapnel wounds as well as many knife wounds. My earlier exposure to Agent Orange caused my lungs to deteriorate and I am diagnosed with severe COPD which has me in a wheelchair and coughing my guts up several times a day. I sleep on a mattress that feels like it has body parts in it as stuffing. There is no way my tired old ass can ever get comfortable enough for a decent nights sleep. I have an arthritic spine that I administer with copious amounts of ibuprofen. Nothing helps so I have to suck it up. I want to fight the way I once did but I don't have the energy I once enjoyed. Fortunately I have great friends like Tim Muise who is a force to be reckoned with as well as Shawn Fisher and a few others who chose, like I did, to fight rather than drink the Kool Aid of the DOC. I truly love these wonderful friends and I know that when my time comes to wither away in the misery that is the prison hospital that they will be fighting for me with their very blood, sweat, and tears. I am comforted in that knowledge.

I have always wanted to form a prisoner run group that represents the views and opinions of all prisoners and not just the few. There are things we can change with unity both inside and out. The only way to accomplish this task is to have a street person(s) file a 501c with the secretary of state and keep the books out there while we in here are the committee of prisoners whose voice fuels the machine out there instead of the other way around as it has been in the past with some groups who purport ~~to~~ represent us, without even asking what our goals are. We do not care about the food in the chow hall, canteen, or other small issues. We want compassionate release for the sick and dying. We want a fair parole board; We want a reasonable assurance that when we fall sick that the "hospital" does not kill us with its dirt. Sepsis, C-Diff, MERSA, hepatitis or other contagious bacteria as I believe it did to my dear departed friend, Billy Barnoski. We would like to know that men will never again be made to lie in bed with maggots in their diapers or covered in their own feces for hours on end. We want a place where

DiNardo appointed "inmates" do not steal from the infirm. We want our deaths to have decency and dignity. We want our families treated with respect. We want meaningful programs to prepare men for release and not just token programs to make the DOC look good but have no real relevance in the world. We know that the more education a person has, ~~that~~ the less likely they are to reoffend. We want to break the chain of violence in our neighborhoods by addressing the causes while the men are in prison. That means giving them a chance. Just a chance to be successful and productive once they are released. We want to expose the DOC for what it really is, a warehouse that generates pork barrel jobs for people who get paid large sums of money by insuring that prisoners do indeed fail and come back to prison so the cycle runs on into perpetuity. We want a voice so that the public at large can see how their tax dollars are wasted and how the DOC ensures their streets are not safe. These are our present goals. Some things we will change, some will be out of reach but I began fighting forty years ago and will not stop til my last dying breath. I have like-minded friends as I have mentioned, and as I sit here typing these words I am comforted in their strength and determination. I will die with a smile. My last gesture to the DOC. They will know by my face that in the end, I won.

Joe Labriola

As Told to Timothy J. Muise

\*\* Joe, Shawn and Tim are renaming CURE-ARM "Bread & Water" and will be subtitling the organization "The True Voice of the Prisoner". We will keep all the readers of this blog posted about our progress as we are drawing up the Articles of Organization this week.

Timothy J. Muise