October 2017

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Hello World!

As you can see my mailing address is different since I last wrote - even though I am at the same facility.

I stopped posting to the blog when I noticed 20-50% of my letters never reached the blog. Also, I realized things I said in my letters were being used by the facility to create discomfort among the inmate population. It made me feel like a snitch. Real dangers I could understand, but busting a guy for say... passing a couple of extra eggs to his buddy in the chow hall... really!?

Anyway - since I am nearing the 2-year point until my release (MSR Date) I have mixed emotions. It feels real! This nightmare actually looks like there will be an end.

Often in the past 10-years I would try to imagine life after prison. This usually

led to depression. Once you've been captured in the "web" of the American Justice system it seems impossible to ever escape even when you're completely law-abiding.

Most successful transitions out of prison happen when family members make the effort to establish housing for the incarcerated person.

In one instance the parents converted their garage into an apartment. After 25-years of his incarceration he is now back in society more than 2-years. He is married, working and continues to be law-abiding.

Many of the younger men (19-22) should <u>not</u> go home to their old neighborhoods. The prison system does not help, but <u>makes</u> them return. It seems there is a missing element to guiding people to being successful, law-abiding citizens.

There are some really great Christian based programs and half-way houses in Illinois. Getting a young, drug dealing, gang banger to pursue a stable Christian ministry for help is one in a thousand.

Our veteran's program is

making a big difference.

In September 2016 we began a daily raising and lowering of the Colors. We use a four-man formation and even a bugle. The flag-pole, walkway and 6-concrete posts, each with a Medalion of a different Branch of service, was paid for entirely through donations. But it is the consistant, discipline and professionalism of each veteran marching out there rain or shine to the U.S. and P.O.W. Flags that has set the tone.

In February 2017 the veterans were permitted to move into the same housing unit.

There are five other facilities that have launched vet programs following our model. This was when the I.D.O.C. Director said <u>every</u> prison should establish a vets group.

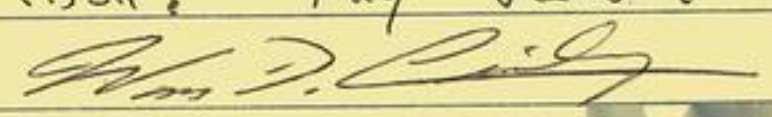
We hope in Janvary of 2018 there will be another big step for the veteran programs in IDOC. One that could help vets to <u>earn</u> days of credit in sentence reduction.

It's been a busy and a good year!

One last note on some fun today. I've known this guy for 6-years and consider him a friend. There's not a lot you can do for a guy on his birthday when all you can do is give him a card and a tube of toothpaste.

This year we did something different. We took a bag of candy and passed all the pieces out to the 30-other veterans living in our house. When my friend returned from church service; for 3-hours guys came up to him, wishing a happy birthday and each gave their piece of candy to him. With his pockets full of candy - he finally figured out what was going on. It was a good laugh.

My original idea was that everyone should give him a roll of toilet paper. That's actually a common prison gift because it's so difficult to get enough T.P. in here. But to end up with 30 or 40 rolls would be pretty funny.

We can only do this because we're friends, Christian Brothers and fellow veterans. Among the general population and criminally motivated - giving candy or toilet paper would be seen as a homosexual act, or an offense leading to a fight rather than a prank. Most of the time it's safer just to think of it as any other day and do nothing.

But F*U* Prison! Yay Jesus!