

MY OBSERVATIONS & TESTIMONY Re: MY HUSBAND'S SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

My husband, **Mark DeFriest**, who is now **53 years old**, has been incarcerated since he was **first sent to prison at 19 for a minor, nonviolent crime**. Since he felt that he didn't belong in prison, and he was intelligent, skilled and creative, he **escaped** and thus became a major escape-risk for the **Florida Dept. of Corrections**, causing him to be confined in **Solitary/Close Management I for much of his prison sojourn - now 34 years and counting**. In Florida, every time he - or any inmate - receives a DR for breaking even minor rules, more years are added to their already overly long sentences, and **15 years** are added for each escape. It seems that they demand **perfect** behavior from **imperfect** souls, while they allow them to be "tortured" at the same time -- Draconian rules to be sure!

As someone with an escape history, Mark is frequently hated by guards because they could lose their jobs over an escape, so rogue-guards create a lot of problems for him, even to the extent of falsifying certain information at times, in order to create DRs. And this history follows him whenever he gets transferred to a different facility - even to another state.

Without relief from the Florida Department of Corrections (the system that "owns" him), he will be **127 years old** when he is finally released from prison!

I first met my husband through shared Spiritual letters, and loved him for the sensitive, higher qualities I saw in him, although he was only **33** at the time, and had been in **Solitary for the better part of 13 years** already. My heart went out to him in sympathy, and I vowed to devote my life to helping him rescue his life from its untimely destruction. So we were married by proxy, and I then visited him for the first time a week later. That was at **Florida State Prison**. At last he had a "Wife," and no longer felt so abandoned in his lonely life. We were happy that day!

But I noticed how pale his skin looked, from lack of sunshine. And his blue eyes had a vacant, expressionless stare - I learned this quality is cultivated by inmates so that guards can't be sure what the inmate is thinking. **I later learned that his teeth had become weak and broke easily. Throughout the ensuing years, he lost many of his teeth to breakage and they were pulled by prison dentists. I surmised that the lack of sunshine (as he hadn't been allowed outdoors throughout his confinement), had cost him the health of his teeth.** Vitamin D comes from the Sun and is necessary in order to metabolize Calcium, which is important in the formation of teeth and bones.

Since he was often fed only **"confinement loaf"** as punishment during that period - an unpalatable and non-supplemented basic bread-type loaf, which he often refused - his

nutrition was seriously jeopardized.

Yet he is a natural athlete - "running" being his favorite exercise, and he would run in place for several hours at a time in his cell, after doing pushups and other exercises to keep in shape. He is a very high-functioning, technical-minded "Savant-type", who is highly creative in many ways, and also exhibits **Aspergers Syndrome**, which compromises his ability to relate to others. He also suffers relentlessly from **Migraine Headaches**, which generally go untreated by prison medical staff. In addition to this, he has been examined, and diagnosed by an outside Psychologist as **Bi-polar**, and his prison punishment has often been related to misbehavior caused by his manic episodes which occur under pressure - in other words, he gets punished for his **mental problems!**

In preparation for this letter, I have immersed myself in Mark's old letters, until all of the torturous circumstances of that period have been weighing heavily on my mind and heart, again, just as they did for both of us when they happened. Of the 4,000 or so letters from Mark, that I have saved throughout the **20-plus** years that we've been together, I only reviewed a small fraction, yet **his despair - feeling of hopelessness - and even suicidal thoughts were apparent throughout many of those letters!**

There was so much more than just solitary confinement involved - there was endless abuse of one kind or another - faked DRs, the stealing or destruction of his limited personal property, like his dictionary and personal address list, his wedding ring, brutal beatings by staff, and being gassed - stripped and left nude in a "strip cell" with even his water turned off - provocative "mind-fucks" accompanied by the loss of my letters to him or their refusal. On and on - because the solitary confinement gave some of the mean, "bully-type" guards the cover they needed in order to perform their atrocities and get away with it.

And Mark also witnessed other beatings -- like the brutal, uncalled-for beatings, gassing, and stripping nude of a certain inmate of color, who seemed to be hated by certain guards. He was a quiet, well-behaved inmate, who hadn't done anything to deserve this.

A special 7x8 ft. cell that had been ordered and built on FSP's infamous X-Wing - (a windowless, boxcar-like metal cell, with double locked doors and no view to the outside corridor, and no ventilation or air conditioning during the hottest part of Summer - a cell designed for Mark DeFriest alone) - was unveiled for him, and as they moved him into it on Christmas Day in 1997, the guard announced, *"This will be your home for the rest of your life! Merry Christmas!"*

At FSP in those days there was significant approval of this kind of lawlessness on the part of the higher Officials, as well as Officers.

Fortunately, for Mark, he was later traded as an Interstate Compact Inmate out of Florida,

to California, as his life had been threatened following his role as a witness to the beating death of another inmate by FL prison guards. Of course, he was immediately housed in Pelican Bay's SHU - home for the worst of the worst - but even that was an improvement over FL.

The problem with **Corrections** is much more far-reaching than just the effect that confinement has on the mind or body of the inmate. Until **Correctional Officers** are hired and taught to view **Inmates** as damaged, broken **human beings** who need "fixing," rehabilitating, and even "healing" - not just further judgment, punishment and torture -- until the age-old mindset of **"We're the good guys - they're the bad guys"** is eliminated and not allowed to rule their treatment of prisoners -- and **until the lawmakers themselves let go of their greed for power while playing on the fears of the public rather than supporting the higher humanitarian instincts of Humanity** -- our **USA prisons** will remain "Hell-Holes" of abuse, where those inmates who manage to get through it and are released, will continue to carry a "stigma" on their name and identity, which will prevent any meaningful adjustment or ability to get decent jobs or reintegrate into society.

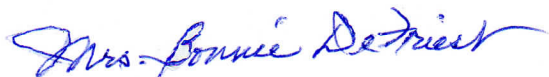
My husband, Mark DeFriest, is one of those individuals who is highly gifted in ways that could have been used to greatly benefit society, but throughout the years of his tragic and restricted confinement his mind has shown evidence of gradual deterioration. He has lost much of his beautiful, creative talent for writing, and for art. His mechanical and technical abilities still remain, but the lack of freedom to use them is frustrating for him, and his body has become weakened with age and prolonged malnourishment.

Drugs are an insidious form of escape from the harsh realities of prison-life for many inmates - and they, too, do their damage to the inmate's mind and body. Mark has known inmates whose brains and minds seem "fried" due to just the psychotropic drugs they are given in an effort to control their behavior.

Mark, thank goodness, still has a good heart, but it is coming from a higher (Spiritual) level now, and he is struggling to learn forgiveness, while occasional abuse continues to be inflicted upon him.

Perhaps he will come out a WINNER after all - at least in a future life, if not this one!

I deeply hope and pray this will be so!



Mrs. Bonnie DeFriest
Philomath, Oregon 97370
bonniedf@danler.net