

MEDICAL CONDITIONS
TREATMENT OF PRISONERS ON O AND X WINGS
CORRECTIONAL TRAINING FACILITY, SOLEDAD
CALIFORNIA

LETTERS FROM INMATES

1970



THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS (CONTAINING
SIGNATURES AND NAMES OF OTHER PERSONS
REFERRED TO THEREIN) ARE AVAILABLE FROM
THE SOLEDAD BROTHERS DEFENSE COMMITTEE,
P.O. BOX 31306, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

O Wing. Where guards beat on guys for almost nothing, where one Doctor hack took convicts by force out of their cells and gave them shock treatments strapped on a common barber shop chair. Where convicts were thrown gas bombs in their cells after being beaten to subdue them they called it. Where guards opened convict cell doors on purpose with others they knew would fight, or stab, or kill each other...

I have been beaten, stomped, almost shot to death, shot at with gas guns, clubbed and dragged to cells called quiet cells and rebeaten, refused medical attention...attempted suicide three or four times to stop my own hell I was forced to live in. For five years I have not seen the sun//who would like to live in this kind of life in his right mind I mean. That's why I'm now going to court to get away from guards that are nuttier than I am. They don't put me in a hospital, because they rather gas me. At San Quentin there's more, but this is just a little about O Wing and me.

I have been repeatedly refused medication for an eye disease, namely Glaucoma. Through the negligence of the Medical Department in Chino, California, I have lost the vision in my left eye. It is a fact, which is backed up with my medical record that when I arrived in Chino, my vision was: Rt: 20/20-Lt: 20/500. Yet, when I came to this place my vision turned out to be Rt: 20/20-Lt: 20/B (the B stands for blind, no light perception). (Glaucoma causes tremendous headaches due to the raised pressure of the eye).

My treatment for my ulcer condition has not been properly taken care of. So much so that my stomach feels as though its being food poisoned... I have lost consciousness twice and each time before I did so informed the officer in charge of my illness and each time I regain consciousness in my locked cell and no one came to check me out. At this writing my health is extremely bad. The doctor has refused to examine me for a period of three months, whereby I have informed him of my condition.

P. was working in O Wing as a porter...He was attacked from the rear by an inmate and stabbed in the neck. When P. tried to defend himself, he was attacked from the side by another inmate, grabbed around the neck and cut on the hand, back and forearm. The attackers were Caucasian inmates and D. is of Afro-American descent.

P. was taken to the prison hospital and placed into the hands of inmate nurses. The only aid given him was the placing of two bags on either side of P.'s head after the stanching of the flow of blood from P.'s wounds. (Dr.) K. was negligent in not adequately tending to P.'s wounds, operating... after an elapse of time in excess of twenty-four hours and as a result of this P. is paralysed on the left side of his body, not having the use of his left hand and incoordination throughout that side of his body.

Ever since the original filing of my suit revealing how they went about setting me up and the letting of inmate nurse's sew up a two-inch blade in my neck, that was left their for 24 hours to their knowledge before being operated on, I have not been able to get proper medical attention nor dental work. They pulled my teeth saying it was necessary in order to give me oxygen. I lay for some time with a tube in my mouth and paralysed on my whole left side. Their is much I could reveal to you and prove to you if you will allow me too. They pulled my teeth without my consent, and when came time to have some put in, they instead of cleaning them sought to match up some yellow false teeth with the ones in my mouth. When I complained the dentist snatched my head and told me to shut up with the intention of having me except these yellow teeth. So when I responded to him snatching my head by pushing his hand away they refused altogether to give me anything in place of that which they took. They say I got nasty and that I had my chance.

They are so guilty that they have been trying to make me look hostile with intention of saying what happened to me in O Wing I brought it on myself. They handcuffed me going to the board while still paralysed and spread rumors by openly talking about me round inmates. The next time you come down here will you please talk with me I'm in X Wing cell.

At approximately 5:45 A.M. this morning inmate J. was discovered by Officer H. His cell was full of smoke and it was apparent that inmate J. had been smoking in bed. Officer H. immediately got a fire extinguisher and put the fire out. He then opened windows and went down stairs and called the hospital. That was at approximately 5:50. Mr. H. then came back and kept calling inmate J. who was unconscious and did not answer Mr. H. At this time and before, I called up and told the officer that inmate J. is epileptic also. Inmate S. told him that maybe J. had swallowed his tongue. I told the officer that J. possibly needed artificial respiration. Officer H. said that he had called the M.T.A. and that that was all he could do. We kept trying to get him to open the cell.

Finally, at 6:15 officers came and opened J.'s cell. They then put handcuffs on him and carried him out front and layed him on the floor. At 6:22 A.M. the M.T.A. finally got here. (Note: the hospital is adjacent to O Wing, yet it took 27 minutes for medical aid to come to J.) All of this time we could hear them calling to J. who just kept moaning in a semi-conscious state. Even after the M.T.A. got here they stood around calling Mr. J., and telling him to relax...J. was finally carried to the hospital.

Here is a man literally unconscious and they are buckling him down with handcuffs and laying him on the cold concrete floor. Is this First Aid?...Had Mr. J's smoke inhalation been of a worsor degree, coupled with an epileptic attack, it is beyond a shadow of doubt that he would have died. In all it took 40 minutes for him to receive first aid, short of extinguishing the fire and opening the windows.

About the last part of October, Dr. Boone on his once a week to O Wing came to my cell and asked why I looked bored and tired. I then told him the past few nights, I was not able to sleep. He suggested I write him a note to the hospital and he would look into my medical records. That next day the day officer came by and gave me this capsule which is for epilepsy. I told him I was not an epileptic and would not take it. He

threatened me, so I thought it would be best to save them as evidence; at the expense of a write-up knowing it would be on writing, which is now on my records for evidence. I will be going to the committee for having the epilepsy capsule, which was found in my cell on a shake-down.

Mr. G. was locked up in O Wing with the so-called hardened and unruly inmates, because he had demanded medical help while on the mainline. His condition on the mainline (general population) had gotten so bad that he refused to go to work any longer until he could find out what was wrong with him. After being locked up Mr. G.'s condition got worse. He became so weak until he could not get off his bunk without extreme difficulty. It was at this time that the Blacks on that side (O Wing West) wrote out the petition describing the state of Mr. G...They locked Mr. G. up in the so-called Medical section of O Wing. The inmates in this section are suppose to be extremely violent or suffering from an overt mental aberration. All of them are generally on some type of sedative. But the main thing is this; most inmates take the guys who are in this section to be "nuts" and generally do not take them seriously. However, in the case of Mr. G. he is known as one of the few black intellectuals on the mainline. I personally talked to Mr. G. when he first came in and he was as mentally alert as he was the last time I had spoken to him. He told me that he had been constantly trying to get medical attention and a diagnosis of his ailment, but was always turned away as if he was gold-bricking and seeking a lay-in or something of that nature. Finally the pain got unbearable and he told them "either I get medical attention or I refuse to program any longer." So they locked him up.

I was taken to R.G.C. Chino and when I was there, I told the M.D. it was hard for me to get to sleep, and without a physical examination, I was given pills to take. I took them for a few days, but nothing was working. So I asked to be

taken off of them. Then I was told "we will not stop because you need them." Then I was taken to Soledad North on August 14, fine--I was there one day, then they brought me to Soledad Central and placed in A.C. I didn't know why until they told me it was because I was taking pills at Chino and for a psychiatrist to see. I have done nothing wrong. I am white and in need of help. I go to the board this month, but I know they are going to put me off for another year by saying I need a psychiatrist. I am not trying to do anything but go home. I know I can stay out of trouble because I realize what I have done wrong. Please help me.

Almost 4 out of 10 inmates in O Wing are on some kind of medication. Pills that depress and tranquilize the inmates. There is no close supervision of these narcotics, many of the forty percent who get them sell them to the remaining sixty percent. When one is coming down off of these pills he is usually very irritable and truculent. It is common to hear the inmates calling "Bring that medication you----- Bull!" or something to that nature.

It appears that this is not an adjustment center at all. Many enemies are made here. Later these inmates meet and kill each other at some other institution. It also appears that the authorities are using the narcotics to shirk their duty of adjusting the occupants of O Wing to normal prison life. Instead they throw them in here and try and dope them up...It is also a known fact that the hardest medication to obtain for any inmate, but especially Black, is medication for pain. However, it is suppose to be very simple to obtain pills concerning mind disorders, such as: nervousness, insomnia, restlessness, etc.

For over a month Mr. M. has been complaining to the M.T.A. (medical assistant, who is not a doctor) and the Doctor, Mr. B., who comes through O Wing every Monday, about a severe pain in his right side. Mr. M. says the pain makes him feel

miserable and has taken his appetite to the point where he no longer eats breakfast. I have a physiology book, which describes the viscera of the human body. With this book we located the pain to be in the area of the gall bladder and one inmate suggested that it could be gall stones or something, being laymen, we don't know. Anyway last week M. was finally taken out to the hospital and was given a blood test and urine test, and in approximately three minutes they had diagnosed him and found that nothing was wrong with him and sent him back...Mr. M. says that he is ready to testify in a court of law that he is not getting adequate medical attention, nor is he able to find out the nature of his sickness, with these three minute analysis. He does not even know if a doctor or M.T.A. checked him.

Mr. M. stopped Doctor B. again and complained of the pain in his right side. The doctor after listening to Mr. M.'s complaint said, "That's the type of pain you don't have to worry about" and walked off down the tier, completely shunning Mr. M.

I have some hydrocortisone ointment, in my property, that they refuse to give me. I need it bad, because the skin on my neck, in the bends of my arms and knees, has dried and cracked, and it is becoming difficult for me to move.

Inmate G. is now in X Wing (which is just as bad) adjustment center. He is an epileptic and constantly has seizures. They have him on the first tier, which is four solid walls and a door. You have to open a small trap door to look in. Being an epileptic Mr. G. could easily fall out and swallow his tongue, choke and die and no one would hear him. He has complained to me many times on how his medication was not coming from the hospital. It is only the Graces of God, that Mr. G. is still alive!...I would

go so far to say "don't be surprised if Mr. G. is the next Black victim to accidentally die at Soledad after the heat has cooled off."

I then sent a Civil Complaint for Writ of Quo Warranto and Summons to the United States District Court, Northern District of California.

In short the writ has to do with X-rays taken at the Santa Barbara General Hospital, which disclosed that I have a deformed spine. Well in May of this year I slipped on the floor of my cell and struck my spine on the metal bunk. Dr. Boone, of this prison had an inmate take X-rays of my back. He sent the X-rays to an expert in Salinas (name unknown) so they said there was nothing wrong with my spine. The records in Santa Barbara will prove I'm telling the truth, any way, I backed up my writ with law, and said I wanted \$50,000.00. I just sent it in last week. I also sent a copy to a civil attorney in Santa Barbara, but no answer. So like I said, I don't think my letters are going out. If you like I'll send you a copy of the writ.

I have traumatic brain damage, which came about when I was a small child, I have severe headaches constantly, I am an epileptic and on top of that, I'm supposed to be a paranoid-schizophrenic with some other medical lingo thrown in. I'm either in very bad shape or I'm a hell of a hypochondriac. I do know that the seizures I have aren't a happy experience, or the changes I go through with my head aren't what you would call "bliss."

I first entered a California prison in 1966 and since that time I've been on fairly heavy medication. I was paroled a few months later and sent to C.R.C. as a dual commitment, kicked out, and returned to Vacaville on a parole violation: At that time, I went through some psychotic changes. I was placed in S Wing and went through their testing (E.E.G. etc.) therapy, and I don't really remember what all.

The brain damage was again verified and I was again diagnosed as a schizophrenic of the paranoid type; was put on medication therapy, and continued to go through the black out spells(not seizures) for a period of five or six months heavily.

I was returned here in August, 1969 and placed in the psychic ward, put on heavy medication and subsequently put on the mainline again. The psychiatrist here, Dr. Francis, felt that the medication I needed was too heavy for this mainline, so he had me transferred to C.M.C. East, where I received the proper medical attention. Then C.M.C. sent me to B section, San Quentin, on August 14, 1970, I requested to see a doctor as soon as I got to Receiving and Release, but the doctor said he could do nothing since he didn't have my medical jacket. Each day the M.T.A. came by my cell, in B section, I would tell him that I was hurting, was an epileptic, etc., and if he would get me to see a psychiatrist, I also wrote letters to the Chief Psychiatrist, Chief Medical Officer, Warden Nelson, verbally requested help from the cops of B section, all to no avail. I then filed charges with the Marin Courts on September 4, 1970, I never got an answer. I feel that the complaint was never allowed to leave the institution, but I do have a copy of the complaint. All this time, I was up right, no sleep, headaches, had a couple of seizures, and could still get no help.

On the 17th of September, one of the B section bulls got sick of seeing me go through all of those changes, so he took me to the hospital (without permission from his superiors) and bogarded his way into a psychiatrist's office. Needless to say, I got action from the psychiatrist and he said he thought some body showed pure negligence in not bringing my situation to his attentions as soon as I arrived. At this time, I had gone through over a month of pure hell, lost weight, and was seriously contemplating suicide to end it. I'm not sniveling, just showing you a typical situation, it just happens I'm the victim in this instance.

Anyway, when the San Quentin committee sent me here, I was approved for the mainline, I was receiving sufficient medication to cope with any problem and I felt like a regular human being again. Of course, I was put in O Wing

(given a 60-day review) and when I saw the M.T.A. the next day, I told him my problems, I was then issued dialantin and phenobarbital, three times a day. This helped to hold down my epileptic seizures, but did nothing for my head, sleep, nervousness, etc. I then saw the Chief Medical Officer (Dr. Boone) but to no avail. I then wrote to Dr. Francis then discontinued the phenobarbital and put me on straight dialantin, that was on the 30th of November on the 2nd of December, I had a seizure. From the 30th to the 2nd, I told the M.T.A. each morning, that this medication wasn't helping at all. Again to no avail. As I write this letter, I have and have had a excruciating headache for three days. The doctors are aware of my medical history. I've tried to talk to them and they refuse to help me. I am afraid that I will seriously hurt another person, or myself one of these days soon. I don't want to "flip out" and jump on cops again, because I don't want to go through that scene again. It's a righteous bummer.

Since my last letter, I have had two more seizures. The first one occurred on December 4, 1970. I fell against the bars of my cell and split my forehead open. An M.T.A. was summoned and he did nothing to aid me. After awhile, with the verbal help of a friend, I tried to get up from the floor and again fell against the bars, and did greater damage to my forehead. I was then taken to the hospital, taped up and brought back here the next day. On or about December 4, I had another seizure. An M.T.A. came to my cell, placed me on my bunk and split. Again, I was given nothing to help.

This morning I was taken to hospital. The doctor said I was on his medical list. I have been on lists for 9 months now without seeing the proper doctor.

He began his examination, but when the officer told him that I was in the section on strike, the doctor stopped. He said, "As soon as I was off this foolish strike he would consider replacing my name on the list." I was returned to my cell.

I'm writing you in concern of my health, I have been denied the proper medication for my actual problem by Doctor Francis who failed to provide me with the needy medication.

The records indicate that I once suffered a head injury and an operation was necessary. This operation took place at Vacaville Medical Facility a few years back. Since then I've gone through various minor headaches which I bother not to consider serious at that time. But my long incarceration on Max Row made matters worse and my head pains increased. I brought it to the attention of Dr. Francis and he proceeded on placing me under some type of drug that eventually took its toll and duplicated my grievances. I began complaining and demanding, not only the right medication for my headaches, but also some medicare to combat the affects of the previous drug that appeared to damage me, both physically and mentally.

Dr. Francis was giving me tranquilizers and something else that knocked me out and I used to wake up feeling drunk and the pain in my head was terrible. Dr. Francis refused to place me under valiums and so at the present time, I am under no medication and need your cooperation immediately.

I can prove that the death of the 22 year old inmate, who was stabbed 15 times on the third floor of O Wing yesterday morning, was caused by Dr. Howell's negligence to perform emergency surgery to stem the internal hemoraging evidenced by X-rays. I can also present evidence that many other deaths here resulted from causes other than those which the doctors here reported. I can furnish the dead man's family with enough evidence on the real reason for their son's death for them to institute successful legal malpractice proceedings against Dr. Howell and Dr. Boone, the Chief Medical Officer. These are but a few isolated instances...