

**Interview with 44 Year Old Man
Who Wants to Remain Anonymous
[at AMHI 3 times]**

September 11, 2003

Interviewer: Karen Evans

KE: We are going to start out by talking about some of your experiences at AMHI. So I would first like to ask why did you go to AMHI?

Because, I don't know. They just put me there. I was just put there.

KE: You don't remember the events that lead up to it?

No. I was put there three times and there was no reason.

KE: When you think about AMHI, what kind of memories come to mind?

Mostly good. I will tell you mostly good.

KE: Okay, can you talk a little bit about those memories?

It is like the camaraderie we had between patients and stuff like that. Not so much the staff, but the superintendent was good. But the camaraderie we had with the patients, with each other.

KE: When were you there and how long were you there?

I was there three times. I was there, let's see once for six months, once for like a month and once for about two weeks and then they sent me to Togus.

KE: Of the three different times that you were there, did you notice any changes that happened within AMHI itself?

Yeah, there was. They started really putting the drugs to people. I noticed they really started to putting the medication to people.

KE: The last time it was more prevalent than it was the first time.

I would say yes...I would say that the last time was when they were really doing it and when I first got there they weren't doing it so bad.

KE: Can you kind of tell me about a day in your life at AMHI, what was a day like?

Well it was kind of average in the way of just relaxed, you know, very relaxed. Nobody was pressuring you and nobody was bothering you and stuff like that. It was a very relaxed environment.

KE: Were there people at AMHI that impacted you in a positive way?

I would say yeah, Jim Champlain did. There were people there that impacted me in a positive way.

KE: How about in a negative way? Did you run into anybody that effected you in that way?

Some of the aides would pick on some of the patients at times. I did notice some of the aides picking on the patients.

KE: Would you like to expand on that or not?

Okay, I will. One time an aide was giving a drug to a girl in line and she didn't want to take it, but he forced her to. Another time a girl was being over drugged and I even went to the doctor. I took the girl to the doctor and I said what is wrong with her. I go what is wrong and she said I am over drugged...Another time an aide was laughing behind a desk where [this same] girl was trying to get her shoes to go out on a pass, a day pass and he was laughing behind the desk, because he had given her clothes, but he wouldn't give her shoes. Then I told her to go tell him you want to speak to the superintendent right now and she did and he gave her the shoes and she got to go out on pass...I really enjoyed everybody there. But the aides were kind of mean sometimes.

KE: Who were the most important people in your life while you were there? Was it the patients...?

The doctors, to be honest, the doctors.

KE: Who helped you the most of your whole stay there? Who was the most outstanding in your mind?

To be honest I would say the VA doctors that came and brought me out of there. They saw I was there from the VA and they brought me to Togus.

KE: What was the culture of AMHI?

The culture of AMHI was mixed... But it wasn't bad; it wasn't bad. You know, we were all kind of friendly.

KE: What were the relationships among the people there? Was there a sense of community?

It was like this. You know, people like the girls would be attracted to the boys and the boys would be attracted to the girls like that, you know. It was more like everybody was looking out that way.

KE: How did the patients relate to one another? Did they seem to get along pretty well with one another?

Oh yeah; oh yeah.

KE: What were the interactions between the patients and staff like? Did they feel that there was a sense of communication going on or not?

With most staff, yes.

KE: The staff interaction with each other, did you notice what that was like?

It was quiet; it was very quiet.

KE: What treatment did you receive while you were at AMHI

I received medications and some kind of classes where we would talk about things and do things. You know, we would also do activities; there were some activities.

KE: Can you explain what those activities were?

I forget the activities exactly. But there were activities that we did, when we would talk and stuff like this together in a group.

KE: Did you have an individualized treatment plan?

Yeah I did.

While you were there?

Yeah I did.

KE: Were you part of making that plan?

I went out in the community. I got a job and they let me go and everything else.

KE: How did staying at AMHI affect you in relationship to your family and your friends? Were they able to communicate with you while you were at AMHI or were you isolated?

No, no, I wasn't isolated. People came by; people did come by.

KE: Both family and friends came by when you were there?

Family didn't come by. My mom came once; I don't know if you know about that. But my mom came once. But friends came by.

KE: When you left AMHI what happened? Now you were there three times, so you have three different scenarios. Why don't we focus in on the one that you were there the longest and what do you remember happening?

What happened was that AMHI asked me to organize myself in the community and get a job with the city and go to school and all of this stuff. I went to USM, I got straight Bs and I had to go to Cony High School to work as a janitor to pay for my rent and my schooling.

KE: Do you have anything else that you would like to say about your stay at AMHI?

It was good; it was pretty good. But like I said there was an issue of over drugging at one point.

KE: I would like to focus now on your experiences and thoughts for today. So I want to start out by asking how do you think you are doing today

I am doing pretty good.

KE: What are you doing with your life at this point?

I am just, I am taking it a day at a time and taking it very, very quietly and relaxed, minding my own business.

KE: In what way are you connected with your family and your friends today?

I call my sisters up and I have friends out at the manor I am at.

KE: Have you experienced discrimination or stigma or anything like because of your mental illness?

Not me, not at all.

KE: We are going to talk about recovery. Recovery is kind of the word that is in right now, recovery from mental illness. Do you feel that you have experienced recovery and what is the most important thing of your recovery process, if you are starting to experience recovery?

One thing I have to keep in check is my moods. When I am moody what I do is I like to be by myself. Where I am at the manor I go out in the woods by myself. That helps in my recovery because there are 14 acres there. There is a trail and I mind my own business primarily, listen to music and watch TV in my own room and I have my own room.

KE: Did spirituality play any role in your recovery?

Well, let's see. Not really; not really.

KE: What has been your greatest challenge or obstacle to recovery?

I would say, I would say the fact that I had drug interactions that reacted with my body that they had to change them and in lieu of changing them I got very sick and I ended up in the hospital again.

KE: How have your hopes and goals changed since you have spent time at AMHI or have they changed?

No, no, they have improved and it was always good. I will tell you with me, they respected me. But they were inappropriate at times...with other people and I saw it.

KE: You know that we are building a new psychiatric hospital, Riverview Psychiatric Center in Augusta to replace AMHI. If you had just done thing that you would like to tell them, what would it be? What kind of advice would you like to give them?

I would just like to tell them to keep an eye on each other. To make sure that everybody is being treated right, you know what I mean, by the staff. You know, keep an eye on the staff so that to make sure all of the patients are being treated right.

KE: Do you have any goals that you would like to see for the Riverview Psychiatric Center?

I would like to see empowerment as much as possible to happen to the people that are there to make them feel as much as at home as possible, you know, as much at home as possible, because I feel at that place they are probably going to be staying there for a while. As much at home as possible.

KE: Anything else you would like to comment on?

Everything that was the past, I want to tell you, these issues that I mentioned have pretty much been brought to light in a consent decree and it is not ongoing anymore. But it did offend me when I saw it, you know, but it has changed.

KE: I want to thank you so much for you time and this interview.

You are welcome.