

My name is George Magrath, or as the D.O.C. has me listed; McGrath, a spelling I rather dislike. They list Magrath as an alias. I am 69 years old. I have been incarcerated since the age of 21. Yes, if you are quick at math, I am serving my 48th year. My conviction is for felony murder in which it is alleged that I was the driver in an armed robbery that ended with two people losing their lives. I suppose some people will say I was lucky. I could have been sentenced to die in the electric chair. Instead, I was sentenced to serve life without parole. In other words, death by old age.

In 1972 the legislature passed Chapter 777. It has been characterized as "Week-end Furloughs". In reality it established Education and Work Release for anyone within 18 months of a potential release either by parole, or the expiration of sentence. Furloughs were part of that legislation. Individuals were allowed a maximum of 336 hours (14 days) furlough time per year. Much the same as earned sick or vacation time you would earn if working for a government agency, or private sector company.

In 1972 I was one of the first lifers to go home on a furlough. That 12 hour Thanksgiving Day furlough was the first of more than 200 times I was in the community over the next 15 years. In all that time I was able to attend the funeral of my father, High School graduation of my youngest brother, got married, attended the birth of my son, helped renovate a home, and visited with a daughter on several of her trips from Texas. As with the majority of lifers over the years, most of my time was spent around maintaining relationships with family and strengthening ties in the community.

In 1973, I along with other members of the Honeywell Computer Program, was chosen to create a Honeywell Program at MCI-Framingham the state's female institution. It was to be, and for 9 years, a CO-ED facility where men and women worked and lived side by side.

At the time Framingham consisted of 4 "cottages". Two were designated for women and two for men. In 1982 MCI-Framingham reverted back into an all female institution, not because of a failure of housing men and women together. It was because of the increase of women being sentenced to prison.

During my time at Framingham, the members of the Honeywell Program built a suite of rooms out of a loft area, to house a computer system, office space, and most importantly classrooms. We taught others Computer Programming, Computer Operations, Computer Maintenance, and Data Entry. We also built and operated a 'for-profit' Service Bureau. We provided system design, computer programming, as well as providing computer time to run payroll systems, data analysis for government agencies and private companies. Then in 1982 MCI-Framingham reverted back to an all female institution and Honeywell withdrew it's support of the program throughout the D.O.C.

In 1983 I began my involvement in the Concord Achievement Rehabilitation Volunteer Experience (CARVE) when I was transferred to Concord Farm, a minimum security institution in Concord, MA. As part of the program I went to the Metropolitan State Hospital in Waltham with others Monday through Friday on a D.O.C. operated bus. I began work on the Special Treatment Team. It was a locked door unit for individuals who had alcohol/drug problems along with mental health issues. I began my work on the Unit as a Mental Health Worker responsible for showering, shaving, feeding, and taking daily vitals. After some time, it was felt I could be better utilized as a patient evaluator with the clinical team. At the time psyc-residents from Harvard would do six week rotations on the unit. After a while the resident leaving would tell the incoming resident, there is a member of the clinical staff on the unit that is a PRISONER. How long do you think it will take to figure out. I surprised most! While on the CARVE program I was also trained to be an Emergency Medical Technician through a

program taught by UMASS Boston. After completing the program I took the state exam and became a state registered EMT. I used some of that experience to help teach a first aid course, as well as teaching CPR to hospital employees, including doctors who needed to be certified at the hospital. Of all the programs I have been involved throughout the years with, my time working at Metropolitan State Hospital has been the most rewarding.

In January of 1988 all the 1st degree lifers were brought back behind the "Walls". All 63 of us that had been housed in minimum security institutions and involved in such programs as CARVE, renovation crews, school grounds custodians, etc. were brought behind the "Walls" so that Governor Michael Dukakis would not continue to be seen as soft on crime as he ran for president.

From 1988 until 1991 I worked as a Head Clerk and Working Leader in the Furniture shop here at Norfolk. In 1991 Baystate, originally a minimum security institution, was renovated and opened as a longtermers institution. It was an appeasement to all those affected by the removal of all 1st degree lifers and others. It was to be an institution that was a medium, deemed by the fence, with a minimum interior. While there I was working towards an associate degree using Pell Grants to pay the cost of courses. With change in federal political positions policies were changing, and requirements for obtaining Pell Grants were changed. Felons were no longer allowed to apply for them. With the change, state community colleges that were offering classes were no longer able to cover the cost. And the D.O.C. was not going to budget for any college level program.

For me the timing could not have been better. Around this time my health began failing. In 1996 I had my first heart attack. Within 90 days I had my second one. This one required modified bypass surgery. Because Baystate did not have 24 hour medical coverage, once again I found myself back at Norfolk while I

recuperated. With my co-defendant I began work on an appeal for the first time in 25 years.

After approximately a year I was declared medically stable. This led to my being transferred back to Baystate. I spent the next couple of years concentrating on regaining my health while my appeal moved slowly in the court. One night my brother-in-law came to visit unannounced. I must have had a panicked look on my face as I came through the visiting room door and recognized him because he immediately threw up his hands and mouthed: "NO NO nothing bad." And, bad it was not! He had come to let me know the judge had granted me a new trial.

After 31 years of incarceration I went home after posting, or I should say my family posted a bail. For the next 22 months I remained in the community while my appeal continued on through the state court system. Meanwhile I worked at rebuilding my life. One of the first things I did was to go see my mother at her home. When I walked through her door she looked up and simply asked: "Are you home on furlough?" You see, by that time my mother was suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. Furloughs she still remembered because she had seen me on so many in the past. As the months went by my mother seemed to forget I was ever in prison. She died less than 3 weeks after my return to prison.

One thing I quickly learned when released was without support from family and friends adjusting to life in the community can be almost impossible. Sometimes honesty is not the best policy. With a 30 year gap in a work history companies do not want to take a chance on hiring. Cannot go to college for that long a time. I finally asked my brother for help, after a couple months of noes, I was running out of options. Being a veteran firefighter he knows people in the construction fields. In a day he found a job for me with an insulation company. One of the owners was from a firefighting family. The owners knew of my background, the workers were never told. I worked for the company for a little more than a year and a half without incident.

With the continued help of family I settled quickly. I stayed with my sister until I had enough to get a small place of my own. I reconnected with friends from when we were barely teens. My son, by now was a young adult, stayed with me for a while. My daughter, born just 5 weeks before my arrest introduced me to her toddler, my grandson. Life was a pleasure to greet and live. Then I got a call from my lawyer. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court had overruled the lower court judge and reinstated my conviction. I needed to appear in court the next Tuesday, the day after Memorial day. I had just three more days of freedom.

I have been back at Norfolk for almost 15 years now. From 2004 until 2008 I concentrated on attaining my bachelor's degree from Boston University. I graduated cum laude with a 3.559 GPA. I now audit classes when my health allows.

I currently hold a position on the Board of Directors of the Lifers' Group Inc. I have been a contributing member of this group since 1969. Throughout the years this group has been the first and sometimes only group I have requested to attend whenever coming back to Norfolk. I have never aligned myself with a better group of men as those I have worked with in this group.

At my age, and with all the physical ailments I suffer from I am not sure if I will live long enough to see changes needed in this criminal justice system. However I have lived long enough to know you never know!

Sadly, George passed away in May of 2022, but passed away at home after being granted Medical parole in December 2019.