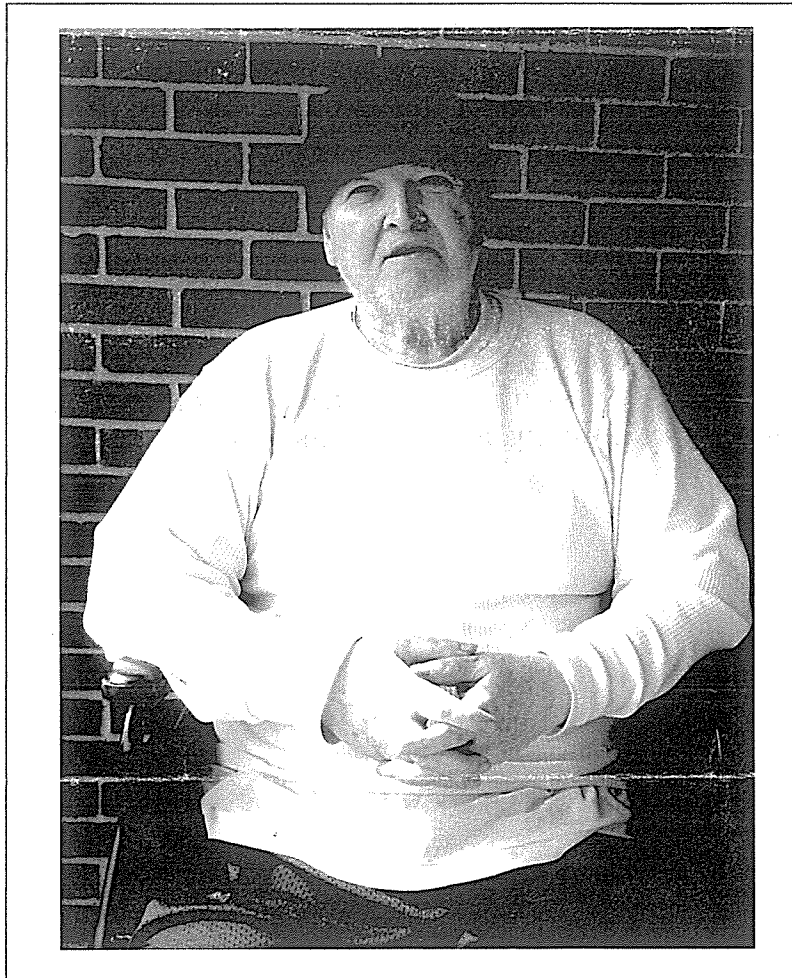


Justice - Today

“Creative Alternatives in Criminal Justice”

THE TRUSTEES



Richard Valliere is 77 years-old
He has been in state prison for 52 years

Previously, we highlighted the plight of some of the 64 Massachusetts Department of Correction former “trustees” who were removed from minimum security state prisons on December 29, 1987 and returned to higher security facilities.

For the past 36 years, a few dozen or so of these men have languished in medium security prisons, their former “trustee” status a long forgotten memory.

A sad example of excessive punishment

Recently, the troubling case of Richard Valliere was brought to our attention. It turns out that Mr. Valliere has been incarcerated by the state of Massachusetts since September 22, 1971.

In June of 1972 Mr. Valliere was sent to Death Row at Walpole state prison for the crime of murder. There he remained up until the United States Supreme Court ruled that capital punishment was unconstitutional. That ruling led to the removal of a number of Massachusetts prisoners from death row.

All Massachusetts death row prisoners, including Mr. Valliere were automatically sentenced to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole. Here, it is important to note that at least four of those former Massachusetts death row prisoners were later found to be completely innocent of the crime that they stood convicted of.

In 1979 Mr. Valliere, who had maintained a very good track record in prison, was transferred to the Bay State Correctional Center located in the Town of Norfolk. At the time, that particular institution was classified as a "minimum" security facility by the Department of Correction. While he was at that institution, Mr. Valliere earned "work release status" and he had a job at the Pondville Hospital maintenance department. Eventually he transferred to the Bay State renovation crew, traveling all over Massachusetts repairing buildings.

Between 1980 and 1987 Mr. Valliere returned to the community without incident at least one hundred times

In 1980 Mr. Valliere was granted his first "furlough". He would participate in the furlough program for several years. In fact, between 1980 and 1987 he successfully participated in at least one hundred furloughs. Inmates involved in the furlough program were put through a battery of tests to insure that they "complied" with all rules and regulations. While on furlough they were required to check in and call back to institutional staff at pre-arraigned times. They were also required to be at specific pre-set locations at all times. Any violation of these stringent rules resulted in termination of program participation and return to a higher security facility.

Prison records indicate that Mr. Valliere was transferred to MCI-Shirley minimum security in 1981. There he also worked in the maintenance department and continued his participation in the furlough program. In 1982 he applied for a "cadre" position at the minimum security South Middlesex Pre-release Center in Framingham. Within the state Department of Correction cadre positions are only approved for the most trustworthy prisoners. Prisoners who apply for such positions were required to appear before a number of successive classification boards before final authorization was given. In June of 1982 Mr. Valliere was transferred to the South Middlesex Pre-Release Center.

While he was incarcerated at the South Middlesex Pre-release Center, Mr. Valliere held several jobs. He worked in the building maintenance dept., then on the grounds crew, and he also worked at the state prison for women in Framingham in their maintenance dept. All of that was to change dramatically in December of 1987 when he was sent back to a higher security facility. At no time while he was in minimum security did Mr. Valliere violate any rules or regulations.

In June of 1991 Mr. Valliere was transferred to the newly opened medium security Bay State Correctional Center in Norfolk. There he worked as a property clerk. In 2015 the Bay State Correctional Center was closed by the Department of Correction and Mr. Valliere found himself once again being transferred, this time to the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Norfolk.

Failing health – Decades in prison takes its toll

Since his incarceration at the Norfolk prison, Mr. Valliere has suffered some very serious medical issues. In December 2021 he was transported by ambulance to the Milford Regional Hospital. There doctors implanted a pacemaker. On December 23, 2022 he was again taken by ambulance to U. Mass. Medical Center in Worcester. On December 29, 2022 Mr. Valliere underwent quadruple heart by-pass surgery.

Since the quadruple by-pass Mr. Valliere has been hospitalized at both U Mass Medical Center and today he is confined at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution (MCI) Norfolk hospital's Critical Stabilization Unit.

Like the other former Massachusetts trustee prisoners we have written about, the story of Richard Valliere is compelling. This prisoner has served in excess of fifty-two years in prison. During this extensive period of confinement he has maintained an impressive record of abiding by the rules and regulations. On over one hundred occasions he has demonstrated that he can be trusted not to commit another crime. Indeed, Mr. Valliere was free to roam about the Commonwealth for years while at minimum security correctional facilities or out on furloughs. At no time did he even think about committing another crime.

Yes, it is true that at one point in his life decades ago he did something terrible. However, today he is a completely different person. So once again we ask this question:

How much punishment is too much?

Death by incarceration is the same as death by any other means is it not?

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