

The Peter Alarid Story Continued:

# 'God has brought him back to us'

By Nyewusi Askari

(This is the final installment of the Peter Alarid Story. Peter, who suffered serious head injuries while incarcerated at Rocky Butte jail, recently filed a \$200,000 suit against the officer alleged to have inflicted the injury.)

In May of 1979, Peter Alarid, not having yet gone to trial, suffered head injuries, and was left without medical attention for several days. The alleged assault had put Peter into such shock that for four months he did not speak. Peter's suit alleges that his head injury was inflicted by Rocky Butte jail guard "Rick Gaskell" who became infuriated when Peter failed to follow a direct command. Rocky Butte says Peter attacked the guard. However, statements obtained during an earlier investigation found that when the incident happened, Peter was handcuffed.

After seven days in Portland Adventist Hospital, Peter was taken to Oregon State Hospital for psychiatric evaluation, but doctors were not told the reasons for Peter's condition. Thus, he was evaluated as being a "Paranoia Schizophrenia."

The Supreme Court has identified three legitimate functions of a Corrections System: Deterrence, Security and Rehabilitation. Legislation has also identified rehabilitation as one of the major purposes of incarceration. R.I.G.L. 42-56 Declaration of Policy: a) the legislature hereby finds and declares that...2) efforts to rehabilitate and restore offenders as law abiding and productive members of society are essential to the reduction of crime.

In one of the earliest appellate court prison decisions, the District of Columbia Circuit said: "That penal as well as judicial authorities response to constitutional duties is vastly important to society as well as to the prisoner. Treatment that degrades the inmate, invades his privacy, and frustrates the ability to chose pursuits through which he can manifest himself and gain self-respect, erodes the very foundations upon which he can prepare for a socially-useful life." (Barnett vs. Rodgers, 410-F.20-995.100-2 D.C. Cir. 1969)

Peter's first stay at Oregon State Hospital was for a total of 20 days, after which he was returned to Rocky Butte. His condition continued to deteriorate. Another court order of commitment followed. This time electro-shock therapy was administered. Peter, by this time was able to speak and told his brother that the hospital would not stop the shock treatments and that he had a terrible feeling of desperation, as though he would explode. No consent by the family was given nor asked for by the hospital. No independent physician was consulted, which is contrary to Oregon State Law ORS 426.385 (2)... "Mentally ill persons committed to the division shall have the right to be free from potentially unusual or hazardous treatment procedures, including lobotomy and electro-shock therapy, unless they have given their express and informed consent. This right may be denied to

such persons for good cause only by the director of the facility in which the person is confined, or his designee, but only after consultation with and approval of an independent examining physician."

Peter sent notes to family members stating his feeling of desperation, the feelings of near explosion, the terrible thoughts going through his mind. In one note he said that if something wasn't done to stop the shock treatments, he would attempt to escape because he felt he was losing his mind. Already ten shock treatments had been administered to him.

Indeed Peter did try to escape, but here, another tragedy began. The escape turned into a serious fall from the third floor of the psychiatric ward; his head was badly crushed; spinal fluid was coming out through his nose; he had a concussion; internal bleeding; a fractured spinal vertebrae; a broken leg; a broken foot and was hardly expected to live.

The neuro-surgeon told Peter's relatives that he would more likely have brain damage.

Three months later, a plate was placed in his forehead to replace the crushed bones which had been removed in the first surgery, but 7 days later, the plate became dislodged due to a sneeze, and spinal fluid again began to leak from his nostrils. Three weeks later, the third surgery followed. This time, the doctor could not assure the Barboza family that there wouldn't be future problems.

Peter was returned to Rocky Butte six weeks after his third operations. Three months later, at Rocky Butte, he again began to leak spinal fluid. A court order was given to have him examined again. This time it was concluded that surgery again was needed.

In the doctor's petition to the court for Peter's medical needs, he wrote: "Surgery is needed as expeditiously as possible," nevertheless, instead of proceeding with Peter's need for surgery, the D.A. asked the judge for an order to continue with the trial, stating, "He does not need surgery at this time." The records said otherwise, but the state wanted to clear their back-log because as the attorney himself said, "It didn't look good to have delayed the trial so long." So, heavily drugged, Peter found himself in court, with the prosecuting attorney insisting that he plead guilty. That was on the 15th of December, almost four months after it was known he needed surgery.

Concerned about the lack of medical treatment for her son, wrote to the director of Corrections Division Mr. Bob Watson, as well as the doctors who had performed the operation and treatments. In addition, she sent copies of her letter to Rocky Butte authorities and Corrections of Multnomah County. Mr. Watson responded that it was out of his jurisdiction now, and sent the letter to the Administrator of Mental Health Division, J.H. Treleven, M.D. His response was "the authorities responsible for his care now was Rocky Butte jail.

Rocky Butte authorities said that they didn't have the funds for his needs, however, "they would keep a report on his condition." The doctors did not respond.

In spite of it all, Ms. Barboza remains hopeful that justice will come. She sums up her feelings.

"There has been a marked transformation in Peter's patterns since December of 1979, and we can attribute this, first of all, to the intervention of Almighty God in reply to prayers of many who love Peter, and next, to family therapy which has also contributed in great part to



AGNUS BARBOZA

the slow healing and wholesome development of his mind. Dr. Franks of Portland Adventist Hospital who examined Peter on August 27th of last year gave this

report: 'The physical examination reveals a pleasant and alert man. The speech is normal.' Her voice breaking, Ms. Barboza paused before continuing.

"We realize that many times good can come out of bad situations, and we can truly say that Peter's restlessness, insecurities, and rejections of the past have been settled in Christ his Lord, finding him his peace. Many can testify of this here in Portland and Salem area who have visited him and can speak on his behalf; including pastors and Christian workers. There are also people who have seen and know the effect that family therapy has performed in his miraculous recovery after all the ordeal he has gone through. Now he wants his life to be useful to others. Yet as a permanently disabled person, he will need the love and care that only God and his family can render him, and that is to be in an atmosphere where there is the opportunity for complete and total restoration and adjustment.

"If we have failed him as a family before, we do not want to fail him ever again. I believe that if he were released in my custody, his re-adjustment would be secure and his life be made more wholesome, having prospered rather than hin-

dered from his experience. Peter's oldest brother has been a missionary for nine years in Mexico and Central America. The rest of his brothers and sister also have the love of God in their lives. The prayers of this close family have brought Peter

back to God, and God has brought him back to us."

"No amount of words can tell what I, as Peter's mother, feel, seeing the possibilities that can lie ahead for him."

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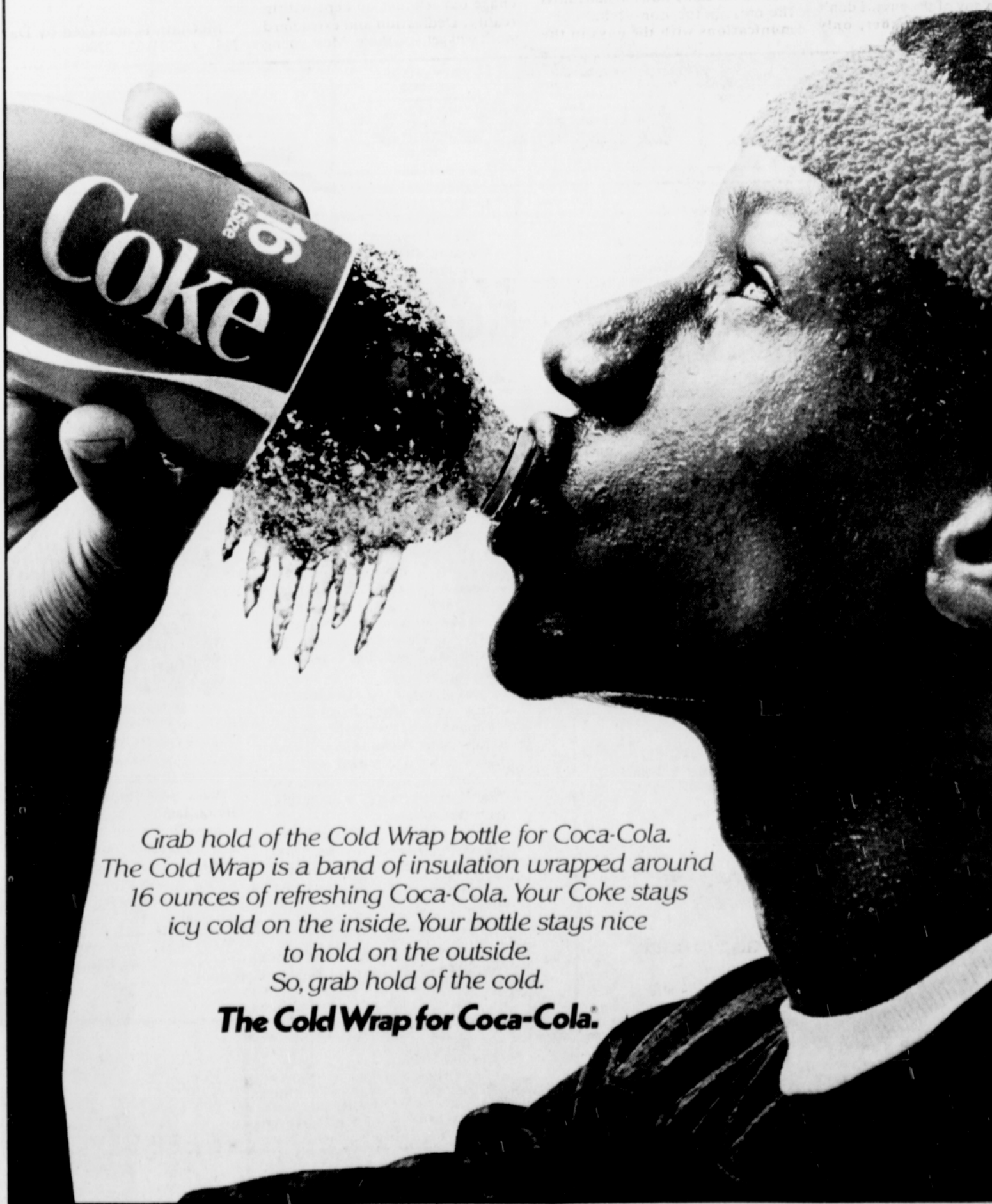



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