

Olmstead Haring

Monday March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014

Leroy Hammond: Self Advocate, formerly at Polk State Center

I went to Polk when I was a young child, a little boy. The judge said he was going to send me to Polk. I left Polk when I was about 30. A priest came to see me and asked me if I wanted to leave.

I went to the Barber center. The whole time I was at Polk I sat on my foot and my leg was twisted. When I left I had surgery on my legs. I had braces and I used crutches. But I did not sit on my foot anymore.

Things I remember from Polk:

A friend of ours – they took all of his teeth out without anything for pain. I got up at 5:30 am and went to bed a 6 pm. I had to work in the fields. When I was there the girls were on one side and men were on the other. If I talked to them (girls) I would get locked up. My job was to wash all of the state cars. We got paid but we had to hide the money. The staff would take the money – the night watchman. Punishment was you had to walk on a rubber floor mat and carry a bucket of bricks. You were not allowed to stop. How long? However long your punishment was. They picked up a floor brush and threw it at you. When we were there if you did not eat at a certain time they took it away from you. If you did not come in time for breakfast you did not get it. There is a lot more. I get upset when I think or talk about it.

(Leroy's life now):

I feel more better here than I do there. We choose what and when we want to eat. This week I am going on a deacon's retreat. I am a Eucharistic minister. I served on a board (Erie County Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities) in Erie County for 12 years. I am the godfather of a young lady. I volunteer at the hospital. I take newspapers around. I have been there 9 years. I go to the Humane Society. I am a clown and I went to Clown school.

(when asked if Leroy lived in life share or group home) We just call it home because it is our family.

We tried to go back to visit (Polk) about a year and a half ago. They would not let us in. They said officials were there for an important meeting. We just drove around the outside. You get scared when you get in the door. When I go back it scares me. I get very upset. I get very nervous. I get scared because of what I remember. I feel very sad for the poor people like that (still there).

(What Leroy wants the legislators to know):

I want more people to get out. I don't want to see them stay there. I want them all to get out of there. Question Number one – how would you like to be the patient there? If you think it is so good, why don't you go live there?