

# Farnum Center

May 16, 2013

In the Fall of 2011, as part of a DUI plea agreement, I agreed to attend a 28 day residential alcohol treatment program. This idea originated with me, as I was aware that I had a severe drinking problem that would ultimately kill me if not addressed. I presented it to my PD and it was presented to the prosecutor, and made part of my sentence. On January 17, 2012, I was admitted to Farnum Center, with an anticipated discharge date of February 16, 2012.

I was initially assigned a counselor with a first name of Dean, no last name given. I received a total of ½ hour of counseling with Dean before he abruptly disappeared in the middle of the day on or about January 27. Nothing was said to explain his sudden departure other than some type of "family emergency".

I was subsequently assigned a substitute counselor named Mary "Liz" Beach. She was the Residential Care Coordinator and represented herself as a LADC (Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor).

Farnum turned out to be a highly coercive religion based 12 step program. We were led in prayer numerous times/day. The building that houses Farnum was a former nun's residence, complete with a stained glass equipped chapel on the third floor. There were daily AA meetings in this chapel, despite the fact that there was a class room, with more than enough space to accommodate all residents. Meetings were opened and closed with prayer. There were always speakers, many of which delivered highly religious remarks, many of which were effectively lay sermons.

We were required to attend readings from the AA Big Book, which is also religion based.

We were also required to attend daily group sessions.

I have no religious beliefs. While I respect the right of others to hold any spiritual or religious beliefs that they see fit, I fiercely defend my own right to the absence of such beliefs.

Despite that, I was determined to get everything out of the program that I could and enthusiastically participated in all activities other than group prayer.

As my encounters with Ms. Beach progressed, she seemed to develop an aggressive attitude toward me. When I was admitted, I was having problems with diarrhea and on two occasions, unknowingly soiled my khaki colored pants. This was pointed out to me and I was invited to go upstairs to shower, which, of course, I did. When I returned, LB accused me of not taking a shower and this subsequently showed up as being in denial of hygiene issues and using that to push people away. She also, on numerous occasions, accused me of being in denial about my alcoholism, which could not have been further from the truth. She also picked on me for minor issues. 80% of the residents at Farnum were there for opiate addiction. I had many frank discussions with these folks and heard some stories that were hard to comprehend. At one point, I made a light hearted remark to a resident that addicts would make good phlebotomists, as they, by necessity, have had to become expert at finding veins. The response was something to the effect, yeah, I could throw a syringe from across the room and get it in. It was a very short light hearted interchange that got me a private, humiliating, 15 minute lecture from LB.

One of the forms of discipline that was routinely applied, employed the use of a “day of awareness”, which consisted of being required to be silent for 24 hours with no other residents permitted to speak to the affected resident. It was much like the Amish shunning.

We had a Thursday morning meeting where staff brought issues of concern to the community. These meetings were often drama filled and painful. This is a coed facility, and you can imagine the funny business and attendant jealousies/drama that result. These were often the subject of discussion, to the point of humiliation. At one point, I started playing cribbage with one female and developed a crush on her, which became public and I was the subject of one of these public humiliations. You are the first person in 16 months, including my therapist that I have been able to tell this story to.

Never the less, I never protested and remained faithful to my goal of getting well.

At times, this place was out of control. The males were housed on the second floor and the females on the third. One evening, two males climbed bed sheets from the second floor to the third to rendezvous with a pair of females. There were regular after hours dice games on the men's floor.

On February 15, at 5:30 PM, 15 hours before my anticipated discharge, Liz interrupted my dinner to call me into her office to inform me that I was not being discharged as planned and that I would be staying another 30 days. I said no, as I had fulfilled my commitment both to myself and to the court. She replied that she had spoken to my PO and that he was making it a requirement. I told her that from this moment on, I rescind any and all permission to share anything about my treatment with anyone, including my PO. At that point, any further communication about my status to anyone, including my PO became a violation of both State and Federal (HIPPA) privacy law. She, never the less, got PO Scott Dodge on the phone and told him that Jeff wants to rescind his record release and put me on the phone with Scott. She attempted to listen in, which in and of itself is illegal and I told her no. Scott threatened to put me in Jail if I did not cooperate. This was the point where this became a clear violation of my first amendment rights, to say nothing of clear violation State and Federal privacy laws and state wiretap law. In addition, I was informed that I would be subject to a “day of awareness”.

Needless to say, I was devastated. If she wanted to keep me, why was this not brought to my attention days ago? My only guess is that I had had a discharge planning session, where I objected to her requiring me, post discharge, to attend AA, get an AA sponsor and attend their weekly out patient program in Manchester (I live in Loudon and of course have no way to get to Manchester).

I had the distinct impression that I was witnessing the emergence of LB's inner Nurse Ratched.

Today, out of curiosity, I decided to see what Farnum's web site looked like. Under the staff listing, to my surprise, LB was no longer listed as Residential Coordinator. Given her bizarre behavior toward me and her notes that are in direct contradiction to the observations of others, curiosity piqued, I contacted Farnum and asked for her. I was told she no longer works here and that they had no contact info. Curiosity further piqued inquired with the state about her license status. Turns out, that she has been misrepresenting herself as a licensed professional, when she clearly is not. At this point, she has a partial LADC application in but has never been licensed in this state.

Courts in numerous jurisdictions have held that state coerced participation in 12 step programs are a clear violation of the establishment clause.

The state of New Hampshire, Farnum Center and Scott Dodge, PO egregiously violated my rights under the first amendment.

In addition, Farnum, Mary Elizabeth Beach, Cheryl Wilkie and the Easter Seals organization violated my privacy and committed psychiatric malpractice.

As to misrepresenting herself and practicing without a license, Ms. Beach seems to have her overly ample tit in the proverbial wringer.

I intend to hold these organizations and individuals accountable for their actions.

I can see a couple of causes for action. Malpractice, as Farnum negligently assigned me a counselor who fraudulently misrepresented her credentials to practice alcohol counseling and thereby, through her gross incompetence caused me severe emotional damage and distress, and the obvious civil rights/first amendment issue as previously discussed. I would also assume that LB's misrepresentation of her credential, and doing alcohol counseling without being a LADC would be a violation or misdemeanor. Imagine what would happen to a hospital under similar circumstances where your doctor turns out to be unlicensed. Finally, there is the privacy issue, which is taken **extremely** seriously in any other health care setting.

Easter Seals of NH, in their most recent Form 990, reported an annual income in excess of \$61,000,000, with their CEO Larry Gammon earning in excess of \$525,000.00.

I will do everything that I can to insure that Ms. Beach never has another opportunity to work in the role of a counselor and that Farnum and Easter Seals develop a more humane approach to those of us unfortunate enough to be addicted. In addition, while not my highest priority, I think some financial compensation would be highly appropriate.