

# HUMAN

# RIGHTS

# ALERT

January 19, 2001

ISSUE # 14

A Psychiatric Survival Broadsheet



## ONTARIO

### 'Oak Ridge' facility focus of massive lawsuit

Ontario's Attorney General and psychiatrist Elliot Barker have been named in a \$150 million class-action lawsuit alleging 'torture and abuse' at the maximum-security 'Oak Ridge' division of the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre.

The lawsuit, which was filed on October 25, 2000, is expected to be amended to include other patients and staff at this facility.

Dr. Barker was the founder of the Ridge's experimental 'Social Therapy' Unit - a misleadingly named and incredibly abusive undertaking which employed techniques such as sleep deprivation, torturous experimental drug treatments with substances such as LSD and Scopolamine (the latter drug had originally been developed by the Nazis for use as an interrogation tool) and handcuffing patients to known enemies for prolonged periods, claiming this would 'break down a person's defense mechanisms.'

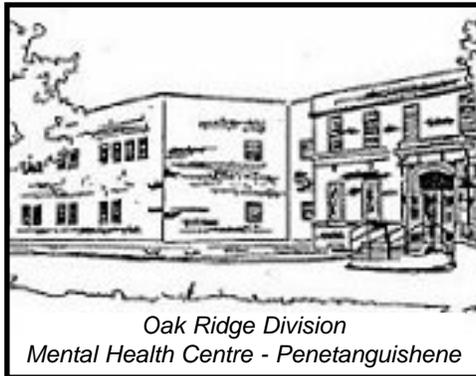
### **Bizarre programs**

One of the more bizarre tools was known as 'the capsule' - a small windowless room to which small groups of patients were confined for extended periods of time, often without the benefit of clothing. Food was provided through straws in the wall. Patients were monitored by other patients via closed circuit cameras.

The Oak Ridge facility, which first opened in the 1930's in this isolated Georgian Bay community, has been

condemned by numerous studies which have described it as being 'unfit for human habitation.' (A former Ontario Minister of Health was once overheard as saying that she 'wouldn't allow her dog' to be held at this institution).

Aside from the torturous procedures which typify patient 'care' in this place, there are other factors such the barren, cold cells, many of which have no source of drinking water and toilets which consist of a brick-lined hole in the floor. (Patients are often forced to rely on these toilets for a water source. They are flushed once a day).



Oak Ridge Division  
Mental Health Centre - Penetanguishene

In 1991, the Oak Ridge facility became the object of a police investigation into claims of rampant physical and sexual abuse, along with a number of suspicious deaths.

The outcome of this investigation, which was instigated by a man who was an inmate at the facility in the 1960's, proved to be 'inconclusive' and no criminal charges ever resulted. (Why am I not surprised? - ed.)

11 January 2001

**PLEASE PASS THIS INFORMATION TO INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE INCARCERATED AT PENETANGUSHENE AND WERE SUBJECTS IN THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:**

### \$150 MILLION CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT

*Vance Egglestone v  
Dr Elliott Barker*

- (a) All individuals who were incarcerated at Penetanguishene between 1968 and 1982 and who participated in the Motivation, Attitude, Participation Program ("M.A.P.")
- (b) All individuals who were incarcerated at Penetanguishene between 1968 and 1979 and who participated in the Total Encounter Capsule Program (the "Capsule")
- (c) All individuals who were incarcerated at Penetanguishene between 1965 and 1980 and who participated in Defence Disruptive Therapy ("D.D.T.")

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## **SURVIVORS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!**

**WE REMEMBER  
EDMOND  
YU  
WE REMEMBER  
OTTO  
VASS**

**Upcoming memorials  
for murdered men**

On February 20, 1997, thirty-five year old Edmond Yu was gunned down on a Toronto city bus by one of three cops who were attempting to take him into custody under the Mental Health Act.

Just this past August the 9th, 55-year old Otto Vass was beaten and kicked to death outside a west-end Seven-Eleven store where he had apparently gone to purchase a bottle of barbecue sauce.

At the time of his death, Edmond (according to eyewitnesses) was holding a small hammer which he displayed in a 'non-threatening' manner to these three cops who had cornered him in the back of the bus. These three were cleared of wrongdoing by the Special Investigations Unit.

According to witnesses, Otto Vass was thrown to the ground 'without provocation' by one or more of the four cops who had moments before escorted him from the store. The police were described as beating him 'worse than an animal' while he lay on

the sidewalk in handcuffs. The four officers are facing charges of manslaughter.

The mainstream media has done everything in its power to demonize these two victims by promoting the 'fact' that both men had histories of psychiatric intervention, and by illustrating alleged examples of bizarre behavior in their pasts.

**Memorial for  
OTTO VASS  
Friday, February 9, 2001**

**Parkdale Activity &  
Recreation Centre  
1499B Queen St. W.  
Time: TBA**

*For more details E-mail  
<dweitz@interlog.com>*

**4th anniversary Memorial for  
EDMOND YU**

**Tuesday, February 20, 2001  
12:00 NOON**

**GRANGE PARK**

**East of Beverly St.  
(between Dundas  
& Queen St.)**

*December 8, 2000*

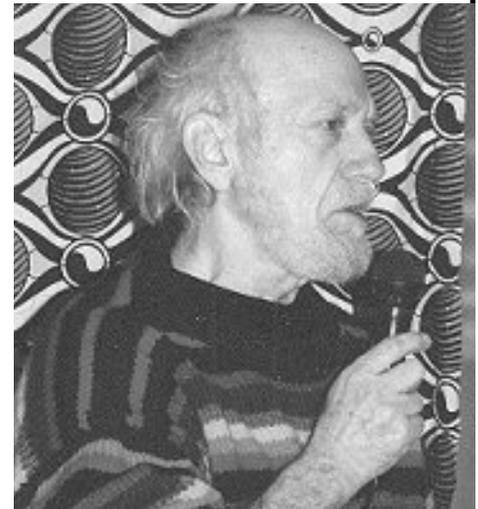
**Don Weitz's  
life celebrated!**

More than a hundred friends and loved ones turned out for a 'celebrity roast' of this remarkable activist on the occasion of his 70th birthday

For hours, the packed hall resounded with laughter as Don's friends from the Survivor community shared anec-

dotes about their relationships with him, and letters of tribute sent by activists from across Canada and the United States were read. As well, the evening included performances by members of the Friendly Spike Theatre Band and a number of local musicians.

An outspoken and passionate human rights advocate, Don Weitz was the co-founder of one of the first self-help groups in Ontario (*On Our Own*) and of the radical antipsychiatry magazine *Phoenix Rising*, which published for almost ten years in the 1980's.. As well, he is the co-editor of the outstanding anthology *Shrink Resistant: The Struggle Against Psychiatry in Canada*, and for several years produced a weekly radio show called *Shrinkrap*, which aired on CKLN 88.1 FM. He has also developed and taught a course on 'Antipsychiatry: Survivor Perspectives' which has been offered twice through the *Free University of Toronto*.



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**Contributions welcome!  
(Contributions may be  
edited for space)**

