

Young black man sure he's 'framed' at Willowbrook

By A. STANLEY ALLISON

James Kelliehan is more than convinced that he was framed on false charges by high-ranking employes at Willowbrook Developmental Center. Especially in light of three arrests and no convictions.

Amid a plethora of documents containing testimony, allegations and notices of dismissal, Kelliehan, a young, black man, outlined what he felt to be an intricate conspiracy to demean him, contrived by his former employes at the institution.

The most outstanding of these falsehoods, according to Kelliehan, a Mariners Harbor resident, are evident in the results of a trial conducted in Criminal Court on Nov. 18. Judge Royal S. Radin dismissed the charges and recommended that the district attorney's office investigate the possibility of perjury, tampering with a witness and other criminal acts.

Kelliehan, in this one particular case, was arrested April 5 on the job and charged with two counts of assault, resisting arrest, possession of a dangerous instrument, harassment and criminal trespassing.

The two arresting officers have stated that the charges were clearly not what they were made out to be.

The sworn affidavit states that Kelliehan attacked William Seery and Elijah Beaufort, both former safety officers at the institution, with a roll of nickles causing injuries which required treatment at the institution's hospital. It also alleges that Kelliehan was "abusive," "obscene" and had entered the building where he worked with an "intent to harass, annoy and alarm..."

"There wasn't any violence," Beaufort told the Advance. "Kelliehan went peacefully and got into the patrol car."

"I approached him with handcuffs and he pushed me away and that was it," Seery stated. "He didn't hit anyone with nickles...he decided to leave peacefully and he came into the patrol car on his own free will."

Beaufort claims that he and Seery signed the arresting affidavit under duress, stating, "If I resisted, the chief safety supervisor said I would lose my job."

Kelliehan was first arrested at Willowbrook nearly a year ago. He was charged with obstructing government administration after he allegedly interfered in a Willowbrook safety officer's arrest of a resident who reportedly stole a radio.

Kelliehan claims that he was framed on the charges and offers the judge's dismissal of them as proof.

On May 5 he was arrested in the St. George Social Services Center while attempting to apply for welfare after being without a job for a month.

On Oct. 29 he was acquitted by a jury of the charges, but in the meantime, he was still battling another court case without a lawyer.

According to Kelliehan, all three arrests occurred simply because he was outspoken about administrative policies and would not bend under pressure.

"How can I explain things that just didn't happen?" Kelliehan asks. "All I did at Willowbrook was speak out against things and the things I spoke out about were injustices. The people know what injustices I'm talking about."

Now 26-years old, the father of two children with another on the way, Kelliehan attempted to interpret the numerous counsel slips, allegations and notices of dismissal...one effective April 5 and another effective April 12.

Many of the charges leading to his termination claim that while on the job, Kelliehan was abusive to his supervisors, insubordinate and lax in his duties.

He, however, claims to have had an impeccable work record and a genuine concern for the residents and employes at the institution.

"I used to speak out to the employes because the union wouldn't do anything. I used to tell them their rights because the union refused to tell them their rights," Kelliehan stated.

Now 12 months after the fact, Kelliehan is still without a job, finds it hard to provide food and shelter for his family, is in heavy debt and has lost close to 90 pounds as a result of the lengthy judicial dilemma.

"The only one who really knew what was going on and I didn't have to explain myself to was the Lord," Kelliehan stated.

He still wants to know why he was subjected to such harassment and turmoil.

"There isn't one charge that I've been brought up on that I can't disprove...not one," he said. "If a man is going to be as insubordinate and as outspoken as they say I was, why is it that when I get into a court I have nothing to say? Why is it that when I get into a hearing I have nothing to say? One thing always seems to contradict the other about what they say.

"Everything in here is basically a lie or the truth has been distorted...I'm just glad it's over." Or is it?