

IS THERE REALLY JUSTICE FOR ALL?

When Public Officials engage in Conspiracies to Cover up Potential Criminal Acts – Far too often the Guilty Parties are not held Accountable by the Criminal Justice System.

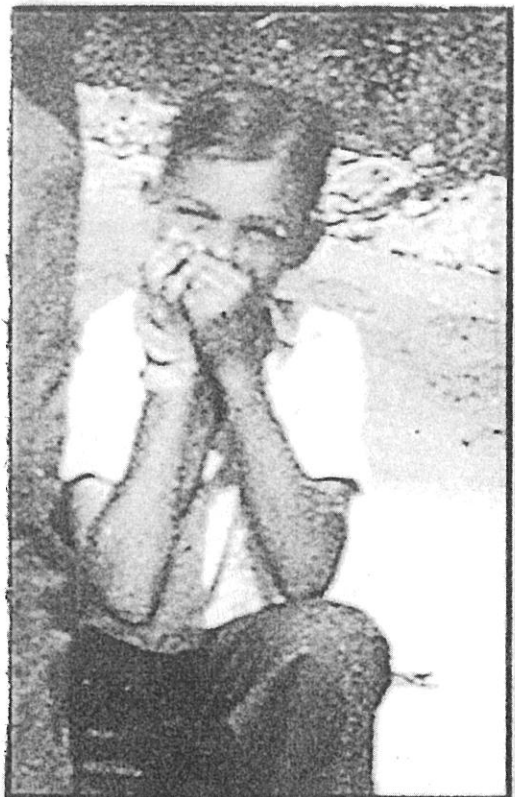
HOW THEN WE ASK:

Are Families of the Victims to Obtain Closure and Justice?

“My Mother Was Never the Same”

Ovell Krell’s last contact with her brother George Owen Smith took place back in 1940. At the young age of 14, George was sent off to one of Florida’s most brutal Reform Schools, the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys located in Marianna. According to what few facts are known today, it is said that young George and another teen had been riding around town in a car that had been reported as stolen. From the date of his arrest in December 1940, until August 2014, no one ever really knew what actually happened to George. In fact, no one today knows much more than they did back in 1940.

Here’s what we do know: Ovell Krell’s mother’s last contact with her 14 year-old son George took place sometime during December, 1940, shortly after he arrived at the Dozier School for Boys. That contact came in the form of a letter that George wrote to his mother advising that he was at the Dozier Reform School. George’s concerned mother



14 year-old George Owen Smith

What really happened to 14 year-old George Owen Smith At Florida's Dozier State Reform School?

immediately wrote a letter to the superintendent of the Reform School, Millard Davidson, asking him about her son. Shortly thereafter, she received a reply to her inquiry stating that no one at the reform school knew where her son George was.

Just a few short weeks later, in January 1941, Dozier officials apparently had a change of heart, and advised George Owen Smith's family members that George had somehow escaped from the Reform School. More troubling was the news that young George had been found dead someplace under a house. Family members immediately requested that George's remains be taken to a local Funeral Home and began preparation to travel to Marianna to claim his body. Upon their arrival at the Dozier School, officials led the teen victim's family members to the site of an unmarked freshly dug grave. There, they were told, lay their 14 year-old son. Today, George Owen Smith's sister, Ms. Krell, who is now 85 years-old, says that; *"My mother was never the same"* when referring to the moment the family was shown George's grave site. According to Ms. Krell, her mother would spend the rest of her life *"sitting on the front porch each and every night hoping that somehow, her child would find his way home."*

MANY TROUBLING QUESTIONS HAVE YET TO BE ANSWERED

Ms. Krell is not alone when it comes to dealing with the heartbreak and pain associated with the unexplained loss of a child.

In 2009 the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) undertook an inquiry into the unexplained disappearance and deaths of dozens of young boys at the Dozier Reform School. The result of that investigation yielded little except denials that

anything wrong had taken place at Dozier. However, the FDLE report did indicate that investigators had identified some 31 gravesites that were located on the sprawling 1,400 acres that make up the school grounds.

Following the closing of the Marianna Reform School in 2011, a more intensive inquiry, headed by anthropologist and researchers from the University of South Florida began. It is worth noting here that the efforts of these anthropologists and researchers to excavate suspected grave sites on Dozier School grounds were strongly opposed by many, up to and including, Florida Governor Rick Scott. Facing mounting criticism, Florida State Officials relented and, with specific time sensitive stipulations, allowed the excavations to take place. So far, researchers have positively identified no less than 55 grave sites, almost double the number reported by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in 2009.

The site on school grounds where the 55 remains were located was known as the side used to house children of color. Given that for many, many years of its one hundred plus years of operation, the Dozier Reform School operated as a segregated institution, there is every reason to believe that it is indeed possible, if not even probable, that many additional children are buried in unmarked graves located on what was once called the white side of the institution.

THE DOZIER REFORM SCHOOL WAS A PLACE KNOWN FOR BRUTALITY

For decades, Florida's Dozier State Reform School for boys had a reputation as a barbaric and brutal institution. Countless allegations of physical and sexual abuse of boys confined there were commonplace. No one listened, after all, almost all



Chamber of Horror
Dozier reform school's infamous "White House"

of those complaints originated with the victims themselves, many of whom were troubled children. A number of former inmates have described a "chamber of horror," often referred to as "The White House." That particular structure was a white stand alone building that was located some distance away from the main housing area at the institution. The graphic details of the horrors alleged to have been inflicted upon children within that structure defy any form of rationalization. A few of the former Dozier inmates have since gone as far as to allege that children were killed in the white house, and their bodies disposed of in unmarked graves by Dozier staff.

A COLD CASE GETS HOT

There are a number of factors, including the following, that require further evaluation if the complete story is to be told.

- The long and well documented brutal torrid history of the Dozier state reform school
- The countless allegations of abuse and quite possibly, worse events at the school by former inmates
- The discovery of some 55 grave sites, 24 more than Florida law enforcement authorities claimed existed in 2009
- The initial December 1940 claim by Dozier officials that "no one at the school knew where George Owen Smith was"
- The subsequent admission by authorities to family members that young George had escaped from Dozier
- The fact that George Owen Smith's family was led to a gravesite at the Dozier reform school despite their timely request that his body should immediately be taken to a local funeral home
- The undisputed fact that anthropologists have now positively identified the remains located at one of the 55 burial sites as those of 14 year-old George Owen Smith

When we fail to pursue justice, our culpability exceeds that of the perpetrators

A quote by – 429SCJ (August 10th, 2014) <http://www.northescambia.com>

All of the above circumstances beg the question: ***“What really happened to 14 year-old George Owen Smith at Florida’s Dozier State Reform School?”***

Perhaps we will never know the answer to that question. However, there is encouraging news. Anthropologists at the University of South Florida continue their work to identify the remains of the 54 additional children they have discovered. Perhaps, with a little luck they will also be able to determine the cause of death in some of those cases.

Could 14 year-old George Owen Smith have been a victim of foul play? During the 1940’s, 1950’s and well into the 1960’s, it was not at all uncommon for both male and female teenage reform school inmates (especially those who dared escape), to be severely beaten by staff. Escaping from any form of a correctional setting be it a state reform school or a prison has, and still continues to be to this very day, viewed as the ultimate transgression upon authority.

When taken in total, the as yet not fully explained tragic deaths of children at the Dozier State Reform School raise a number of very troubling questions. **Could there have been a state sponsored conspiracy lasting for decades to cover up the abuse and possible murder of children at Dozier?** Until such time as all of these, and many other questions are addressed, skepticism will remain.

The Southern Florida University team of researchers headed by Dr. Erin Kimmerle, have now concluded that a minimum of 98 people, including many young boys aged 6 to 18 years-old died at the Dozier Reform School between 1914 and 1973. They have also determined that at least 7 of those boys, including George Owen Smith, died following escape attempts. Just as shocking is the fact that an additional 20 boys mysteriously died within three months of their arrival at the reform school. One

could reasonable ask; ***“Were those 20 boys rebellious to a point that they may have resisted authority and suffered deadly consequences?”***

Following the identification of the remains of George Owen Smith in August 2014, United States Senator Bill Nelson was quoted as stating: ***“So that brings closure to one family, but think about all the other families that still don’t know.”*** Senator Nelson, who led efforts to secure federal funding from the United States Department of Justice for DNA testing on the remains unearthed at the Dozier site praised family members who had flown in from all over America to give DNA samples to USF researchers. Highly critical of efforts to thwart researchers, Senator Nelson noted, ***“This dirty little secret has been covered up for a better part of a century.”*** ***“It’s finally coming out.”***

A CASE THAT DEMANDS ACCOUNTABILITY

Should anthropologists and scientific researchers reach a determination that any of the remains of the 55 children they are now examining show signs of anything other than death by natural causes, justice for the families of those children will demand accountability. That accountability should begin with an in-depth investigation by the United States Department of Justice. If that investigation reveals that one or more of those 55 children, or any other children still buried at the Dozier site, were murdered, as some have claimed, federal authorities should hunt down and prosecute those responsible with the very same vigor as they have employed when hunting down those suspected of being war criminals. The abuse and or murder of defenseless children being held in the custody of a state agency is by anyone’s definition, a crime against humanity.

Article by: P.J. O’Shea for Justice-Today. See related article – America’s Often Hidden National Tragedy-Physical & Sexual Abuse of Detained Juvenile Offenders. www.realcostofprisons.org