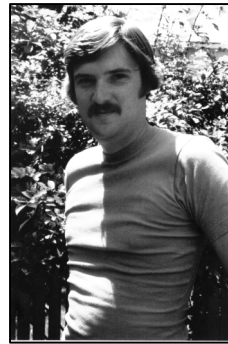


For Immediate Release
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Renaissance Man ‘Ups the Establishment’

~Nurse Goes to Jail for Patient Justice~



*Michael Newell III,
then and now.*

Philadelphia, PA; 1971 – 2007 - - When he picked his son up from the Northeast Police Detective Division on Harbison Avenue in Philadelphia, Michael Newell told his namesake that his own father, a Philadelphia cop, had died at Byberry, and that he had done the right thing.

Established in 1907 and closed in 1990, the Philadelphia State Hospital at Byberry has become the stuff of urban legends, with websites describing teenagers chased by criminally insane, spittle-flecked former patients brandishing machetes and the ghosts of abused patients lurking in crumbling hallways. The reality of Byberry is an American tragedy; a facility that was founded as a place of care and healing degenerating into a *Snake Pit*, a *Bedlam*, a *Madhouse*, replete with filth and neglect and, of course, the specter of questionable medical treatments of yore: the lobotomy, electro-shock therapy and the like.

In a description of Byberry as he found it in 1948, author Albert Deutsch observes, "As I passed through some of Byberry's wards, I was reminded of the pictures of the Nazi concentration camps. I entered a building swarming with naked humans herded like cattle and treated with less concern, pervaded by a fetid odor so heavy, so nauseating, that the stench seemed to have almost a physical existence of its own." ([The Shame of the States](#)).

By 1967, state legislators charged that, "a cloak of secrecy has hidden deplorable sanitary conditions as well as a lack of proper care and security" at Byberry, where 5000 patients were being cared for by attendants whom found themselves in charge of a staggering 150 patients per shift (*Bucks County Courier Times*, 12/26/1967).

By the time Michael Newell III ran afoul of the law in 1971, he was a psychology student at LaSalle University working as a psychiatric aide-trainee at Byberry. Witness to appalling neglect and bureaucratic inertia, and unable to generate interest in improving conditions from within, Newell, at the tender age of 23,

decided to bring attention to the plight of his vulnerable charges by engaging in a civilly disobedient manner.

The Vietnam War was raging, Lt. Calley had just been convicted of war crimes against civilians of My Lai, John Lennon's sublime anthem *Imagine* had just been released, a gallon of gas cost 40¢, and the 26th Amendment had just lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. It was in this atmosphere that Mike Newell decided to "*stick it to the man,*" by handing out leaflets protesting the atrocious conditions at the hospital in the lobby of the auditorium in which the Superintendent of the facility was to deliver a "State of the Units" address to staff and press.

A janitor, a fire marshall and a security guard assaulted the young man, dragging him to a security van, throwing him inside, and sitting on him until the police arrived. Without a warrant, he was arrested and taken into custody and interrogated for two hours before they recognized that he had done nothing illegal, at which time his father was summoned to take him home. The next day he was fired from his position with Byberry.

It was a "Eureka" moment for Newell, a registered nurse and published author who founded LifeSpan Care Management, a company whose mission is to counsel and advocate, to intervene on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Honoring his obligation to the mute victims of a healthcare system gone mad, Newell and his nurse employees advise clients on every aspect of their care, from reviewing their medical records to attending doctor appointments.

A client recently sent a letter saying, "You were a life saver in my time of crisis. I am appreciative of your support on my behalf. I've been fortunate to have had LifeSpan services. Your skills, experiences, availability as well as approachability are admirable." -Mary Bergman

The Philadelphia State Hospital at Byberry is in the process of being torn down now, but Mike Newell and his colleagues at LifeSpan Care Management are helping people find the information, connections, resources and perhaps most importantly, advice that they need to negotiate the medical maze. "It's like having a nurse in the family," says Newell. "We organize and put the medical records on a USB flash drive, so they're up-to-date and accessible at all times. We get to know the patient and their family so we know what their proclivities and wishes are, their fears and aversions. Then everyone involved can go about

their business, knowing that a trusted 'family member' with a medical degree is standing sentry."

Imagine.

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