

## **WHEN AND WHERE WILL IT END?**

by: Bill Clark, California

I'm sure you've had your share of nightmares, but what if you woke up one morning after dreaming you had been wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death?

Imagine your conviction and death sentence being a product of perjured testimony by police and civilian witnesses along with evidence which had been manufactured, hidden, destroyed, altered and consistently lied about by prosecutors. Imagine going through the actual process of being arrested, fingerprinted, strip-searched and photographed. Imagine the process of being formally charged, transferred to court and going through a preliminary hearing and trial.

Have you ever thought about what such a chain of events would do to your life and to the lives of your family and friends?

Well, for a moment, I'd like you to think about such a predicament! Imagine the police coming to your home in the middle of the night, waking up you and your family, frightening both you and them by placing you in handcuffs, arresting you for a horrific crime and taking you to jail!

Imagine the ride in the police car as you are taken to jail. Think about the frightened, confused, agitated state you'd be in. Think about your family, your friends and your employer as you wonder how you are going to explain what has happened. Think about the realities of life in jail. The intense loneliness, the staggering depression, the agonizing stress, the gross mistreatment, etc. Then imagine sitting in jail for fourteen, fifteen or sixteen months while you try to explain to any and everyone you come in contact with, that you are indeed innocent. But, unfortunately, no one will listen!

Imagine how the drastic changes in diet and living conditions would affect you. No longer will you be allowed to go to your favorite restaurants, the health club, the theater, etc. No longer will you be able to enjoy the comfort of your nice warm bed, your private bath and shower or your computer games. No longer will you be able to go for a walk in the park, for a drive down the coast, window shopping in the mall or simply to your refrigerator to grab a snack!

While sitting in jail awaiting trial, imagine having the judge appoint you an attorney who has "bought" into the police and prosecution's theory that you are the culprit. Imagine having someone who's "supposed" to be working on your behalf ignoring and thumbing his nose at your claims of innocence. Imagine yourself as you explain your innocence to your court appointed attorney while providing him with specific instructions on locating the evidence to prove it, yet he takes absolutely no steps to follow up on your instructions. Imagine telling this same attorney that the prosecution's claims and evidence are indeed false, yet the attorney does absolutely nothing to challenge, disprove or investigate the prosecution's case.

Imagine beginning a trial where you're selecting a jury of your alleged "peers", yet not one of the people sitting in the jury box when the trial begins is of your race. Imagine the looks on the jury members' faces as the prosecutor presents his evidence while pointing at you and urging them to find you guilty.

Imagine what you would be thinking and feeling as your family and friends sit in the courtroom as the prosecutor's "handpicked" witnesses commit numerous acts of perjury with the prosecution's knowledge, blessing and assistance.

Imagine your thoughts and feelings as your attorney comes to your holding cell to tell you that the jury has reached a verdict. Imagine yourself being led into the courtroom, sitting down and listening as the guilty verdict is announced. Imagine watching yourself on television being labeled a "monster", a "menace to society", a "person who should never be allowed back into the free world".

Imagine coming back the day you are sentenced and as the judge hands down the most harsh sentence he can, he refers to you using the same vile, evil, sinister phrases you previously heard on television. Imagine the bus ride to prison. Here you are on the bus with guys who have lived most of their lives in the revolving doors of penal institutions. These are now your peers: murderers, rapists, child molesters, thieves, con men, etc. Imagine not having anything in common with most of these guys, yet here you are living with and interacting with them on a daily basis.

Imagine being locked in a 6 foot by 9 foot cell 20 hours per day with no means or method to alleviate the depression, the loneliness or the stress that envelopes you. Imagine the only things you have to look forward to are a letter, a telephone call or a visit from a loved one. And worse, imagine having all your family and friends abandon you, ignore you and deny your existence.

At this point you've obviously lost your job, your savings account has been depleted and you are left with no means of financial support. You have no money to hire a competent, experienced, compassionate appellate attorney. Imagine your mental and emotional state after years of degrading, dehumanizing treatment. This is your worst nightmare!

I should know because for me it's no nightmare. It's a reality. Something I deal with each and every day of my life. And for me, the nightmare began September 22, 1991 in the Orange County Jail located at 550 North Flower Street in Santa Ana, California.

When and where will it end?