

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUED BIAC  
FUNDING**

**GARY ALLEN**

**03 MARCH, 2011**

**ON BEHALF OF THE EVER INCREASING POPULATION OF PEOPLE WITH ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT, AND AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE STATEWIDE CONNECTICUT ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY ADVISORY BOARD, I'D LIKE TO THANK EACH MEMBER OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THEIR ATTENDANCE AND FOR HEARING MY TESTIMONY TODAY.**

**WHILE I WAS ENLISTED IN THE NAVY, IN DECEMBER OF 1983, I WAS RETURNING BACK TO THE SUBBASE IN GROTON FROM HARTFORD. I FELL ASLEEP BEHIND THE WHEEL OF MY CAR AND WAS THROWN THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, SUBSEQUENTLY LANDING ON RT 2 IN LEBANON. I WAS INITIALLY TAKEN BY AMBULANCE TO BACKUS HOSPITAL IN NORWICH.**

**ONCE I WAS STABILIZED I WAS FLOWN TO BETHESDA NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER IN MARYLAND. I REMAINED COMATOSE DURING THIS TIME. I WAS AT THAT MEDICAL CENTER UNTIL MARCH OF 1984. I WAS THEN TRANSFERRED BACK TO CONNECTICUT, TO THE WEST HAVEN VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL. I SPENT 6 MONTHS THERE IN REHABILITATION BEFORE BEING DISCHARGED TO MY PARENTS' HOME IN FAIRFIELD.**

**FOLLOWING MY DISCHARGE FROM THE VA HOSPITAL IN 1984 I LEARNED ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION. I JOINED A SUPPORT GROUP IN BRIDGEPORT & WENT TO MONTHLY MEETINGS, IT WAS A COMFORT KNOWING THAT THERE WAS AN ORGANIZATION FOR PEOPLE WITH BRAIN INJURIES ~ THAT I WASN'T ALONE.**

**I MOVED TO WEST HARTFORD IN 1989 TO ATTEND A TECHNICAL SCHOOL IN HARTFORD TO LEARN TO BE A CNC MACHINIST. I WAS SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL BUT WAS FIRED AFTER 3 WEEKS ON THE JOB DUE TO MY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR; I NEEDED TO FIND A PLACE TO HELP ME WITH THESE ISSUES. AT THE TIME THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BECAME FRUSTRATED WITH ME ~ THEY HADN'T DEALT WITH VETERANS WITH BRAIN INJURIES VERY OFTEN, SO I WAS ON MY OWN. I CONTACTED THE CONNECTICUT TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION AT THAT TIME FOR SOME HELP. THEY ASSISTED ME IN FINDING A PROGRAM THAT WOULD MEET MY NEEDS BY REFERRING ME TO THE EASTER SEALS STRUCTURED INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM IN HARTFORD - THAT WAS IN 1992.**

**I STARTED BECOMING MORE ACTIVE WITH THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION AT THAT TIME, BECOMING A BOARD MEMBER IN 1992 FOR A 6 YEAR TERM. THIS WAS A BUSY TIME FOR THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION, WE WENT TO WASHINGTON TO SUPPORT THE BRADY BILL IN THE SUMMER OF 1993, WE HELPED DEVELOP THE FIRST MEDICAID WAIVER PROGRAM IN 1995-6.**

**THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION WORKED HARD TO**

**GET CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY ISSUES FOR PEOPLE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM. WE WERE SUCCESSFUL AND NOW PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING BETTER SUPPORTS. BIAC ALSO WORKED WITH DSS TO PROMOTE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ABI MEDICAID WAIVER BY THE END OF THE 1990'S.**

**IN 2005 A MEMBER OF THE BIAC STAFF ACTUALLY DROVE ME DOWN TO THE VA HOSPITAL IN WEST HAVEN TO HELP ME GET THE VA TO PROVIDE ME WITH SOME ASSISTANCE AT MY HOME IN WEST HARTFORD. SHE AND MY VA SOCIAL WORKER WERE ABLE TO DISCUSS MY NEEDS & WHAT THE VA WOULD PROVIDE ME WITH.**

**I HAVE LOOKED FORWARD TO THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION'S GET TOGETHERS FOR SURVIVORS THROUGHOUT EACH YEAR.**

**THERE'S AN ANNUAL VALENTINES PARTY AT THE WEST HARTFORD TOWN HALL IN THE WINTER, A PICNIC AT WICKHAM PARK IN EAST HARTFORD IN THE SUMMER.**

**IN SEPTEMBER WE HAVE HAD AN ANNUAL RETREAT WEEKEND, WITH A BIG PARTY SATURDAY NIGHT & THE ANNUAL MEETING FOR BOARD MEMBERS PRECEDING THAT. INITIALLY THE EVENT WAS HELD AT CAMP HEMLOCKS IN HEBRON, MORE RECENTLY IT HAS BEEN HELD IN ASHFORD. THIS HAS HELPED ME IN BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE AND HAS HELPED ME IN THE SOCIAL AREA.**

**DUE TO FUNDING ISSUES OVER THE PAST COUPLE YEARS, THIS ANNUAL EVENT HAS BEEN SHORTENED, AND LAST YEAR IT WAS ELIMINATED COMPLETELY. THIS WAS DUE TO FUNDING BEING CUT A COUPLE YEARS BACK, MORE AND MORE EACH YEAR.**

**THERE IS NO OTHER AGENCY IN THIS STATE THAT PROVIDES THESE SERVICES, NOWHERE ELSE TO GO FOR SURVIVORS OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY. BIAC ACTUALLY SAVES THE STATE MONEY EVERY DAY THROUGH FEWER INSTITUTIONALIZATIONS, ER VISITS AND INCARCERATIONS.**

**SINCE 2002 I HAVE BEEN PART OF SEVERAL STATE COMMITTEES SERVING THE BRAIN INJURED POPULATION IN CONNECTICUT. I AM CURRENTLY SERVING ON THE STATEWIDE CONNECTICUT ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY ADVISORY BOARD AND KNOW THAT WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION, MY LIFE AND THE LIVES OF SO MANY SURVIVORS I HAVE MET OVER THE YEARS WOULD NOT BE WHAT THEY ARE TODAY.**

**I WOULD LIKE TO THANK EACH MEMBER OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FOR LISTENING TO MY TESTIMONY TODAY IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUED FUNDING FOR THE BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT. I FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT THE HELP THAT THEY PROVIDE TO ME AND TO SO MANY OTHERS WITH BRAIN INJURIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.**

**THANK YOU**