

Brown vs. Army—Final Round

Fifth Estate Collective

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The United States Army has begun what looks like its final move to rid itself of Jerry Brown, the GI who exposed the illegal physicals being given at Fort Wayne in an interview with this newspaper last May.

Even though the office of the Inspector General of the Army has admitted in a letter that Army personnel have been “cutting corners” during physicals, the brass are still trying to make Brown accept a punitive transfer to Ft. Jackson, S.C.

Jerry was to have reported to his new assignment by midnight of July 17. but he decided to stay and fight the transfer in Federal court. On July 21 his attorney, Dennis James, obtained a court order temporarily restraining the Army from taking Jerry out of Detroit. A hearing on whether to make the order permanent was scheduled for July 24 before Federal Judge Stephen Roth.

The letter from the Inspector General's office was addressed to Michigan Sen. Hart and said that there “were procedural irregularities” at the fort and that they resulted mainly from “a failure to pay attention to detail.” Right, details like throwing away blood samples and marking them all passed and cheating on height and weight requirements.

Col. Ralph Hughlett, who signed the letter to Hart, said, “the irregularities appear to have been founded in the desire of the majority of the personnel involved to process the large number of inductees as expeditiously as possible.”

“That is exactly what we have charged. That the induction center was violating procedures in order to get as many men into the military machine as quickly as possible without regard for their physical well-being. The letter from Col. Hughlett also admits that even after the first criticisms were made public and corrections were allegedly ordered, that “corrective actions were not consistently and systematically taken.”

Maj. Clyde Edwards, who commanded Ft. Wayne when the charges were made public, has been relieved and is on leave pending assignment to Vietnam. The medical officer in charge, Capt. Richard Floyd, has left the Army.

The fate of the GI whose only concern was “to see that the Army performs its medicals properly and fairly” is in doubt. If the federal judge refuses to make permanent the order keeping Jerry in Detroit, he will automatically become subject to arrest for being absent without official leave. Attorney James is pessimistic about getting a permanent order, however, he said this is the first time in the country that a judge has prevented the seizure of a GI protesting a punitive transfer.

Jerry has been in the Army for two years and has only six months left to serve, yet he still plans to fight through the military and civilian courts any attempt to penalize him for his statements.

The main legal point turns on the question of a transfer for punitive reasons. “What is happening to Jerry is just an informal method of punishing him for exercising his First Amendment rights,- Attorney James said. “They are attempting to intimidate my client and others from protesting abuses within the Armed Services.”

Through a call in this newspaper last issue and over WABX, Jerry asked that men who felt they had been given improper physicals at Ft. Wayne contact the Fifth Estate office and tell their experience. Over 40 men responded,

relaying a variety of horror stories. More statements are still needed, so if you were bummed out by your physical, call us at 831-6800 or write 1107 W. Warren, Detroit 48201.

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