

New York State Coalition for Adult Home Reform

Brooklyn Manor: A Timeline of Tragedy

Since at least 1991, Brooklyn Manor and its owner, Benito Fernandez, have repeatedly been cited for serious deficiencies relating to the health, safety and welfare of residents, according to the *New York Times* and state inspection reports. Deficiencies cited include: lack of heat; swarming flies; staff shortages; failure to provide medical aid; employee assaults on residents; use of demeaning names or public bathing as punishments for residents who complain about conditions. The issues are:

- 1991 New York State inspectors document and cite the owner for taking every penny of a resident's retirement benefits, totaling \$45,626.
- 1992 New York State orders the administrator removed after charges that the administrator falsified records to make it appear as if she had attended classes required for administrators. The administrator was Mr. Fernandez's wife, former State Senator Nellie Santiago.
- 1996 New York State Department of Social Services, the licensing agency at that time, refuses to renew Fernandez's license. The decision is upheld by an administrative law judge. Senior state officials subsequently withdrew the case against Mr. Fernandez, rebuked the inspectors and gave oversight responsibility to a different team of inspectors on Long Island. No reason has been given for the reversal of the state's decision.
- 2001 State inspectors cite numerous violations including: absent staff members – one evening one resident was left in charge of the entire 216 bed home; chaotic distribution of psychotropic medication; inaccurate, incomplete or non-existent records, kitchen and rooms infested with flies.
- 2002 New York State conducts emergency inspections of 23 homes with the worst inspection records. Brooklyn Manor was found to have the worst and most serious violations. In addition to the problems found in 2001, inspectors found: an administrator withholding residents' allowances to punish them; failure to disclose that a resident attempted suicide; failure to account for \$11,000 in residents' money.
- 2004 **March:** Brooklyn Manor is placed on the "Do Not Refer" list. As a result, hospitals, and other public referral sources are not permitted to make referrals to the home.
- 2004 **July:** Charles Dunbar is referred by New York City to Brooklyn Manor from the Wards Island homeless shelter in Manhattan.
- 2005 Brooklyn Manor wins court case and is removed from the "Do Not Refer" list. The ruling was based on a previous court decision finding that state inspection reports are invalid if they do not list proposed remedies.

May 8, Charles Dunbar dies in a fire at Brooklyn Manor

Source: New York Times