



Back in February Deadline [went behind the boycott of popular Atlanta sci-fi convention DragonCon](#), whose co-founder [Ed Kramer](#) avoided trial on child molestation charges for over a decade while receiving income from the annual fan fest. This morning in Gwinnett County, GA, the embattled Kramer pleaded guilty to three counts of child molestation and was [sentenced](#) to 34 months under house arrest — instead of the 20-year term recommended by the Gwinnett County DA's office. It's the latest apparent break for Kramer, whose health complaints led to numerous delays in a 13-year series of evasive legal motions believed to have been financed by his reported \$150K per year (in 2011) shareholder cash flow from [DragonCon](#). But as Gwinnett County District Attorney Danny Porter explained to Deadline today, "We wanted a resolution of the case and the victims

wanted a resolution of the case and they agreed to the recommendations." Under the court's nine-condition agreement, if the 52-year-old Kramer violates even a single term he could land back in prison for up to 60 years. Those include failing to pay each victim a \$100K restitution, violating his house arrest, or coming in contact with any person under the age of 16. "I believe he'll violate his probation and we'll have him in prison eventually," said Porter, who has been on the Kramer case since 2005. "I think he'll most likely try and figure out a way to come in contact with children, and that's where I'll get him."

Meanwhile, DragonCon's organizers have cause for relief. Kramer co-created the popular Atlanta sci-fi and pop culture convention in 1987 and until last week was receiving income from the booming fest as a 31% minority shareholder. DragonCon had long come under fire for their connection to Kramer and outrage came to a head earlier this year when a group led by horror author Nancy Collins and Transformers producer Don Murphy called for a boycott of the event. Kramer hasn't had an official role in the fan fest since 2000 but the cloud lingered over DragonCon and its remaining shareholders. Last week the organization officially severed financial ties to Kramer when they closed a payoff settlement merging DragonCon owner Dragon*Con/ACE Inc. with new corporation Dragon Con, Inc. The org's board filed in July but Kramer initially dissented, forcing DragonCon's shareholders to sue to force his cash-out. "There were lots of reasons I did this and one was to divest him of his DragonCon profits," DA Porter explained. "Based on numbers I heard a third of it will go to the victims."



Kramer was initially arrested in 2000 after two boys aged 13 and 15 alleged he'd abused them for a four-year period. A third victim subsequently came forward and joined the case in 2003. Kramer staved off trial through legal maneuvering and health complaints for years; while awaiting trial in Gwinnett County this year, he [reportedly](#) filed 370 requests and complaints in six months, averaging two per day. He was taken off of house arrest in 2009, but was arrested in Connecticut in 2011 after he was allegedly found alone in a hotel room with a 14 year old. Kramer today pleaded guilty to three of six counts of child molestation pertaining to three victims.

<http://www.creativeloafing.com/news/article/13001189/13yearold-not-first-to-accuse-dragoncon-founder-of-molestation>

According to Investigator Curtis Clemons, a 16-year-old boy told police in 1997 that Kramer met him

through DragonCon and had been molesting him since he was 11. Kramer was arrested in that case, but the young man later recanted his account and charges were dropped.

The district attorney's office may contact the earlier accuser and ask him to testify in the latest case, says Clemons, who is assigned to the county's child protection unit. "We can't force him to do so, but the DA's office may recontact him about it," Clemons says.

Kramer is employed by the Metro Regional Educational Service Agency as a technical consultant to 11 metro schools. His most-recent alleged victim is the son of a woman Kramer met through a telephone dating service, a woman who says Kramer and she never had sex during their almost three-year relationship, which ended when her son alleged that Kramer had molested him.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130512110552/http://www.atlantamagazine.com/features/2012/9/1/dragoncon-ed-kramer-child-molestation/print>

The stranger arrived at the movie set late in the evening. Crew members preparing for a long night's shoot were told the short and stocky, heavily bearded man had come to watch over one of the film's stars, a fourteen-year-old boy whose mother was leaving in a few hours for a flight to California. But that didn't explain why the stranger, introduced as Ed Kramer, was busily assembling a shoulder-mounted camera rig to follow the cast and crew into the woods.

The moon was close to full that night, and as the group hiked along an uphill path to the shooting location, makeup artist Krystal Phillips felt uncomfortable. The man seemed to be filming a lot. *Creepy*, she thought. It was mid-September of last year, and Phillips and her crewmates had already spent a week at Camp Katoya, an old Girl Scouts camp on the rural outskirts of Milford, Connecticut, that was serving as a location for *The Penny Dreadful Picture Show*, a middling-budget anthology horror film. In the segment they were shooting, teen scouts are taken on an overnight "snipe hunt" by older scouts trying to scare them, but the campers must fight for their lives when a real monster attacks.

With delicate features and flaxen hair, the young model and actor whom Kramer accompanied had more than a dozen credits in short films and TV projects to his name before coming to Connecticut. Still, Phillips felt protective of this "very adorable, skinny blond kid." After filming a scene in which the boy gets mysteriously "slimed," Phillips took him into a nearby cabin to clean him off. Kramer followed them inside.

"I had [the boy] take his shirt off and Ed wanted to help," she recalls. "I was not okay with him wiping down the boy's chest, so I said, 'I've got this. It'll be quicker if I do it.'"

A few minutes later, when she saw Kramer headed toward the room where she'd sent the boy to change, Phillips nudged production assistant Nick Vallas, who intercepted Kramer before he reached the door. While Kramer looked through the handful of release forms Vallas shoved at him, the boy finished dressing.

As the sun was rising and the crew was wrapping up for the day, Vallas left to drive Kramer and the boy, along with two other young actors and their mothers, to the Super 8, where many of the cast had been staying.

At the motel, Vallas dropped off his passengers and took on a new one: the boy's mother, who needed a ride to the train station. The previous day, before Kramer had arrived, word had gotten around the set that he was accused of molesting three boys in Georgia years before. Although Kramer hadn't been convicted, Vallas felt concerned enough to return to the motel after dropping off the boy's mother.

The boy answered the door of room 101 holding a Styrofoam cup, his hair combed. He was wearing just a towel, Vallas later told police. Kramer was standing toward the back of the room, his camera equipment nearby.

Outside, Vallas called Phillips, who'd been Googling Kramer. At seven that morning, she called her mother, who phoned Georgia authorities. By noon Milford police had Kramer in custody. He was charged with "risk of injury to a minor," a broad statute under Connecticut law that covers sexual assault, placing a child in physical danger, and a range of other crimes.

Squinting sleepily into the camera for his mug shot, with well-defined bags under his heavy-lidded eyes, Kramer

appeared considerably older than his fifty years. His beard was graying and unkempt. His haggard face showed no expression.

On a late Saturday afternoon in May 1987, a thirteen-year-old boy named Richard Dinsmore was sitting by himself, leafing through the program guide at the Atlanta Fantasy Fair, an outsider even among his fellow outsiders. He'd discovered the world of conventions a few months earlier and had talked friends into going, but their interest waned as his grew.

Now, as he waited in the Omni Hotel lobby to be picked up by his mother, a roundish man with dark hair and a full beard walked up and asked if he was there for the convention. They began talking. The man, who introduced himself as Ed Kramer, asked about the boy's interests—at that time, *Elfquest* comic books—and boasted about his own fantasy convention, which was still a few months from its debut.

Dinsmore was immediately impressed with Kramer's knowledge of comics, movies, and games. "Magnetic" is how Dinsmore remembers him.

At twenty-six, Kramer already had an impressive resume outside of the fantasy/sci-fi world. After getting a master's in health administration from Emory, he'd spent much of the 1980s working in grant management and research for public health agencies and private substance-abuse firms. At various times, he volunteered at the DeKalb children's shelter, where he counseled troubled teens, and even cochaired a foster-care review panel for juvenile courts. He also moonlighted as a photographer, shooting concerts for local papers like *Open City*.

Dinsmore was excited to hear Kramer's plans for his own convention. It was to be called DragonCon, after the Dragon Alliance, an organizing group he'd formed with five fellow gaming geeks. Kramer had already scouted out the local competition—Magnum Opus Con, Dixie-Trek, PhoenixCon, Atlanta Comics Festival—but found their programming too narrowly focused or their presentations too amateurish. His festival would be comprehensive, he explained, giving equal time to role-playing gamers, Trekkies, anime fans, comic book buffs, and Tolkien scholars. The two exchanged numbers. Growing up without a father at home, Dinsmore yearned for someone like Kramer who could be both friend and mentor. And when he first saw Kramer's home, he was hooked. Crammed with fantasy-game figures, horror videos, comic books, and concert posters autographed by Gene Simmons and other rock-god heroes, the otherwise unremarkable two-story house on a cul-de-sac in Duluth was a fanboy's playground. Also, unlike Dinsmore's peers, Kramer had a car and plenty of spending money. He took the boy to Braves games and surprised him with concert tickets. They went to dinner often, which could be somewhat embarrassing, Dinsmore recalls, as Kramer was a "nightmare customer," frequently complaining about the food and service. There was just one thing standing in the way of the boy's new friendship. Early on, Kramer came over to the Dinsmore house to introduce himself to Richard's mother. "My mom thought Ed was a creepy dude and couldn't understand why he wanted to hang out with me," Dinsmore says. "I think she used the word *inappropriate* in every conversation we ever had about him."

Still, as a divorced parent working full-time while raising three boys, she was stretched thin, Dinsmore says, and often didn't have the time or energy to argue about whether her thirteen-year-old could go out with his grown-up friend.

For at least two years, Dinsmore slept over at Kramer's house nearly every other weekend and stayed in his hotel suite during DragonCon. They'd watch movies (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is the raciest title he can remember), play Dungeons & Dragons, and talk about sci-fi books, rock albums, and other things that occupy the minds of teenage boys.

Except girls. "I never knew Ed to have a girlfriend," says Dinsmore, adding that Kramer never asked him about school crushes or mentioned women in his own life. At the time, he says, this didn't seem odd, perhaps because Kramer was five foot six and roughly 200 pounds, with skin covered in flaky red splotches from his virulent psoriasis, and shoulders coated with dandruff.

Still, Kramer had a self-confidence—his vanity license plate read "MAGNUS," Latin for "great," Dinsmore recalls—that made him easy to admire. "He always thought he was smarter than anyone else in the room," Dinsmore says. The only time he felt uncomfortable around his older friend was at night, when the young Dinsmore would lie down on a cot next to his host's bed. Sometimes Kramer would crouch next to the boy in the dark and ask to hypnotize him.

"He'd say, 'I need to practice,'" says Dinsmore. "It would get weird for a minute and then he'd say, 'Oh well, guess I have to work on it,' and get back into bed."

As time went by, Dinsmore's classmates began teasing him about spending so much time with a man twice his age. The sleepovers became less frequent. Then, when Dinsmore was fifteen, he moved to Tennessee to live with his father. He was eighteen when he returned, but Kramer made little effort to reconnect.

By then, Dinsmore says, the DragonCon impresario had a throng of younger boys tagging behind him. Convention insiders referred to them as "Ed's kids."

Ken Johnston, a Georgia Renaissance Festival veteran who gave sword-fighting demonstrations during DragonCon's early years, remembers Kramer as "a typical promoter": promising big, sometimes following through, sometimes not. He also heard the salacious

whispers about “Ed’s kids” but brushed them off as gossip.

Johnston, who now serves as executive director of the National Civil War Naval Museum in Columbus, recalls, “I never saw Ed do anything untoward with a minor, but yes, he was constantly surrounded by young boys.”

Kramer was arrested on August 25, 2000, two months after that year’s DragonCon.

On the strength of his unusual health demands, including twice-daily oatmeal baths he claimed were needed to treat his skin condition, Kramer was released on \$75,000 bond in early November 2000. But he was back in jail only a few days later, after a neighbor reported seeing a teenage boy enter his house.

In October 2003, Kramer was reindicted to incorporate a third alleged victim. Still, the criminal case stalled, with several scheduled trial dates passing as Kramer requested delays for health reasons. He underwent a second round of spinal fusion surgery, followed by a gastric bypass procedure, and later was allowed to make trips to a New Jersey clinic for treatment and still more surgery.

Meanwhile he petitioned the court for permission to leave the house to attend certain orthodox Jewish worship services. In all, the court granted eleven separate bond modifications, Porter says, each one giving Kramer more freedom to come and go as he pleased.

“First, it’s the High Holy Days, then it’s, ‘I want to go to the synagogue every Sabbath,’” says Porter. “It became a campaign of attrition to reduce the terms of his bond. He just nickel-and-dimes you to death.”

In late 2003, Kramer was rear-ended while stopped at a train crossing. Two years later, he sued the driver, claiming the impact had resulted in pressure on his spinal cord that made breathing difficult and physical exertion unbearably painful. The lawsuit added that, sixteen months after the accident, Kramer “was being followed by no fewer than sixteen physicians and taking at least fifty-three medications.”

They included Arava and Celebrex for arthritis, hydrocodone for pain, Lexapro for depression, Lipitor for cholesterol, Metformin for diabetes, Oxsoralen-Ultra for psoriasis, Provigil for narcolepsy, Singulair for asthma, Topamax for seizures, and Zyrtec for allergies—as well as various inhalers, respirators, therapeutic cushions, and hearing aids.

In public Kramer leaned heavily on a cane or rode a mobility scooter. Much of his face was often covered with a ventilator mask to help him breathe. Yet court records suggest even Kramer was confused about how he’d gotten so injured. In an unsuccessful personal-injury lawsuit against the county jail, he downplayed the 2003 car accident. But in his suit against the driver—later settled for an undisclosed sum—he claimed that the earlier attack by a jailhouse deputy had resulted in “minor injuries.”

Even so, in 2005 Kramer succeeded in being declared eligible for Social Security disability, with federal Judge Dana McDonald retroactively granting him benefits going back to 2000.

And his criminal trial was put on hold again for several months in 2006 while he traveled to Israel for ten days in a failed effort to emigrate. Porter says he agreed to the scheme after consulting with Kramer's three accusers, who then wanted to put the case behind them.

In late 2006, six years after first being indicted, Kramer attempted to get his criminal charges dismissed by suing Porter's office for dragging its heels in prosecuting him. Kramer accused Porter in court arguments of attempting to "banish" him, even though, Porter says, the proposed move to Israel had been Kramer's own idea.

An appeals court, however, concluded that the majority of delays in the criminal case had been caused by the defendant: "The record strongly indicates that Kramer sought or knowingly acquiesced in the delay and that he did not want a speedy trial."

By the spring of 2009, Kramer was, by most measures, a free man. The previous year, in response to his claims that medical bills and legal fees had left him destitute, Judge Karen Beyers effectively freed him to sell his house and move to Chamblee to care for his elderly, cancer-stricken mother. (Beyers followed Judge Turner, who recused herself in 2007 amid accusations of anti-Semitism from Kramer supporters—despite her being raised Jewish.)

Then, at an April 2009 hearing, Beyers placed the molestation case in limbo until Kramer's health improved enough to withstand the rigors of trial. The court also had ordered his ankle monitor removed, a minor concession to a man who appeared to walk only with great difficulty and could scarcely breathe without the aid of machines.

Kramer had three bond conditions: Stay away from minors, no travel without authorization, and call the DA's office every Monday to report his whereabouts. Last year Beyers even allowed Kramer to move to Brooklyn temporarily so he could be with his mother in hospice. Presumably the judge didn't know that Kramer's mother was already dead.

After Kramer's arrest in Connecticut, Porter discovered that, instead of using a landline phone for his weekly call-ins, as mandated by the court, Kramer had called from a cell phone that disguised his location. And he learned that, in the months before his arrest, Kramer also had visited a film set outside Fort Knox, Kentucky, and had taken meetings with movie producers in California.

At the Milford police station following Kramer's arrest last year, the fourteen-year-old boy told police he and Kramer had been living in Brooklyn together for two months, and that his mother had lately joined them. Asked if he'd ever been touched inappropriately, the boy told police that Kramer never "hurt him or touched him," according to the report. When the boy's mother arrived at the police station, she said she'd met Kramer online more than a year earlier and that he was a "nice person, a religious person" and would never hurt her son. Kramer himself, when asked by police if he'd ever touched the boy inappropriately, responded that he had not, that it would be against his religion. Police also phoned Brian Colby, of Colby Models, in New York. Colby said that two other boys who work as models were staying at Kramer's apartment.

But it is accounts of Kramer's unaided rambles through the Connecticut woods and the

Kentucky countryside that have given Porter the ammunition he believes will finally force Kramer to trial.

Accounts of his alleged robustness have already cost Kramer his principal defense attorney. Earlier this year, veteran litigator Edwin Marger withdrew from the criminal case over Kramer's objections. Kramer's only attorney of record remaining on the criminal case is former Georgia Congressman Bob Barr, who did not return calls.

Says Marger, "I left Mr. Kramer because I didn't feel I could any longer present evidence to a court that I believed in. If what has been reported in Connecticut is factual, then it appears the judge may have been misled, as was I."

<http://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional/all-gwinnett-superior-courts-judges-opt-out-dragoncon-founder-case/khWc308Qk94XsbE7KVBMP/>

He decided to take back his guilty plea & has been granted a new trial. He is also now suing all the govt entities in GA & CT.

"Kramer v. Connecticut et al" Connecticut District Court PacerMonitor.com 2015-02-22

"Kramer v. Vitti et al" Connecticut District Court PacerMonitor.com 2015-08-17

<http://atlantajewish.com/content/2004/edkramer.html>

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2004:

TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND ED KRAMER

Arrested for a crime he claims he didn't commit, Edward Kramer has been waiting for his day in court for more than four years. In the meantime, conspiracies have evolved: Was he set up by enemies he made in the seedy underworld of science fiction conventions? Was he the victim of virulent anti-Semitism? And why has it taken so long for his case to go to trial? The twisted tale of a man and the life he now leads. by Benjamin Cohen



Edward Kramer is sitting in his one-bedroom home. These days it's about all the 43 year old does. Arrested in August 2000 on accusations of child molestation, Kramer is on house arrest and has been waiting for his trial for more than four years.

Kramer's story does not follow a simple path. It takes detours into complex and murky territory. Kramer claims anti-Semitism, saying he was beaten up for being Jewish during his stay at the Gwinnett County Detention Center. Some even claim the judge overseeing his case is a Messianic Jew and could not be partial in judging Kramer, who has become a more devout Jew since his arrest.

He claims the jail did not give him necessary medical attention; he has severe neurological and spine damage and can barely move his neck. Some claim conspiracy. Kramer is the founder of Dragon*Con, a world-renowned sci-fi convention which attracts more than 25,000 people to Atlanta each year. Some in the sci-fi community had personal vendettas against Kramer, were jealous of his success, and wanted to see his downfall.

And, perhaps most important, some claim the evidence against him has so many holes in it that it uncovers possible corruption in the Gwinnett judicial system. After all, his arrest happened more than four years ago and, to this day, he has yet to go to trial.

Surprisingly, months of research not only confirms much of what Kramer and his supporters claim but it's not even the whole story.

It's a bright Tuesday in July 2004, primary election day, and Kramer is allowed to leave his home to cast his vote for the local elections. It's ironic. Shackled to his home by an electronic anklet, Kramer is going to take part in the judicial process, the very same system that has led to his current confinement.

It's shortly after 9 AM at the B.B. Harris Elementary School in the heart of Duluth and the voters have begun to trickle in. Whites, Blacks, Asians - all calling Gwinnett County home. Several "Bush/Cheney 04" bumper stickers reveal a Republican bias in the district. In fact, in the 2000 election, President Bush received 63% of the vote in Gwinnett.

A dark grey Chrysler Town and Country pulls up and parks in an empty spot. The door opens and, quite dramatically, a black cane with a silver handle peeks its way out of the car. It's followed by a foot and slowly a body emerges. It's Edward Kramer.

To those who have not met him before, he's an imposing figure. Part Jerry Garcia, part Paul Bunyan, Kramer is a large man. A bushy black beard and a long ponytail tied in the back with a leather strap punctuate his frame. Wearing a dark suit and a novelty dreidel tie, he's clearly overdressed for the occasion. In a sense, the suit allows him to recoup some sense of self-respect, to feel important as he exercises the only right he has left.

The years in home confinement have not bode well for the already frail man. His eyes, only partially open, are dark and weathered. Unable to exercise, he walks slowly, although he still has a slight swagger in his step.

This is a far cry from his life prior to his arrest four years ago. With a Master's Degree in Public Health from Emory University, Kramer served on Mayor Andrew Young's task force on domestic violence and worked as a technology and health consultant for the Metropolitan Regional Educational Service Agency.

As well, he worked with broken families and served as a mentor to dozens of troubled teenagers. "While my father was in prison on drug charges, Ed was somewhat of a surrogate father to me," says George Burgamy, an Emory alumnus now in his 20s.

But it was these types of relationships that, Kramer's friends agree, may have led people to think he was guilty. "He's put himself in a situation where questions could arise," says David Robinson, who also mentored teenagers with Kramer. "All it takes is someone to point a finger and our lives

will come to a screeching halt and yet we do it because we have to, because somebody should."

To many children, Kramer was like Harry Potter's Hagrid, a larger-than-life adult in whom they could confide. It's a fitting reference since he has made a name for himself in the sci-fi/fantasy literary world. It's as if, in essence, he has become one of his own characters - a tortured soul on a mythical quest of good vs. evil.

That quest began unexpectedly for Kramer on Thursday, August 24, 2000. Kramer had been dating a woman with three sons ages 12, 13, and 15. The father of the younger two, a military intelligence officer, was seeking custody and had the mother investigated by the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS).

An anonymous call was placed to the DFCS office, alleging abuse and the boys were interrogated by Gwinnett police at their school. At first, the children denied anything had happened. Still certain that some wrongdoing had indeed occurred, the investigator, according to court testimony, then went to speak with the boys' mother. The investigator informed her of the situation and asked her to speak with the boys. That evening, she spoke with her sons and later informed the investigator that "something indeed had taken place" with Kramer. The next day, the police called Kramer and asked him to come down to the station. It would be the last time Kramer would go anywhere as a free man.

He was arrested on the spot. From the police station, Kramer was sent directly to the Gwinnett County Detention Center (GCDC) to await trial.

HARD TIME

By almost all accounts, the GCDC is not a pleasant place to await trial. The jail is grossly overcrowded. According to an article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, it had been designed to hold 780 prisoners, but at the moment Kramer arrived it was housing about 1,500. Half of the inmates were forced to sleep on the floor.

Kramer's situation was markedly worse. According to a sworn affidavit filed by fellow inmate Reverend Thomas Coley, Kramer was immediately ostracized for being Jewish. He was denied kosher food, a Hebrew prayer book, and a Jewish Bible - inmate rights that were required by law under the landmark 1999 federal case Jackson v. Mann. Indeed, similar amenities for both Christian and Muslim prisoners were allowed. According to Coley, Kramer was told that he "picked the wrong jail to be Jewish in."

The bond hearing was set for September 14, 2000, more than two weeks after he was arrested. The local news media ran stories about Kramer's arrest that day and the courtroom was jammed with radio and print reporters as well as a number of television crews.

At the hearing, the state only called one witness, Gwinnett County investigator Curtis L. Clemmons who stated that the charges stemmed from an anonymous phone call.

During a search of Kramer's house after the arrest, Clemmons also says he found more than 200 pornographic tapes in Kramer's home, yet the day of the bond hearing, he neglected to bring any of them to the courtroom. It should be noted that two years later, the State conceded that the videos were not pornographic and the tapes - which included The Blues Brothers, Saving Private Ryan, Gladiator and (ironically) Conspiracy Theory - have since been removed as evidence in the case. In fact, the Georgia Court of Appeals held that the entire search warrant's description was so open-ended, that the warrant was in violation of both the Georgia and United States Constitutions.

The hearing was televised and, despite a direct order by jail administrator Major J.J. Hogan to leave the televisions off in the unit where Kramer was housed, it was broadcast to Kramer's fellow

inmates. By the end of the evening, Kramer had reportedly received several death threats and was thrown into solitary confinement for his own protection. Besides five days he spent in the medical ward, Kramer says he spent nearly two months in solitary confinement.

According to Kramer, the room consisted of an 8' x 12' cell, stone floor, a metal toilet and basin, a 12" x 16" slab of steel jutting out from the wall at seat and desk levels, and a steel bunk with a 1" pad. Three meals a day are slid through the door and inmates are confined to their cells for 23 hours a day.

"It's primordial," says Harlan Ellison, a renowned novelist and close friend of Kramer. "They behave as if it's the 14th century, and it's the Spanish inquisition. They're treating him as if he's the Marquis De Sade for Chrissakes."

Reverend Thomas Coley was detained on charges of credit card fraud at the GCDC at the same time as Kramer. While there, Coley led a weekly Bible study group and invited Kramer to talk to the class about Judaism. When the deputies found out about this they cancelled the class and threatened Coley, he says. "They told me it was because I had that damn Jew in there. That's when the whole roof caved in," Coley recalls. "They told me they were going to hang Ed and that they were going to hang me along with him." With no actual evidence of credit card fraud against Coley, his charges were later dropped and he was released from the GCDC after spending six months there.

"I wouldn't have believed it had I not been there," says Coley, who has since gone back to ministering. "The anti-Semitism there was horrendous. As a black detainee there's only one thing that I can think that would've been worse for me - and that's if I was Jewish."

HEALTH CONCERNS

If being Jewish weren't hard enough, Kramer was suffering physically as well. Having several pre-existing medical conditions - including one that caused skin lesions - Kramer was denied access to his medications, even though it is normal protocol to allow inmates access to their prescription drugs.

Although six witnesses took the stand that day in defense of Kramer, Judge Debra Kaplan Turner denied bond stating that he posed a "significant threat to the community" and sent Kramer back to the GCDC. Not able to care for his conditions, Kramer began to get infections all over the surface of his body. By this time, Kramer had been sleeping on blood soaked sheets and, according to an affidavit, was not permitted to change his linens prior to laundry day. "The circumstances of [Kramer's] suffering were so obvious that Edward Kramer's sheets, towels, washcloths, uniform, socks, and undergarments were placed in red biohazard bags because of the exposed blood," the affidavit stated. According to Coley, the GCDC deputies went so far as to tell the other inmates that Kramer had AIDS so that he would be further ostracized. Making matters worse, court records show, Kramer was denied daily showers.

When inmates are suffering medical problems, they are sent to the prison infirmary. Prison Health Services (PHS), the nation's largest private provider of correctional medicine, provides medical services for 235,000 inmates in 26 states at more than 400 locations - including the GCDC.

For years, PHS' operations have been under a dark cloud. Dr. Manuel Fajardo, the first PHS physician to examine Kramer, had two drug convictions prior to being hired by PHS. Dwana Gephart, the woman responsible for all PHS activity at GCDC, only has a high school diploma. And inmates, their families, and even PHS' own nurses continue to file complaints alleging negligence against the company.

A PHS whistleblower in Maine, for example, reported that the medical director reported to work intoxicated, the company was charging the state for medications that were prescribed but not

actually given, and nurses were instructed to destroy inmate medical records. The whistleblower reported that one nurse even took home 42 boxes and burnt them in her wood stove.

This was no isolated case. In July 2004, New York state investigators accused PHS of causing the death of inmate Brian Tetrault for not giving him his Parkinson's medication. The investigators also urged prosecutors to look into falsified records indicating that Tetrault had been released from custody for 10 minutes prior to the time of his death. With Tetrault a free man, jail authorities would not be required to file a report on the circumstances of his death. Tetrault had survived ten years under the watch of a different prison healthcare provider, but passed away less than week after he was transferred to the care of PHS.

"People die in jail just like they do out in the community," says Jean Byassee, the chief legal officer of PHS. "It's not like this is a hospital setting." Indeed, Byassee says that, at any give time, there are around 1,000 pending lawsuits against PHS.

The Gwinnett County Detention Center as well as the Gwinnett County police department is not new to such lawsuits. In May of this year, 31-year-old Frederick Jerome Williams died after being repeatedly shocked with a 50,000 volt Taser stun gun during a scuffle with sheriff's deputies. And in September 2003, 25-year-old Ray Charles Austin also died after being shocked with a stun gun during a scuffle with "12 to 20 deputies," according to published reports. Both families are suing the county for negligence.

By any stretch of the imagination, Kramer wasn't the healthiest of people even before his stay at the GCDC. He had chronic asthma and sleep apnea; at the age of 15, parts of Kramer's vertebrae were fused together to help his spine; and he suffers from psoriatic arthritis, which causes extreme swelling in the joints as well as external lesions. Yet, prior to his arrest, Kramer often went on rigorous caving excursions which required him to rappel deep into cavernous territory.

On the way to the medical unit on October 4, 2000, Kramer slipped and fell causing trauma to both his head and neck. According to a lawsuit filed by Kramer, PHS' Dr. Fajardo told Kramer he would die in jail. Rheumatologist Glenn Parris, who examined Kramer's injuries, called the situation "disastrous." Even after an MRI revealed spinal cord injury Kramer says he was not given a mattress or a pillow when one became available.

"They just totally and completely dropped the ball when he was incarcerated and it worsened his medical condition," says Kramer's attorney Walter Britt.

Things would only get worse when, on December 1, 2000, a food fight occurred in Kramer's unit. Ninety minutes later, according to Kramer, GCDC's Rapid Response Team held a tactical operations drill and told Kramer to put his hands behind his neck. Kramer says a masked deputy then slammed his head into a reinforced cinder block wall.

According to those present, the guards left a golf ball size extrusion on Kramer's head. Although he was not in the room when it happened, Reverend Coley says that one of the deputies admitted to him that it happened. "This deputy was telling me that they damn near broke his neck and he was happy about it," recalls Coley.

Prison protocol is that anytime the Rapid Response Team is deployed and a deputy touches an inmate, there is a written report documenting the incident. Those reports are then available to the public as open records. When called repeatedly for the report, GCDC claimed that the report for that particular incident "didn't exist" and that they couldn't locate it.

Earlier this summer, Kramer had a case pending before the U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals alleging gross misconduct by Gwinnett County officials, PHS, and others. The Court dismissed it in August stating that Kramer's claims that the medical care in the prison was inadequate were

unsubstantiated. As of this printing, Kramer was planning another appeal of that decision.

"I agree with the 11th Circuit's decision," says Christina Bloom, Gwinnett County's attorney handling the suit. "I'm pleased with the result."

BLIND JUSTICE

Underscoring all these aspects of the case, some of Kramer's supporters believe that the judge in the case, Debra Kaplan Turner, harbors anti-Semitic feelings against Kramer. Turner grew up in Atlanta attending Hebrew School at Congregation Ahavath Achim in Buckhead. But according to her father, while attending law school at the University of Georgia, Turner became an apostate Jew, renouncing her Judaism and converting to Christianity.

"She considers herself Christian," laments Arthur Kaplan, himself a semi-retired judge in Atlanta and still an active member of Ahavath Achim. "It's very concerning to me."

Turner, who married a non-Jew, lives in Lawrenceville, less than seven miles away from the Gwinnett County Detention Center where Kramer was allegedly assaulted. "She's still my child, but I'll never know why she converted," her father says.

Gwinnett attorney John Matteson takes the story one step further. A criminal defense lawyer who has tried several cases in front of Turner, Matteson believes Turner actually became a Messianic Jew. He went so far as to attend a local Messianic temple to see if she prayed there. Matteson is not alone in his beliefs. Some of Kramer's friends have made similar claims, even going so far as saying that Turner wears both a Star of David and a cross around her neck - although none of them admitted to actually seeing it.

According to Atlanta's Mark Sanders, a former Evangelical minister turned Orthodox Jew, the fact that her father says Turner converted to Christianity and others believe she's a Messianic Jew are not contradictory. "The Messianic Jews' theology is clearly Christian," he says. "By virtue of believing in Jesus, a Jew has turned his back on his religion." Sanders, who now goes undercover to get people out of groups like Jews for Jesus, also points out that there are a wide range of Messianic Jews.

"It's hard to measure," he says. "Each one of these Messianic synagogues are a franchise onto themselves. The truth is they're real confused."

Rob Greenwald, a Jewish attorney in Gwinnett who has been friends with Turner for 17 years, says the allegations couldn't be further from the truth. "Whoever told you that is full of crap," he says. "Is she anti-Semitic? Not only no, but hell no."

Assistant District Attorney Jim Miskell, who will be trying the case against Kramer, laughs when he hears the charges of Turner's anti-Semitism. "I haven't seen any evidence of it," he says.

Indeed, a trip to Turner's courtroom reveals a more pleasant picture of the 49-year-old judge. It's a recent Friday morning and Judge Turner is handling a calendar call to set the dates for upcoming trials. A bald attorney sporting a goatee walks in wearing shorts and t-shirt. "I like your outfit," Turner says with a laugh. Another lawyer, 300 pounds and sporting an overgrown mullet, jokes that he needs to hurry up so he can go on vacation.

Overall, Turner seems affable, joking around with both the attorneys and even the defendants. She seems compassionate, trying to save a lawyer some extra work by offering an alternative solution.

Still, Matteson sees another version of the judge. "She's a very personable person," he admits. "Debra Turner is very likable and that's what makes her so deadly."

Citing that the case is still pending, Judge Turner refused to be interviewed for this article. However, during a status hearing of the case in August 2004, she tried to put to rest any claims against her. "I am not anti-Semitic," she told those present in the courtroom. "I have never brought my religious beliefs into this courtroom. Allegations like this disturb me." To ensure that Kramer could have an impartial trial, Turner even offered to reclude herself from the case entirely. Kramer's attorney decided against it.

It's not only Judge Turner who is being questioned in this case. The Grand Jury that indicted Kramer in November 2000 was ruled illegal by Georgia Superior Court Judge John S. Langford because the jury pool was wrongfully selected by Gwinnett officials instead of being an independent process. In fact, Kramer was finally supposed to have his trial in February 2002, but it was delayed because Judge Langford halted all jury trials in Gwinnett for two months because of an invalid jury selection process.

"It's a very, very corrupt county," says Matteson. "I don't think at this point in time there's a chance in hell that Ed can win this kind of a case."