

**'I want to go home': Guardianship hearing adjourned again for Vietnam veteran,**  
*Heather Catallo, (March 17, 2025)*

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**'I want to go home': Guardianship hearing adjourned again for Vietnam veteran**

*MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. (WXYZ) — Last fall, the 7 Investigators raised the voice of a Vietnam veteran who said he felt like he's become a prisoner of Michigan's guardianship system.*

*Gerald "Jerry" Harten says he's been separated from his wife and held in various group homes for months. On Monday, a court hearing was finally held to determine Harten's fate, but justice for him is delayed yet again.*

*Harten has been wanting to appear in person to talk to a judge at the Macomb County Probate Court. But once again on Monday, his public guardian would not let him attend the hearing.*

*Harten is an aging veteran who is so frustrated about being under court-ordered guardianship that he called the police on his own family several times last summer.*

*The 77-year-old Vietnam veteran's journey into guardianship started in November of 2023, after he had back surgery and other health complications. His wife Mary had power of attorney to make his medical decisions, but she had her own medical emergency at the same time and could not care for him. So, Macomb County Probate Judge Sandra Harrison declared Harten legally incapacitated and made his son his guardian.*

*"I was in a hospital and my boy stepped up to be my overseer of medicine," Harten told 7 Investigator Heather Catallo in an interview last fall.*



Harten says after his health improved, he still was not allowed to leave his son's home, and court records show Harten's wife and his son started fighting over who should care for him.

So the judge appointed public guardian George Heitmanis, but the family conflict continued and so did the police visits.



**Harten was then moved to three different group homes and now, he's been moved to a rehab facility.**

**"I am really almost crying out for desperation. I want to go home," Harten said. "They always get me away from court deals. And that's what made me mad. I said 'what? I can't see the judge.'"**



**After 15 months under guardianship, court records show Harten's son is now trying to get him back under his roof. And instead of holding a long-awaited hearing for Harten Monday, lawyers for all of the parties asked for another adjournment.**

**"The one thing we did agree to is that we probably need a third party who is not any of us to investigate everybody and then report back who appears to be suitable," said attorney Elizabeth Ferguson, who represents Harten's son and daughter-in-law.**



**Harten's new court-appointed attorney, Ben Schock, advocated fiercely for him in court, objecting that his client's guardian would not allow Harten to appear in front of the judge for his own case.**

**"Why was Jerry not allowed to come to court today?" Catallo asked.**

**"There is a statement from a licensed medical doctor that indicates that his presence in the hearing can exasperate his medical condition," Schock said.**

**"But that statement is a year old, and he's had other evaluations since then. Hasn't he expressed a desire to come to court?" Catallo asked.**



**“Absolutely, he’s expressed a desire to come. That was part of my objection today. We are going to get additional medical, hopefully for Mr. Harten, which allow him to attend future hearings,” Schock said.**

**Harten’s son and his wife declined again to speak to us on camera.**

**All of the parties are expected to be back in court in early May.**

**If you have a story for Heather Catallo email her at [hcatallo@wxyz.com](mailto:hcatallo@wxyz.com).**