

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

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Corrections: Why Do We Do It?

By Joe Bouchard

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Why do we do it? When asking such questions, we often feel forsaken in a wilderness of tasks looking for meaning to our work. Some would point out that no one is entitled to fulfillment in any job. In fact, many would argue that one should not expect satisfaction beyond a paycheck. While that may be a harsh truth for some, fulfillment is a personal imperative. Though our profession does not always offer tangible vocational contentment, it is up to each of us to seek it on our own rather than to expect it automatically or not to expect it at all.

The health of our profession depends on us seeking satisfaction in our work. Pride in one's vocation can fight off burnout, complacency, and disillusionment. This outlook allows us to face every day challenges on the job with optimism and strength.

Do we have to be left empty because we seek deeper meaning in our work? Do higher ideals have to remain overshadowed by a task-oriented workplace? Do our beliefs even matter if we seem to be doing the right thing?

Abstract altruism is not for everyone. **But when you can link virtues such as teamwork and integrity to your every day actions at work, you develop a useful tool to stave off the more challenging moments.**

For most of us, it is not enough to simply do the right thing. **At times we need to focus on higher ideals in order for them to drive us to success.**

Our tangible actions are easy to point to, especially if the actions constitute day-to-day operations. Some people believe that the nuts and bolts of operations are the only factors that drive an organization forward towards success. What we do every day, they assert, is who we are. Without tangible actions, how can we measure our effectiveness?

However, underlying our good, easily defined work is our collective philosophical base. This is found in each mission statement and vision statement. Common

missions and values unite diverse work groups and allow more of us to move with the agency.

This is where the foundation has to be laid. It is one thing to identify some core values. It is a step further in the right direction to define these core values.

There are many ways to initiate positive change and promote core values. It is not enough to say that we need to be a better agency with good values. More important is the **need to define these values and make the abstractions more tangible.**

Defined ideals for the group are a noble cause. And when they are followed, we are less alone in a sea of corrections tasks. Maybe our wish of being rescued from an undirected philosophy is as simple as defined core values and a change in culture. Theory and practice are both very crucial for the success of any agency. A blend of the two will complement each other and move the large corrections vehicle forward. Striking the balance between the ideal and real will promote a healthier workplace. Perhaps, in the end, **it may not matter why individuals follow virtues while executing daily tasks. What matters is that doing so is good for staff, prisoners, and the public.**

IN MEMORIAM

Danny Whiteman
Correctional Counselor
June 21, 2010
FCI Morgantown
West Virginia

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The Correctional Hero

By Kevin E. Bedore

Name a Correctional Hero. Okay, how about all of the warrior-minded officers that day in and day out enter the concrete jungle of the prison and face the predator head on? It has often been said that the duties of a correctional officer can be described as long periods of boredom and isolation contrasted with brief unpredictable moments of utter horror and terror. I couldn't agree more!

Day in and day out the correctional officer keeps coming back regardless of the boredom and terror he or she faces on every shift. Why do they do it? Well, it's just what warriors do. The thought of everyday folk going in harm's way is seldom something they think about or should I say care to think about. All law enforcement officers by nature of their protective role are the ones who go to deal with everybody else's danger.

So what I'm really talking about here is the "untold hero". "Correctional officers," "COs," or as I prefer to call them "Guards" really are a special breed of warrior. Some think it might be derogatory to call correctional officers guards, but I don't. In true respectful context, a guard is a short form for "Guardian" which by definition is, "one who protects and watches over."

A guard by this definition is exactly what Lt. Col. Dave Grossman in his famous model about sheepdogs, sheep and wolves refers to as being the sheepdogs of our society. The ordinary, innocent citizens of society are the sheep, if you will. They live their lives afraid of the predator wolf as is the case here. The predator wolf inside the prisons has hunted innocent sheep while in society. The police are the sheepdogs that caught the wolf attempting to harm the sheep. The prison guard is the sheepdog that watches over the sheep from inside the prison. Col.

Grossman further illustrates the point by a quote that really sums up the correctional officer in the context of his model: "Hunt the wolf and bring light to the dark places where others fear to go."

I think this very accurately describes the guard warrior role in society. The untold hero is common among guards. They don't often get medals, media attention or even recognition from their organization. What they get in return for their humble bravery is the appreciation of knowing they are making society a bit better of a place for the very people that they love most, that is the innocent sheep.

Sometimes it is just the fellow warriors that appreciate the true heroes amongst them. I have been proud and honored to have been shoulder to shoulder with some of the greatest, yet untold correctional heroes in my career. If it weren't for these heroes I know society would be a much more dangerous place.

Without these warriors at my side, I may not have been fortunate to have made it home to my family on many occasions.

The brave actions of correctional warriors are seldom recognized by the society they protect.

The police have an incredibly difficult job as well, but most of the time it is them you see on the news and in the papers arresting the bad guy. After the bad guy is "put away," you almost never hear about the guard having to deal with him inside the prison, which is more often than many will ever truly understand. The public know very little about guards, other than the fictional portrayal of them in movies and TV. Sadly, the media depicts guards as

THE CORRECTIONS VENTLINE™

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Corrections Summit – 2010

Caterina will be presenting at **Corrections Summit – 2010, Crossfire: Combating Corrections Fatigue**, a 4-Day Conference to Strengthen & Encourage Corrections Staff & Families who Walk "The Toughest Beat in the Nation." August 19-22, 2010, Glorieta, New Mexico (Near Santa Fe).

More information at <http://www.csfministries.org/Summit.htm>.

Why I Serve

From Peumansend Creek Regional Jail—Used with permission

In the beginning—A stepping stone to a police department.

Today—Twelve years later, knowing you made a difference because you stayed.

In the beginning—To lock up those who had done wrong.

Today—To know that one kind word at the beginning is sometimes remembered.

In the beginning—The thrill of the fight and the “rumbles.”

Today—The blessing of a quiet, peaceful day.

In the beginning—To match comment for comment, wit for wit.

Today—The grace and wisdom that come with professionalism and age.

In the beginning—Unaware of the huge responsibility that comes with taking care of lives.

Today—The satisfaction and pride that comes with “Thank you. You saved my life.”

In the beginning—Knowing no fear and feeling indestructible.

Today—Knowing what to fear and trusting your judgment.

In the beginning—If they hate you, you’re doing your job right.

Today—The thank you for treating me like a human being.

These are just a few of my experiences over the past twelve years and why I still choose to serve.

Alison Morales, Detention Officer

“To pay my bills,” was the quick reply.

But it looked like the Shift Commander was gonna cry.

So, I’ll put in the effort to appease the boss.

Burn the candle at both ends, so no one’s cross.

Get up as 3:30, while the rooster’s still snoozin’.

A shower and some coffee, then on the road I’m cruising’.

Some days are bad, dealing with grown-up kids.

I’m sure it’s affectionate when they call us “pigs.”

I only grudgingly admit I like what I do.

Not glamorous or prestigious, I’ll agree that’s true.

But, the staff is professional, really tops.

Without their support, I’d be hittin’ the hops.

I make a real difference, that’s not new.

But, if I’m not careful, I might learn something, too.

An ex-inmate with a baby in a house he bought.

Because I took the time to teach what I was taught.

I do my part, that’s my confession.

A little piece to the puzzle, which is this noble profession.

Ralph Roles, Detention Officer

The Correctional Hero

(Continued from page 2)

nasty, brutal undisciplined types resembling those on the other side of the law.

As a citizen, when you see a guard and think he or she is just another overpaid government employee, think about this.

Are you willing to face danger and perhaps thanklessly give up your life to protect society? Not many will make that sacrifice, and to many ordinary folk even the thought of it is terrifying. The correctional warrior accepts this risk every moment they are inside the prisons looking the predators right in the eye and proving that good will always defeat evil.

I talk to many who are not guards and they ask, “Why the heck would you want to work there?”

I don’t really know why, other than somebody has to do it! As far as personal sacrifice is concerned, what is right is definitely worth fighting for. If that is the chance I must take inside, it is completely worth it and some.

Like many other guards, I don’t consider myself a hero, but my attitude about my role is based upon many heroes’ reason for doing what they do. It is a way of putting into action my thanks to many told and untold heroes that have gone before me and will come along long after I hear those big steel doors slam behind me for the final time.

While you are safely at home enjoying your time in the peace of “sheep-hood,” think of the sheepdog guard in the prison keeping the wolf securely away from you.

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



*a non-profit organization
for the well-being of correctional
staff and their families*

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From the Old Screw

Why Do We Do It

Why do we do one of the most dangerous and thankless jobs in the world? Why do we risk our lives every day and minute we are at work? Why do we put our families at risk and sometimes lose them?

Why do we worry and work so hard to protect a society when for the most part they don't rate us much higher than the people we watch? There are so many "why's."

Why do women want to work in a male prison? Is it because they're all control freaks? It couldn't be that a mother wants a fair living, insurance and security for her family. I worked with a female officer who just knew she could be raped and killed one day. Did it stop her from doing her job? No. Why? If a situation occurred, she was right there. No matter where she was assigned, she was there. Why?

Male officers sometimes get scared and have some problems, but they are there standing tall together with the female staff. Why? They all at one time or other go to work sick, high fever and all. Why? They know that if they don't show up someone will have to work over or come into work to fill their slots. The work sometimes has 6-7 day work weeks to make sure all positions are filled. Staff is there. Why?

Their lives are no different than military life. They have PTSD too, yet they as the soldiers are there. Why? Ulcers, high blood pressure, depression, drinking, drugs are everyday problems, but they are still there. Why? Sometimes they have little if any support from higher staff, but they are still there. Why?

Why? Sometimes we ourselves don't know or understand why. In part we are true professionals. We take pride in our work and come hell or high water, we will be there. Why?

Take care, *The Old Screw*

DWCO's Contract with AFGE 1302 Local Terminated

Due to philosophical differences, DWCO's contract with AFGE Local 1302 for EAP services to members was terminated as of July 1, 2010.