

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

A PUBLICATION OF DESERT WATERS CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH
A NON-PROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF & THEIR FAMILIES

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From The Old Screw

Our Weird Humor

One of the things about corrections is the weird humor we take for granted. I believe that our humor comes from our work environment, where we learn to hide our feelings. Joking helps us cover up our deeper emotions, and so it becomes natural for us to laugh about things other people may not consider to be funny. I will relate here some of the prison incidents I have found to be funny over the years.

One night, while a good friend of mine started to lock up inmates at the max unit (*maximum security*), one of them turned and hit him. My buddy was a really big old boy. He had an oversized belly, but no hips. When the inmate hit him, my buddy drew in his breath and drew back his fist. As he did this, his pants fell down. My buddy never missed a beat. He grabbed his pants with one hand, and knocked the inmate away from him with the other. Of course everyone was laughing so hard that the inmate tried to get away and didn't get hit hard. It's hard to hit a man hard while holding up your pants.

In the same max unit an inmate cussed me and told me that, if I would open up the door, he would "kick my butt." The next day he was moved to another wing and this wing had yard for one hour. That evening I was standing at the wing door where the inmates came out for yard. You never heard so many "Good evening, boss!" and other kind words this inmate said when he saw me. Only in a lock up would this seem funny.

One time in another max facility, an Officer friend and I were standing mainline in a chow hall that fed over 1,200 inmates at a time. We always stood in the middle at the outside wall. Something started happening and the chow hall got real quiet. A full chow hall is not a good place when it gets quiet. All

the other staff moved up beyond the bars at the front of the chow hall, but my friend and I were told to stay where we were. We started joking about who was going out the window behind us first if something happened. Of course, neither one of us would have left. While we were joking and talking I was watching the inmates and they were looking at us and then looking up front where all the other staff was. Whatever was supposed to happen didn't, and there was no one any happier than my buddy and I.

At another time, while a CO friend was counting a farm dorm one night, I got a call to go help him count the unit. When I arrived he appeared to be very frustrated, but wouldn't tell me why. We counted the unit with no problems. It was not until a few nights later that I found out what happened. One of the inmates sat on his bunk and every time the Officer walked by he would start counting his toes. That made the Officer lose his count. It was many a day before this Officer lived this one down.

Yet another time in this same max unit, two of the young inmates that were in cells side by side were

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In Memoriam

Karen Stallings
Employee Services
Specialist, FCC Florence
January 26, 2006



Jeffrey Alan Wroten
Maryland State
Correctional Officer.
This 44-year old father of five died on January 27, 2006 after being shot days earlier in the face by an inmate he was guarding at a hospital.

(Continued on page 2)

Healing Trauma

A Survivor Speaks—Symptoms of PTSD

Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are introduced here through an excerpt from the victim impact statement of a correctional officer who was gravely assaulted by an inmate. The survivor describes graphically the involuntary re-experiencing of the incident, persistent physiological disturbances (sleep problems, hypervigilance, and strong startle response), and avoidance tendencies that are typical of PTSD. Used with permission.

For the year 2002, Corrections USA reported that eighty-eight (88) staff members a day were seriously assaulted in the correctional environment. That is nearly four (4) per hour, thirty-three thousand one hundred fifty seven (33, 157) per year. A Correctional Officer can expect to be seriously assaulted at least three times in a twenty-year career.

On ___, 200_, I became one of the eighty-eight who were seriously assaulted on that day. I was nearly killed by Inmate X. Inmate X, without provocation, tried to stab me to death with a weapon that he had made. To this day I do not understand why he chose me to carry out this act of violence. I do, however, understand that this crime against me has changed my life forever.

Nearly a year has passed by and I am still plagued with nightmares surrounding this attack. I have had difficulty sleeping and I have experienced heightened levels of anxiety.

My relationships with my wife, my children and others have become strained since this incident has taken place. There are times that my wife and I do not sleep together because I wake up in fits of panic thinking that I am fighting Inmate X.

I am easily startled and often tense in crowds. I now prefer to be alone as opposed to spending time with others. I have had to seek the counsel and advice of doctors and psychologists to overcome these problems that have developed since the attack.

I often wonder if I will ever overcome the paranoid and on-guard feelings that I have performing routine duties with inmates on a daily basis.

I can only hope that my family can remain together and support me since I have become a different person due to the unprovoked attack that I was subjected to.

Our Weird Humor

(Continued from page 1)

having water fights while I was making rounds. The inmate porter (*inmate who helps clean tiers*) told me that they wouldn't stop. They had gotten him and the tier wet. I went down the tier and told them to stop throwing water. As I went back up the tier they again threw water and got some on me. I did not say a word but I told the porter to come with me. I went into the porter's closet and picked up a five-gallon bucket. I put it in the sink and turned the cold water on. When it was almost full, I told the porter, "I'm going to finish my rounds on the other side." With a great big smile he replied, "Yes Sir, Boss." I was about halfway thorough my rounds when I heard this

strange splash of water and much yelling. There were no more water fights, the tier was cleaned up and there were no more complaints. However, when I made my rounds again later, there were lots of smiles on that wing.

These things happened over 30 years ago, before many of you were even born. When you work max facilities, certain things get to seem funny and you build friendships like no other, except in combat. I have not used anyone's name, even though too many of them have made their final roll call. God, I miss them.

Take Care,

The Old Screw

From Caterina's Desk

ITEMS OF INTEREST

TRAIN THE TRAINER

Thanks to the invitation of Warden Hastings and the tireless footwork of Dr. Terry King, Caterina offered the Training of Trainers *Increasing Correctional Employee Satisfaction* at USP Big Sandy, Inez, KY, on 01/30/06. The training is designed for a 90 or 60 minute class. It includes a year-long program for staff to practice self-care and constructive interpersonal behaviors weekly. Four staff psychologists and four psychology interns attended.

DISPARITIES IN NUMBERS

Los Angeles County Jail: 3,000 deputies and civilian assistants for 21,000 inmates.

Cook County Jail, Chicago: 2,900 detention officers for 10,000 inmates.

New York City Jail: 9,300 detention officers for 14,000 inmates.

From the Los Angeles Times

CITY OF CAÑON CITY AWARD

The City of Cañon City graciously awarded Desert Waters a grant of \$1,200 for 2006. The funds will be used to cover the expenses of operating The Corrections Ventline. Special thanks go to the Community Agencies Committee and its chairman, Mr. Frank Jaquez, for recognizing the importance of DWCO's mission to correctional staff and recommending this significant award for approval by the City Council.

NEW MEXICO CHAPLAINS' MEETING

DWCO had the privilege of presenting at the quarterly chaplain's meeting in Albuquerque on February 7. Prison and detention chaplains from across the state of New Mexico were in attendance, along with representatives of many prison ministries collaborating with Operation Starting Line, a national prison outreach effort. Both Caterina Spinaris and Debby Kirton shared regarding the symptoms of Corrections Fatigue among correctional and detention staff, methods for encouraging staff, and the unique calling and duties of a prison chaplain. Information on The Corrections Ventline program was also presented,

and Ventline brochures and magnets were distributed to all present to take back to their facilities. Special thanks go to Homer Gonzales, Coordinator of Faith Based Programs for the New Mexico Department of Corrections; Robert Ortiz, Chaplain for the Santa Fe County Detention Center; and Micah Fellowship at New Beginnings Church of God, Albuquerque, for its sponsorship of DWCO's travel expenses for the trip.

CCJA MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Caterina Spinaris was elected to the Colorado Criminal Justice Association's Board as a member-at-large. She is to serve for a two-year period.

As an affiliate Chapter of the American Correctional Association, the Colorado Criminal Justice Association:

1. Provides and brokers quality staff training for all Colorado law enforcement agencies at little or no cost.
2. Provides exciting events and activities where members of Colorado's law enforcement, corrections and judicial agencies can network, share information and increase inter-agency cooperation.

CORRECTIONAL DRAWING WINNERS

Our drawing took place on February 17 at Rocky Mountain Bank & Trust in Florence. The winner of the trip to Puerto Vallarta is a correctional staff member at the federal correctional facility in Tucson, AZ. The winner of the digital camera is a detention officer at the Nassau County Jail, Oceanside, NY. Congratulations to the two winners and many, many thanks to ALL of you who helped us raise funds through this drawing.

NOTABLE QUOTE

Running a prison is no different than running a hospital, a university or a corporation. The product is a little different, but it's a business of managing people. If you don't get that right, you won't get the rest right.

Professor Kevin Wright, Binghamton University, NY

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



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

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To **donate online** through PayPal,
please go to:

<http://www.desertwaters.com/a-donations.htm>

MANY THANKS!

Individual donors: Colleen Abdoulah, Anonymous, Jim Beauchamp, Chaplain Ron Hamilton, H.J. & Becky Ann Hutson, Rev. Olga Hard, Vicki Jarrett, John Johnson, Mary Laperriere, Wally & Than Lundquist, Carol McEnulty, Jenny & Greg Murray, Judy Myers, Revs. Clint & Dr. Margie Pollard, Chaplain Russell & Cheryl Scharf, Christopher Seegert, Larry Stringari, Don Wallace & Angela Kantola, Steven Weiser, Mark Welch and Earlene Wolfers

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BLOGS

<http://desertwaters.blogspot.com>
<http://womenincorrections.blogspot.com>

**Your support makes
our services possible!**

The Corrections Ventline™
1-866-YOU-VENT
(866.968.8368)
youvent@desertwaters.com

The Keepers Of This Town

They finally caught the killer and the key has been thrown away.

You can erase him from the headlines and go on about your day.

I hope you feel safer and I hope you get more sleep.

I'll take it from here, as this killer I will keep.

I'll leave my gun outside the door and holster up my wits.

I'll step into a town of hate and knives and balled-up fists.

I'll bust the drugs and stop the hit and keep the weak from rape.

I'll call the day a good one if we all go home after our eight.

I walk alone amongst the criminals, sometimes two

hundred strong.

No doors to separate us.....just a radio to make a call.

They see the car I drive to work, they know my name and face.

And some of us are hunted down when we leave this place.

I do a job that most can't do and some quit out of frustration or fear.

And I take pride as I serve and protect the ones that you hold dear.

To get to you they have to go through me, and I will not lie down.

So spare a thought or prayer for us, the keepers of this town.

Anonymous