

# Tour of prison broadens horizons

By NANCYE ANDERSON

Project Horizons provides faculty and staff the opportunity to tour area businesses and industries that employ WCC students, allowing them a brief glimpse into the world students will be entering.

"Developed in the 1980's, Project Horizons was named to symbolize the broadening of one's horizons and views," said Curtis Shivar, Dean of Curriculum Programs.

One tour is planned per quarter to provide a diversity of experiences.

Past tours have taken faculty and staff to Carolina Turkeys, Hevi-Duty, and Burroughs Welcome.

As part of the Project Horizons programs, on January 4, 1994, 3 members of the faculty and staff, and this student reporter toured Central Prison in Raleigh, North Carolina: Dr. Shirley Jones, Director of Library Services; J. E. Bass, instructor in Mechanical Studies; and James Holmes, Criminal Justice instructor.

Sgt. Temple, a 10-year employee of the prison, led us through the facility which houses over 1,000 male inmates, 90 of whom are now on death row.

## Employee awards from p. 2

Clark's position since her promotion in 1987 is accounting technician whose responsibilities include payroll, budget reports, and reimbursement reports for special grants.

Clark is a current member of the Scholarship Committee, Information Systems Advisory Committee, and the SACS Committee.

David Sasser has been employed at WCC as a groundskeeper since 1985.

Sasser was involved with a recent landscaping project at the front entrance of the Learning Center.

"Around you are 10 guard towers. Each is manned by a Central Prison employee armed with a 38 handgun and a Remington pump shotgun, whose sole duty is to protect you and the general public," said Sgt. Temple as the tour began.

We entered the prison through Operation Control 1 (OC1), where new inmates are processed, and we were greeted with the sign "NO WEAPONS BEYOND THIS POINT".

Removing his gun, Sgt. Temple explained that if a guard were overpowered by an inmate and his weapon taken, the potential for deadly harm was probable.

Instead, guards rely on a buddy-system and continuous video surveillance.

Next we saw the inmate visitation center where non-contact visits are permitted.

Separated by thick safety glass, inmates can talk by direct phone to visitors who sit in a 4'x 5' room containing a single stool and an ashtray.

From the day inmates enter Central Prison they will never make or receive another phone call from outside of the prison.

Incoming and outgoing mail is opened and screened.

Sasser supports college programs, the Foundation, and other college activities.

Also recognized with a plaque were retirees Faye Weeks of the Business Department, and Annie Smith of the Maintenance Department.

Faye Weeks was an accounting instructor in the Business Department at WCC for 22 years.

Annie Smith served as a housekeeper with the Maintenance Department for 24 years.

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This sign welcomed Project Horizons participants. PHOTO: NANCYE ANDERSON page four

Privacy is no longer a privilege prisoners enjoy Temple said.

On the walls of the inmate visitation area hang paintings by prisoners over the years.

I found the paintings unusual and worthy of display, making me wonder how people with clearly evident talent could end up in such a place.

Sgt. Temple then led us to the Death Watch Area where executions occur every 2 to 3 years.

Visible in the small glassed area is the electric chair that had to be converted to a strap-in model when the local utility company refused to supply power for execution purposes, forcing the facility to adopt the gas chamber.

Beside the old electric chair stands the body gurney used to remove the body of the executed inmate or to restrain those who choose lethal injection instead of the gas chamber.

If an inmate refuses to make a choice, one is made for him--death by gas, because it is cheaper.

Allowed in the Death Watch Area at the time of execution are the inmate's family, the warden, clergy, media, and a prison-affiliated doctor.

Guards bring inmates from Death Row put them in cells during Death Watch for 3-7 days prior to the execution.

A portable screen is placed between the hallways to block the view of other inmates when the body of the executed prisoner is brought out.

That day, the screen was in place.

A buzz of questions erupted from our group; then Sgt. Temple explained that an execution would soon be taking place.

As Sgt. Temple led us through the inmate cell blocks, he explained that each block has a rating according to the disciplinary problems of the inmate.

Cell Block "A" houses those on Death Row; Cell Block "B" houses those who show antisocial and violent behavior; Cell Block "C" houses inmates whose behavior has warranted privileges.

Inmates will spend 16 hours or more each day in a 5'x 8' room containing a single bunk, toilet, sink, and solid steel door with a 4"x 3" pass-through hole.

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