

Among wire

McCain employes are upholding 70-year tradition

By Ed Miller

Since its switch to the Department of Corrections (DOC) and reopening last October, McCain Hospital has gone through substantial changes.

"Razor ribbon" and barbed wire now wind around and between 12-foot chain-link fences where there was once nothing but parking.

Remote controlled gates open and close only after positive identification of the users has been made by officers standing guard.

Visitors no longer walk through the halls at will, but rather with armed escorts.

However, with all the new amendments, McCain is still a hospital.

It is a hospital, and it is a prison.

Although the grounds of McCain Hospital have been converted from a sanatorium to a prison, the staff of the facility has retained the pride and determination of the generations of employees who have worked at the hospital.

Orderlies were once present to take care of patients; correction officers now do those jobs plus some.

Last week was proclaimed National Correction Week by President Reagan and McCain honored some of its correction officers with awards that were kept under raps until their presentation.

Captain Carol Oliver, head of the security enforcement division at McCain, said last week that there are "at least" three officers at the prison hospital who deserve recognition.

"There is a real effort going on to change the image of correction officers," Oliver said.

With that in mind, the administration of McCain chose the best they had to honor, officers who could at once demand the respect of an inmate and at the same time, offer compassion to the sick.

Michael Hardin is a correctional officer, and is one of the best at McCain.

As well as being a regular full time employee, he is Captain of the North Raeford Fire Department, coaches "T-ball" and was a volunteer in clean-up efforts after tornadoes ripped through area towns.

Sergeant James Graham is a fire-arms instructor and an "outstanding employee" in performance and personal conduct, according to Oliver.

Sergeant Lee Croft is the longest tenured employee at McCain with the DOC.

He is active with the North Carolina Correction Association and the American Correction Association.

He is also a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

All three officers received framed certificates in a short ceremony last Thursday.

All officers and nurses on duty were invited to participate in a reception to honor the officers.

According to Captain Oliver, all three of these men are excellent employees who fully deserve the recognition they receive.

Oliver said, most of the employees at the facility are not new but were sent here from other places. The varied background gives the officers experience, as well as fresh ideas and methods.

"We don't call them guards anymore, they are correction officers," said Oliver.

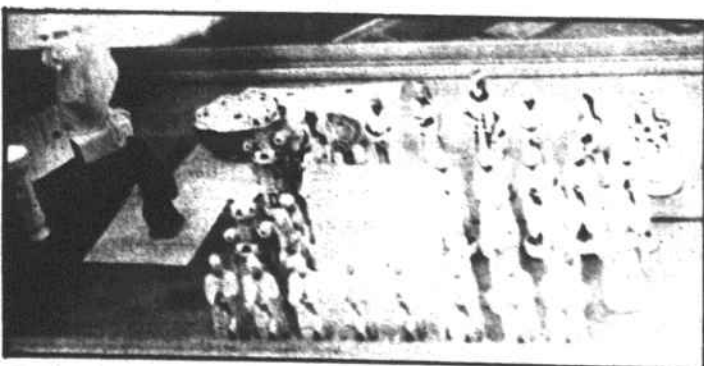
According to the Captain, the officers go through a four-week basic training period before they can work for the DOC.

She added that the training goes on constantly while on the job.

There is a hierarchy among the officials at the minimum security prison that is "much like the Army."

There are 55 correction officers, 10 sergeants, and five lieutenants, who act as officers in charge after regular working hours, and the captain.

These people are working extremely hard to protect the public from the prisoners in their care and to keep the prisoners well.



Handmade

These handcrafted chess pieces are an example of the work done by inmates at McCain Hospital. The items are on display and for sale to the public.



Honored Officers

The uniformed correction officers shown here received certificates of recognition from the North Carolina Department of Corrections during ceremonies last week. The officers are (L to R): Sgt. Lee Croft, Sgt. James

Graham and Officer Michael Hardin. On the back row are Dean Walker, Assistant Superintendent at McCain, Captain Carol Oliver and Health Care Administration Steve Dubay.